

SLIDERS"GROUND HOG DAY WORLD"

THEME: On a world where the Bill of Rights has been suspended, the Sliders realize that the ideals of justice and democracy can only be achieved through acts of great personal courage.

THE STORY:

We open with Arturo and Rembrandt in a bar, talking. Arturo is gloomy, weary of sliding. Expresses some jealousy of Quinn. Rembrandt tries to cheer the other man up -- "We can't get down, we have to keep moving forward." Wade arrives, it's time to slide. As the Sliders exit, hold on the barmaid -- she has a beard.

As the Sliders walk, past rush hour foot traffic (mustachioed women, etc.) to the designated alley where Quinn is waiting with the timer, a (well-choreographed) sequence of events takes place. A mailman is opening a mailbox. A woman asks them for the time, apparently the bus is late. Then, suddenly, crash! a fender bender. The drivers exit their cars, enraged. Wade and the others watch, spellbound -- should they interfere? Quinn has activated the wormhole -- no time. Suddenly the driver of the first car turns his back, and the driver of the second car pulls out a gun and shoots him dead. Screams, panic -- the driver of the second car takes off. Wade rushes to Driver #1 and he hands her a laundry ticket and a computer diskette. He whispers the word "Effie" and dies.

Quinn is yelling, "Hurry -- we'll lose the wormhole." A crowd has gathered, an ambulance is coming, there's no more for Wade to do. Torn, wishing she could stay and help, she slides --

We arrive in a new world. Wade is shaken by what she's seen. As the Sliders take stock and emerge onto the street, we notice how closely this world resembles the last one. (The women don't have beards.) Some of the men appear to be wearing kilts, but otherwise it's parallel. Suddenly, eerily, the same (well-choreographed) sequence of events -- the same people we saw before: mailman, the woman waiting for her bus, which is just now arriving. The bank clock across the street says only a couple of minutes have passed. This can only mean one thing: Wade looks for the fender bender; sees the two cars have already collided down the block; the two men are arguing. The driver of the first car turns his back to walk away, as we saw before -- but this time Wade screams out "He's got a gun!" Driver #1 ducks, turns, fires a gun of his own. And on this world, thanks to Wade's intercession, Driver #2 is the one who's shot. Driver #1, spared through this miracle, hops into his car and patches away. Wade moves to Driver #2 and rolls him over -- an FBI badge. Off Wade's horror! -- END TEASER.

In Act One, the Sliders are cursorily questioned by police, who wears kilts. Where are we, Scotland? The Sliders are cooperative, but the cops don't figure they have much. (Wade holds back on the laundry ticket and diskette gleaned from World #1).

The Sliders check in to Motel 12. As they head to their rooms, the check-in guy drops a dime: "They're here."

The Sliders hole up in their room, arguing. "When will we learn? Don't get involved. Etc." Knock, knock -- they're visited by a man and a woman who threaten them: "Tell the police nothing if you know what's good for you."

This is enough for our Sliders, who immediately re-contact the police to rat out these hoods, who appear to be emissaries of the mafia for all we know. Their statements are taken -- they implicate the two hoods, the Motel 12 check-in guy, as well as provide critical details about Driver #1 (physical description, partial license plates, etc.) and they are offered protective custody. As the Sliders emerge into the police precinct bullpen, they see, across the room and very much to their shock -- the man and woman who just threatened them, wearing police uniforms! End Act One.

The Sliders hightail it out of there, it's like they've gone through the Looking Glass and as they return to Motel 12 to pick up their stuff so that they can hide out for the rest of the slide, they see the check-out guy being hustled toward a waiting squad car -- he's been arrested on their say-so as part of a larger conspiracy. But conspiracy against what? As he goes, he's shouting: "Justice for All! Judge Crater lives - !"

Back in the room, packing swiftly, Wade comes across the laundry ticket and diskette given her by Driver #1 on World #1 -- wonders "Should I have given the cops this?" "No!" says Quinn, "We're in enough trouble."

