

As Marty jogged out onto the field he saw that the golem was approaching the stands on the far side of the stadium. He concentrated and formed a fireball in his hand, holding it long enough to get it to grow to the size of a basketball. Marty then sent it across the field. He held his breath as the golem raised its arms, ready to crush the people in the crowd. The fireball hit the creature in the back of the head. It stopped, then slowly turned around to face him.

Marty swallowed hard, realizing that he had just intentionally made it focus on him. Still, he had kept it from hurting anyone and that was the most important thing. The

crowd had fallen silent now, suddenly not sure about what they were seeing.

The golem charged him. Marty couldn't believe how quick the twenty foot tall beast could move. He quickly cast ice down at the grass in the middle of the field. The golem slid awkwardly when it stepped onto the ice but didn't fall over. It was sliding towards Marty and when it got close enough it swiped at him with one of its giant stone arms.

“Batrakhos!” Marty yelled, casting his jump spell.

He vaulted into the air and the golem's attack missed him. As he sailed over the head of the creature Marty shot out a stream

of fire. He kept it going as he arced over the golem, stopping only to prepare to land. Since he was ready for his landing this time he was able to hit the ground and roll gracefully. He slid to a stop on his knees and then stood and whirled around to face the golem that was now thirty yards away.

The crowd erupted into a loud cheer. Marty glanced up into the stands, realizing that they were all assuming this was a planned halftime show. The golem was coming towards him again and Marty returned his full attention to it. He began casting his ice spell, concentrating hard and forming it into a large spike. He held it as long as he could, trying to make it as hard

and as large as possible. The ground was rumbling as the golem charged and finally Marty let the icy spike fly. It struck the creature in the leg but shattered upon impact. Although the spike had knocked the creature slightly off course it hadn't knocked it over.

With his attack not having the desired effect, Marty had to react quickly. The golem was upon him and it brought its fists smashing downwards. Marty rolled out of the way just in time to avoid being crushed. The golem reacted fast and it swiped at him, catching him in the side and sending him tumbling across the grass.

The crowd let out a gasp. Marty came rolling to a stop and found himself lying on his back. He was about to sit up but the golem was already upon him. It punched down at him with both fists. He didn't have time to move out of the way. Marty raised his hand.

“Aerios!”

A powerful blast of wind erupted from his hand up towards the descending fists of the golem. Marty concentrated hard, pouring as much power into the spell as he could. The creatures attack stalled just a foot above Marty's face. The fists hovered there, unable to fight through the power of the wind. The golem shook as it pressed

down harder, putting all of its weight into the attempt to crush its foe. This caused the fists to inch closer towards Marty.

Marty had never put this much power into a single spell before. He felt like the force of a hurricane was firing up out of his hand but it wasn't enough to throw off the golem. He gritted his teeth as he tried to keep the spell going.

“Aerios!” Marty yelled again.

A pulse of increased power shot out when he yelled the word, causing the golem's hands to be repelled by a few inches. Marty was sweating profusely and shaking as he tried to increase the power even more.

“Aerios!”

Again the pulse of energy shot through the swirling winds, pushing the golem’s fists another few inches away. Marty knew he couldn’t keep this up much longer. He put everything he had into it one final time.

“AERIOS!” he screamed.

A gigantic funnel of wind fired upwards, sending the golem stumbling back. The crowd cheered wildly. Someone in the front row threw a full drink and it hit the golem and splashed all over it. This caused the beast to turn towards the stands and raise its fist. Even though Marty felt completely drained he knew he had to do something.

He got to his feet and shot out a stream of ice, hitting the golem in its raised arm.

The creature turned back towards him. Marty felt like he was close to passing out but he didn't stop casting the ice. He kept it aimed at the golem's arm, which was starting to freeze solid. The creature shook its arm awkwardly, trying to shake off the ice. Marty concentrated harder, pouring more energy into the spell. The golem charged him again.

Marty waited another second, trying to make sure the arm was frozen solid. He then stopped and switched to his newest spell.

“Bronte!”

A bolt of lightning shot from Marty's hand and struck the golem's frozen arm. The arm shattered, sending chunks of ice flying all over the field. Again the crowd erupted into cheers.

