

SLIDERS: ALL FOR ONE (1 of 2)  
by Nigel G. Mitchell © July 1996

Author's Notes: The following story takes place sometime between "Rules of the Game" and the third season premiere, "Double Cross." It was inspired by the short, but deeply introspective and character-oriented Sliders fanfiction written by Diana Jones that changed my view of how SLFIC could be written. I'd also like to acknowledge that some technical elements mentioned in this story are entirely my invention with no basis on the show whatsoever.

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UPDATE 04/15/2012 – This version is an edited version from the original 1996 version. I've updated some references, and fixed some grammatical and spelling errors.

Quinn studied the timer on the table in front of him as droplets of rain pattered against the hotel window. He carefully wrote down the numbers flashing across the timer's display in a notebook, one already filled with calculations and formulae.

Quinn glanced around the hotel room at the other members of his group. They all seemed lost in their own worlds. Wade lay sprawled on her side on the couch, watching a TV that filled the room with the bang of a police gunfight. On the other side of the room, Arturo sat in a brown leather armchair while reading a copy of *Taming of the Shrew*. From the bathroom, Quinn could hear a rhythmic swish as Rembrandt brushed his teeth. It was quiet. Too quiet. Even before Rembrandt walked into the room, Quinn knew the fight was about to begin again.

Rembrandt hummed "Tears In My Pillow" around the green toothbrush in his mouth as he came out of the bathroom. He paused by the window to peer through the glass into the darkness outside. "Still rainin'?"

"What else would you expect, Mister Brown?" Arturo asked as he turned a page. "It's been raining for the last three days, non-stop. Forecast calls for rain for the next two days until we slide out. As I've explained more times than I would care to count--"

Rembrandt pulled the toothbrush out of his mouth and held up his palms. "Yeah, yeah. Meteorological anomaly in this world, temperature inversion over Los Angeles causing high precipitation, yada, yada, yada. I was just makin' conversation, professor."

Arturo lowered his eyes and settled back in his chair. "Well, next time, choose a slightly less annoying topic."

"Whatever." Rembrandt went back into the bathroom to spit, then went to the couch to stand by Wade's side. After a moment watching the sandy beach rolling by, he asked, "What's this?"

"*Baywatch*," Wade murmured as she popped a potato chip into her mouth.

Rembrandt pointed the toothbrush at the TV. "Haven't you already seen this one?"

Wade shrugged and dug some more potato chips out of the bowl on her lap. "Maybe it's different on this world. Besides, there's nothing else on."

Rembrandt waved at the TV with the toothbrush. "Well, turn to A&E. There's a special on the Spinnin' Topps comin' on."

Wade rolled her head back to glare up at him. "Hey, I was here first."

"But you just said you've already seen this one."

"So? You *lived* the Spinning Topps. Is there anything about it you don't know already?"

Rembrandt lowered his toothbrush as he shrugged. "Hey, I like to re-live the glory days, okay? Now, come on, switch it."

"I said, no." Wade settled her head back down to glare at the TV.

Quinn took his mind off the argument as he flipped through the pages in his notebook. He could see the same pattern repeating in his calculations. It would work.

Rembrandt snatched up the remote off the coffee table. As he hit the button to change the channel of the TV, Wade shot up onto her elbow to glare at him.

"Hey!" she yelled. "Gimme that!"

Arturo looked up at the two of them over the rim of his glasses, then shook his head. "You young people get so emotional—"

He narrowed his eyes at the toothbrush in Rembrandt's hand. "Mister Brown, is that my toothbrush you're holding?"

Rembrandt looked down at the brush in his left hand. "Uh, yeah."

Wade made a grab for the remote in Rembrandt's right hand. "I said, give it back!"

Arturo snapped his book closed with one hand while pulling off his glasses with the other. "Good lord, man. What the devil are you doing brushing your teeth with my toothbrush?"

"I lost mine in the last slide. Haven't had a chance to get a new one. Don't worry, professor, I'll wash it." Rembrandt raised the remote higher as Wade made another swipe for it. "Wade, you been hoggin' the TV for hours. I just wanna watch one show."

"I said, no!" Wade yelled. "I was here first!"

Quinn tightened his grip on his pencil as he tried to focus on his notes. He began working on some new formulae. The calculations made sense, but he needed to make sure.

Arturo set his book firmly down on a nearby table. "Wash my toothbrush? That's not the point, Mister Brown. Have you no decency? No respect for other people's property? Why didn't you ask me?"

