

QUINTESSENCE

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FADE IN:

EXT. SPACE

A star flickers and fades.

EXT. ALIEN LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

Two monsters, a WHITE SUPERGIANT and a BLUE SUPERGIANT trade blows.

They circle, flip and lash out, each hit unleashes a wave of energy that travels out into,

EXT. SPACE

Waves of energy radiate into the night.

EXT. ALIEN LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

The blue supergiant throws the white to the ground with a gruesome crunch.

EXT. SPACE

The star flickers and goes out with a massive energy wave.

INT. GYM - NIGHT

QUIQUE (late 30s), black belt, circles opposite CASEY, brown belt (20s).

Women in workout clothes group around to watch.

QUIQUE

(lectures)

You look at me and see muscles,  
power. The ability to overpower  
you.

She attacks! Fists and feet fly at him.

He parries, but only just.

KAPLAN (30s) arrives, leans in the doorway from the gym's lobby and watches.

QUIQUE

It doesn't matter how many muscles  
you have, we all have the same  
weaknesses.

Casey keeps the pressure on, Quique barely escapes.

He delivers several pointed counterstrikes, which she blocks.

QUIQUE

We all have a throat, eyes, elbows,  
knees, balls. So to speak.

She blocks his last attack, throws him to the mat.

Kaplan chuckles to himself.

Quique looks up at the group.

QUIQUE

See? With confidence and training,  
you can be a match for anyone.

He climbs to his feet.

Casey doesn't let her guard down.

EXT. SPACE

The energy wave reaches earth!

INT. GYM

A massive earthquake shakes the room.

QUIQUE

Under the doors!

The students shelter under the doorways as the room shakes, and they see Quique and Casey's fight replayed before their eyes in sped-up time.

The earthquake passes.

They all share a confused and fearful look.

QUIQUE

That's good for this week.

EXT. GYM - NIGHT

Students watch the news on a small TV in the gym lobby.

NEWSCASTER

The worst of a series in recent weeks. Scientists continue to disagree at global summits in cities all over the world, reaching no consensus on what is causing what they have dubbed "time-quakes," and what they portend--

Kaplan watches Quique pack his gym bag.

QUIQUE

If anybody needs a place to stay tonight, don't hesitate to call.

The students leave.

Kaplan starts to approach when Casey pulls Quique aside.

CASEY

Quique, there's no good way to say this, so I'll just kick it... I'm pregnant.

QUIQUE

What?

CASEY

You heard me.

QUIQUE

Aw, this is no... aren't you on  
the... you know?

CASEY

Yeah,

(mimes punch in the face)

I know. Me too. It's a freak thing,  
but there's always the possibility.

QUIQUE

This is a surprise.

(off her look)

Casey, I--

CASEY

Well, what do you want to do?

QUIQUE

Do I have to... can I think about  
it?

CASEY

I've been trying to tell you for  
weeks, but with all that's going on  
it's never a good time.

QUIQUE

I know, but--

Kaplan sees it's getting ugly.

KAPLAN

I don't mean to interrupt, but are  
you Quique Gutierrez?

QUIQUE

Yeah?

KAPLAN

My name's Kaplan. This is going to  
sound like a pitch, but have you  
ever felt like you had a destiny?  
A purpose in life you had to  
fulfill?

QUIQUE

Of course. I own a gym.

KAPLAN

Right, you didn't become a martial artist so you could own a gym. Haven't you ever felt you were meant for more than making a living getting beat up by women?

(to Casey)

No offense.

CASEY

Judgement reserved.

QUIQUE

Everyone thinks they're the center of the universe. I'm fine right where I am.

KAPLAN

Funny you should put it that way. How do you feel about tournaments?

QUIQUE

Ah la chingada, you're a recruiter.

KAPLAN

Kind of.

Quique heads for the back door.

QUIQUE

I gotta get outta here.

(to Casey)

We'll talk later.

(to Kaplan)

Do you run?

KAPLAN

Not if I can avoid it.

QUIQUE

Good.

He bolts out the back door.

CASEY

Damn it, every time.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Kaplan follows Quique down an alley and across a street.

Quique vaults a fence, and Kaplan does too.

KAPLAN

We're not through here.

QUIQUE

I can't hear you.

KAPLAN

Then slow down! I'm not whoever  
you think I am.

