

Crusade: End of the Line

By J. Michael Straczynski

TEASER

FADE IN:

BLANK SCREEN

Over which we HEAR:

GIDEON (V.O.)
Previously, on Crusade...

FLASHBACK/MONTAGE

Most of it from “To the Ends of the Earth” and “Path of Sorrows.” The material dealing with the loss of Gideon’s first ship, the Cerberus.

We SEE the attack on the Cerberus ... Gideon leaving in an EVA suit as it’s destroyed by a Shadow hybrid vessel ... being picked up by Galen .. his questioning and interrogation ... his determination to find the ship that killed the Cerberus and her crew ...

We SEE his encounter with the killer ship again in the present .. the battle with and destruction of the hybrid ... and Gideon’s determination to find the others like it by locating and following the hybrid’s signal.

We END the montage with Gideon in bed listening to a recording of the signal, over and over and over ... as we ever so slowly FADE TO BLACK and FADE BACK IN ON:

EXT. EXCALIBUR – HYPERSPACE

The ship is coming at us from the distance. As it passes CAMERA and continues away, we slowly begin to HEAR that signal again.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As Gideon enters on the quick, Matheson looking up from his station, the atmosphere tense.

GIDEON
You’re sure you’ve got it? I don’t want any –

MATHESON
(overlapping)
I’ve got it. It’s weak .. but it’s definitely the same signal we’ve been looking for. It’s wavering –

GIDEON
Just hold onto it a few more seconds. Is Galen –

MATHESON
I told him as soon as it came in.

GIDEON
Put him through.

INT. FLIGHT DECK

Where we SEE Galen’s flyer.

INT. GALEN’S FLYER (COMP)

We see a little more of it than before, though only just one wall: a black wall, looking almost vacuum-formed with patterns, one solid piece, no recognizable controls. The eye just sort of slides off it, except for the very center, which appears to be a two-foot wide vertical pool of silver water or molten silver or some similar fluid.

We can't tell it's fluid yet, it could be just a silver panel. Galen is standing in front of it, rolling a small silver or steel ball bearing between his fingers.

GIDEON (ON PA)

Galen .. do you have a lock on it?

GALEN

I'm transferring the data now. Just another moment ...

GIDEON (ON PA)

We may not have a moment. The signal's wavering all ver the place. We don't know how long we can hold it.

GALEN

Matthew...

GIDEON (ON PA)

What?

GALEN

Shhhhhh....

He raises the small ball bearing up to eye level, and studies it. There's a small FLICKER of energy over the ball (ROTO), then it's gone. Satisfied, he holds it out, as though to drop it down.

ANOTHER ANGLE

As Galen releases the small ball, but instead of falling to the floor, it falls sideways, into the vertical silver pool on the wall. As it hits, it sends out ripples that bounce out to the edge of the pool and return. Unlike conventional ripples in a pond, though, the ripples continue to come, back and forth, creating a locus in one area, a focus. A directional homing beacon.

ON GALEN

As he smiles for a BEAT, then:

GIDEON (ON PA)

Galen ... we just lost the signal up here ... it faded out ... did you get a fix on the location?

(beat)

Galen? Did you get it?

GALEN

I have it, Matthew. The signal lock is now part of my ship. No matter how far away, no matter how small the signal becomes, my ship can now follow it. Once locked, there is no power on Earth or anywhere else that can break the lock. We have it.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

Gideon nods, ready to proceed. His voice is almost quiet: he knows what he's going to get us into again.

GIDEON

Navigation ... transfer navigational data from Galen's ship. Stand by to change course.

NAVIGATION (O.S.)

Aye, sir.

He looks to the monitor, where a course projection appears, a directional arrow designating new course in 3 dimensions. Matheson comes up alongside him.

GIDEON

There it is, John. The long road, as Galen says. At the other end could be another one of the ships that killed the Cerberus ... or the base that built them .. or a whole fleet of them. Last time we went after one of those things, we damn near got destroyed. You still up for this?

MATHESON
Just give the word.

GIDEON
Then let's do it. And let the devil take the hindmost.

MATHESON
Aye, sir.

And he moves off to comply.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – HYPERSPACE

As the engines FLARE, and the ship angles AWAY from CAMERA, we

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. EXCALIBUR – HYPERSPACE

As it zooms past CAMERA.