Wade sat up on the couch so she could twist the remote out of Rembrandt's hand. When she had wrenched it free, she aimed the remote at the TV and jammed the button like she was trying to stab it.

"Hey!" Rembrandt yelled. "What's the idea, Wade?"

Wade settled back on her knees on the couch, then jammed a thumb into her chest. "I said, I was here first. Wait your turn."

She flopped back down onto the couch.

"Oh, come on." Rembrandt turned back to Arturo. "Professor, I did ask you, remember? I asked you last night."

"Yes," Arturo said, "when I was half-asleep. And if I recall, I said nothing. That meant 'no.'"

"I thought it meant 'yes.' And you wouldn't have been half-asleep if you haven't drunk all that wine." Rembrandt rounded back to face Wade. "So when's my turn, girl? Next Tuesday?"

Arturo rose up out of his chair and thrust up his chin to stand at his full height. "Mister Brown, are you insinuating something?"

"Your turn," Wade sneered, "is when I say it's your turn. And that'll be when pigs fly, thanks to that little stunt you pulled."

"Nice." Rembrandt walked backwards to the TV as he shot a glare at Arturo. "No, professor. I'm not insinuat' anything. Just sayin' you had a little too much to drink last night. And the night before that. And the night before that."

When Rembrandt reached the TV, he reached behind it, and yanked out the plug. He held up the end for Wade to see. "Fine. Nobody watches TV."

Wade scrambled off the couch to stand in front of Rembrandt. She glared up at him with eyes blazing, despite the height difference between them. "Plug that back in, right now."

Arturo thrust a finger over her shoulder at Rembrandt. "Mister Brown, I'll have you know that the only reason I have been indulging so much recently is that there is nothing else to do in this forsaken hotel. I am sick to death of this place. I am sick of sliding. And I am sick of you, Mister Brown, and your lowbrow idiosyncrasies."

"Well, I feel the same way, professor, but you don't see me drownin' my sorrows." Rembrandt shifted his glare down at Wade. "Girl, just back up and calm down."

Wade balled up one hand into a fist. "Remmy, I swear--"

Quinn wrote down one last number in his notebook. He felt a chill sweep over him as he read it. He looked up. "Guys?"

"You're gonna fight me over an episode o' *'Baywatch?'*" Rembrandt asked Wade.

"Guys," Quinn said.

"I am sick of all of you," Arturo roared.

"No," Wade yelled, "I'm gonna fight over you being a selfish jerk again. Now, plug it back in or I'll--"

"Guys!" Quinn yelled.

The others stopped, then turned to glare at Quinn.

"Oh, what is it, Mister Mallory?" Arturo asked. "Can't you see we're busy?"

Quinn stood up. "Sorry, guys, I hate to interrupt you killing each other, but I thought you'd like to know...I found a way home."

Wade lowered her fist. "What?"

Quinn held up his notebook, tapping frantically on a page. "Okay, you all know the guidance system's been erased, right? We don't know the coordinates to home, and that's why we can't get there. But I've been tracking the timer's tachyon emissions for the last fifteen slides. The emissions allow the timer to stay connected to our machine back home. It's a faint transmission, but I noticed that it fluctuates, getting weaker and stronger over time in a wavelength--"

"Get to the point, Mister Mallory," Arturo said.

Quinn slammed his book shut, letting it rest by his side. "Fine. Tonight, the emissions will be strong enough to get a fix on our world. It'll only be for a few seconds, but during that two seconds, I'll be able to open a bridge that'll lead straight to home."

"Home?" Wade whispered. "We're going home?"

Rembrandt clapped his hands and thrust them over his head. "Yes! I knew it! I knew you wouldn't let us down, Q-Ball! No more hotels, no more lousy food, no more runnin' from monsters."

"No more you," Arturo snarled. "I'll finally be able to go back home and forget this motley crew ever existed."

Rembrandt's smile faded as he fixed Arturo with a cold glare. "Yeah, well, the same here, pal. I didn't wanna get involved in this trip with you guys, anyway."

Wade rolled her eyes as she turned away from him. "Oh, brother. Have you said that enough times, Rembrandt? How many times do we have to say it was an accident?"

"Enough to get me home." Rembrandt strode towards Quinn, gesturing with the toothbrush. "Okay, Q-Ball, should we start packin' or what? I mean, how's this gonna work? When do we slide?"

