

SLIDERS:

The Lost Episode

Blood and Splendor

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SPLASH

We open on mole-man world, where we find our Sliders in an underground San Francisco (Rags, how about some clever takes on prominent Frisco landmarks), housed within a vast cavern, stalactites and stalagmites forming the foundations for a city of stone. Our heroes are running towards us, in an obvious hurry, as they are being chased by grotesque humanoids reminiscent of the mole-men from the Fantastic Four comics or Gollum from Lord of the Rings (pale almost translucent skin, large, bulging, slit eyes, frail but nimble bodies). Quinn is in front (right up against us in the foreground), pointing the timer in our direction, counting down the seconds to the next slide. Wade is behind him, looking back as they hurry through the darkness. Arturo is next, nudging Wade to keep moving. Rembrandt is last, concern on his face, especially since he is the closest to these freaks.

QUINN: Just keep moving guys! Almost there! Slide in 3 ... 2 ...

Leave room for title and credits on this page ...

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Small shot of the timer shooting it's quantum beam into the darkness as ...

... Quinn screeches to a halt and does a deft little balancing act, waving his arms frantically to steady himself for some reason. Wade, aided by momentum, bumps into him, forcing Quinn to reach back and grab her to keep from falling. (By the way Rags, Wade is wearing a shirt with the words 'The Inner Swine' written just over her left breast.) Arturo and Rembrandt bring up the rear, grabbing onto Wade, and being forced to stop as well, with the mole-men in hot pursuit. Wade screams, Why'd you stop?

Where's the slide? Quinn, catching his breath, points into a pit, Down there. (NICE SHOT HERE, RAGS) ... the pit is immense and just pure pitch black ... and the slide vortex is hovering a few feet down inside of it.

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Rembrandt looks back over his shoulder, as the sound of the scurrying mole-men draws nearer. He asks Quinn, C'mon Q-ball, what are we gonna do? Those things are getting closer! Quinn, ponders the pit and matter-of-factly answers, We're gonna have to jump for it. Wade belts out, You're kidding right? Quinn gives her a stern look and asks, Who's first? Rembrandt steps up, checks the distance, Here's lookin' at ya! He jumps ... and slips safely into the slide. Arturo is next, sweating bullets, My dear boy, athletics were never my forte ... oh ... bloody hell! He jumps, and makes it. Meanwhile, the bulbous heads of the mole-men have begun to creep up around the corners. Quinn tells Wade, You're next! GO! Wade, flustered, takes a flying leap and slips away. Quinn holds his breath and plunges into the pit, closing the gate behind him. The mole-men scurry up to the pit and chatter in confusion as remnants of the slide-tunnel ripple in the darkness.

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Inside the tunnel, a swirl of color and energy, our Sliders hurtle towards their next destination. They are positioned in this order, Rembrandt in front, Arturo close behind, Wade next, then Quinn far back a ways. Wade notices the walls of the tunnel and thinks that they look a little strange. Almost like something is moving beneath its surface. Suddenly, a tunnel-snake emerges, as if growing right out of the quantum energy itself, shaping itself into a horrific beast (like the creatures in Tremors and Dune), a thick, giant snake with a huge, gaping maw, reptilian skin, covered in villi (little protrusions of skin, like millions of tiny little feelers) and slobbering! It strikes out near Wade's feet and immediately coils itself around her, all those little villi, creeping over her body. Wade screams out ... it looks grim for her as that nasty maw inches closer to her face. Quinn screams out, WADE!

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The commotion causes Arturo and Rembrandt to look back, even as the exit to the slide quickly approaches. Arturo and Rembrandt are horrified at what they see, but are pretty much helpless since they cannot change the direction in which they are falling. Quinn, however, does some quick thinking and pulls his arms tight against his body, like a parachutist in diving position, and accelerates his fall through the tunnel, aimed directly at the beastie. Like a bullet, he hurtles towards it, screaming, and at the last moment, he brings his arms up in front of him and BLAM! barrels into the monstrosity. The tunnel-snake squeals and loosens its grip on Wade ... just enough for her to wriggle free and hook onto Quinn as they continue their descent. The tunnel-snake withdraws into the walls as the exit appears dead ahead. WHEW!