INT. EXCALIBUR – HALLWAY

Crew are being scrambled, hustling past a Crew member, JENSEN. He buttonholes another passing crew member.

JENSEN
What's going on?

CREW MEMBER
Captain Gideon's in Ahab mode again. Word is he's got another lead on that ship he's been chasing. He's got the XO pushing max on the engines.

JENSEN
What's he got?

CREW MEMBER
I dunno ... the bridge is buttoned up tight as a kettle drum. All I know is we're hauling major ass toward sector 420.
(shakes head)

I hope this time goes better than before. Last time this vendetta of his damn near got us all killed.

With that he continues OS. Jensen watches him go, then moves against the tide of oncoming people, clearly on a mission of his own.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – HYPERSPACE

We can HEAR the signal as we PAN off Hyperspace CLOSE to the bridge in profile, where we can SEE Gideon standing at the window, looking out.

GIDEON
Galen.

GALEN (V.O.)
Yes, Matthew?

GIDEON
Still with it?

GALEN (V.O.)
Closing in on target.

Gideon nods and moves back into the bridge.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As Gideon continues toward the command chair.

GIDEON
What's in this sector, Lieutenant?

MATHESON
According to the charts, this is supposed to be an empty sector. No known colonies, planets or stations. Nearest jump gate should be about two point five light years from here.

GIDEON
Should be?

MATHESON
If something's in this sector, it has to get here somehow. Unless all their ships are jump capable, which is unlikely, there has to be a jump gate around here somewhere.

GIDEON
But it's not on the Hyperspace beacon map. So whoever's out here, they managed to build a jump gate without anyone knowing about it. That means power and money. And power and money means trouble.
(beat)
You getting this, Galen?

GALEN (ON P.A.)
Of course.

We INTERCUT this with

INT. GALEN'S FLYER (COMP)

As he studies the display.

GALEN
How close do you want to be to the target before we jump to normal space?

GIDEON
Not close, just inside the system. I want to scope out the area, see what's waiting for us before we go charging in. How much longer until we're in position?

Galen regards the silver pool ... as the ripples become faster.

GALEN
I'd say ... right about now.

GIDEON
Stand by to jump. Jump.

EXT. NORMAL SPACE

As the Excalibur jumps in from Hyperspace.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As Galen enters and approaches the main window.

GIDEON

(to Matheson)

Still tracking that signal?

MATHESON

Aye, sir. It appears to be coming from the fourth planet in this system. At our current speed in normal space, estimate ... four hours until we're within scanner range.

GIDEON

Good. Take us in slowly. Scanners at maximum. If anybody launches a ship at us, I want to know about it ten seconds before it happens.

ANGLE – CLOSE ON GALEN (COMP)

He blinks and the contacts we've seen before slide down over the front of his eyes.

ANGLE – ON WINDOW – HIS POV

We seem to see a cluster of somethings illuminated in the distance, almost like snowflakes, glittering in something that looks like the infrared spectrum.

GALEN (V.O.)

Ah... Matthew....

BACK TO SCENE

As they look to Galen.

GIDEON

Yes?

GALEN

Perhaps you should be looking for something small, rather than something large, like a ship.

(beat)

There's something out there. A cloud of small objects, several thousand of them, each no larger than a marble.

GIDEON

How can you tell?

Galen gives him a look of "I'm a technomage, remember?"

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Right .. never mind, forget I asked.

(to Matheson)

Lieutenant ... ?

MATHESON

We're recalibrating the scanners ... data confirms Galen's reports. Objects are dead ahead.

GIDEON

Marbles?

GALEN

If you've been wondering where they'd gotten to, this may be the answer.

GIDEON

Thanks.

(beat)

Not everything dangerous comes in a big package. With the scanners looking for ships large enough to pose a threat, objects that small would have gone undetected until we were right on top of them.

MATHESON

Which may have been the intent.

GIDEON

Lieutenant. ... fire a long range probe into the middle of them. Let's see what happens.

MATHESON

Aye, sir.

(calling out)

Stand by on probe.

NAVIGATION

Probe ready to launch.

MATHESON

Launch.

EXT. EXCALIBUR

As the probe is launched.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

They wait, watching.

