

BUSINESS AS USUAL

by
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THEME: The old Code of The West might expedite modern business transactions, but corporate gunslinging should remain a metaphor.

THE STORY:

In the Teaser, The Sliders arrive in a deceptively modern, commerce-oriented, yuppie looking world. A parade of three piece suits passes by our tired and hungry heroes, and an important anachronism goes almost unnoticed: Everyone here has on cowboy boots.

Entering what seems like a normal restaurant, the place's saloon-like atmosphere takes The Sliders by surprise. A drunken bully named Dalton is harassing the bartender, and before The Sliders can leave, he makes a crude pass at Wade. Quinn steps between them, and Dalton takes this as a challenge. Everyone except the bartender, and a beautiful woman named Priscilla, dive under tables. We see why as Dalton pulls his Brooks Brothers jacket over his hip, showing a holstered six-shooter. Quinn raises his arms...he's unarmed. The bartender throws him a pistol, and Quinn catches it reflexively. Dalton draws, shots ring out, and Quinn seems to have gunned down his attacker. Quinn: "Oh my God...I've killed a man."

At the beginning of Act One, Quinn is still stunned. He just stares in disbelief as people slap him on the back, offer him free drinks, and toast him. Despite the crowd's reaction, and the fact that it was self defense, The Sliders are worried. They want to get out of there quick, but as they head toward the door, a Sheriff enters.

The Sliders are separated when Quinn is taken into custody, and the others check into the Motel 12, next door to the restaurant. At the precinct, in the middle of Quinn's interrogation, an important looking man named Hank tells the Sheriff "Mr. Lerner" wants to see this new guy. The Sheriff okays it, and a nervous Quinn wants to know who's Mr. Lerner? Sheriff: "He's the boss of the man you just shot." Quinn can't believe it..."And you're going to just let this guy take me to him?" Yes sir.

So Quinn ends up in a big corporate building, fearing the worst. Things take a decidedly different turn, however, when

Mr. Lerner turns out to be an extremely charismatic man, who welcomes Quinn with open arms. He courts Quinn, in fact, recruiting him like some high school star athlete, visiting a big university. To top it off, Lerner tells Hank and the boys to take Quinn out on the town. But as they head outside, they're met by an angry young hot-head, who's heard about Quinn and wants to prove he's "a better man for the job." Suddenly, the guy draws on Quinn. Quinn doesn't react, but as the First Act ends, Hank and his cohorts, save him by ventilating the hot-head.

Hank explains to Quinn that the guy who tried to kill him, was a Harvard MBA who had just been turned down by the corporation. He graduated top of his class, but Lerner believes more in life experience.

Back at the Motel 12, the other Sliders have gotten to know Priscilla and her son Jamie. Priscilla is the widow of Gomez Calhoun, and she runs the place now. She and Matt Saunders, the bartender/owner of the restaurant next door are the leaders of a Small Business Association which opposes Lerner (who's trying to buy them all out). But Priscilla has spent every last cent on hiring the one man who can save them: Billy The Kid. It's a big secret, but Priscilla warns Quinn, telling him she knows he's not a killer. Since her boy Jamie idolizes Quinn, she doesn't want to see him hurt. Quinn doesn't believe what she says about Lerner. He returns to the corporate building, where he asks a colleague about their boss. He gives Quinn the company line, but not convincingly.

Quinn heads back to the restaurant. Now, he sees Priscilla is outside crying. She looks at Quinn with disdain. Priscilla: "Just look inside if you want to see how your boss really does business." Quinn opens the door. We see the shadow of the bartender swinging on a rope.

Act Three begins with Quinn telling Lerner he's quitting. Lerner is furious, but when it's leaked on a CNN Business Newscast that Billy The Kid has been hired by the Small Business Association, he realizes he has a bigger problem. Lerner turns to Hank, who says he has a plan.

The SBA worries that since Lerner knows, he might make his move before The Kid gets into town. Jamie insists that Quinn can protect them. Priscilla doesn't like it, but the others ask Quinn if he'll stay. Quinn agrees, so Lerner will be kept at bay. Quinn is even a bigger hero to Jamie now, but when Priscilla sees them together, she yanks the boy away. Quinn wants to know why, and Priscilla tells him..."You're

not the man Jamie thinks you are. You didn't kill Dalton...I did." Quinn is shocked, but it all makes sense to him now.

The next day, Billy The Kid steps off of a train...Bill the Kid Gates, wearing a cowboy hat. Everyone cheers, but Gates reveals that in a late night telephone negotiation, he has agreed to take a seat on Lerner's board instead. Priscilla is furious: Gates has been bought. Worse, Lerner and Gates demand an immediate negotiation for the wholesale takeover of the saloon, the motel, everything on the block. They expect to see Quinn, acting as negotiator, at High Noon.

Quinn would be crazy to face Gates, so The Sliders have to get out of town. But when Quinn goes to say good-bye to Jamie, Priscilla is ashen-faced: the boy has been kidnapped by Lerner's men, and if Quinn doesn't show at the negotiation, she'll never see him again.

In the opening of Act Four, The Sliders try to talk Quinn out of going. It's certain death, but Quinn has no choice.

On opposite ends of a long street, Quinn and Gates begin the long, dramatic walk toward each other. Quinn is steeling himself against the inevitable, and the crowd along both sidewalks is silent with morbid anticipation. Quinn deliberately unbuckles his holster, letting it fall to the ground. Gates doesn't know what to do, as Quinn continues toward him with his hands raised. Off to the side Hank registers this unanticipated move. He immediately sends one of his men to fetch Lerner.

Quinn stops ten paces away from Gates, and dares him to shoot an unarmed man. Gates looks at Hank...what's this guy trying to pull? Hank: "Shoot him!" Gates can't do it. A short-lived moment of triumph is shattered when Wade screams a warning, "Quinn!" He turns to see Hank draw his gun... but Priscilla wheels, fires and drills him through the arm.

Lerner bursts from the building, ordering his cohorts to shoot them all... only to suddenly realize that Rembrandt, loitering in disguise, has a gun in his ear. Lerner has no choice, but to tell his men to drop their guns.

In the ensuing celebration, Hank rises, draws a derringer with his uninjured arm and, on the verge of shooting Priscilla in the back. Except it's Arturo this time, who knocks his arm, causing the gun to fire harmlessly into the ground.

Begging for his life, Hank pins the blame on Lerner. The Sheriff finally finds some spine: "It appears this will be a matter for the circuit court judge to adjudicate." At that moment, the cry of "Mom!" is heard, and Jamie comes running down the street into his mother's arms. He knew Quinn would come to save him.

Our heroes slide, and as they go through the worm hole we hear Jamie calling out with historical resonance..."Quinn... Come back, Quinn."