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SPLASH

It is early dawn as we join Montezuma IV meditating in a drug-induced trance, praying to a vision of the war god, Huitzilopochtli. Montezuma is seated in front of a fire, flanked by three Eagle Knight guards. (Rags, check out the book.) They are in a clearing in the royal groves, trees lining the area. Monty is an older man, late 50's, but still solid. He is dressed in ceremonial garb, robe, headdress, bracelets, etc. The Eagle Knights (Damn these guys look cool!) are in full ritual gear, carrying ceremonial knives and spears. Monty is looking into the plumes of smoke rising from the fire, and he can see his god Huitzilopochtli. Huitzilopochtli is a fierce, awesome vision of a god. Monty prays out loud, quoting an ancient Aztec poet, "There is nothing like death in war, nothing like the flowery death so precious to him who gives life. Far off I see it! My heart yearns for it! The battlefield, where the burning, divine liquor is poured out!" A little bit off into the distance, at the edge of the trees, we can see the beginnings of the slide gate forming. The vision replies, in a thundering voice, "We shall conquer all the people in the universe. I will make you lords and kings of every place in the world! I will send you the tools you will need to accomplish this!"

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With a rush of wind and a few crackles of energy, the tunnel opens up, and Rembrandt drops out, landing hard onto the branches of the nearby tree. He discovers that he is snagged among the branches and silently thanks his lucky stars that he didn't have to hit the ground. The noise startles Monty, who whirls in the direction of the popping, in time to see Arturo, Wade and Quinn smack into the ground nearby. Monty's eyes widen with wonder, or the extended high from his hallucinogen of choice, as he instantly assumes our Sliders to be the tools that Huitzilopochtli promised that he would send! In a flash, the Eagle Knights surround our guys, drawing their ritual weapons. Rembrandt watches silently from the tree and Wade, Arturo and Quinn wisely make no mention of their missing comrade. Monty quickly calls his guards off, chattering in native Aztec, saying "Stay back! They are not here to hurt me. They are gifts from Huitzilopochtli himself!" The guards lower their weapons and Monty begins to chatter incomprehensibly to our Sliders. Our guys throw cautious and confused glances towards each other as Monty rambles on in that oh-so-kooky Aztec tongue.

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Quietly, Quinn, Wade and Arturo begin to speak with each other, keeping their eyes fixed on the wildly gesturing Monty. Quinn asks if Wade is OK. Wade responds in the affirmative and asks about that thing in the tunnel. Arturo offers, "Whatever it was, let's hope that it isn't there when we slide next. Speaking of sliding ... Mr. Mallory, when is the next gate?" Quinn slowly raises the timer, checks out the display and reads off, "Just over 32 hours. We just gotta spend the night here and then we can slide out ... to wherever it takes us next." At the sight of the timer, Monty pauses briefly, a smile curling his lip like a kid being offered a new toy. Wade notices that Monty has stopped talking and is instead watching (listening?) to them. Wade remarks, "Guys, should we be talking about this stuff in front of Tonto here?" Arturo studies Monty, and spouts, "Young lady, it's obvious that this man is nothing but a primitive savage. Apparently this earth is more of the same. I highly doubt that this society has advanced past the early stages of technology ... much less comprehend the ability to traverse the dimensions from one world to the next." Arturo follows up with a condescending smile and nod to Monty.

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Monty smirks slyly and reaches into his robe, pulling out a cellular phone! He flips it open, dials, and in perfect English, says, "**Captain, attend to me immediately. Oh ... and inform the palace that I shall be arriving presently ... with guests.**" Our Sliders are stunned, and so is Rembrandt who we can barely make out in the tree behind them. Monty continues, "**Huitzilopochtli you are too kind! You there, white man, tell me of this technological wonder you bring me, and of these other worlds.**" As Monty talks, he points with the cel phone's antenna. Quinn, of course, balks at the request, as do Arturo and Wade. Sensing the hesitation, Monty signals his guards who immediately sieze the trio. Quinn's guard places his stone-hewn knife into Quinn's mouth, resting the sharp blade against his tongue. Wade gasps as she struggles. Arturo calmly utters, "Wait ... don't harm the boy. Let me explain." From the tree, Rembrandt can see Arturo gesturing as he explains Sliding 101 to Monty. Behind Monty, we see that the palace guards have arrived.

