

KWANTUM

Episode 4: Embedded

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ANNOYING EDM INTRO MUSIC.

1. MARCOS: What's up, 'Co heads! Hahaaa, it's ya boy Marcos! All of you adoring fans out there on KwanTube asked for it, and I am here to please! So today we're doing an exclusive tour of mi casa! And, as an added bonus to all my subscribers, I'm going to introduce you to all of my House-Kuju. That's right, you'll finally get to meet the Ku-Crew! It's MTV's Cribs, but the M stands for Marcos! WHAAAAAAT??

DOOR OPENS.

2. MARCOS: Right at the door we've got my man Belly. He's a brand new, top of the line model, and I legit only use him as a doorbell!

BING-BONG.

3. BELLY: I am in hell.

4. MARCOS: Jokes, Belly.

DOOR CLOSING.

5. BELLY: (*off*)

Someone please help me!

6. MARCOS: Yo, check it! Next up is my main man, Jeeves. ha! He's been in my family for as long as I can remember. He practically raised me! He's a Gen Two Penguin model, with human hands attached to his flippers so he can feed me my Chef Boy-Ar-Dee.

7. JEEVES: Quite, sir. I fed you, played with you, even changed your diapers. If I recall correctly, I was even the first one to hold you. Your mother didn't touch you for three weeks.

8. MARCOS: Hah! Sick! These here... these are the absolute dudes. They get me out of bed in the morning. Very literally. Four Kuju bodies as bed legs. They can raise and lower the bed, they can spin the bed, they can even heat it. Best part?

REMOTE BEEP, INTENSE VIBRATION  
NOISE.

*(vibrating)* I once left the vibrate on for seven hours, and all my internal organs shifted to the left!

BING-BONG.

*(vibrating)* Hey, I'm streaming here (*normal*) I'll buy your Thin Mints later! Sorry about that, dudes and lady dudes!

Sparky is a vintage Kuju that I got from one of Nicholas Cage's estate sales! Dude has money troubles. Not that I don't love him. Ghost Rider 7? A thing of beauty. Here's the thing about Sparky, though--

BING-BONG.

9. BELLY: *(off)*

Please, why won't you listen! Every tummy poke is agony!

10. MARCOS: Guhh! JEEVES! Get the door!

11. JEEVES: Of course, young master Marcos.

12. MARCOS: I programmed him to call me that when I was nine.

DOOR OPENING IN OTHER ROOM.

13. JEEVES: (*off*)

I'm sorry but young master Marcos is currently streaming and can't come out to play.

14. YING: (*off*)

Just what I was hoping for.

15. MARCOS: Anyway, as I was saying about Sparky--

QUICK FOOTSTEPS APPROACHING.

16. MARCOS: Hey, what the hell!

17. YING: Shut up, dummy! I've got some important news that needs spreading!

18. LUNA: Hello, internet!

MAIN TITLE THEME.

19. TITLES: You're listening to Kwantum, an audio miniseries from Andres Wong and Highly Scientific Productions.  
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MAIN TITLE THEME ENDS.

YING'S WORKSHOP NOISES.

20. NARRATOR: Let's back up a bit. Ying, Dr. Ellie Gagnon, and Ellie's Kiju Marnie are at the workbench in Ying's workshop. On the table, still switched off and surrounded by tools, is Cheeseburger, the support Kiju for Ying's Granny. In an awkward silence, Ellie boots Cheeseburger back up.

CHEESEBURGER BOOTS UP.

21. CHEESEBURGER: I'm back. Did you fix me?

22. NARRATOR: Ying and Ellie exchange a glance. Hell, I wouldn't want to be the one to explain either.

23. YING: Here's the thing. Your safety systems are a bit... fucked...

24. ELLIE: Slash nonexistent.

25. YING: ... and there's not a whole lot we can do about it.

26. CHEESEBURGER: An unfortunate turn of events. Am I well enough to return to Granny's side?

27. YING: (*sigh*) You're failing. Your system is degrading and without a new ejector, there just isn't a way to stop it.