Quinn swallowed. This was the part he had been dreading. "It'll, uh, be in about three minutes, guys. But there's one problem."

Arturo's eyebrows lowered as he took a step towards Quinn. "Problem? What problem?"

"The window to home will only last a couple of seconds," Quinn said. "That's not long enough for all of us to go. In fact, to tell the truth, only one of us will be able to go home."

The others stood silent a moment, just staring at Quinn. He could see the same thought turning in all their minds.

Rembrandt clapped his hands as he said with forced cheer, "Okay, so, who's it gonna be?"

Quinn let his eyes roam the others as he said, "That's the question, gang. Which one of us goes home?"

Wade looked from one to the next in the group. As the silence wore on, her breath quickened, until she blurted, "Oh, come on. It's obvious, isn't it?"

"Yes," Arturo said. "It does seem that way, doesn't it?"

Wade whipped her head around to glare at him. "I meant Quinn. You thought I was gonna say you, didn't you?"

Arturo thrust his chin up. "Certainly not. Of course, Quinn is the most obvious choice. When he returns, he can repair the sliding machine, and bring us all home."

Rembrandt pointed at Quinn as a smile spread across his face. "Hey, yeah, yeah, that's a great idea. You just slide home, then come get us, right? Then we all go home."

Quinn shoved his hands into his pockets. "It's, uh, it's not that simple, guys. What if I can't fix the sliding machine? Or what if I fix it, but I can't find you guys?"

Rembrandt's grin faded. "Well, we just keep slidin' by ourselves, huh? Bound to get home sometime."

Quinn lowered his eyes. "Yeah. Well, that's one idea."

Arturo ran his fingers over his beard. "I'm beginning to see Mister Mallory's point. It's been proven time and again that I do not have the technical expertise to run the timing device on my own. If it was damaged, as it has been before, then I would be unable to repair it. We would never return home."

Quinn nodded and raised his eyes again. "The professor's right. It can't be me who goes home. I have to be able to help whoever stays behind."

Wade folded her arms and hunched her shoulders. "Then...I guess it's between us three, huh, guys?"

Rembrandt looked at Wade. Then he looked at Arturo. Arturo shifted his eyes to Rembrandt, then down to Wade.

Rembrandt pointed at Arturo. "You knew it all along, didn't you, professor?"

"What?" Arturo asked.

"Wade was right," Rembrandt said. "You think you're the obvious choice."

Arturo's eyes narrowed. "Mister Brown, I--"

"And you're right," Rembrandt said. "Quinn's gotta stay behind to take care of us. But you're the only other one who has a shot o' fixin' the slidin' machine back home. So it's gotta be you who goes."

Wade closed her eyes. "He's - he's right. You go, professor. I'm sorry I got mad at you. I guess I wasn't thinking straight."

Arturo blinked, then lowered his eyes to the floor. "I'm...I'm honored, my friends, that you would...give me this chance. But I'm afraid I...can't go, either. As I said, I do not have the technical expertise to repair the timer. I certainly cannot hope to repair the sliding machine. Sending me home would be futile."

Arturo smiled and wrapped an arm around Quinn's neck in a playful hold. "Besides, I serve as a backup mind for Mister Mallory. Many's the time I have aided you in your work, eh, my boy?"

Quinn grinned. "Sure did, professor. I couldn't have built the sliding machine without your theories, and we couldn't have gotten this far without you."

Arturo laughed and clapped him on the back.

Wade and Rembrandt looked at each other.

Rembrandt held out his hands towards her. "I guess it's between you and me, sweetheart."

Wade dropped her eyes. "No, it's not, Remmy. You go. It's like you've always said. We chose to get into this mess. You didn't. If anybody deserves to go home, it should be you."

Arturo moved to Rembrandt's side and hooked his thumbs into his belt. "Miss Wells is correct. You truly are the innocent in this affair. Go, my friend. Go home, rebuild your career, and live a long, healthy life."

"Yeah," Quinn said, "and tell somebody about us, huh? Maybe you can get something going back home, bring some minds in on rescuing us."

Rembrandt held up his hands. "Now, wait a minute, guys. I...I know I talk big about wantin' to go home, but this slidin' stuff's been a blast. I mean, what've I got back home? No career. Been gone for over two years. Be surprised if my manager even speaks to me again."

"Oh, come on," Wade said. "It worked last time we thought we got home. Your career was bigger than ever."