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Monty laughs out loud, bellowing, "**There is nothing like staunch faith finally rewarded! All my scientists ever have are theories, but Huitzilopochtli delivers hardware.**" Pointing at our Sliders, he continues, "**You have been sent by the war god himself to fulfill my destiny! 'We shall conquer all the people in the universe.', this is what Huitzilopochtli promised me, and now I see that the universe is very large indeed. You will help me conquer not only this world, but all worlds!**" Quinn mumbles against the knife as Wade shouts out, "NO! We can't do that! You don't understand the power and the danger!" Arturo silently concurs. Monty is obviously perturbed by this answer. With a simple gesture, the guards begin to bind our heroes as Monty posits, "**How foolish of me. Huitzilopochtli does not wish to be served by lazy men. He has given me a great tool, but I must discover its secrets...or have them discovered for me.**" Pointing to Quinn, Monty continues, "**You shall be the god's feast tomorrow at dawn. A fitting show of gratitude to the war god for his bounty.**" He then turns to Arturo as he mounts his horse and teases, "**Unless of course, you think better of defying the Aztec Emperor. Take the boy to el Templo Mayor! Hold him there until I come for him!**" (NOTE: Rags, the palace and el Templo Mayor are two different buildings. El Templo Mayor is a dungeon/sacrificial place.) Arturo watches as Quinn is led away. Reluctantly, he

agrees to Monty's terms, "No ... wait ... I can help you." Monty beams, "**As I thought! Guards, bring them to the palace! One cannot defy the will of a god, white man...or the will of men on power.**" As Monty turns his back, Arturo leans over to Wade and whispers, "Courage, Miss Wells, we must buy time." Both he and Wade glance over their shoulders, searching for Rembrandt.

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Up in the tree, Rembrandt watches the scene play out and stifles a sneeze as the soldiers lead the party towards the city. Quietly, he arches his back to look over the hill to see where they might be headed. (Rags, money shot!) We see for the first time, the city of New Tenochtitlan. A beautiful, sprawling city that combines modern and Aztec architecture into a wonder to behold. (Rags, check out the book pp 12 & 13) Traditional Aztec constructions rise to the sky made not of clay and mud, but of concrete, steel and glass. The sun glints off of the spires as day begins to break. The paved roads have stylized automobiles zipping around as wires criss-cross the city in a dizzying web of technology. In the center of the city is a massive temple, el Templo Mayor, a rich, decorative building that looks like a place of worship. Rembrandt decides that is where they are headed. Having lost sight of the party, Rembrandt decides to wait a few minutes until the coast is clear before he even considers climbing down from the tree.

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As Montezuma and his guards make their way to the palace, Quinn and his guards are already long gone to the Temple, Wade and Arturo are forced to walk behind the horses. Monty is casually imbibing his favorite liquor in the morning sun. As the horses pass some thick brush, we see that there are painted faces hiding there. Monty begins to sing some slurred praises to Huitzilopochtli when suddenly, the entire caravan is ambushed by more Aztecs! Monty's personal guards surround him and whisk him away from the scene, fearing his assassination, even as Monty protests vehemently. The ambush is fierce as the rebel Aztecs engage the guards and attempt to free Wade and Arturo. A stately warrior, grabs onto our dynamic duo and pulls them onto his horse, riding them off into the countryside. Behind him, his rebels decimate the probably drunken palace guards. (Nice, short but extensive battle scene here Rags.)

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Later that day, the Aztec rebel leader, Itzcoatl tours Wade and Arturo through a reservation for whites seeking sanctuary from Monty's rule. We see various images of white people, clustering together as if to protect each other. Itzcoatl explains that he feels sorry for these whites ... but although he is by no means fond of them, he abhors the ritual sacrifice that Monty has re-instated in his nation. Arturo listens incredulously to Itzcoatl's tale of how Europeans attempted to settle these lands, and tame the red man. However, they did not count on the strength of the Aztec empire, and could only stand by and watch as the Aztecs drove the Europeans back and claimed North America as their own. The cruel treatment of the whites towards Native Americans, relegated them to slave stock. Since Montezuma IV's rule, the emperor has re-instated the practice of ritual sacrifice, a practice that had been dead for decades but now, the Europeans that remained, were fodder for the gods. Itzcoatl goes on to tell of an Aztec resistance to the barbaric ways and an uprising that wishes to overthrow the government. Arturo bellows, "This is ridiculous! An advanced society practicing segregated sacrifice!" Itzcoatl wheels around and points a finger at Arturo's face, **"Watch what you say, white man! The Aztec nation existed long before your people had learned to walk upright! Do not suppose that Montezuma represents all of us, most of the Nation despises his ancient religion. I will not be judged by a European! If we are too 'savage' for your tastes, take your chances in the temple!"** Itzcoatl stomps off, leaving Arturo to wallow in his own ignorance. Wade steps to him and whispers, "Speaking of taking chances, I hope Rembrandt has found a way to..."