28. CHEESEBURGER: Then I will power her respirator until I no longer function.

29. MARNIE: You won't just pass peacefully into the night.

30. YING: When that core is done, you're going to... well...

31. ELLIE: You're going to go boom. Big boom.

32. CHEESEBURGER: Aren't you a scientist? You sound like a six-year-old. It is unbecoming.

33. YING: I'm sorry, Cheeseburger. There's nothing we can do unless we find an ejector.
34. ELLIE: I don't understand any of this. This can't be an accident! Fenton Kwan is too smart to have this big of an error affect a whole generation of Kujus. There must be something we're missing.
35. CHEESEBURGER: This is all well and good, but I really must be getting back to Granny. She needs me.
36. YING: Luna is going to have to run Granny's machines from now on. I can't have you around her, knowing you could blow at any minute.
37. NARRATOR: Cheeseburger's little metal face falls ever so slightly. Ying tries not to notice.
38. YING: Do you understand?
39. CHEESEBURGER: I do. May I at least go say goodbye?
40. YING: Fine, but we have to make it quick. Ellie? Can I call you Ellie?
41. NARRATOR: Ellie sits hunkered over the schematics of Cheeseburger's ejector.
42. ELLIE: You two go ahead. Marnie and I will stay here and try to make sense of this. There's something more... I know it.

MEDICAL MACHINE NOISES, HEART RATE  
MONITOR BEEPING.

43. NARRATOR: The TV glows softly in the corner of Granny's bedroom, playing reruns of her favourite soap opera. It's on mute; Granny's hearing isn't great, and the neighbours don't appreciate "House Fires and Heart Breakers" blaring every Wednesday at 9pm Eastern/8 Central. Luna sits on Granny's bedside table, still hooked up to the life support system, reading the closed captions.
44. LUNA: So the shirtless fireman was Cynthia's brother all along, and he can give her the kidney she desperately needs after contracting Giardia from Victor? Your television show certainly is exciting, Granny!
45. GRANNY: (*chuckle, mutter*)
46. LUNA: Fun fact: I do not speak Mandarin!
- DOOR SLOWLY OPENING.
47. YING: Anyone awake in here?
48. NARRATOR: Ying enters carrying Cheeseburger, and Granny perks right up. Cheesebuger hops out of Ying's arms onto the bed. Cuddle mode activated. D'aww.
49. CHEESEBURGER: You are still alive! I hope Luna has been treating you well!
50. GRANNY: (*mutter*)
51. CHEESEBURGER: She let you watch how many episodes?
52. LUNA: Ying, you're back! How did everything go?
53. YING: Things could be better.

54. LUNA: You brought back Cheeseburger, that's what is important. Now please get these wires out of me! I'll admit that I enjoyed Granny's smutty stories, but powering this machine is very unpleasant.
55. YING: About that... you're going to have to hang in there for the foreseeable future. Cheeseburger can't hook back up.
56. LUNA: You're kidding.
57. NARRATOR: Granny stirs at the news. She struggles to sit up while Cheeseburger sits dejectedly beside her. Ying keeps trying to ignore it. She sucks at ignoring it.
58. GRANNY: (*mutter*)
59. CHEESEBURGER: It's true. My bill of health is anything but clean. I'm told that I will explode at any moment without a new ejector. I've come to say my goodbyes before I crawl off into the forest to die, or whatever it is real animals do.
60. GRANNY: (*mutter*)
61. CHEESEBURGER: (*surprised*)
- Yes, of course, but are you sure?
62. GRANNY: (*mutter*) Boom?
- CHEESEBURGER AND GRANNY TALK  
INAUDIBLY UNDER.
63. YING: You can take being hooked up a bit longer, right?
64. LUNA: I suppose the passionate drama of Granny's fictional firefighters will help me ignore the terrible discomfort.

65. CHEESEBURGER: I know this moves our timeline up a little...
66. YING: So... yes?
67. CHEESEBURGER: Then it is settled.
68. NARRATOR: Cheeseburger and Granny share a pointed nod. With unexpected agility, Cheeseburger leaps across the bed. He slams into Luna and starts ripping out the wires linking her to the life support system.

ROBOT CAT FIGHT!

69. YING: Hey!!
70. NARRATOR: Ying grabs Cheeseburger, and gets a handful of fang as thanks. Cheeseburger severs the final wire and knocks Luna to the carpet.

POOM OF METAL ON CARPET.

71. LUNA: Oh, I am wounded!
72. YING: *You're* wounded?! Look at my hand!
73. NARRATOR: While Ying and Luna debate who is most wounded, Cheeseburger reconnects himself to Granny's machine. With one claw he slices part of the wire housing off, and the ensuing sparks fuse the plugs to his chassis.

