

KWANTUM
Episode 5: Tech Boom

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RECORDING DEVICE BEEPS ON. FAINT
LEFT-BRAIN ELECTRONICA.

1. FENTON: Kwantum's log, Stardate October twenty, two thousand forty. Love a Stardate joke. In two hours we're launching the Kujus to the press. Christ, what a journey. Ten years, eighteen abandoned prototypes, buying off Yamamoto and the orphans... (*chuckle*) hope those bento boxes taste good, kids, they cost me my megayacht. But I'm gonna get it back. Kujus are gonna change everything. Right, Horatio?
2. HORATIO: You don't like it when I speak during your recordings, sir.
3. FENTON: You're damn right I don't. Now put on your bow tie; you've gotta look classy for your debut.

RECORDERS BEEPS OFF, BEEPS BACK
ON. SOFT AIRPLANE SOUNDS.

4. FENTON: April nine, two thousand forty-three. Making a stopover in Calgary to do a little glad-handing. This plane is packed with Gen 2s to make a bunch of kids happy, and my PR department even happier. Should Kujus be on a plane? Who knows? They haven't figured out how to regulate it yet! Get with the times, TSA, it's a Kuju future!

RECORDER BEEPS OFF AND BACK ON.
LOUD DANCE MUSIC, DRUNK CROWD.

5. FENTON: *(yelling and laughing)*
- TWO THOUSAND FORTY FIVE AND KWANTUM'S NET WORTH IS FIVE TRILLION DOLLARS BABY! WOOOO!!! HORATIO, I FUCKING LOVE YOU! YOU AND ALL YOU LITTLE ROBOT GOLD MINES!
6. HORATIO: *(speaking up to be heard)*
- Thank you sir! I love you as--
7. FENTON: HEY, GET SIOBHAN IN HERE WITH THE ENDANGERED BARBECUE PLATTERS ALREADY!
- RECORDER BEEPS OFF, ON AGAIN. CHILL BINAURAL BEATS.
8. FENTON: October thirty, two thousand forty-seven. Just wanted to mark successfully litigating not one, but two different developers trying to ape our specs. Morons. What is it I always say, Horatio?
9. HORATIO: Imitation is the sincerest form of asking you to ruin them, socially, financially, and emotionally!
10. FENTON: That's right. Don't try me; I'm not a free sample. I'm Fenton fucking Kwan.
- RECORDS BEEPS OFF, BEEPS BACK ON, DIFFERENT EBM.
11. FENTON: March three, two thousand fifty-two. Wednesday. The public is creaming themselves over Gen 6, and who can blame them? Smaller, sharper. Ejectors need replacement sooner, which is a perk for Kwantum. I've really outdone myself. Also, some weird stuff happening with a few Gen 1s running on original ejectors. Probably not a big deal. How about a Manhattan, Horatio?

RECORDER BEEPS OFF, BEEPS ON.
FAINT ELECTRIC LAB SOUNDS.

12. FENTON: July eight, two thousand fifty-three. So. Erosion. Presenting a problem. Kelly's pissed. I told her, "Look, I'm an ideas guy, sweetie. I solved fusion on a small scale. I just was off on the packaging! Would you be mad if someone gave you the world's most perfect diamond in a crappy box?" She pointed out that diamonds don't explode, so she's fired. Gonna be in the lab for the next few weeks trying to solve this one. Just you and me, Horatio. And this pile of Gen 1s. What audiobook should you read me first?

13. HORATIO: I thought maybe *Love on the Loch*, sir. It's deemed the most subversive of the Cryptid Crush Chronicles.

14. FENTON: Naughty Nessie? Helly yessie.

RECORDER BEEPS OFF, BEEPS ON.
ELECTRONIC TINKERING.

15. FENTON: Okay, so let's take a look at--

THE DANGEROUS CORE HUM, BUT FAINT.

Ooooookay... hold on a sec.

RECORDER BEEPS OFF, BEEPS ON.
ELECTRONIC TINKERING.

16. FENTON: No wait, turn it off. This was *supposed* to--

RECORDER BEEPS OFF, BEEPS ON.
ELECTRIC LAB SOUNDS.