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...keep a low profile."

In the open streets of New Tenochtitlan, Rembrandt walks the streets like a lost puppy, sticking out like a sore thumb. He is bumping into market tables, knocking over stands and bumping into people as he searches for something ... anything ... resembling the Dominion Hotel. However, despite the spectacle he is making of himself, and the fact that he can see no multi-cultural diversity readily apparent, no one pays any real mind to his presence. Suddenly, the market square is filled with the sound of shrine drums, horns and trumpets as Rembrandt turns to face el

Templo Mayor. It seems that Rembrandt has made it in time to witness the midday sacrifice to the gods. At the top of the man-made mountain, a white man is dragged screaming to the altar. Rembrandt assumes it is Quinn and rushes forward. Rembrandt cries out, QUINN!!!

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It is not Quinn, but the sight is no less horrible. Plumes are placed on the white man's head and amid the jeers and taunts of the guards, he is forced to dance for Huitzilopochtli. The man is then laid down on some narrow stones, where a priest draws a stone knife across the man's chest, reaches in and pulls out his palpitating heart, offering it to the idols there. The guards then kick the body down the massive steps of el Templo Mayor. Rembrandt watches as the limp body bounces down the mountain to butchers below who chop the corpse up into pieces and flay the skin from the bone. Rembrandt turns away and can barely keep his stomach when he notices that most of the people in the crowd are turning away in revulsion as well. In fact, some of the Aztecs look quite angry at what they have just witnessed, including some of the city guards. In the background, we can see that one of the onlookers is Itzcoatl.

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Still feeling a tad queasy, Rembrandt feels a tap on his shoulder. "Are you here to hunt or to sell?" asks a well dressed black man. Confused, Rembrandt doesn't know how to reply. The slaver continues, pointing to the latest sacrificial lamb, "I made a pretty penny off of that cracker! Best thing that coulda happened was Monty taking the throne and bringing back sacrifice ... unless you're white that is." He laughs heartily. Rembrandt smiles weakly at the macabre joke. Later, as the two sit in a local bar, Rembrandt is informed of the black role in the Aztec empire as slavers/bounty hunters. In fact, there is a large bounty out now for two escaped white prisoners. One is a hefty male with whiskers and the other a wispy female with short cropped hair. Rembrandt recognizes the descriptions as Wade and Arturo and again attempts a weak smile. The slaver excuses himself to answer nature's call. While Rembrandt is seated the table, he is nudged from behind by Itzcoatl. Itzcoatl whispers in his ear, "Your friends are safe. Come with me if you want to see them."

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Meanwhile, back at the palace, Monty is checking in with his scientists who are busy scribbling notes, measuring, pawing, etc. the slide timer. Quinn is in tow, being pulled along by two palace guards. Monty talks to Quinn, telling him, **“My scientists tell me that your device is advanced but not beyond us.**

It may take time, but I am assured that we can make use of it, possibly even replicate it. I will lead my people into untold glory as Huitzilopochtli has commanded.” He then turns to his scientists and chides them, “I want full reports on your progress as they come in.” The scientist utters meekly, Yes, my emperor. Quinn steps in, struggling against the guards, “You shouldn't be messing with that! You have no idea the danger it could bring on you!” Monty grabs Quinn by his ear and pulls him to his side. They start to walk a bit, as Monty leads Quinn out onto a terrace overlooking the royal courts. “Listen to me, boy! There is no danger in battle ... only glory! And when we find the key to operating your device, that glory shall be mine and mine alone!” Monty points out over the terrace towards a huge garrison of soldiers, decked out in traditionally styled Aztec armor, but with modern touches. They are also slinging contemporary weapons over their shoulders, uzis, bazookas, lasers, etc. Monty continues his rant, “I shall lead these armies into the folds of the universe, and I shall be made lord and king of everyplace in the world!” Quinn's face tightens into a grimace as he studies the army assembled. Suddenly, from within the laboratory, there comes a rush of wind, a pop, an eerie squeal, and a blood-curdling scream as ...

