

SLIDERS: DARKEST HOUR #3 - PLOT FOR 22 PAGES

Note: Some of the minor characters in this story are drawn from episodes of the TV series. If you'd like a more detailed description of them, call Dan.

PAGE 1 (Drawn by Kobasic, after Giordano, inked by De La Rosa)

This first page establishes exposition to bring in the new reader, and refresh the returning masses!

The SLIDERS tumble through the sliding corridor, harshly lit by the strange "negative effect" that hit them at the beginning of the miniseries slide.

CUT TO: ZERCURV MARAUD, mad and on the edge, leaning in the sliding machine switch that started up this whole deadly plunge into darkness. Fierce crackles of the Zercurvian yellow sliding energy sears around him.

CUT TO: A petty and paranoid looking QUINN sits at a long table, the big jar of pennies near to him, teetering stacks of coins built up around him. He's arranging the coins, keeping an eye out for anyone who might steal his fortune. *Copy establishes how the "darkness" being brought out in the Sliders ranges from petty to dangerous.*

CUT TO: A violent WADE using the planter to wail on the battered CONSTRUCTION WORK ROBOT (issue 1 of Darkest Hour), sparks and bits of metal and fake-flesh flying up from the cyborg.

CUT TO: A stone cold REMBRANDT stands before the other three SLIDERS as they're strapped down to the operating tables from the last issue. REM looks completely cunning and self-serving, uncaring at the predicament in which he's placed his friends.

End recap.

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PAGE 2 - SPLASH (Drawn by Mayerik and inked by De La Rosa)

Note to Val - Remember, something evil is happening to the Sliders. Zooming through these tunnels has begun to have a negative affect on their personalities. The characters should be drawn to spec, but then burst out in uncharacteristically evil displays. These displays get worse and worse as we continue...

EXT. PARK, DAY. Picking up from where we left off last issue with a grim and worrisome visual. The trio of ferocious SAMURAI surround the pale SLIDERS in the sandbox, our heroes dropped to their knees as the warriors have raised their swords. The three arrogant KIDS who command the SAMURAI are off to one side, urging the swordsman to finish the SLIDERS off.

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PAGES 3 THROUGH 6

CLOSE ON THE TRIO OF KIDS, tough and snot nosed cocky, telling the SLIDERS it's a good day to die.

REM hands his head, squeezing his eyes shut, lamenting this is no way for a a great soul singer to die.

REM'S lament pisses off WADE, who directs her rising (uncharacteristic) fury at QUINN, blaming his experiment for leading them to this pointless end.

REM and WADE rip into QUINN, the young physicist trying to defuse their anger, but falling back on defensive "You were never cut out for exploring the unknown!"

A seething ARTURO lumbers to his feet, disgusted at this infighting, refusing to meet his doom on his knees.

QUINN snaps back into character, trying to keep the Professor's bluster from getting himself (and the rest of them) killed that much quicker.

ARTURO is cold rage as he snarls, "Shut up, Mallory!", his jealousy about QUINN'S talents, and the Professor's harsh feelings about their protracted journey coming through.

One of the SAMURAI slashes his blade, about to cut ARTURO in two--

-- but the warrior holds off the killing blow as ARTURO suddenly barks out several terse phrases in Japanese.

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The SAMURAI holds off, a look of stern curiosity on his face in response to the professor's words; that doesn't draw back the warrior's blade from its place scant centimeters off ARTURO'S neck. The professor doesn't flinch in the least as he embellishes on his comment (now in English). Trotting out his expertise (another degree) in Oriental history, he comes down hard on the RONIN for selling their samurai tradition for this pathetic servitude, doing the will of the weak.

The three SAMURAI listen to ARTURO's words, their expressions at first brutal, furious at his accusations --

-- but then their expressions take on a degree of reason, the trio nodding as one as they begin to accept his charge to recapture their tradition.

ANGLE ON THE KIDS, impatient and uncaring, pressing "their" SAMURAI to shed some blood.