Marty fell to one knee. He was using more magic than he ever had before and wasn't sure how much longer he could keep this up. He watched as the golem staggered about, waving its stone stump around crazily. It was completely disoriented. Now that Marty knew a way to destroy it he stood back up, trying to power through the wave of nausea and weakness. He raised his hand and cast his ice spell again. This time he aimed it at the golem's torso. He was going

to freeze its whole upper body. Marty found that he had to fight hard to keep his mind focused on casting the spell. The golem was still confused and it hadn't charged him yet.

The ice began to spread across its chest and Marty tried to push himself to up the power so that the stone of the beast would freeze deeply. The stadium was quiet and a lone voice sounded out sharply.

“Look out!”

Marty recognized the voice. It was Keiko. The golem was in front of him so the only thing he feared was something coming from behind. He leapt quickly to the side just as a fireball reached him. It caught him in the back of his shoulder and

spun him. He fell to the ground and rubbed his shoulder. It burned but he didn't seem to be on fire.

He could see the person who cast it approaching from the far end of the field. It was a young man, maybe mid twenties, wearing a dark black jacket with flames running up the sleeves. This wasn't someone that he had seen with Sloan and as Marty stared he thought that this was more of a professional, some sort of a hired gun. The unknown caster smiled and then pointed behind Marty. At first Marty thought this was just a lame tactic but then he felt the ground rumbling.

Marty was still lying on the ground and he twisted onto his back just in time to see the golem come into view, towering over him. It leapt into the air. The creature kept its feet together and was coming down towards Marty, about to squash him like a bug. Nothing Marty could think of seemed adequate to save himself and at the last second he made the futile action of covering his head with his arms.

Just before it landed on him the golem broke apart into a thousand pieces. Chunks of rock fell all over Marty, some still large enough to hurt quite badly. But he was alive. He scanned the crowd, trying to see if he could locate Blake. It seemed that Blake

had been able to get to Crosby and not a moment too soon.

The crowd cheered again, not as loud this time as they weren't certain why it was that the golem had blown up. Marty struggled to his feet and turned towards the other man just as he fired off a huge fireball. Even though they were forty yards apart it was upon him in just seconds.

“Alexo!”

Marty was surprised he had been able to remember this spell since he had only cast it once when training with Blake. However, this time he had timed his shield correctly. The faint blue square glowed along his arm and Marty brought it around in front of him

right as the fireball hit. The shield repelled it, sending it flying off in a completely different direction. At first he was quite pleased with himself but it took just a split second for that to disappear. Marty had saved himself from the fireball but now it was hurtling towards the crowd.

Marty raised his hand quickly and cast his air spell. He concentrated hard, curving the air up underneath the fireball. Sweat poured down his face as he manipulated the spell, trying desperately to catch the deadly fireball. It was just a few feet away from the stands when he finally got the wind underneath it. Marty moved his arm upwards, imitating the movements of the

wind as it pushed the fireball up. It rose, sailing just above the heads of the fans. He gave it one last blast of air and then collapsed to his knees. The fireball skimmed just above the crowd before flying out of the stadium.

“Ooohhh,” the crowd said collectively.

Not sure if he had the strength to get back up, Marty stayed on his knees as he turned back towards his enemy. The man was shaping another large fireball. This one was growing larger than the last and Marty knew he needed to end this fight now. He looked down at the thousands of stone chunks on the ground around him and got an idea.

Marty stood up and quickly backed away until he was clear of the area filled with the stones. He raised his hand and aimed it down at them.

“Aerios.”

He used the wind to pick them all up and then looked down the field at the other man, sending the stones towards him. Marty intentionally didn't put much power behind the spell and they flew towards his attacker slowly. Still, with so many he had to react and the man stopped preparing his fireball and stood, ready to dodge the many stones.

Marty began sprinting behind the wall of flying stones. When he was about thirty yards away he spoke.

“Batrakhos.”

He was vaulted up into the air. As he sailed above the wall of stones he could see his opponent. The first of the rocks had reached the man and he knocked some away while ducking below others. He was too preoccupied to notice Marty arcing through the air towards him. Marty looked down at his right hand and concentrated on a different spell. An icy encasement spread across his fist and as he came flying down his hand was covered with a thick layer of ice.

As a person shaped shadow settled onto him the man looked up at last, just in time for Marty to punch him as hard as he could

in the face. The ice glove shattered and the man flew backwards. Marty hit the ground hard, too tired to go into a proper roll.