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...Monty rushes back into the lab with Quinn dragging behind, in time to see that the scientist with the timer has activated a mini-slide-tunnel! The tunnel is a mere pinhole compared to the regular tunnel but it is still impressive. Quinn looks on in horror and dismay as the tunnel flickers in front of the scientist. Monty rejoices at the sight. There! There is the gate to the gods! The scientist looks quizzically at the timer as it seems that something is wrong. All of a sudden, a tunnel-snake screams out of the small tunnel and latches its maw onto the face of the scientist. There is a sickening hiss and crunch as the tunnel-snake begins to eat the scientist. Monty is horrified and frightened, as are Quinn and all in attendance. The guards and the other scientists take this opportunity to beat a hasty retreat. Without warning, the tunnel begins to contract and closes on the tunnel-snake, cutting it in two, spraying its weird quantumized blood all over the lab floor. Monty can only stand in

shock as Quinn does the shackled-up two step over to the timer to read its face. It reads 14 hours 02 minutes! Quinn exclaims, Damn! That opening shaved eight hours off the slide time! Monty snaps out of it and screams at Quinn, grabbing him and pinning him to the floor, **“Do not tempt me, white face! You have kept secrets, I see! You will give me what I need to harness this power, now!”** Quinn spits at his face, **No.** Monty returns, **“Then Huitzilopochtli shall dine on your heart.”**

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Back at the reservation, Itzcoatl reunites Rembrandt with Wade and Arturo. They play a quick game of catch up and each contributes their separate pieces on this alternate universe. Arturo explains, "From what little I've gathered, it would seem that the Aztecs were never conquered by Cortez in 1519. As such, the empire was left to flourish and extend far into North America." Wade continues, "By the time the Europeans came over, the Aztec empire had grown exponentially. The settlers simply couldn't match the numbers or the ferocity of the Aztecs. Some Manifest Destiny, huh?" Rembrandt comments, "You got that right. And it looks like the black slaves that we read about had it made here. But why do they speak such great english?" Arturo shakes his head. "Mr. Brown, long before we upstart colonists came ashore, the British Empire was the trading power in the world. If that portion of history remains unchanged, English would likely be the trade language of the whole world." Itzcoatl interrupts him, **"It is also wise, wouldn't you agree, to know the speech of your enemies? Now, will you waste your time talking or are you going to think about saving your friend?"** Wade chimes in, He's right, Rembrandt. Did you see where they took Quinn?" Rembrandt answers, "No, I didn't see him. But, if it's anything like I saw this afternoon..." Itzcoatl continues, **"Sacrifice is not a pretty thing. Montezuma is an old man with old traditions. But he has twisted and perverted those ancient ways to his own ends. Your friend is but one in many who will fall to this madman. He claims to speak to gods, gods who grant him gifts! The ancient ways are no longer needed. Our army is strong and ready. I have been waiting for the right time to strike, for many of his supporters are not bad men, just Aztecs who value the old ways and saw, at first, a return to them in Montezuma's rule. Now he has grown too strong for them to oust, and it falls to us."** Arturo persuades Itzcoatl to help them regain the timer as well, saying, "We need to save our friend, but it is important that we retrieve the timer as well. If Montezuma abuses its power, many more will

suffer." Rembrandt, with a twinkle in his eye, adds, "Let's do it ... and let's do it right. I've got a plan ..."

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Night has fallen as several figures stand at the Palace wall, their horses standing idly by. Wade and Arturo are shackled and led by a chain. Holding the chain is a dark figure whose face we don't see yet. Behind Wade and Arturo are accompanying guards. The dark figure addresses the wall guards, "I hear there's a bounty out for these two. I'm here to collect." The palace guards respond, Wait here. He turns and steps off into the palace. Wade and Arturo look at each other and then to their captor who we finally see is Rembrandt. Wade says quietly, "Do you think this is going to work?" Rembrandt answers, "It has to." The whole party turns towards the palace as Monty himself comes bounding out, beaming. "Excellent! You will be my guest tonight, slaver, and tomorrow after the ritual, you will have your reward!" He then turns his attention to Arturo, and tells him, "Men of power, my dear 'professor', do you now understand?" They all step off into the palace.