The SAMURAI turn on the KIDS, hissing for them to be silent, badly shaking up the trio of youngsters.

ANGLE ON THE PARK, where we see several other SAMURAI -- with other KIDS, alongside MOTHERS wheeling their baby carriages, at the side of VENDORS manning sushi carts have turned in the direction of the sandbox as ARTURO'S words carry across the park.

The trio of SAMURAI at the sandbox drop to their knees before a pleased, arrogant ARTURO. They see him as a man of unflinching character and resolve, and pledge their allegiance to him, not as RONIN, but as SAMURAI.

The SAMURAI draw short swords across the throats of the three KIDS, the trio looking scared shitless; the warriors are prepared to kill them on ARTURO'S word.

A long, chilling moment (or PANEL as the case may be!) passes as ARTURO hunkers down to study the KIDS. His thin smile is all ice as he reminds them of several insults they heaped on him--and he's very seriously considering having them slaughtered.

ARTURO spares the KIDS, throwing his hands wide in a magnanimous gesture; the trio of KIDS run off, screaming and crying.

ARTURO begins to head off, flanked by his new SAMURAI. The other SLIDERS try to press pass the warrior guard, calling after him.

The SAMURAI turn their swords back on the other three SLIDERS, ready to cut them down.

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ARTURO turns on his friends, but there's nothing but contempt in his expression. He warns them all -- especially QUINN -- not to cross him (ARTURO).

As ARTURO heads off, we're left on the other three SLIDERS, badly frightened, shaking their heads and trying to figure what's come over them.

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PAGES 7 AND 8 (by Calero and Carlos, after Mayerik)

CLOSE ON THE TIMER IN QUINN'S HAND, the readout showing only just over a minute 'til the next window.

A grim QUINN presses the timer into WADE and REM's hands, telling them to be ready. With whatever they're going through, they can't afford to lose the professor, and QUINN's going to gamble on getting his mentor back into the fold.

A darkly smart-ass QUINN shouts an insult after ARTURO; he turns, as does his SAMURAI guard. Their weapons are up, as is the professor's temper.

QUINN calls the professor a coward, daring him to fight his own fights if he's got such a beef with QUINN.

The professor grabs a sword from one of the SAMURAI --

-- and charges toward QUINN, even as the young scientist shouts to the other two Sliders to trigger the gateway.

The sliding portal swirls into life, right in front of the startled ARTURO; he tries to wheel backward, shouting "NO!" --

-- but he's too close, and is sucked through as REM, WADE, and QUINN leap after him.

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PAGES 9 THROUGH 10 (by Kevin Kobasic and Barbra Kaalberg)

CUT TO: EXT. PARK, as the other end of the portal dumps the SLIDERS out onto another green, on another Earth.

As the group gets to their feet, a shaken ARTURO sticks his sword into the ground; he's wondering both what came over him, and what mad world they've journeyed to this time.

The answer appears in the form of CONRAD BENNISH, JR. (a sort of crazy hippie-genius with glasses from the TV show), diddy-bopping his way in their direction, and dressed in the toga and accouterments of an ancient Roman diplomat! "Hail and well met!" he shouts, giving a big wave.

WADE, QUINN and ARTURO are wide-eyed at this latest parallel development; REM'S just wide-eyed at BENNISH'S general space-cadet attitude. QUINN and ARTURO bring REM up to speed on what a zone-case BENNISH is back on their Earth.

BENNISH proclaims the group to have arrived just in time for the dawning of, "The Great Bennish Empire!", even as he hands out flyers to each of them. The SLIDERS look aghast at being part of this reality for any length of stay.

CLOSE ON THE FLYER in WADE's hand: it's a photocopied advertisement for a college toga party - "The Great Bennish Empire!" - a toga party the whacked CONRAD is hosting. "A t-toga party?" WADE stammers, just now realizing this isn't some parallel world where Rome never fell.

"I know it's dated," BENNISH shrugs. "But hey, time is relative, right? SO where you guys been?" "Been?" QUINN asks, hoping beyond hope.

