

SLIDERS: The Lost Episode: Blood and Splendor

by Tracy Torme, Jeof Vita and Jeff Somers

We open in *Moleman World* where we find our Sliders underground in a vast cavern shaped into a city, being chased by grotesque humanoids showing all the signs of having evolved underground: pale almost translucent skin, large, bulging, slit eyes, frail but nimble bodies (think *Gollum* from *The Lord of the Rings*). The gate is imminent, and as they run they count down: 3, 2, 1....and just as the gate is scheduled to appear Quinn (in the lead) stops short at the edge of an immense pit, so deep the bottom cannot be seen. It is simply a pit of pitch black. The other three barely stop in time as well. "Where is the gate?" Wade asks nervously, noting the pursuing *Mole-men*. "Down there." Arturo points out gravely. The gate hovers several feet out from the edge and below them, in the pit itself! "We'll have to jump for it!" Quinn shouts. One by one the Sliders screw up their courage and make a leap of faith, each of them successfully hitting the mark, first Arturo, then Rembrandt, then Wade, then Quinn.

INTO the tunnel: they enter the now-familiar slider tunnel between dimensions. But something is wrong. Suddenly a "Tunnel-Dweller" seems to grow right out of the quantum energy itself, a snake-like creature with a huge, gaping maw (such as the creatures in *Tremors* or *Dune*). It encircles Wade with lightning-quick dexterity. She struggles, but it is far too strong. Quinn, directly "behind" her, quickly assumes the "parachute diving position" pulling his arms close to his body and pointing his head directly at Wade, causing himself to accelerate through the quantum field. He strikes the "Tunnel-Dweller" head-on, knocking Wade loose from it. The Sliders then proceed to escape the tunnel without further incident.

CUT TO Montezuma IV, Emperor of the Aztec Empire which has conquered North America in 1996, meditating in a drug induced state on his royal preserve. He is guarded by a pair of ceremonial "Eagle Knights" (see page 123 in book). By reciting ancient Aztec poetry, he implores his God, Huitzilopochtli, to send a sign of his will. "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!" In his trance/stupor he sees Huitzilopochtli appear to him. The God speaks, promising to make him the greatest emperor of them all: "We shall conquer all the people in the universe. I will make you lords and kings of everyplace in the world!" I will send you the tools you will need to accomplish this, The God continues, and then fades.

IMMEDIATELY our Sliders fall literally from the sky, shocking Montezuma back to reality. While Rembrandt falls into a nearby tree and is thus unobserved, Quinn, Wade and Arturo land almost directly before the Emperor, who immediately assumes these are messengers from Huitzilopochtli. The Eagle Knights, bearing only ceremonial weapons (spear, sword, etc) advance on the trio threateningly, causing the Sliders to not indicate Rembrandt's presence due to caution. Montezuma quickly calls his guards off, explaining in his native tongue that they are servants of Huitzilopochtli. Quinn, Wade, and the Professor relax enough to speak to each other; Quinn asks if Wade is okay, Arturo asks when the next slide is due. "About 23 hours, around sunrise, we go to the next world." Quinn replies, studying the timer. Montezuma has taken a keen interest in this exchange. Noticing the look of shrewd interest on his face, Wade asks if they should be talking like this in front of Montezuma. Arturo replies that he is obviously a primitive, and this obviously an earth where society never advanced past the early stages of technology.

Grinning, Montezuma pulls a cellular phone from his robes, flicks it open, and dials. "Captain, please have my guards attend to me immediately, and inform the palace that I will be arriving presently." In perfect english, he goes on to explain to them that they have been sent by Huitzilopochtli to aid him. He demands an explanation of the Timer, and their references to "other worlds". When the Sliders balk, Montezuma gestures to one of the Eagle Knights, who steps up and puts a knife to Quinn's throat. Arturo steps forward and explains the basics of Sliding.

"You have been sent by Huitzilopochtli to lead me on to greater and greater conquests!" Montezuma exults. "Not only of this world, but of many worlds!"

The Sliders respond negatively, saying they cannot and will not help in that endeavor. Montezuma's guards have arrived and have bound the trio, and the Emperor gestures at Quinn. "You obviously know how to operate this technology, but you dare to challenge the will of Huitzilopochtli. You will be tomorrow's dawn sacrifice to the Great God." He looks at Arturo. "Unless, of course, you choose to fulfill my destiny, as ordained." Quinn is led away to the Temple by several guards. Arturo, seeing no better alternative, agrees, whispering to Wade "We *must* buy time!" They are led away by the guards, with Montezuma calling for his retainers to prepare for the return trip to the Palace.