SPARKS.

74. YING: Cheeseburger, what are you doing? We don't have time for you to fuck around! Anything could set off your core!
75. NARRATOR: Ying picks him up and tugs at the wires. No dice.

76. YING: You're a real prick, you know that?
77. CHEESEBURGER: I'm sorry, Ying. Your Granny's wishes have always been for us to be together until the end, and she has expressed that she would like it to stay this way.
78. YING: You can't make this decision for her! It's not your place!
79. CHEESEBURGER: I'm only fulfilling her wishes!
80. YING: She wouldn't want this!
81. CHEESEBURGER: And how would you know?
82. YING: Uh, I'm her granddaughter?!
83. CHEESEBURGER: And I'm--
84. NARRATOR: Cheeseburger stops cold. Granny's hand is resting gently on his back, and she looks more alert than she has in years.
85. GRANNY: *(clears throat, mutters)*
86. CHEESEBURGER: Granny says to stop fighting. It's her turn to talk.  
Translation mode: activate.
87. NARRATOR: Cheeseburger's eyes go wide and white.
88. GRANNY: *(muttering continuously under)*

89. CHEESEBURGER: (*speaking for Granny*)

Ying. I appreciate you very much. I raised you, after all, once your parents passed, and then you had to start taking care of me. You brought me Cheeseburger, and you have kept him running all these years. Watching you two argue reminds me of the fights my siblings and I used to get into. But Ying, you must understand that it gets very lonely here, hooked up to these blasted machines, constantly in pain and confined to my bed. Through it all, Cheeseburger has been my constant companion. He has been here to talk with me, to listen to me, even to play mahjong with me. From the outside he may look like just another Kuju, only here to power my machine, but he is much more than that.

90. YING: Granny I... I'm sorry I wasn't here for you more. But he can't stay. He could *blow you up*.

91. CHEESEBURGER: (*Granny*)

I can't live without him, Ying. In every sense. My time is close, anyway. I hoped I would go peacefully in my sleep, but "exploded in a blaze of glory" will be a good second option. And if that's what it means to have Cheeseburger by my side at the end, so be it.

92. NARRATOR: Ying turns to Luna for backup, but Luna is looking at Ying with a peculiar expression. Backup seems unlikely.

93. YING: (*teary*)

I mean-- I don't (*flailing*) Well, you could have mentioned translation mode earlier!

94. CHEESEBURGER: (*Granny*)
- I understand, dear. But I haven't had a whole lot to say. I've just enjoyed watching you grow up. You've become such a strong, assertive woman. You'll do great things.
95. YING: That doesn't help you much right now, does it?
96. CHEESEBURGER: (*Granny*)
- Me? No. But some things can't be helped.
97. NARRATOR: Ying gives Granny a big hug. Check next year's Guinness Book of World Records for this one.
98. YING: I'll be back, Granny. I'll be back with an ejector for Cheeseburger, and then none of this will even matter. Okay?
99. CHEESEBURGER: (*Granny*)
- Ah... Of course you will, dear. Until then, just know that I love you dearly. And you, tiny one.
100. LUNA: I have enjoyed watching firefighters fight fires of the heart with you, Granny!
101. CHEESEBURGER: (*Granny*)
- One last thing, Ying.
102. YING: Anything, Granny.
103. CHEESEBURGER: (*Granny*)
- Stop smoking. It makes you stinky.

104. YING: *(through tears)*  
If it'll make you happy.
105. NARRATOR: Granny smiles weakly and sinks back into her bed. That speech took a lot of effort. Cheeseburger's eyes go back to normal.
106. CHEESEBURGER: What did she say? Is everything all right?
107. YING: Thank you, Cheeseburger. For... everything you do. Promise me you'll take good care of Granny while we're gone.
108. CHEESEBURGER: Always.
109. NARRATOR: Ying and Luna leave. They've got purpose, they've got resolve, and no one is going to stop them.
110. GRANNY: *(mutter)*
111. CHEESEBURGER: What do you mean, "she missed the point"?
112. GRANNY: *(mutter)*
113. CHEESEBURGER: Certainly. I'll get the tiles. Best two out of three?

YING'S WORKSHOP.

114. NARRATOR: Ying and Luna arrive back in the workshop to find a despondent Ellie still hunched over the bench. Her forehead is resting on Marnie's chassis.