"Yeah, because I was a slider. But without you guys, I got no proof o' where I been. What I've been doin'. I start tellin' people I was on another planet, they'll lock me up in the nuthouse."

Rembrandt shoved his hands in his pockets and lowered his eyes. "Nah, man. I'd rather stick with you guys. Who knows? Maybe we'll run into another world where I'm a superstar or find a new paradise. Or maybe we'll get home. There's nothin' home for me without you."

He raised his eyes to look at Wade. A roll of thunder swept through the skies over the hotel. "But you, you got everythin' back home. A job, a family, friends. And you can tell people about us, send in the cavalry. Wade, you should go."

Quinn watched her, feeling tightness grip his chest. He had been dreading the thought of any of them leaving the group, but Wade had been his most feared. He might never see her again. Yet if there was a chance of getting her out of this nightmare, Quinn couldn't be selfish enough to deny it to her.

Quinn looked down at the timer. He had reset it for the new window of opportunity, and it counted down from ten seconds. He tried to sound cheerful as he said, "Here we go, guys. Get ready, Wade."

Wade looked up at Rembrandt. Her eyes glistened, then a tear rolled down her cheek. Her face screwed up in a grimace until she threw herself into Rembrandt's arms.

"I can't go home," she sobbed. "I don't wanna leave you guys. I may never see you again. I'll miss you so much."

Rembrandt wrapped his arms around her and hugged her close. "I'd miss you, too."

"As would I." Arturo strode forward to join the group hug.

Quinn felt a rush of emotion, a mixture of sadness and relief. He moved into the hug, wrapping his arms around Wade and Arturo. They all savored the closeness of each other, bonded together physically and emotionally, as they had been since their sliding began.

Quinn's timer beeped. He broke the embrace to press the button. The transparent beam of energy lanced out to pierce the wall of the hotel room.

It expanded into a glowing blue vortex. All of them watched as it was suspended in the air for a brief, glorious moment. Quinn thought he could hear voices, the voices of his mother, his home, his life. He knew it was his imagination, but it seemed so real. From the looks on everyone's face, he knew they heard their own voices, too.

Quinn felt the urge to run. To jump into the wormhole. To go home, regardless of all they had discussed. But then he looked at the others. And knew that he couldn't leave them behind.

The wormhole's roar faded. The vortex collapsed into a point of light that faded away.

"So that's that," Rembrandt sighed.

"Maybe," Quinn said. "Another window could open again."

Arturo grinned, still holding the others. "And what then, eh? Another discussion ending in a ridiculous burst of emotions?"

He laughed. The others laughed with him, grateful for the relief of tension. Wade stepped away from the others, wiping off her face with her palms.

Arturo sighed. "No. I think we've learned something here."

"Yeah." Wade smiled up into the faces of the others, one by one. "If we're gonna go home, we're gonna go home together."

Rembrandt held up a fist. "And if we ain't goin' home, then we're gonna slide together."

Arturo held out a hand, palm down. "To the Four Musketeers."

Quinn smiled as he clapped his hand over the professor's. "One for all."

Wade slapped hers firmly down on his. "And all for one."

Rembrandt shook his head, still laughing, and rested his hand on Wade's. "Man, I never thought somethin' so corny would be so true."

They stood there for a moment, their hands together, smiling at each other.

Arturo broke the bond, drawing his hand away. He went back to his chair and picked up his book again. "Well, that was an interesting little adventure, wasn't it?"

Rembrandt sighed and looked down at the toothbrush still in his hand. "Yeah, makes you think. We ain't got it so bad, after all. At least we got each other."

Arturo peered down at his book as he murmured, "Yes, but you still owe me a new toothbrush, Mister Brown."

Wade pointed at Rembrandt. "Yeah, and I'm still watching *Baywatch*."

Then she grinned. "Later. Watch your show, Remmy. I'd like to see it, too. I don't know that much about your career."

Wade sat down on the couch, scooting over to give Rembrandt room. He sat down next to her, leaned back, and changed the channel. They began to watch a grainy black-and-white film of the Spinning Topps dancing on *The Ed Sullivan Show*.

Quinn sat down at his table with his notebook, turning the pages with all its recordings of the tachyon emission levels. The levels might rise to a suitable point again, their key to getting home. Quinn closed the notebook, knowing he would never bring it up again unless he could find a bigger window of opportunity. For all of them.

THE END