The Sliders take refuge in the park. Night is falling. A cop with a kilt and nightstick walks by, eyes them suspiciously. Why do the cops wear kilts? It seems to be as much a part of the uniform as a badge. As the Sliders hunker down for the night, Rembrandt finds a newspaper -- The San Francisco Chronicle, and there, beneath a photograph of the man we know as Driver #1, we read the caption "Judge Crater." The article fills in what we suspect already -- Judge Crater was an honest Judge who ruled against the FBI on an important case. An incorruptible, he became a champion to the men and women who had suffered when the FBI suspended Habeas Corpus and other Civil Liberties during the McCarthy era. Scheduled to testify before Congress, to provide testimony against the Bureau, Judge Crater mysteriously disappeared.

69-15

The Sliders realize they have given the cops information enough to hunt Judge Crater down (Driver #1 on Worlds #1 and #2) and kill him. We've got to get there before they do. End Act Two.

In Act Three, having debated the relative merits of doing nothing versus getting in deeper, we go to the laundry with the ticket from World #1. Wade asks for "Effie." The counterman looks at her blankly, no Effie here. But I'll get your laundry, and he returns with a kilt that's been dry cleaned.

Outside the laundry, they examine the kilt and read the tailor's name: Fred Evans. F.E.?

The Sliders enter the tailor shop, question F. Evans, who seems to know more about Judge Crater than he lets on. Just then they're interrupted -- the bells over the door tinkle. The Sliders hide, watch through the dressing room door as a man and a woman enter. The two cops who threatened them in Act One! Are they good cops? Bad cops? Who is who on this world? The cops and F. Evans whisper, the Sliders are exposed.

Turns out, they're good guys. The Sliders learn that on this world, J. Edgar Hoover's FBI went out of control -- (Hoover, a reputed cross-dresser, even instituted a dress code for his agents, hence the kilts or skirts). Judge Crater has been an advocate of civil rights, and thus a target of the FBI. (One could argue -- and Arturo might, that the Bill of Rights would be voted down in today's climate. Too radical, and too protective of criminals.) A silent majority of the cops on this world want to reinstate Constitutional protections -- to them, Crater is a hero. J. Edgar Hoover is dead, but his legacy lives on. Only an act of Congress can bring this world out of the darkness.

The Sliders are relieved -- Wade is happy. She saved the Judge's life, after all. Her instincts were right all along. Arturo's just happy they're off the hook. F. Evans (an ally of Judge Crater) tells the good cops where Judge Crater is in hiding. The Sliders exit onto the street, saying goodbye to this situation once and for all -- only to witness a police raid. The good cops have been tailed (the Sliders' reaction to them in Act One raised suspicions). The Sliders leap into the police car with the female cop -- her partner is captured -- and they manage to escape.

They reach Judge Crater's hideout just in time to see the good Judge in cuffs, being led away. They got there too late. End Act Three.

Arturo wants to give up here and now. Wade and Quinn are adamant -- a good man is in danger. Perhaps the future of the Bill of Rights. Arturo reasons if it wasn't for us, he'd already be dead,

so we're even. Quinn and Wade win out. Wade realizes the key to the puzzle -- the computer disk Driver #1 back on World #1 gave them.

The bad guys have the Judge. They want computer disk #1 which contains critical evidence (maybe the only known wording of the Bill of Rights itself). The Sliders, aided by the female cop, negotiate a settlement -- Judge Crater's life for the destruction of critical computer disk #1. The Judge at first refuses the deal -- he'd rather die than have this crucial document destroyed. But he has no choice.

The Judge is freed. Without the disk, he poses no threat. What the cops don't realize, and what Judge Crater is amazed to discover, is that Wade has an exact duplicate from World #1. The Sliders leave World #2 knowing that Judge Crater will be able to press his case in Washington and that hope is alive. (On World #2, although perhaps never again on World #1.)

The Sliders land on World #3. Arturo is more convinced than ever that the Sliders should avoid involvement in the future and at all costs. Wade hears a small kitten mewing at them -- he's stuck in a tree. Poor kitty, we've got to get him down. Arturo, Quinn and Rembrandt, in unison "Don't even think about it!" Off the kitten, Wade's going to do it anyway -- and as the other Sliders brace for the inevitable, if unforeseen consequences -- END OF ACT FOUR.