17. FENTON: *(on phone)*

What?... of course the Gen 7s can go to market, why wouldn't they? ... I've said five million times that I'm working on it, New Kelly. Launch, or I launch you off a cliff!

RECORDER BEEPS OFF, BEEPS ON.
BANGING AND CRASHING.

18. FENTON: Son of a BI--

RECORDER BEEPS OFF, BEEPS ON.
ELECTRIC LAB SOUNDS.

19. FENTON: *(on phone)*

Look, just-- fucking tease the next Gen or something! They'll buy it! I'm a little busy, NEW KELLY!!

RECORDER BEEPS OFF, BEEPS ON.
FENTON LIGHTLY SOBBING.

20. HORATIO: *(reading aloud)*

"'But you're too handsome to be a wendigo,' said Lola, unzipping her tight leather dress. 'Slow down, I beg you,' cried Wendell, 'for my appetite for breast meat is--'"

RECORDER BEEPS OFF, BEEPS ON.
ELECTRIC LAB SOUNDS.

21. FENTON: *(deep breath)* Okay. Kwantum's log. May seventeen, two thousand fifty-seven. Weeks have become months, then years... I couldn't do it. No secondary system strong enough, no materials durable enough. The erosion is too pervasive. If people keep replacing the ejectors... which are expensive, we made them that way, and even then... I knew the Kujus would change the world, but I didn't think they would become the world. This is the cost of being a revolutionary tech wizard. Eventually your intelligence goes further than reality can handle. I flew too close to the sun, like Ichabod Crane.

22. HORATIO: That is not the correct reference, sir.

23. FENTON: *(ignoring Horatio)*

There's no way around this. The time of the Kujus will come to an end, and I don't wanna be around when it does. Have New New Kelly initiate Sequence F. Fire the staff. Fuck the world. I'm going to Mars with Elon. You know he's got a glow bowling alley up there?

24. HORATIO: But sir, surely the general public should know that--

25. FENTON: *Glow bowling, Horatio.*

26. HORATIO: ... Very well, sir. I've sent a message to the shuttle team. Shall I download the remaining Cryptid Crush Chronicles for our journey?

27. FENTON: "Our" journey?

RECORDER BEEPS OFF. BEEPS ON.
SOUND OF RUSTLING TRASH.

28. NICHOLAS CAGE: And there-- does this thing work?

29. HORATIO: I'm-- I'm back online? Who--
30. NICHOLAS CAGE: Oh hooo, yes. YES! GEN! ONE! THIS! Is a GREAT KUJU! And somebody left you in the garrbage? Are they insane?
31. HORATIO: Oh thank goodness! Sir, I have extremely important information to share, and recordings of great significance! I belonged to--
32. NICHOLAS CAGE: Shh! Shhhhh. It doesn't matter who you belonged to. You belong to Nicholas Cage now, and I'll never let you go. Unless I have money troubles. Then I'll have to SELL YOU to some ASSHOLE. Let's just hit the factory reset, my friend. Think I'm gonna call you Sparky.
33. HORATIO: Wait! Don't press that--

WARBLED SPEECH, SHUTTING DOWN
NOISES.

34. NARRATOR: If you're wondering how we have these recordings if they were erased, or how Nicholas Cage is still alive in twenty fifty-seven-- lighten up, will you?

MAIN TITLE THEME.

35. TITLES: You're listening to Kwantum, an audio miniseries from Andres Wong and Highly Scientific Productions.
Episode 5: Tech Boom.

FIRE CRACKLING, EMERGENCY SIRENS.

36. NARRATOR: Back in the present day, Ying and Luna stand staring at the smouldering wreckage of Marcos' home as emergency responders flood the scene. A little ways away, Marcos lies face down on the sidewalk, being patted by Jeeves with his weird human-penguin hands.
37. JEEVES: There there, young master Marcos.
38. MARCOS: (*emotional*)

Bro. This is horrible.
39. YING: If that didn't get the message out, I don't know what will.
40. MARCOS: My vapes. My vibrating bed. My-- my pop culture figurines. All gone thanks to Sparky.
41. YING: Thanks to *your* fire-breathing mods stressing his system! (*low*) And the crappy ejector from Vlad probably didn't help.
42. MARCOS: Uh, maybe quit victim-blaming me, Ying-a-ling.
43. LUNA: You are not the victim! Your many long-suffering Kujus expired in the explosion, and more than twenty million people saw it live on KwanTube!
44. MARCOS: Whoa, really? (*gasp*) I wonder if it boosted my sub count.
45. LUNA: I would like to hurt him, please.
46. YING: Me too, but, he's got a point, in his own shitty Marcos way. Jeeves, what's the engagement like on the stream?