The stadium erupted into one of the loudest cheers Marty had ever heard. He tumbled to a painful stop. Just a few feet away he could see the other man lying. He was unconscious. The cheering continued and the stadium public address system kicked on.

“How about that folks? BSU takes halftime entertainment to another level!” the voice boomed.

Marty felt like he could sleep for a week but he forced himself up onto his hands and knees. After taking several deep breaths to

gather himself he got to his feet. He then stumbled towards the nearest exit.



Created and Written by A.C. Hall

EPISODE EIGHT

δυσπιστία
(DISTRUST)

Keiko rushed down the hallway, pausing to look inside each door she passed. Marty had disappeared off the field following the battle at halftime but she could tell that he

was hurt. She was searching the underbelly of the stadium for him. Deep down she felt that something bad was going to happen if she didn't find him.

As she went past a room full of electronic equipment a stadium employee turned towards her.

“Hey, you can't be down here!”

She ignored him and kept moving.

Pretty soon she was at the end of the hallway and there was nothing there but a door that led outside the stadium. She was about to turn away but she paused. Marty would want to get as far away as possible. She ran forward and pushed the door open. She stood there and held it, knowing that if

she stepped out and let it close she'd be locked out.

It was quiet outside the stadium, with most people still inside at the game. She scanned the area and leaning against a nearby tree she saw Marty. Keiko rushed out and ran towards him.

“Marty?” she yelled.

His back was to her and he appeared to be putting all of his weight on the tree. She moved in front of him. His skin was pale and slick with sweat. She touched his forehead and felt that he was burning up.

“Marty? Can you hear me? Are you hurt?”

After a moment his eyes blinked open and he looked at her. His eyes were unfocused and he looked confused. His mouth moved but no words came out. He swallowed and then tried to speak again.

“I feel strange,” he muttered.

Keiko rubbed his back. It was something she used to do when he wasn't feeling well and the movement came to her as naturally as breathing.

“My legs are numb,” Marty whispered.

“Oh no,” Keiko said.

She had spent enough time around him the first time he battled his cancer that she knew exactly what this meant. She moved to his side just as the seizure hit him. She

eased him down to the ground as he began to jerk violently.

“It’s okay, it’s okay,” Keiko said.

Once they were down on the ground Keiko rolled him onto his right side. This kept his airways clear. He fought against her but she worked until he was on his side. She saw that his head was hitting hard onto the ground so she quickly pulled off her sweater and folded it. She then slid it beneath his head.

Tears fell down her face as she watched him thrash.

“It’s okay, Marty. I’m here. It’s going to be okay.”

Less than a minute later the seizure had passed. He wasn't conscious and Keiko used the time to look at him and make sure he hadn't hurt himself during the episode. Once she was certain he was okay she sat down on the ground by him and slowly rubbed his back.

Keiko wasn't sure how much time passed like this. The sounds of the game echoed from the stadium and she stayed against Marty, wanting him to know she was there with him. She remembered from the doctors that as long as the seizure was over this quickly and wasn't followed by another that there was no reason to seek immediate medical attention. Still, she hated to see

Marty like this again. It flooded her with memories of being by his side through his first battle with the brain cancer. It had been hard fought but together they had beaten it.

Thinking about the fact that he had kept the cancers return a secret and had been on his own with it for two years overwhelmed her with emotions. She was angry at him for keeping it from her and for leaving, she admired his strength, she loved him and wanted him safe and well.

She sat and watched him, staying close the whole time, lost in her own turbulent thoughts. His eyes opened slowly and he looked up at her.

“Keiko?”

She smiled, thankful to see him wake up.

“I’m here Marty.”

He tried to sit up and she helped him.

“Do you feel okay? Are you hurt at all?” Keiko asked.

“I think I’m okay,” he answered. “My head is killing me.”

Keiko nodded. His post seizure symptoms usually included severe headaches and tiredness.

“Let’s get you home so you can sleep.”

He nodded and she got to her feet and helped pull him up to his. He swayed and she draped his arm over her.

“Lean on me.”

They slowly started moving away from the stadium. After a minute Marty spoke.

“This is the wrong way.”

Keiko shook her head.

“My dorm is much closer than the Beta Theta Pi house. You can stay with me until this passes.”

