

SLIDERS

EPISODE THREE

THEME: Law and order are worthy and attractive goals, but the true extent of their value depends on what it costs to achieve them.

THE STORY:

We open with the Sliders eager to leave a harsh, violent, refuse strewn world. Armed thugs patrol the streets in pickup trucks -- it's Somalia meets Mad Max. With only moments left before we slide, Quinn impulsively steps in to rescue a beautiful young woman from being brutalized by a big creep who continually refers to himself as "El Sid." The trouble is, El Sid is not about to let her get away that easily. Quinn has no choice but to hurl the woman into the wormhole to safety. Unfortunately, El Sid jumps in after us.

We arrive in a new world on the same street, in the same spot as the one we left -- but there the similarity ends. People here seem prosperous, orderly, and unfailingly polite - - "Good morning, how are you today?" is the requisite greeting. It's like an American Switzerland, bright, shiny and clean. There are no cars, only electrically powered vehicles -- golf carts and jitneys with cheery red and white striped canvas roofs.

Our old friend Pavel (the cab driver from many previous worlds) drives a jitney on this world, but as we arrive he's on a break, playing chess for money with one of the other jitney drivers. He's losing badly as the gate opens and the Sliders tumble out onto his opponent and the chess board -- obliterating the game. Pavel quickly calls the game a "draw," grabs his half of the money and turns to greet us enthusiastically. In seeming gratitude, he piles us into his Jitney and takes us to what he calls "our new home." The Sliders are only slightly less mystified by his largess than El Sid and his woman (Michele).

Arturo tries to impress upon El Sid that he is now on a new world, upon which his old behavior patterns are unnecessary and inappropriate -- but El Sid makes it clear he's not seeking self improvement. He has a gun and an attitude. The Sliders huddle and argue, if they get a chance to slip away from this guy, is it moral to do so? How can we loose El Sid on a peaceful and unsuspecting society. We brought him here, we have to deal with him. On the other hand, how much personal danger are we willing to risk in order to protect a world we'll soon be leaving? And finally, what do we do with Michele?

Pavel returns with our neighbor and landlord, who does the full "welcome wagon" number, complete with home baked brownies. Then, he interrupts his "welcome" speech to open the window, pull out a gun and shoot a woman passing by in the street. Act one ends as he turns back to us and smiles pleasantly, "Now where were we?"

The landlord explains that he's in the neighborhood watch program and the deceased woman had been seen violating the curfew. Pavel elaborates that San Francisco has perhaps the lowest crime rate in the world because crime of any sort is simply not tolerated. Whatever criminal activity *does* occur is dealt with swiftly and efficiently. The Sliders hope that this cautionary message will have a restraining effect on El Sid -- but instead he sees challenge and potential opportunity.

Wade gets to know Michele and tries to understand why she allows herself to be treated so horribly. Michele asserts it's all she's ever known, all any of her friends have ever known. The idea that there is any other way to be treated is utterly foreign to her. All the men on her world are, by nature, violent -- or they don't survive. Women have little choice but to go along with it. Michele has a dangerous attraction to Quinn -- her knight in shining armor -- who's given her a first taste of gallantry.

Meanwhile, Sid steals away. Rembrandt discovers that he's missing. The Sliders realize this can only mean one thing, and it's not good. They rush out to find him, fanning out in different directions.

While the Sliders are out, Pavel and the landlord use the opportunity to go through their belongings, trying to find out more about how they could just appear out of nowhere as they did. Pavel is certain that they can utilize this knowledge to "bust out of here!"

Quinn finds Sid. Unfortunately, he's in the middle of committing a robbery. Quinn interrupts and succeeds in saving the victims lives and money, but the neighborhood watch is alerted in the process -- and they think Quinn is as guilty as Sid. As act two ends, Quinn and Sid barely escape the scene. Now we are criminals, we're in real trouble.

The Sliders spend act three on the lam, working their way to the city limits, hoping to get out of San Francisco before they're caught and/or killed. The best news is that there's not too long to go before we slide. The bad news is that it looks like El Sid will be coming with us again. We are appalled as he starts referring to us as "his gang." We finally reach the city limits, only to discover a razor wire fence, guard towers and surveillance cameras. We are quickly surrounded by a swarm of guards. Trapped.

Act three ends as we learn that San Francisco is a "prison community." We do not have the appropriate (surgically implanted) identification, so we are taken to an interrogation area for questioning. El Sid rats us out in exchange for his own safety and some "privileges" in the city.

In act four, we have to escape the guards, avoid Sid, deal with Pavel and the landlord (who have followed us thinking we're their ticket to freedom), rescue Michele (again), reclaim our timer and slide off to new adventures -- all against the ticking clock of the timer winding down to zero.

Michele will come with us for awhile, ultimately blossoming from a victim into a strong, independent woman who may just break Quinn's heart when she stays behind on the world of her choosing.