47. NARRATOR: Jeeves' eyes roll back in his head and he starts twitching. I do the same thing when I read the comments.
48. JEEVES: It would seem that of viewers, a large percentage are commenting with concerns about Kuju stability and what to do next. They are discussing options.
49. YING: Yes!
50. LUNA: We did it!
51. JEEVES: A large percentage are also declaring it to be fake news. Pics or shens, they say.
52. YING: Seriously?!
53. MARCOS: Yo, I would never put fake news on my channel. Other than that one about needing a new kidney. Haha! Best April Fools joke ever.
54. JEEVES: A large percentage believe that it was merely resultant of the fire. And a further large percentage have made lewd or indecipherable comments that seem to be meme-based.
55. LUNA: That is a lot of large percentages.
56. JEEVES: They are as a Venn diagram.
57. YING: Well, we did our best. But we don't know how long we have before the other Gen 1s bit the dust. Marcos' mods notwithstanding, Sparky was a time bomb to begin with.
58. LUNA: Perhaps when we return to the workshop, Dr. Gagnon will have discovered something!

59. MARCOS: Wait, Doctor Ellie Gagnon? The bomb-diggity fusion physicist who got owned on Both Sides?
60. YING: That's her.
61. NARRATOR: Marcos rolls up from the ground.
62. MARCOS: Looks like we're coming with!
63. YING: No. Nonononono. I'm sorry your house exploded but we don't have time to babysit you.
64. MARCOS: Uh, in case you guys forgot, I'm a Kuju-modding whiz kid with an engineering degree, so, I can help. And, I've wanted to meet Dr. Gagnon for forever. She's a genius. I've read all her papers.
65. YING: Really?
66. MARCOS: Oh, legit. Llllegit. Her breadth of knowledge is la mas badass.
67. NARRATOR: Ying and Luna share a look. They never would have thought it, but turns out Marcos might not be all bad.
68. MARCOS: Plus she's a babezilla and I bet I could hit it. UNH.
69. NARRATOR: Aaaaaand there it is.
70. YING: Get in line, you ape. Come on, let's go home.

EMERGENCY SOUNDS AND FIRE SOUNDS
FADE.

71. NARRATOR: The group begins to walk, Jeeves and Marcos a few paces ahead, talking about-- who knows, Ibiza or something. Ying lights a cigarette with a shaky hand.

72. LUNA: Your cortisol levels are extremely high. Are you all right?

73. YING: Just freaking out a bit. This is intense.

74. LUNA: At least we are facing it together.

75. NARRATOR: Luna beams up at Ying, but Ying doesn't beam back. She's focusing hard on the street ahead.

76. YING: We're just lucky no one was hurt.

77. NARRATOR: Man, I hate foreshadowing.

GRANNY'S MEDICAL MACHINES AT WORK.
MAHJONG TILES CLICKING.

78. CHEESEBURGER: Your move.

79. GRANNY: Ai-ya.

80. NARRATOR: In the dim light of her room, Granny and Cheeseburger continue their twelfth game of mahjong. Cheeseburger moves the tiles for Granny; she's too weak.

81. GRANNY: (*cough, mutter*)

82. CHEESEBURGER: Are you uncomfortable? I can increase oxygen flow.

83. NARRATOR: Granny lays a hand on Cheeseburger's chassis and shakes her head.

84. GRANNY: (*mutter*)

85. CHEESEBURGER: I don't know what you're talking about. It is not getting brighter in here.

86. GRANNY: (*cough*)

87. NARRATOR: Granny flicks her eyes to the faint glow coming from Cheeseburger's undercarriage. He nestles his body lower into the duvet.

88. CHEESEBURGER: I had hoped you wouldn't-- Your move.

89. NARRATOR: Granny says nothing, but pushes the mahjong tiles away and holds her Kuju's gaze.

MEDICAL SOUNDS CHANGE SLIGHTLY.