"Been?" bellows ARTURO, grabbing BENNISH. "Yeah, y'know - weeks, months, whatever! Like I said, time's a slippery thing!"

BENNISH steps back, brushing off his toga. "Guess you been doing that Timothy Leary 'drop out' thing, huh? That's cool." The SLIDERS are all looking at each other, wonder on their faces as they realize that the fact of their being gone quite means they're finally home.

CUT TO: TABLOID NEWSPAPER HEADLINE - "'MISSING' PROFESSOR BACK FROM PLAYING HOOKY" - with a picture of ARTURO.

CUT TO: TV NEWS REPORT, an ANCHORWOMAN on screen, along with a small picture of REMBRANDT. "Returning from the 'where are they now' file,

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Rembrandt 'Crying Man' Brown came out of what many believed to have been an Elvis-like seclusion..."

CUT TO: WEEKLY WORLD NEWS FRONT PAGE, showing blurry photos of "aliens" and the headline, "ALIENS DENY RESPONSIBILITY FOR ABDUCTIONS!"

CUT TO: FBI BRIEFING ROOM. A tired and irritable QUINN and WADE are wrapping up being grilled by four FBI AGENTS (the same quartet from the series pilot and the "Summer of Love" episode), both on their disappearance and QUINN'S experiments. The duo's lack of cooperation frustrates the feds.

CLOSE ON A "MISSING PERSON" FILE FOLDER with QUINN and WADE'S names on it. The folder is closed as a rubber stamp "Case Closed" comes down across the clean surface.

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PAGES 11 THROUGH 14

EXT. SHOT UNIVERSITY BUILDING, DAY.

INT. ARTURO'S OFFICE, the beaming professor shaking hands with the DEAN - a dignified, gray haired woman - as she welcomes him back into the fold. There are several large fruit baskets on the professor's desk. He's excusing himself, suggesting , "I've plenty of catching up to do!"

ARTURO takes a seat at a computer, begins typing away.

CLOSE ON THE SCREEN, as the beginning of an academic paper shows up on the display: "Sliding Across the Einstein-Rosen Bridge: Principles & Applications of Interdimensional Travel and Alternate Realities": and then, "by Maxmillian Arturo & Quinn Mallory."

ARTURO studies the screen for a pensive moment.

CLOSE ON HIS FINGERS as they hit the "delete" key.

ANGLE ON THE SCREEN as QUINN'S name vanishes from the screen, leaving sole credit for the theories and discovery with ARTURO.

ANGLE ON ARTURO, seeming troubled by what he's just done.

SAME ANGLE AS PREVIOUS, but now a self-serving smile stretches across ARTURO'S face as he types away at this latest paper.

CUT TO: EXT. EST. SHOT AGENT'S OFFICE BUILDING, a sleek structure of chrome and glass.

NIT. AGENT'S OFFICE, with REMBRANDT as he's glad-handed by his AGENT, a greasy used-car salesman type. He's chiding REM for "blowing that ballpark gig!" But REM's vanishing act prompted interest in his backlist of songs, and the AGENT'S got lost of nostalgia bookings for REM to play.

REM'S none to happy at this; he wants his career to move forward, not stay mired in the past. The AGENT starts to turn ugly: "Listen, at your age up on the stage you can take what you can get!"

REM shoves the AGENT, HARD, badly shaking up the little man. REM decides to take his AGENT'S advice - "I'll take all I can get!" - and decides to start with cutting himself in for the skim action the AGENT runs on the side.

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REM sweeps one hand across the AGENT'S desk, scattering papers. With his other hand, he scoops up a Grammy statue, REM revealing how he knows all about the AGENT'S abusing new talent, and taking extra off the top of their percentages.

REM threatens the AGENT with the Grammy, ready to hammer him with it unless he (REM) gets a big piece of the easy street the shaken AGENT'S carved out for himself.

The AGENT smiles a big, greasy smile; he can relate to this new side of REM, telling him, "That's cool!" REM, however, has lowered the Grammy as a scared look comes over his face. "No, it isn't," he mutters, worried over this strange, greedy side of himself that's again manifested itself.

