

August 20

From: Dial
To: Da Boyz

"Oh Brother, Where Art Thou?"

Being a Free-Form Effort to work out the story of Abel Allgood.

TEASER:

The sliders drop out of the vortex into a beautiful meadow. Rustic splendor. As they walk along, looking for a road, they talk about where they've been, etc.

Quinn: I still don't understand why you married the guy?
Maggie: Couldn't think of a way out. I knew we were going to slide in a few hours, and, besides, he was cute and had a lot of money.

Timer says they're here for a week.

Suddenly they see a strange sight. Over the top of a nearby hill comes a man, flying. We might automatically assume it's a hang glider, and we're in some contemporary parallel world. But, as the glider comes closer we see it's not made of contemporary aluminum and nylon material. It's all thin wooden struts and canvas -- a Victorian version of a hang glider. The pilot hits an updraft and soars over the sliders, then swoops back again. He's having some trouble controlling his direction, and, when he's within about 20 feet of the ground, the wings suddenly flip upside down and the pilot crashes into the bushes.

The sliders run over to help him out. Turns out to be a guy about Quinn's age, and he's all tangled up in the cables and canvas, but he's not hurt. When they get him free of the wreckage and he and Quinn are facing each other, we notice that they look an awful lot alike. Maggie notices it first and wonders -- sotto to Remmy -- if this might be Quinn's alternate on this world. The man introduces himself as ABEL ALLGOOD, and he's mighty grateful for their help. He speaks in a flowery, more formal English devoid of slang or contractions, and we notice he's wearing a home-spun shirt, dark trousers and high-topped black shoes -- looks like he stepped out of a 19th century photo of a farmer. Closer inspection shows he's not Quinn's twin, but could be a relative.

As Abel explains his flying machine, Quinn studies him closely, listening carefully to the voice and inflection. After a moment he turns to the others and says: "I think this guy is my brother."

The sliders help Abel take his wrecked glider back to his house -- he's a tinker/blacksmith and lives in a single room behind his shop/lab.

The sliders are amazed at the village -- thatched roofs, some log cabins, dirt streets, wooden sidewalks. No telephone or telegraph wires. No electricity. No cars. We are in 19th century America. Horses tied up at hitching posts, buggies and buckboard wagons.

As the sliders head up the street with Abel they draw quite a bit of attention from the townspeople -- including a stern looking woman we'll call MOTHER ALLEN. We hear some comments from these folks about Abel and his insane "human kite," and about the strange clothing the newcomers are wearing. "All we need is three more maniacs." We may notice that the women in this town are all pretty much the bosses -- men seem reticent to the point of sheepishness.

At Abel's place. He shows us that repairing things is his trade, but inventing is his profession. Among the 19th century tools -- forge, anvil, black iron hammers and tongs of all shapes and sizes -- we see a number of Abel's "inventions." They are elaborate, bulky, Rube Goldberg things that may look a little familiar, if outsized: a printing press, some kind of typesetter with foot pedals and a complex arrangement of levers and cables, numerous little, undentifiable gizmos and gadgets scattered around the tabletop, spring wound thingees, pendulums, compasses, a whole section devoted to primitive electric experiments.

Abel explains to our folks that he sometimes gets in trouble with the powers that be in this community. They're a very conservative and provincial bunch that distrust progress and experimentation. "I mean it's 1997. We've got steam power and running water, and if I could figure a way to contain it, I might be able use electricity for...for...I don't know, heat. We're coming up on the millenium, and anything's possible. Someday, I predict, man will be able to ride in machines without horses."

Quinn wants to find out whatever he can about Abel's background. Abel says, "I heard what you said back there about me being your brother. I thought you were just being friendly, and I was raised to believe all men are my brothers."

Well, Quinn wants to know, just how were you raised and where? Abel tells him all he knows: he was raised by George and Melissa Allgood who, when he was old enough, told him he was adopted. He doesn't know who his birth parents were, and is not much interested. The Allgoods were kind people, and he loved them. They died in a flu epidemic some years ago. "I don't know anything about medicine," Abel says, "But there ought to be some way to prevent disease. As it is, we just wait until people get sick, then put leeches on them."