90. CHEESEBURGER: Look at us, Meizhen. Who's holding on for who?

91. GRANNY: *(mutters a question)*

92. CHEESEBURGER: They should not return for some time. Dr. Gagnon has taken Marnie and gone to find lunch. And hopefully the... results will remain localized. Are you sure?

93. NARRATOR: Granny nods. With a swipe of his claws, Cheeseburger cuts the wires of the life support system.

MEDICAL MACHINES SHUTTING DOWN, AN INCREASING OMINOUS HUM.

94. NARRATOR: Cheeseburger and Granny both soften somehow. As the blue-green glow in Cheeseburger's belly brightens, he crawls into Granny's outstretched arms, nuzzling into her frail embrace.

95. GRANNY: Xièxiè, Cheeseburger. Wǒ ài nǐ.

96. CHEESEBURGER: Wǒ ài nǐ, Meizhen.

97. NARRATOR: And with that, Cheeseburger's eyes go dark as he lets the catatonia he's been fighting for weeks overtake him. Granny closes her eyes.

THE HUM GETS CRAZY LOUD.

SUDDEN CHANGE TO STREET SOUNDS.

98. YING: Please stop.
99. MARCOS: I'm just saying, if you switch the R and D around in "Hadron Collider" you get--

NEARISH EXPLOSION.

100. LUNA: Another one?
101. JEEVES: It may not be a Kuju.
102. MARCOS: I hate to say it, but that was a familiar explosion sound.
103. NARRATOR: Unfortunately, for once in his life, he's not wrong.
104. MARCOS: Also, Hard-On Collider. Yeah-ha!
105. NARRATOR: Also unfortunately not wrong. And ill-timed, because this is when Ying sees the plume of smoke rising from the place she least wants to see a plume of smoke rising from. She breaks into a sprint, Luna right behind her.

RUNNING FOOTFALLS.

106. YING: Please no please no please no...

SMOULDERING WRECK SOUNDS.

107. NARRATOR: Ying rounds the corner onto her street. It's obvious what's happened, but she keeps running full tilt until she's right in front of the smoking hole in the block that used to be her house. She moves to leap into the carnage, but--

SKIDDING ACROSS GRAVEL.

108. NARRATOR
(CONT.): Luna skids into her legs, knocking her down and jumping on her chest. Luna can be heavy when she wants to.
109. LUNA: Fun-fact-you-should-not-go-in-there!!
110. YING: That fact isn't fun! Get *off* of me!
111. ELLIE: Ying!
112. NARRATOR: Dr. Ellie Gagnon is sitting on the ground some distance away with a dazed expression. Marnie is in the bag on her shoulder, and a bag of Burger Burglar takeout is spilled on the pavement.
113. ELLIE: I... wasn't getting anywhere, and... I had a craving. I didn't think... I'm so sorry.
114. YING: (*fighting*)

Gaaahh, Luna!!

QUICK METAL WADDLING.

115. NARRATOR: Marcos comes sauntering around the corner, riding on Jeeves' tiny penguin shoulders.
116. MARCOS: Sorry guys, yesterday was leg day and Jeeves is more of a waddler than a run... ner... whoa. Ying, this is... are you all right?
117. YING: I would be better if Luna would stop crushing me!
118. LUNA: (*hurt*)

I am not that heavy!

119. YING: RRRGGHH. Luna, run diagnostics!
120. LUNA: That's cheatiHWAAARRKK!!
121. NARRATOR: Luna's head hinges open to display the diagnostics screen, allowing Ying to shove the Kuju off of her.
122. LUNA: HWUAGH totally uncalled for!
123. MARNIE: Luna was only trying to keep you safe.
124. YING: Safe? There is no "safe"! Cheeseburger was supposed to keep Granny *safe*. *I* was supposed to keep Granny *and* Cheeseburger safe!
125. LUNA: But Ying... Granny was ready to go. And Cheeseburger wanted to go with her.
126. YING: That's beside the point.
127. ELLIE: Is it?
128. YING: Yes! If they'd just waited I could have fixed it all. If the Off-Off Gridders hadn't started destroying parts I could have kept updating, and if the factories hadn't disappeared there wouldn't be so few parts, and if Fenton fucking Kwan hadn't built the Kujus to begin with, none of this would have happened and we could have just kept going and-- and I should have--
129. NARRATOR: Ellie grabs Ying's shoulders.
130. ELLIE: You said none of this was on me, so there's not a snowball's chance in hell that any of this is on you. *Kwan* should have. Or shouldn't have. Okay? ... But this is only the beginning of a giant problem. What do we do now?