EXT. SMALL MINES

Shooting PAST and through the cloud of marble-shaped and sized objects toward the approaching probe.

EXT. SMALL MINES – REVERSE

As the probe enters their midst .. and gently bumps into one of them. Suddenly the one explodes ... others around it begin to explode ... and now as we PULL BACK it's a chain reaction, a cloud of fire and death.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As the light of the nearby explosion briefly LIGHTS their faces, then fades.

GALEN

Nasty. But effective. Not enough to destroy the ship, but it would have left us disabled and helpless.

GIDEON

Lieutenant ... where did those mines come from?

MATHESON

Backtracking their trajectory ...

They go to the monitor, which shows a display of the mines' trajectory. It leads back to a nearby planetoid.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

It looks like they were launched from this planetoid. No life signs, may have been an automatic defense system.

GIDEON

Except it took time for them to get that far. When were they launched?

MATHESON

Given distance traveled, I estimate two hours ago. No sign of any others ... they were deliberately put right in our path.

GALEN

It would appear they knew we were coming.

GIDEON

Lieutenant .. we have a leak. I want it found a plugged. You have exactly ten minutes.

Matheson nods and hurries off to comply as Galen comes up alongside Gideon.

MATHESON

(to com officer)

Communications, I want a full readout on all transmissions in the last twelve hours.

COM OFFICER (O.S.)

Aye, sir.

GALEN

(sotto)

Why exactly ten minutes?

GIDEON

Last time we did this as a drill, he ran the whole com system in twelve minutes, which I believe was a record. What good's a record if you can't break it?

GALEN

I'm sure the first man to run the Greek marathon felt the same way.

GIDEON

Why? What happened?

GALEN

He died.

Galen moves off. Gideon looks to a display.

GIDEON

Eight minutes twenty-five seconds, Lieutenant.

INT. EXCALIBUR – CREW QUARTERS

The same crew member we saw before, Jensen, is on his bunk, looking tense. He gets up, paces ... his paces bringing him to the door just as it beeps at him.

JENSEN

Yes?

The door opens. Nobody's there. He edges closer to the open doorway ...just as four or five really big marines come charging in the door, swarming him and pinning him against the opposite wall as Gideon and Matheson ENTER behind.

GIDEON

Nine minutes, twenty seconds. Outstanding, Lieutenant.

MATHESON

Thank you, sir.

Gideon approaches Jensen as the marines step back, allowing him room to stand.

GIDEON

Jensen. Eric B. According to our records, you were assigned to the Excalibur two months ago on standard rotation. How much did they pay you to sabotage my ship? And just out of my own curiosity ... who are "they?"

JENSEN

You don't get it, do you? What you're up against is bigger than you. Bigger than me and a hell of a lot bigger than this ship. Right now, you and me, we've got one thing in common.

GIDEON

What's that?

JENSEN

We're both dead. You just don't know it yet.

Suddenly he reaches for the back of one of his hands and before anyone can stop him he snaps it back sharply (PROSTHETIC). A mechanism inside is activated with the SNAP, and with a pulsation it begins POWERING UP.

GIDEON

Bomb! Evac, right now! Move it, move it, move it!

He gets the others clear and looks to Jensen.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Why? You didn't have to ...

JENSEN

Yes, I did. You don't know what the alternative is to failure. But you will.

The bomb powering up almost all the way, Gideon charges out the door into

INT. EXCALIBUR – HALLWAY

He dives for the ground just as the bomb EXPLODES behind him, the fireball erupting out of the crew quarters doors. On their reactions to this, we

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. EXCALIBUR

Still continuing on its way.

INT. EXCALIBUR – MEDBAY

Gideon watches as Chambers goes over what's left of Jensen's body (which ain't much, and we thus keep it fairly covered). She doesn't bother glancing back at him as she speaks.

CHAMBERS

I can save you some time, Captain. There wasn't enough of the body left intact to put in a show box. There's no way I can tell you who made that bomb or where it came from.

GIDEON

All I need to know is was it made by humans or aliens?

CHAMBERS

Captain ... I couldn't tell you if it was made by leprechauns. I've never seen anything self-destruct so thoroughly.
(to med-tech)

All right, that's about all we're going to get. Send the rest off to the lab, maybe something'll show up on the electron microscope. But I'm not holding out any hope.