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Late at night in the dungeons of the Palace, Wade and Arturo sit despondently in a cell, guarded by several of Montezuma's men. The two rebel Aztecs appear in the hall. Upon being challenged by the guards, they attack quickly subduing the surprised guards. Rembrandt appears and kneels before an unconscious guard, locating the ornate keys and opening the cell. "It's about time!" Wade exclaims. "Indeed," Arturo rumbles, stretching extravagantly outside the cell, "We have little of that commodity to waste. Let us locate the timer quickly!" Rembrandt, thinking of the scene at the temple earlier nods gravely. "And let's not forget about Q-ball, Professor."

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Cut to inside the laboratory, table with the disassembled timer scattered upon it in foreground. in the background, the rebels are standing over another pair of subdued palace guards. Arturo reaches the table first and exclaims "Good gods! It's been gutted by these primitives!" Wade looks anxiously from device to Arturo. "Can you fix it?" she asks. "Silly girl! I taught that young pup everything he knows, I think I can manage to repair this!"

Gathering up the pieces, they turn to flee, but Arturo suddenly pauses. "We cannot leave any notes or information behind, or that royal fiend may yet piece together the sliding technology. This lab must be destroyed!" Arturo and the others are seen putting torches to the scattered papers and equipment. With the palace partially in flames behind them, they gallop into the night. "Mr. Mallory is due to be sacrificed at dawn," Arturo yells over the pound of hooves, "and the slide is only a few hours after that!" Wade looks over her shoulder at the puffing Professor. "Well fix it, My dear Professor, fix it!"

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On the reservation, we see the Aztec rebels amassing their troops and checking equipment, much of it very modern, under the supervision of Itzcoatl. Out of one well-lit hut in the background can be heard Arturo's shocked exclamation: "The power source is missing!"

Inside the hut, Arturo sits at a makeshift work table, flanked by Wade, Rembrandt. "What do you mean, 'missing'?" Rembrandt wants to know. "Precisely what I said, Mr. Brown, I have re-assembled the Timer and the power pack is not here!" Arturo responds angrily. "It must have been left behind in the lab." Wade says quietly. "We were in such a rush...." "Surely it was destroyed in the fire, then." Arturo says heavily. "We are trapped on this earth." Itzcoatl enters the hut. "We are as ready as we can be." He announces curtly. Wade looks from Itzcoatl to Arturo. "We still must save Quinn, Professor." she says. "We can't let him die, he needs us..."

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...God only knows what they're doing to him!"

With dawn gathering in the sky, Quinn stands atop El Templo Mayor dressed in traditional sacrificial garb. Priests bustle about, one placing plumes atop Quinn's head, others readying the ceremonial knife and altar. Montezuma appears. **"I'm sure it pleases you to know that your friends have destroyed my laboratory and recovered the Timer, boy, but don't get your hopes up, my ancestors have been dealing with your kind for centuries. Soon you will appease Huitzilopochtli, and the golden age of Montezuma IV will begin! Dance, then, dance in honor of the Great God of War!"**

The Eagle Knights use torches to force Quinn to dance, thrusting

them at his feet and keeping him in motion, performing a clumsy ritual dance. Quinn notices the power pack to the Timer hung by a leather cord around Monty's neck, and the old Emperor notices his discovery. **"Ah yes, the power source to your Timer. Trust is a rare commodity in my experience, and I trust men of science less than honest warriors. But now my bit of insurance serves a dual purpose: your allies are forced to deal with ME."** Behind him the city is peppered with torchlights as the rebels move in.

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Back in the city, the rebels are stirring up riot amongst the people. "Montezuma must be stopped! You have all seen the madness which marks his reign! This horror of human sacrifice must end!" There are shouts of agreement and approval, clenched fists, and nervous Eagle Knights move in telling everyone to disperse. At first it seems the crowd will obey until a thrown rock knocks the captain of this group of guards down, and the rest of the crowd roars its approval. "Look!" Someone shouts. "The sacrifice is about to begin!" They are pointing to El Templo Mayor, where in silhouette figures move around the altar. Itzcoatl turns to Wade, Rembrandt and Arturo. "If that is your friend, we must beat the dawn."