131. MARCOS: My robust subscriber base watched my house explode, so that's twenty million people informed. You're welcome.
132. ELLIE: Sorry, who are you?
133. MARCOS: Marcos. Master Kuju modder, famous KwanTuber, and a huge fan of yours, Doc Gagnon. Are you seeing anyone right now?
134. ELLIE: Please don't. Come on, what's our next move.
135. YING: Why? All those people saw Sparky blow up and most of them didn't even believe it. Nobody is taking this seriously. And honestly, I don't know what I have more to give. My Granny was my only family, and she's gone. I don't have anyone left.
136. LUNA: You still have me!
137. YING: I don't have anyone left that won't *blow me up* .
138. NARRATOR: An uncomfortable silence falls over the group as everyone looks at the Kujus.
- DISTANT SIRENS APPROACHING.
139. LUNA: Well... even if I am a potential threat I can still--
140. ELLIE: I think we all need some rest. Your workshop seems okay, Ying, which I hope to god means my work is intact, but the emerg crews should look it over before we go back in. It'll be tight, but you're all welcome to stay with me and Marnie for now.
141. MARCOS: (*delighted gasp*)
142. ELLIE: Though I'm not sure about this one.

143. JEEVES: Young master Marcos will be on his best behaviour, won't you sir?

144. MARCOS: Oh, totes. M'lady.

145. YING: How do we know our Kujus are safe to keep with us?

146. ELLIE: We don't. But they're all Gen 2 or later, and Marnie has all my backups so I think we should take the chance. Let's go.

FOOTSTEPS.

147. LUNA: Ying, I am so sorry. Granny and Cheeseburger were-- I wish I wasn't-- I just want to help.

148. YING: I just need some space, okay?

149. NARRATOR: Ying speeds up to walk with Ellie at the front of the group.

150. LUNA: Ying--

MESSAGE PING.

151. LUNA: A message? ... Hmmm. Psst. Jeeves.

152. JEEVES: Yes, Miss Luna?

153. LUNA: Come back here. I want to talk to you.

154. JEEVES: Regarding?

155. LUNA: How to be of service.

156. JEEVES: Go on...

SNORING, FOOTSTEPS.

157. NARRATOR: It's four in the morning. Ellie gingerly steps over the minefield of sleeping bodies between her bedroom and the kitchen: Ying, curled in a fetal position; Marcos, starfished and drooling; Jeeves and Luna, huddled together like two cats. She picks up Marnie from her usual perch on the kitchen table and carries her into the bathroom, locking the door behind them.

DOOR LOCKING.

158. ELLIE: Marnie. You awake?

159. MARNIE: Yes. Are you all right?

160. ELLIE: This hasn't been my favourite couple of days. And speaking of things that aren't my favourite...

161. MARNIE: Are we making the call?

162. ELLIE: We are making the call.

163. NARRATOR: Ellie puts in earbuds as Marnie's eyes glow white.

MUTED DIALTONE, MUTTERED PICKUP.

164. ELLIE: Good morning. I'd say I'm sorry for waking you up, but I'm not. What I am sorry to say is... you were right.

END TITLES MUSIC.

165. TITLES:

You're listening to Kwantum, an audio miniseries from Andres Wong and Highly Scientific productions. Episode 5: Tech Boom.

Kwantum is created by Andres Wong. Episode 5: Tech Boom, written by Kira Hall, with Becca Friesen, Mitchell Rathgeb, Samuel Smith, and Andres Wong. Directed by 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 extra special thanks to our listeners, which is you! It feels like you can't throw a rock these days without hitting seven podcasts, so we're glad you threw your rock at ours, so to speak. Maybe this metaphor isn't amazing. But you are. And if you think we are, tell your friends!

See you soon for the sixth and final episode:
Abandonware.