She emerges from the isobay, pulling off the autopsy gloves.

CHAMBERS (CONT'D)

I've been going over his personnel jacket.

GIDEON

Then I can save you some time. There's nothing there. It's a perfect record.

CHAMBERS

And that doesn't strike you as odd? Five years in Earthforce and not a single infraction in add that time?

GIDEON

Some people can do it. I did.

(off her look)

Well... for about a week.

CHAMBERS

Ok, so maybe an anal-retentive career officer could pull it off ...

(beat)

Or someone like you –

GIDEON

Thank you.

CHAMBERS

-- but the kind of person who'd blow himself up isn't the sort to have a perfect record.

GIDEON

So you think the record is a fake.

CHAMBERS

I wouldn't put money on it, but my gut says yes.

GIDEON

If that's true, then whoever's behind all this has contacts deep enough in Earthforce to plant a fake personnel jacket. Probably making sure nobody in Earthforce gets too close to the truth about these ships, whatever that is. This is getting more interesting by the minute.

Just then his wrist link goes off.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Gideon here, go.

MATHESON (ON LINK)

Captain, we're closing on the target, nearly within scanner range.

GIDEON

I'm on my way.

(toggles off)

Thanks for the information, doctor.

CHAMBERS

I'm not sure I gave you any.

GIDEON

You gave me some interesting questions, and sometimes that's even better than an answer.

And he exits.

EXT. EXCALIBUR

As it heads PAST CAMERA toward a brown, hazy planet in BG.

MATHESON (V.O.)

Approaching the target.

INT. EXCALIBUR – CHART ROOM

As Gideon and Matheson approach the 3D display table, Matheson touches a control. A display of the planet appears with some denotations as he describes them.

MATHESON

We're picking up a series of small domes on the planet's surface. No markings of any kind.

GIDEON

Any transmissions? Anything that can tell us who or what's down there?

MATHESON

Negative. And the carrier wave we've been tracking just went off.

GIDEON

It got us here, that's what matters.

Just then the display begins to blink, tracing a series of blips across the planet's surface.

MATHESON

Sir, I'm picking up fighters being launched. On intercept course.

GIDEON

All right, scramble offensive wing. All hands, battle stations.

MATHESON

(as they go)

Aye, sir. Battle stations!

They head OS fast.

EXT. EXCALIBUR

As a batch of Thunderbolts are launched.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As everyone hurries to their respective places.

GIDEON

Have we got an ID on those fighters?

MATHESON

Coming in now.

Matheson goes to a console and looks at the readings. We don't see what he does, only his reaction: he goes cold, and is stunned by what he's seeing.

GIDEON

What is it? What's wrong?

MATHESON

The enemy fighters ... silhouettes match starfury and thunderbolt readouts. Those are Earthforce ships out there.

GIDEON

What?!!

EXT. SPACE – ANGLE ON ENEMY FIGHTERS

Black thunderbolts and starfuries race PAST CAMERA, heading for the oncoming force from Excalibur.

EXT. SPACE – ANGLE ON EXCALIBUR FIGHTERS

Shooting PAST THEM to the oncoming fighters.

INT. THUNDERBOLT COCKPIT (STOCK)

Reacting to this, the pilot's face unseen behind the dark faceplate.

PILOT

Squad leader to next ... Captain, those are our ships out there. Are we supposed to fire on our own side?

GIDEON (V.O.)

Stand by...

INT. EXCALIBUR - BRIDGE

As Gideon reacts to Matheson:

MATHESON

Fighters are taking position ... five hundred clicks and holding. We're getting a signal from the planet.

GIDEON

Put it through.

On the monitor appears an Earthforce officer, MAJOR LEE. And he's not pleased.

LEE

-- repeat, this is base to intruder. You are ordered to stand down or we will open fire.

GIDEON

This is Captain Matthew Gideon of –

LEE

I know who this is. Now stand down and recall your fighters. Right now.

Gideon hesitates. It doesn't go over well.

LEE (CONT'D)

That's an order, Captain.

The crew looks to Gideon, who himself isn't sure what to do, or what the hell's going on .. but takes a chance.

GIDEON

Stand down. Lieutenant, call back the fighters.

MATHESON

But sir –

GIDEON

Give the recall order.