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At the temple's outer gates, Itzcoatl faces his force in a long shot. Close in on Itzcoatl: "For too long the Aztec people have stood by and let this madman pervert our proud history and traditions. Today it ends!" The force cheers, and a battering ram is brought to the fore. Once, twice, three times they bring it to bear on the gates, and finally with a ground-trembling snap the massive gates break inward. "Once more into the breach!" Arturo shouts in something akin to glee, waving his gun inexpertly.

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Back atop the temple, an Eagle Knight reports to Montezuma breathlessly: "They have stormed the temple grounds and engaged the guards! The city is in turmoil and I haven't enough men to go around!" Montezuma speaks to Quinn instead of his captain: **"They are too late. You, boy, are soon a gift to Huitzilopochtli, and they will have to bargain with me for the power source, and in their hesitation will be lost."** he then addresses the captain again: "The only priority you have is to keep those vermin away from this sacred place, do you hear?" The captain salutes and strides off. "Place him upon the altar!"

Montezuma commands, and Quinn, struggling, is forced onto the stone slab.

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The battle inside the temple grounds; the rebels have swarmed to the foot of the temple and are struggling to mount the steps. Even our Sliders have weapons and they are forced to use them as Eagle Knights and Jaguar Knights converge firing on the rebels. It is a bloody and claustrophobic battle, as the defenders are coming from above and have much better positions, while the attackers have the weight of numbers. A fortuitous opening in the defense catches Wade's attention. "Come on! We can reach Quinn!" She shouts, and our Sliders scramble up the steps, followed by Itzcoatl who covers their ascent with his machine gun.

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At the altar, Montezuma is flushed with perceived victory. "The dawn is upon us, now for my destiny!" he yells, raising the knife up. The knife comes whistling down.....until a gunshot rings out. Montezuma cries out, dropping the knife and clutching his shoulder. Who...? he gasps. We see Itzcoatl, crouched in classic sharp-shooters position (rifle on shoulder), squinting into his sight. Now for the other temple dogs.... he mutters, and shoots the eunuch holding Quinn's shoulders. Free, Quinn sits up and hits the man holding his legs solidly on the chin, knocking him cold. Standing, he approaches the pale Montezuma. "I'll give you your destiny." he says darkly.

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Quinn makes a grab for the power pack, but Monty has life in him yet and they grapple. Wade, Arturo, and Rembrandt arrive at the altar. "We are trapped on this earth, Mr. Mallory!" Arturo bellows, strangely exhilarated by all the fighting. Quinn knocks Montezuma out and snatches the power pack from around his neck. Itzcoatl takes charge of Montezuma, covering him with his weapon as the Emperor moans groggily."We're not out of luck yet, Professor." he says, tossing the pack with perhaps too much flair. It sails past Arturo's unathletic attempts to catch it, threatening to sail over the edge of the temple.

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Wade, thinking fast, dives for it, catching it and barely saving herself from the bumpy ride down to the temple butchers. "Is this what you were looking for, professor?" she asks, handing it to him. "Listen, we don't have much time! Montezuma's scientists tampered with it and somehow caused a mini-gate to open, and that cut down our time." Quinn announces. "Check the timer, the next gate is due any moment!" Arturo places the power pack in the Timer, and there is a shot of the display: only 18 seconds left! "Well, what are we waiting for?" Wade asks. Quinn is troubled. "Wait a second, there's more. Remember the.....things we encountered during the last slide?" "What of them?" Arturo asks. "I think they are more of them, a lot more."

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A bullet from the battle below barely misses Rembrandt, who ducks in reflex. I don't care if there are a hundred of them, Q-ball, it's that or never getting back home! Arturo agrees: Good point, Mr. Brown. With that, he hits the button, and the gate appears directly before them. Montezuma sees this and struggles to his feet. Huitzlopochtli! he shouts, breaking for the gate, but Itzcoatl trips him, once again knocking the aged emperor cold. A rebel arrives to inform Itzcoatl that re-enforcements are arriving from the palace. If you are going, the rebel leader tells the Sliders, go now, or be prepared to battle. The Sliders look at each other. Quinn: Let's do it. I want to go home.