EXT. EST. SHOT DOPPLER COMPUTER SUPERSTORE, DAY.

INT. STORE, where WADE is arguing with store manager MICHAEL HURLEY (also from the pilot). They're standing on opposite sides of a long row of computer monitors, an angry WADE pointing out that these particular units were part of a recall: they gave off too much in the way of an electromagnetic field, putting users at risk. HURLEY is brushing her off, telling her the store's made a tremendous investment in its stock, they're not just going to write them all off.

CLOSER ON HURLEY AND WADE, as HURLEY gets very anal, telling WADE she's lucky to have gotten her old job back after having been gone so long. WADE is astounded at this nitwit's pettiness, especially after all the things she's seen and done.

The dark side of WADE comes out as she starts gleefully smashing the defective monitors, using a big hard drive as a club. Glass and metal spew everywhere.

HURLEY is freaking, but is too scared to come close enough to stop her.

WADE continues smashing monitors, more glass and metal crashing about.

ANGLE ON SEVERAL SCARED CUSTOMERS, backpedaling away as they're hit (and cut) by flying debris.

ANGLE ON A SHAKEN WADE, cooling her righteous vandalism as she realizes how her actions have hurt these people.

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PAGES 15 & 16

EXT. EST. SHOT QUINN'S HOUSE, TWILIGHT.

INT. LIVING ROOM, QUINN with his MOM, the two of them sharing a cup of tea; QUINN'S standing, trying to explain where he's been. MOM is all love for her son, and while she doesn't understand or buy all that he's saying, her feelings for her boy make the exchange that much easier.

She holds a framed photo of herself, a young QUINN, and his DAD; MOM is studying the image with affection, commenting how much QUINN takes after his dad; wild ideas leading to wild predicaments.

QUINN puts down his tea, turning dark as he tells his MOM, "Yeah, you know, about dad...there's something I've always been meaning to tell you for a long time..."

The following panels should seem "real" to our readers, but it's a red herring to catch 'em off guard as QUINN imagines this dark exchange with his MOM.

QUINN and his MOM, but now he's all belligerence, and she's upset and confused. He's railing on her for all the grief she heaped on him about his own experiments - blowing the fuse box, late hours, too much time in the basement.

QUINN heaves his father's notebook off the bookshelves, the pages flying open to show engineering formulae and sketches, an angry QUINN coming down hard on his mother about the grief she gave his father with *his* work.

QUINN standing over his MOTHER accusingly, the woman on the verge of tears as he tells her that all her "good natured" grief "drove dad to the grave!"

CLOSE ON THE FRAME as it hits the floor, the glass shattering.

and now we come out of the "fantasy" vignette.

MOM - caught up in emotion, but over good feelings for her husband and son - picks up the frame from where it slipped from her fingers. "Look at how clumsy...I'll have to run out and get a new frame!"

ANGLE ON QUINN, looking shaken and dazed. We realize his "dark side," was contained inside his head...this time. That doesn't make it any less powerful or upsetting.

"Were you going to say something, Quinn?" MOM asks, smiling.

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QUINN kisses his MOM on the forehead, trying to cover the fear in his eyes. "Just - just that daddy really loved you, mom!" he stammers

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PAGE 17 THROUGH 20

INT. BASEMENT, NIGHT. Still dominated by QUINN'S sliding apparatus, there is now also an assortment of "Welcome Home!" party decorations hung all over the place. The four SLIDERS are gathered here, ostensibly to celebrate the end of their journey - but none of them look too happy. REM is throwing down a little party hat, WADE is shredding a party horn, ARTURO is sullenly picking at a piece of cake. "This is supposed to be a party!" REM is shouting. "You're talking about making it our funeral!"

CLOSER ON THE FOURSOME, as QUINN is broaching the delicate subject of their respective dark sides...which only seem to be getting stronger.

CLOSER STILL ON QUINN, as he concludes something happened to them on one of their slides - something that changed them.