REMBRANDT sees and hears all this from his hiding spot in the tree. Unsure of what to do, he sees the city *New Tenochtitlan* (it is a mixture of modern technology and Aztec architecture, see picture on pages 12-13 in book) in the near distance and decides that that must be where they are headed. He quickly loses sight of them.

ON the way to the Palace, the Emperor's party is ambushed by a group of Aztec Rebels, people who abhor the ritual of human sacrifice, resurrected by

Montezuma, and the Emperors other tyrannies and atrocities. Fearing assassination, Montezuma's guards whisk him away to safety despite his protests. The Rebels, by Itzcoatl, recognize Wade and Arturo as whites headed for sacrifice, and rescue them from the guards, riding off into the countryside to a local reservation, where whites are forced to live separate from Aztec society. Itzcoatl explains there that While he abhors human sacrifice and Montezuma's other cruelties, he does not like whites, "My good man!" Arturo blusters, "You can't be serious!" Itzcoatl replies: "I have to save you, but I do not have to like you, or your people." He explains that before the Aztec invasion, whites had decimated the north american indian tribes and enslaved the black man, but that the Aztecs had slaughtered most of the whites in America, leaving a remnant to live as symbolic prisoners of war on reservations, now used for the ritual sacrifices Montezuma had brought back. Wade wonders what might have happened to Rembrandt...

MEANWHILE back in the city, Rembrandt, while walking around searching from something resembling The Dominion Hotel, is attracted to a commotion near the center of the city. He wonders why, despite the fact that there is almost no multi-cultural division in the city no one remarks on his presence. Finding himself face to face with *El Templo Mayor*, the Great Temple, Rembrandt witnesses the midday sacrifice. Seeing a white man being dragged up the temple steps, he at first assumes it might be Quinn and rushes forward. It is not Quinn, but it is no less horrible: at the terrifying sound of shrine drums, accompanied by the blare of conches, horns and trumpet-like instruments, Rembrandt sees the man have plumes placed on his head and be forced to dance before the idol of Huitzilopochtli. He is then placed upon narrow stones and with stone knives the priests slice him open and draw out his still beating heart, offering it to the idols there. They then kick the body down the steps and butchers waiting below cut off the arms and feet and flay the skin off the face. As Rembrandt turns away in horror, he notes that the crowd is also repulsed by this ceremony, and some seem to be angered by the display.

He is suddenly accosted by another black man. "Are you in town to hunt, or to sell?" he asks Rembrandt. Confused, Rembrandt doesn't know how to reply. The Slaver goes on: "I made a pretty penny off of that Cracker. Best thing to ever happen to us was Monty taking the throne and bringing back that nasty shit."

The Slaver offers to buy Rembrandt a drink. At the local bar Rembrandt pieces together bits of history and realizes that most blacks in the Aztec empire are slave traders cum bounty hunters. His new acquaintance tells him about a huge bounty out for two escaped whites, and from the description Rembrandt recognizes Wade and Arturo. He is nudged from behind by an agent of rebels. "Your friends are safe," the Aztec Whispers. "I will take you to them."

IN THE PALACE Laboratories, Montezuma urges his scientists to solve the riddle of the Timer, which lays in pieces on a workbench. He threatens and cajoles them, leading their supervisor to the terrace. "When you have completed this great work," Montezuma says, gesturing at a huge garrison of armed men in traditionally styled body armor bearing contemporary weapons (uzis, shotguns, etc), "I will lead armies the size of which no man has ever seen into untold glory other dimensions, as Huitzilopochtli has predicted for me!"

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BACK at the reservation, Rembrandt is reunited with Arturo and Wade. They meet with Itzcoatl, and the pieces of this alternate history are fitted together. Itzcoatl comments that Montezuma is an old, old man filled with tradition, but tradition that he has perverted to his own ends. "I have been biding my time, waiting for the proper moment for this movement to strike. But now he is speaking with gods! He is mad! I have waited too long, the time to act is now!" He says he will rescue Quinn to stop the sacrifices immediately. Arturo persuades him that regaining the Timer is necessary as well, since with it Montezuma would be "more powerful than you could imagine."

BACK at the Temple, Montezuma has Quinn chained in a cell. He tells him he has one last chance to do Huitzilopochtli's bidding and cooperate, otherwise he will be sacrificed at dawn, and once the ceremony is begun, it cannot be stopped. Quinn, of course, refuses.