He didn't offer any resistance and after fifteen hard minutes she had finally gotten him into her room. She had a single resident room but the tradeoff was that it was tiny. There was a computer desk, a closet, a bed and not much else.

Keiko got him over to the bed and then eased him down onto it. He was still wearing the hooded security jacket. Keiko

reached down and grabbed it and started to pull it off. Marty weakly raised his arms to allow her to get it off. She realized that his t-shirt had also come off but didn't want to bother him to try to get it back on. Keiko paused for a second as she looked at his bare torso, realizing that he was in better shape now than he had been two years ago.

She walked to the other end of the bed and pulled off his shoes. She then draped her blanket over him. Once she was certain he was comfortable she sat on the bed beside him. There was so much she wanted to say to him, so much she needed to say to him. His breathing changed and she knew without looking that he had fallen asleep. She

realized just how much the afternoon had taken out of her and after hesitating for a moment she laid down beside him. She was planning on just resting her eyes but within moments she had fallen asleep.

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“Ready for breakfast?”

Marty slowly opened his eyes. He was completely disoriented. Ken was standing above him but this wasn't their room. It took him a moment before he remembered that this was Keiko's dorm.

“Where's Keiko?” Marty asked.

“With her boyfriend. He got injured late in the game, she’s over there with him.”

Marty sat up and the blanket slid off of him, revealing his shirtless torso.

“Did you take my shirt off?”

Ken laughed as he answered.

“It wasn’t me man. Must’ve been my sister.”

“Oh.”

After pausing for a moment to think about this Marty turned towards Ken.

“How long was I asleep?”

Ken sat down at the computer desk before answering.

“Twenty hours or so.”

Marty groaned. Ken tossed him a sack of food.

“I went to Burger Masters. I know how much you love their chicken biscuit.”

Marty opened the sack and pulled out an item. He unwrapped it and looked at it for a moment before looking over at his friend.

“This is an egg biscuit.”

“Those chicken biscuits are expensive, man,” Ken said as he bit into his own egg biscuit.

He was far too hungry to care about the difference and Marty quickly ate his own biscuit.

“The school’s been buzzing about that stellar halftime show.”

The thought of the battle brought a weighty mood down on Marty.

“That was serious stuff out there,” Marty said.

“I know man,” Ken said with his mouth full. “You were awesome.”

Marty shook his head.

“That’s not what I mean.”

After a second Ken nodded.

“I know,” Ken said. “It’s scary.”

Now Marty nodded.

“It is.”

The two sat there, each considering the situation for several moments.

“Do you know anything about how Blake stopped Crosby from casting the golem?” Marty asked.

“No. I tried to find him after the game but the guy must be laying low.”

After a moment Ken spoke again.

“Blake’s not a good person. He’s using you to get to Sloan and I don’t buy his whole noble act, he’s after something that Sloan has,” Ken said. “I don’t trust him, Marty.”

This was exactly what Marty was thinking about.

“Neither do I.”

“How can we trust that he’ll really give you the scroll once you guys take down

Sloan? Or that the scroll even exists?” Ken asked.

These were good questions and ones that Marty didn't immediately have answers for.

“You know what we should do?” Ken asked.

With no ideas of his own Marty was all ears and he gave his friend his full attention.

“We should break into Sloan's vault and get this scroll ourselves.”

His first instinct was to laugh, but Marty didn't. He instead thought long and hard about this. It was the exact kind of thing Ken would come up with, but he realized that's what gave it a chance of succeeding.

No one would be expecting such a bold move out of Marty.

“Villains like him always keep their valuables close,” Ken continued. “They never trust banks. I’d bet his vault is right there in that building. We find a way to know when he’s not around and we go in after it.”

Marty couldn’t believe it but he was actually buying into this. Ken seemed to sense that and he smiled wide.

“Oh man, we’re so going to do this. We are, aren’t we?”

Before responding Marty chewed on the idea some more. Sloan was evil and dangerous and he did need to be stopped.

But it would be nice to take Blake's bargaining chip away. With the scroll in Marty's possession it would make his participation in the fight against Sloan voluntary. It would get him out from under Blake's thumb. Even though he was scared to entertain the thought, Marty also realized that if the scroll was real, it could also cure him. Finally he stood up and smiled.