He flips a big power switch. "And the only way to set things right is to go back through!"

WIDE SHOT OF THE DOWNSTAIRS, all four SLIDERS pale as they turn towards the massive portal that's suddenly sprung to life.

REM grabs a baseball bat, ready to tear up the machine rather than voluntarily subject to turning his life on its head again.

WADE puts a gentle hand on the singer's shoulder, calming him for the moment, both agreeing to hear QUINN out.

QUINN hesitant, pointing to the chalkboard full of equations, admitting to not knowing the specifics of what happens when they slide.

An arrogant ARTURO turns his nose up at that, the difference between the master theorist and his practical application student.

QUINN lets it slide, holding up a globe in one hand, and a basketball in the other. One way of looking at things is they're actually traveling to separate worlds.

QUINN holds up a prism, letting light refract through it, the beam coming out the other end as a multicolored spectrum. The other way of looking at it is that all the worlds exist atop one another, and sliding from one to another is "no more" than a shift in their physical "frequencies" so they can suddenly perceive a new dimension (and phase out the previous one).

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ARTURO admits it's an interesting theory...and follows up on it by hypothesizing that their "strange slide" twisted their personal "frequencies" and bring out their respective darker tendencies.

WADE is upset at this possibility, wondering "Then we're not even who we are anymore?"

ARTURO broaches the idea that having these darker character traits at their disposal is not necessarily a bad thing; "It can be an edge, a valuable tool!"

REM shakes his head, not certain which end of the tool they've got hold of. "Would who we were *like* what we've become? Is this what we wanted to be?" And how much more dangerous can they become, to themselves or to those around them?

QUINN makes adjustments to a control board, hesitant as he explains he's made adjustments based on the timer's readings from the slide where everything changed. It's possible they can go through, "phase back" and rebound right back to the basement.

ARTURO shakes his head, trying to be logical. "But you don't know for sure!" We could die! We could be lost again on an endless series of slides!"

The foursome stand before the portal, tense but committed. Yes, they can die...but they've still got enough moral fortitude that they can't (right now) live with what they've become. And they'd better do what they can to remedy it before they change so much it doesn't matter to them anymore.

WADE, ARTURO and REM step forward through the portal.

QUINN'S MOM pokes her head into the basement door (looking down the stairs, but not seeing what's up); she's smiling and joking with QUINN about flickering the lights again, and making sure everything's all right.

"It's fine, Mom," QUINN calls back, his voice brave but tears on his cheeks.

He steps through the portal, whispering "I love you, Mom."

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PAGES 21 and 22

In between worlds, the SLIDERS tumble, thrown about by a reversal of the negative effect that twisted them in the first place. Their bodies are white outlines showing black bone.

INT. BASEMENT, as the four SLIDERS are blown back out of the portal, the equipment sparking and shorting as they return.

A fire has started in the basement as the battered SLIDERS get to their feet.

The SLIDERS race up the stairs as the fire begins to tear out of control; their patting themselves, making sure they're whole. Their expressions are open -- they can feel the change, like a weight lifted off their shoulders.

EXT. HOUSE, smoke pouring from it as the SLIDERS barrel out of the firetrap. QUINN'S wheeling about looking for his MOM -- she wasn't inside, and he thinks she must have gotten out before, or left before the fire.

The SLIDERS dodge as streams of water spray from off panel, targeting the fire; they're laughing, figuring they're back in one piece, and back home.

The laughter gets cut off as a MED. WIDE SHOT reveals the "fire engines": several large elephants, spraying water from their trunks. Fire fighters ride the beast's backs, directing them to target the blaze with their "hoses."

ANGLE ON QUINN, and his three friends; he's down, feeling he's led them back into uncertainty and danger. REM, ARTURO, and WADE nod their heads in agreement...

...BUT conclude that they're back being who they were meant to be, and who better to face the adventure's ahead than with each other? That sentiment caps the strong final image of the four standing in a circle, arms around each other's shoulders, resilient smiles on their faces.

THE END