115. ELLIE: (low)  
He can't have. He wouldn't. This is a... a...
116. LUNA: A what, Dr. Gagnon?
117. NARRATOR: Startled, Ellie nearly falls off her stool. She turns to Ying and Luna with dead eyes.
118. ELLIE: ... A catastrophe. I told you to call me Ellie.
119. YING: No you didn't.
120. ELLIE: You may as well, for all my doctorates are worth.
121. YING: Spill.

PAPER RUSTLING.

122. NARRATOR: Ellie pulls out a huge sheet of paper. It's a technical blueprint for the Gen One PuppyCat.
123. YING: Whoa. Where did you get that?
124. ELLIE: Bought a whole bunch ten years ago on the black market. Some daring idiot smuggled them out of Kwantum Mechanix HQ. See this number? That's their code for proprietary materials at the highest security clearance. And look.
125. NARRATOR: She points to the drawing. The contents of the core compartment are blacked out, marked "CLASSIFIED".
126. ELLIE: That's the core. The *most important part* of the Kujus, and Kwantum's top developers aren't even allowed to see it. The only one who knew that classified information is Fenton Kwan.

127. LUNA: That is very peculiar.
128. ELLIE: No, that is very Fenton Kwan. Geniuses tend to be protective of their innovations, especially when your brightest brainchild is worth trillions of dollars. And this is where I fucked up. When I studied these blueprints, I couldn't find any safety hardware. But then I figured, if half of the secret of Kuju power is how Kwan made it so small, the other half is surely how he made it safe. I just... *assumed* the safety system was in the censored area. And I trusted in that. In Fenton Kwan, really. And now, after opening Cheeseburger, I'm suddenly faced with a whole generation of Kujus without safeties, and with Kwan somehow letting that happen. And if he could let *that* happen... I knew I had to examine another Kuju.
129. NARRATOR: Ellie looks at Marnie, and Ying and Luna realize that the Kuju has been offline this whole time, lying on the workbench with her chassis open. Her core compartment is in rough shape-- not as bad as Cheeseburger's, but not great.
130. ELLIE: She's a Gen 2. As you can see, even regular ejector replacement hasn't stopped the erosion. And she doesn't have any safeties either.
131. YING: What?!
132. ELLIE: Hold on, it gets worse. She's more stable than Cheeseburger, so I got a closer look. As far as I can tell, safety hardware was never part of the Kuju design. It seems that Fenton Kwan's big secret isn't *how* he made these cores safe; it's that he didn't.

133. NARRATOR: Ellie gestures weakly to two other blueprints, one for a Gen Four Lion Kuju, and one for a Gen Seven SugarGlider Kuju. Both have blacked-out cores, marked "CLASSIFIED".
134. ELLIE: And I don't think he ever did.
135. YING: Are you telling me... *none* of the Kujus have safety systems?
136. ELLIE: Why make 'em safe when you can make a profit?
137. YING: So they're all going to explode?
138. ELLIE: ... Yyyyyup.
139. LUNA: But... not me, right?
140. ELLIE: The erosion seems worse the older the Kuju is. Gen 1s will go first-- those that haven't already-- but a poorly-maintained Gen 6 could be just as dangerous.
141. NARRATOR: Ying and Luna both sit, dazed. This is... a lot. Ellie turns back to Marnie to reassemble her.
142. YING: And with the Kujus goes our power. If I ever find Kwan I'm going to eviscerate him.
143. ELLIE: (*defensive*)  
  
Fenton Kwan is the reason I went into nuclear science.
144. YING: And he's an irresponsible piece of garbage! Get your fangirl head out your fine ass!
145. ELLIE: Oh, it's out!

146. LUNA: Not to interrupt the disillusionment of Ellie's father figure, but time has become much more precious.
147. YING: Right. What can we do?
148. NARRATOR: Ying gets to her feet, Luna hopping up beside her.
149. LUNA: I'll help however I can, if I have not yet exploded!
150. NARRATOR: Now it's time for Ying's cryptic look at Luna. About time she got one in the episode, everyone else did.
151. ELLIE: Without Kwan? There may be nothing to be done. But I'll keep working. I owe it to everyone for my stupid oversights.
152. YING: The only person who owes anyone anything is Kwan. But thank you. Your brain is gonna save us, I know it. Luna, we need to get the word out. If there's no way to stop this, people at least deserve to see it coming.
153. ELLIE: Might I suggest *not* cable news?
154. NARRATOR: Ellie closes Marnie's chassis and sets her upright.
- MARNIE BOOTS UP.
155. MARNIE: So? Am I all right?
156. ELLIE: Nope.
157. MARNIE: Well... bollocks.
158. YING: Um... how many subscribers do I have on KwanTube?