“Looks like we've got a heist to plan,” Marty said.

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Marty stood in the hallway and took several deep breaths. He was nervous and

trying to calm himself before knocking on the door. He and Ken had spent the whole week planning their heist and this was the first time that Marty had been able to come see Annabel. Now that he was outside her door he wanted to be anywhere else. He had no idea what he was going to say but knew that he needed to say something.

Finally he gathered his courage and knocked on the door. A moment later Annabel opened it. Her mood darkened when she saw him.

“Look who finally came back.”

“About that...”

“Don’t bother, Marty. I don’t even care it’s just that... I thought we were having a good time together.”

“We were!” Marty said. “I was having so much fun being there with you.”

“Right. So much fun that you run off halfway through the game and don’t come back, then you wait a week before coming to talk to me about it.”

Marty shifted from foot to foot. He had expected this reaction but wasn’t sure what to say to make her feel better.

“Something was happening that I had to take care of.”

Annabel scoffed.

“Be careful, you don’t want to get too specific.”

Marty stared at her. Even when she was mad she was cute, but he hated seeing her upset. His mind was racing as he tried to come up with the right words. After a long pause she sighed.

“What do you want, Marty?”

“I like being around you.”

She crossed her arms.

“Do you?”

“Yes,” he answered quickly. “I feel at peace when I’m with you. I just, I like being around you. I like you.”

She chewed on her lip for a moment before responding.

“As a friend? Or as more?”

For some reason he hadn't been expecting this question. He looked down at the floor as he thought about it. In a normal world he had no doubt how he'd respond. He'd step forward and kiss her. But his world was far from normal. There was the cancer, the spells, the evil crime lord trying to kill him. There was Keiko.

Annabel had waited as long as she could. She let out an exasperated breath.

“I get it. Friends, co-workers, whatever,” she said.

She was clearly hurt. Marty started to say something but she held up her hand.

“It’s fine Marty, I get it. I’ll see you around, okay?”

Before he could answer she quickly closed the door. He stood and stared at the door for a full minute, feeling awful about what had just happened. He didn’t want to hurt Annabel, he didn’t want to hurt anyone. Marty had no idea what the right thing to do was. Was it better to keep people away and never get close to them at all?

He turned and left, his thoughts troubled as he made his way across campus to meet Blake. Over the past week he had started making demands of Blake, putting him to work surveilling Sloan. Blake hated it and complained endlessly, but he couldn’t push

back too hard for fear that Marty would decide not to help him fight Sloan.

With Blake taking care of that, Ken and Marty had spent the week preparing their plan. Ken had proved to be invaluable, using his security connections at the college to get them blueprints of Sloan's building. There was a huge section on the bottom floor that had been fitted with state of the art security features. Now that they knew the location of the vault they needed a time to hit it.

Marty arrived at the secluded common area on the far side of the campus and saw Blake sitting alone at a table.

“It's about time,” Blake said.

Marty sat down across from him.

“Tell me what you know.”

Blake shook his head.

“I’m sick of running these errands for you. If you want Sloan followed then you tell me why.”

This wasn’t the first time he had made this threat. Blake was growing suspicious of Marty’s change in attitude over the past week.

“Like I told you before, I’m not going to take part in some poorly planned ambush next time. If you want my help fighting Sloan then I’m going to make the decision on when and where we attack him. And to make that decision I need to know

everything about his movements,” Marty said.

His story was well rehearsed and he knew it was going to work. Blake was too committed to taking down Sloan to risk losing Marty as an ally. Finally he relented.

“There’s nothing to tell from the past few days. And I won’t have anything for you in the next few. Sloan and Tasha are leaving town.”

“What for?” Marty asked.

“One last getaway before springing his big plan. Once Sloan makes his move and takes out a whole town it might be tough to make time for a vacation with his lady friend.”

Marty nodded, trying hard to hide his excitement over hearing that Sloan was going to be gone. He stood up.

“If they’re going out of town that means he’s planning on moving forward with the plan when he gets back. We’re running out of time, Marty.”

Marty nodded again.

“Stay patient,” he said.

Before Blake had a chance to respond, Marty turned and walked away. His heart was beating faster and he had a nervous energy coursing through him.

Tomorrow they were going to break into Sloan’s vault.

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END OF EPISODE 8

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