Quique- still carrying his gym bag- leads a winding Parkour  
chase through a series of alleys and public spaces.

He tricks off obstacles, stays a step ahead.

QUIQUE

How do you know you're not who I  
think you are?

Kaplan slogs after.

KAPLAN

It would take quite an imagination.

Quique wall-hops to an intersecting alleyway.

Kaplan follows.

QUIQUE

Whatever you want, the answer's no!

He jumps off a ledge.

He takes a spill when he hits the ground, but gets up and  
staggers on.

Kaplan follows.

KAPLAN

How do you know I'm going to ask  
anything?

QUIQUE  
You're chasing me.

KAPLAN  
I just want to talk.

Quique halts in a vacant lot, still guarded.

QUIQUE  
Fine, go ahead.

Quique's breathing hard, Kaplan's barely winded.

KAPLAN  
You let her win.

Quique looks up with a start.

QUIQUE  
'Course. I can't teach them self-  
defense if I beat them up.

KAPLAN  
So much for making them strong.

QUIQUE  
It's not about strength.

KAPLAN  
Exactly. This is no ordinary  
opportunity.

QUIQUE  
Tournaments're fine for young men  
with something to prove.

KAPLAN  
Then why are you running? I'll  
tell you. You're not getting any  
younger, but you haven't  
accomplished what you set out to.  
You've never really had a chance to  
find out what you're made of. I  
can offer you that. These  
earthquakes, gravitational  
fluctuations? Time scrubbing? I  
know what's causing them.  
(MORE)

KAPLAN (CONT'D)

And they're only going to get worse unless you help me stop it.

(off his look)

I'm serious. If we don't do something, all matter will eventually go the way of the weird and painful. I'm not just jerking you around.

QUIQUE

Yes you are.

KAPLAN

Okay, fine, I am. But not without reason.

(off his look)

Fine, you want to cut to the chase? I don't know how to explain this fast, so I'll just show you.

He moves to a door in the brick wall of the lot, produces a remote device.

QUIQUE

Show me what?

KAPLAN

My credentials.

Kaplan points the remote at the door.

The door glows.

QUIQUE

What the--

Kaplan leads the way through the door.

KAPLAN

I told you I was serious. Come on.

Quique glowers at it, hesitates.

QUIQUE

Okay, my life isn't crazy enough. I'll walk through the glowing door.

He follows Kaplan through the door.

EXT. ALIEN LANDSCAPE - NIGHT

Three moons in a bright green nebula glare at them as they walk into an open field.

A knot of torch-lit figures writhe to the sound of drums, tramp crop circles at the edge of their vision.

QUIQUE

(gestures to the remote)

What was that?

KAPLAN

(pockets it)

Neutrino emitter, turns any threshold into a quantum tunnel. Best way to fly is not at all.

QUIQUE

And we are?

KAPLAN

That's a little harder to explain. We've all seen enough Star Trek to know mathematics demands an infinite number of realities all stacked up on each other.

QUIQUE

We have?

KAPLAN

But realities are spherical, with higher powers binding them together. We're in a gap between the spheres.

Kaplan leads the way across the field towards the figures.

QUIQUE

Who are you?

KAPLAN

I'm an agent for a higher power.

QUIQUE

So that means you're, what, an  
angel? Prophet?

KAPLAN

Eh, there's a lot of higher powers.  
The being you call 'God' is  
actually a pulsar in the  
constellation Gemini. He's alright,  
but half the time he's looking the  
other way. I'm what you call a  
Harbinger.

QUIQUE

Of what?

KAPLAN

The thing about Harbingers, it's  
never good news. I have to say,  
you're taking it remarkably well.

QUIQUE

I'm resilient.

Kaplan and Quique approach the circle of aliens gathered  
around two massive monsters who square off in the center of  
the group.

Some of the onlookers eye them, others shout and lay odds on  
the impending fight.

CROWD

(in an alien dialect)

Fight! Fight! Fight! Fight!

The monsters crash into each other, ponderous and brutal.

Waves of energy cascade from their blows.

QUIQUE

Madre de dios.

KAPLAN

More or less. Those are the higher  
powers. You'd call them Daemons.  
Dark Electric Matter Objects.  
Subatomic black holes.

(MORE)