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One by one, they dive in. Quinn hesitates, and Montezuma groggily raises his head: The gate to the Gods! he exclaims, reaching out weakly. Quinn turns to Itzcoatl. May be, but I haven't met any yet. he says. Silently, he salutes the rebel leader, who returns it in some amazement. Quinn turns away and leaps into the gate. The gate snaps shut. Below, the battle rages on, gaining in intensity.

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In the tunnel: they float with nothing but the usual disorientation to deal with. Anyone see anything? Arturo calls. Nothing unusual! Wade replies. Be careful! warns Quinn, I know what I saw! Rembrandt is already relaxing: Hey, maybe that worm was the only one! he offers, just as said Tunnel Worm appears, grabbing him. Panicked, he aims his gun and fires. The worm

explodes into gore, and he is free. Careful with that weapon!
Arturo snaps. Good shooting, Cryin' Man! Quinn adds, let's hope
we won't see any more. Close up of Wade, looking nervous. Uh,
guys....

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Splash

Our four Sliders in free-fall, the walls of the tunnel suddenly
crawling with Tunnel-Worms! They are everywhere, and several make
grabs for our heroes.

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The Sliders begin fighting for their lives, shooting at the worms
and struggling to free themselves. The worms are slowing their
progress down the tunnel. Fighting his own Tunnel-Worm, Arturo
observes breathlessly: We have been en route much longer than
usual! Rembrandt replies over his own struggle: First things
first, Professor! Quinn breaks free from his own worm, only to be
grabbed by another. Watch where you're shooting, everyone!

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Wade spies the exit suddenly - it is getting smaller! If we don't
get free of these things soon, she shouts, getting shot will be
the least of our problems! The gate is shrinking! They all see it
is true. "I have an idea, Professor!" Quinn yells. "It's
dangerous, but...I'm going to fire the Timer!" Arturo is aghast
even through his struggle. "But you do not know what the
consequences of that will be! It is a unknown variable!" Quinn
replies, "From what I saw in Monty's lab, I think I have an idea
what will happen, but we don't have time to discuss it! Here
goes!!" He aims the timer at his worm, presses the button, and
with the same soft whine the worm fades back into the wall. "I
was right! The Timer controls Quantum energy.....in ALL its
forms!" Quinn shouts. "Great," Rembrandt shouts back, "pat
yourself on the back later, Einstein, and start aiming now!!" One
by one the worms are dispatched. Wade looks back to the exit.
"It's gonna be tight!" she gasps. "I've never seen it so small!"
Arturo is closest. "I think your little experiment has sped its
atrophy, Mr. Mallory!" Quinn has no time to argue. "Stop talking,
Professor, and make some tracks!" One by one they shoot through
the exit gate, Quinn barely making it just as it snaps shut.

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One by one emerge onto.....DESERT WORLD! They each land in an apparently endless and featureless sea of sand. Above them, the sun is huge and powerful. They stand, covered in gore from the worms, brushing themselves off, Quinn noticing that his escape from the tunnel was closer than he knew: his ceremonial headdress is shaved off cleanly where the gate closed. Wade joins him and he shows it to her. Another inch and... Rembrandt and Arturo join them. Rembrandt: You're gonna be darker then me after a couple of hours in this sun, with that Tonto outfit you got on, Q-ball. Quinn replies: I'm just glad to be alive, wherever we are. Have you ever seen anything to indicate those things existed, Professor? Wade?

None of them have. They sure are badass things though. Rembrandt says. Wade nods. Are we going to have to deal with them every time we slide, from now on? she asks. I couldn't say, not without much more observation that I sincerely hope I never have opportunity to make, but I certainly hope not.

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They turn their attention to the new earth they have arrived on. Can anybody see anything? Arturo asks. Nothin' but sand. Rembrandt answers. How long are we stuck in Sand Francisco, anyway?

Quinn checks the timer. Uh.....looks like a little more than three days, unless those Aztec scientists did more damage than I thought. Wade isn't amused. Is that possible? It was in pieces, my dear girl, Arturo replies, and although repaired rather expertly by yours truly, anything is possible.

I'll say, Rembrandt mutters, look where we are now. What do you suppose we ought to do?

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Splash

Full page scene of nothing but sand, our four Sliders dwarfed by the sheer expanse of desert nothingness around them in every direction. A merciless sun pounds down on them. Three days, eh? The Professor says, I would humbly suggest we make water our first priority.

Quinn: And some clothes.