How would 3
Cromaggs lead him here?
maybe
coordinates
in micro-
dot, etc.
Nah.

Quinn has just about convinced himself that Abel is his brother -- resemblance, similar interests -- though Abel is stuck with 19th century science, he has the same curiosity and drive for knowledge that Quinn has. And the back story, being adopted, is the clincher. Maggie and Remmy are skeptical. What are the odds of finding his brother in all the variant worlds they've been to?

Quinn can't really "prove" Abel is his brother, but he decides to hang with him anyway for the week they're in this world, get to know him and his work, and maybe he can give him a point in the right direction with some of his inventions.

Maggie and Remmy have to figure a way to blend in and not attract too much attention from the locals during the week -- or is it already too late for that?

We learn, either from Abel, or from the townspeople, that the United States in this world, has been purposely turned away from science and invention. In the thirties and forties there were great wars between the US and European and Asian countries. Weapons development got out of control, and the end result was what is now called "Cataclysm in the Desert." In 1945 a weapon of terrible force was tested in the desert of New Mexico. It caused some kind of "chain reaction" that caused the destruction of the entire state and a good deal of the surrounding Arizona, Colorado and Texas. Millions of people died, and continue to die from some kind of contaminated cloud that hung around the west for twenty years after the event.

weird

The American government was overthrown by a feminist movement -- men had really screwed everything up, time for the women to take over. America is now a matriarchy, and men have been relegated to the position women were in during our own 19th century -- few rights, can't vote, etc. The women in charge have done away with the military/industrial complex and returned society to the primitive state we find it in here. Maybe they don't have modern conveniences, the argument goes, but they have peace and a solid value system that allows them to raise their children the right way.

I think that Quinn and Abel get to work on some of Abel's stuff, that Maggie can contribute her flying experience to refining the "human kite." Don't know what Remmy gets into at this point -- is he the only black around? Is there still slavery? If so, maybe we do a kind of "Skin Game" thing in which Remmy has to pretend to be Abel's servant -- "bought him over in Barstow" -- Is this a worm can? California never had slavery anyway.

12
Jerk
this
Remmy
invents
electric
stuff

Where we're going: as these newcomers in their strange clothes continue to help Abel, the town weirdo, the townspeople get more and more suspicious and actively upset -- maybe Quinn is helping with electrical experiments that send lightning bolts into the sky or something. Mother Allen, the local matriarch,

gets on the case, warning everyone that Abel and the newcomers are doing dangerous things.

or not accidental; something really happens,

Maybe some kind of co-incidental natural occurrence -- earthquake, flood, fire, etc. -- is attributed to Abel's latest experiment. Or maybe the electric machine actually causes a fire that threatens the town.

Mother Allen invokes the law against this kind of research and Abel and the sliders are arrested. (Yikes, another prison show?)

sentenced to death

If we go this way - a trial scene might be good. Sort of "Inherit the Wind" stuff with Quinn and Abel defending the peaceful benefits of healthy curiosity and scientific research, and Mother Allen pleading the Luddite cause. "This is the sort of curiosity that led to millions of deaths in the desert."

by lightning storm -

Anyway, they're sentenced to death and are about to be burned at the stake -- At the last minute the vortex opens, freaks out the locals, and the sliders take Abel with them.

*↓
storms happen due to weather blown out of wack*

They land in a modern day version of L. A. But Abel's home made britches have been burned by the fire or ripped up in the vortex or something. We have to buy him some new pants. He is dazzled by the display of pants in a golf shop -- decides on some tangerine slacks, and is blown away by the zipper, which he's never seen -- "Look at this," he goes from rack to rack discovering that "All of these britches have them! How do they do that?!"

There is the beginning shape of a story here, and some fun beats, but we need to hammer this out. Crucial turns involve how does Quinn really convince himself that Abel is his brother? Does Abel believe it? Does Quinn find a way to project the dot that was implanted in his mother? Maybe information there can connect with something Abel remembers, or some data he has had stored somewhere -- a locked cabinet or sealed envelope he was told not to open unless an unexplained stranger came into his life someday claiming to be a brother???