AT THE Palace, a shadowy figure leads Wade and Arturo, chained as slaves, to the palace gate. "I am here to collect a bounty." A guard disappears into the Palace and we see that it is Rembrandt, posing as a slaver, along with several Revolutionary Aztecs posing as his guides. Montezuma himself emerges, beaming, from the Palace. "Excellent! You will be my guest tonight, slaver, and tomorrow after the ritual, you will have your reward!" Wade and Arturo are taken away to cells, and Rembrandt and his "guides" are led to a suite of rooms.

Late that night, Rembrandt and the Rebels overcome the prison guards and free Arturo and Wade. They locate the lab, and are shocked to discover that the Timer has been disassembled! "Can you fix it?" Wade asks nervously as Arturo gathers up the parts. "Silly girl! I taught that young pup everything he knows, I think I can manage to repair this!" They start off, but the Professor stops them. "We must destroy this lab and its contents. If any notes or research of the Timer survive, Montezuma might at some future time replicate it." They set fire to the lab and flee into the night. "Only three hours until the slide!" Arturo shouts as they run. "Well, fix it, my dear Professor, fix it!" Wade snaps back.

AT THE reservation, Arturo works feverishly to repair the Timer while the Rebels organize riots in the city to protest the practice of human sacrifice and an

all-out assault on the temple to rescue Quinn and overthrow Montezuma. The Professor discovers to his horror that the power pack to the timer is missing. "It must have been destroyed in the fire," Wade gasps. "Then we are doomed to this world," Arturo says heavily, envisioning a life constantly fearing sacrifice. "We still must rescue Quinn!" Wade demands, and off they go with the Rebels to Temple, where Montezuma prepares Quinn to be killed.

TEMPLE: Quinn Mallory, dressed in traditional sacrificial garb (loin cloth, light gold jewelry, headdress, etc.), is led to the stone slab where the ritual is performed. There he is forced to dance as eunuchs taunt him with lit torches and Montezuma's crazed laugh fills the dawn. Quinn suddenly notices the power pack hung by a cord around Montezuma's neck. The Emperor laughs. "I kept this obviously essential part to protect myself from my own scientists, but now that your friends have stolen the device back, I am doubly glad I did so. They are forced to deal with ME!"

Throughout the city of New Tenochtitlan riots are being stirred up by the rebels, protesting the sacrifice. The attacking force bursts onto the Temple grounds just as Quinn is lowered to the slab and held there by burly eunuchs, and Montezuma raises the knife up. The Eagle Knights rush forward and open fire on the rebels to suppress them. A full-scale battle begins, with Arturo, Wade, and Rembrandt trying to fight their way up the Temple stairs to rescue Quinn. Quinn sees them, and when a good shot by Itzcoatl hits one of the eunuchs, Quinn manages to push Montezuma off balance and tear the power pack from around his neck. Yelling out to Wade, he tosses it, and with a daredevil dive she manages to snatch it from the air before it is lost to gravity. She hands it to Arturo. "Is this what you've been looking for, Professor?" With a click and a snap the Timer comes to life, and the gate appears beneath the tar, sucking Quinn unexpectedly into it. As the remaining Sliders run to the gate, Rembrandt shoots a look back at Itzcoatl, who is staring in awe at them while holding Montezuma hostage. Gaining his composure, Itzcoatl nods silently at Rembrandt as if to say "Thank you. And good luck."

IN' THE TUNNEL again, the forgotten "Tunnel-Dwellers" are suddenly back in force. All of the sliders find themselves fighting for their lives against the eerie worms. Arturo shouts from his own melee "We have been en route much longer than usual! I believe the tunnel is shrinking!" The tunnel is indeed atrophying, and they realize their time is short. Using the weapons they retained from the assault on the temple, they break free and slip through the exit of the tunnel just in time.....

.....into DESERT WORLD. This world is hot and dry, with sand as far as the eye can see. After a soft landing, our Sliders take stock and in a long shot they see nothing but sand. The quartet discuss the confrontation with the tunnel-

snakes and then turn their attention to their temporary home. (Small balloon, small letters: "How long are we here for, my dear Mallory?" Quinn replies: "Um.....a little over seven days." Wade: "What should we do?" Rembrandt shakes his head and says "I guess wed better find us some water.")

THE END..... for now.

WE'VE made a lot of minor
changes since this version.