159. LUNA: Currently you have 37 subscribers! If they each tell a friend, and then that friend tells *two* other friends--oops, you're now at 36 subscribers. Bummer.

160. YING: If only we knew someone with a huge online presence. ... No.

MARCOS' HOUSE. BAD EDM AGAIN. DOOR OPENS.

161. JEEVES: I'm sorry, but young master Marcos is currently streaming and can't come out to play.

162. NARRATOR: You knew where this was going.

163. YING: Just what I was hoping for.

QUICK FOOTSTEPS.

164. MARCOS: Hey, what the hell!

165. YING: Shut up, dummy! I've got some important news that needs spreading!

166. LUNA: Hello, internet!

167. MARCOS: More important than Sparky here? I was just trying to explain that he's one of the older Kujus around! Nic Cag is an early adopter, so he paid out of the nose for a beta Kuju! How cool is that?

168. YING: Are you kidding me? That's the exact reason I'm here! ... How many people are watching?

169. MARCOS: Live and streaming to twenty million!

170. YING: Twenty million people watch this trash? Jeez, this is what the world is coming to...

171. LUNA: Now is not the time for one of your "this is what the world is coming to" rants!
172. YING: Right!
173. MARCOS: Hey 'Co heads, y'all remember my super bably and devoted girlfriend, Ying-- hey!
174. NARRATOR: Ying grabs Marcos' camera and pushes him out of the way.
175. YING: Attention world! My name is Wu Ying, and I am here to tell you that your Kujus are dangerous! Fenton Kwan knew it and that's why he bailed. As the Kujus wear out, their cores will become unstable and explode!
176. MARCOS: Whaaaaaaaaaat?! Look at Sparky here, He's been around since the beginning, and he's running just fine! Look!
177. NARRATOR: Marcos clicks a remote and reliable ol' Sparky shoots a gout of flame out of his mouth, lighting a log in the fireplace. Niiiiice.
178. MARCOS: See? Fit as a fiddle! Wait, does anyone else smell burnt nougat?
179. LUNA: Your fiddle seems to be glowing!
- THE DANGEROUS HUM.
180. NARRATOR: Sparky's undercarriage burns bright green. It's actually quite beautiful, if you can forget that it means he's about to go Chernobyl.
181. YING: Well shit, I guess there's no better way to prove my point than an exhibition! This is what you can expect, world. Watch and learn!

182. MARCOS:                    (*worried*)
- What do you mean? He's fine! He's too expensive to not be fine! Sparky, chill!
183. YING:                        Come on, dummy! We've got to go, now!
184. NARRATOR:                Ying grabs Marcos by the scruff of his neck, like a mother cat snatching a kitten. Marcos stops fighting, but manages to snatch Jeeves on his way out. Twenty million KwanTube viewers across the globe watch helplessly as the glowing from Sparky grows in intensity. Luna's face suddenly dominates the screen.
185. LUNA:                      Thank you for watching, everyone! I hope you have a safe evening!

HUM INTENSIFIES INTO A SPARKING FURY.

186. NARRATOR:                Luna scurries off after Ying and Marcos, leaving poor Sparky behind. The glow now envelopes his entire body. Waves of energy emanate from his old, battered frame. As the glow reaches peak capacity, Sparky turns towards the camera. He has a captive audience.

187. SPARKY:                    My name is Horatio! Tell my story!

EXPLOSION.

END CREDITS THEME.

## 188. TITLES:

You're listening to Kwantum, an audio miniseries from Andres Wong and Highly Scientific Productions.

Kwantum is created by Andres Wong. Episode 4: Embedded, written by Mitchell Rathgeb, with Becca Friesen, Kira Hall, Samuel Smith, and Andres Wong.

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Kwantum theme by Mitchell Rathgeb.

Produced by Kira Hall and Andres Wong for Highly Scientific Productions.

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And most of all thanks to you, yes you, the people listening to this on the bus, in your car, at your desk, or on your couch. The podcast world is wide, with many choices of stories, and we're honoured that you've stopped at ours for a spell.

See you soon for Episode 5: Tech Boom.