MATHESON

(reluctantly)

Aye, sir.

Matheson goes to the console. As he does, Gideon approaches the monitor.

GIDEON

You'll forgive my concern, but according to the charts we don't have any bases in this part of space.
(fishing for name)

So I'd appreciate an explanation, Major ...

LEE

Not on an open channel.

GIDEON

All right, then I'll come down there.

LEE

Negative, Captain. You will turn around and leave this sector at once.

GIDEON

I'm afraid I can't do that. For all I know, this could be a renegade base. You could be impersonating an officer. I have an obligation to follow orders if that order comes from a legitimate source. I can't take this one without verification.

LEE

Captain –

GIDEON

Protocol in these situations require that I send out a signal to any other Earthforce ships in the area and call home, get some more people in here to help resolve the situation.

(beat)

I can make it as crowded as you like, Major.

LEE

All right ... we'll clear you for landing. Just you and one pilot, no more.

GIDEON

That'll be fine. Thanks for your cooperation.

The Major blips off. Matheson looks to Gideon.

MATHESON

Captain ... what the hell's going on? We were on the trail of that vessel that killed an Earthforce ship. What's it doing leading to an Earthforce base?

GIDEON

I don't know ... but I'm sure as hell going to find out, and I can't do that up here.

MATHESON

It may not be safe.

GIDEON

What is?

With that, Gideon leaves.

EXT. EXCALIBUR

A lone shuttle emerges from the ship. It speeds away.

EXT. SPACE – ANGLE ON ENEMY FIGHTERS

As they form up on either side of the shuttle and escort it toward the planet.

EXT. PLANETARY BASE (CGI)

As a dome over a landing platform opens and the shuttle heads for it.

INT. PLANETARY BASE (CGI)

The shuttle lowers on a platform, the dome closing above it.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING – HALLWAY

Totally anonymous and undecorated, plain white walls. Gideon is escorted under armed guard to a door, also unmarked. A guard knocks. There's a BEAT, then:

LEE (O.S.)

Come in.

The guard opens the door and stands back, allowing Gideon to enter

INT. OFFICE

Gideon enters, the door closing behind him. Lee sits at his desk, finishing some papers in a folder, deliberately making Gideon wait. After a moment, Gideon clears his throat, to get his attention. It doesn't exactly work.

LEE

(without looking up)

If you have to clear your throat, there's a water fountain down the hall.

GIDEON

Yes, sir.

Finally, Lee closes the folder, looks up.

LEE

What are you doing in this sector, Captain?

GIDEON

I've been assigned to the Excalibur to try and find a cure to the –

LEE

(taps file)

I know all about your mission, Captain. And you. And your crew. Back to grade school. That doesn't tell me what you're doing here.

GIDEON

We're supposed to explore areas off the beaten track. This qualifies.

LEE

According to the last flight plan you filed with Earthforce, you're supposed to be in sector 730.

GIDEON

Then I'd say we're considerably off-course. And since this base isn't on the map, I'd say that applies to both of us. Sir.

Lee frowns, gets up and walks around the room.

LEE

However important your individual mission, Captain, do you think you are privy to every matter of planetary security affecting Earth?

GIDEON

No, sir.

LEE

Then let me enlighten you, as far as I'm able under the regs. This is a research and development facility, one of half a dozen others, all working on weapons technology vital to the protection of Earth and her colonies. The work is extremely dangerous and highly classified. To protect innocents, and the privacy of our work, we've been located well off the beaten track. We're not on any map. Officially ... we don't even exist. And we intend to keep it that way.

(beat)

This base is none of your concern, Captain. I've told you all I can, and that's the end of it. Whatever prompted you to come here, you will now turn your ship around and leave the area at once.

GIDEON

I don't know .. it sounds pretty exciting. Maybe I should stick around for awhile, check it out. After all, at the end of the day, we're all on the same side. Aren't we?

Lee returns to his desk, sitting under:

LEE

We're all on the side of Earth, Captain. And we're all responsible to the same chain of command. If you don't

leave the area, I will make sure that someone very high up that chain of command relieves you of authority and puts someone more compliant in charge of the Excalibur. Do I make myself clear?

GIDEON
Yes, sir. As crystal.

LEE
Good. Dismissed.

He's over his paperwork again, the conversation over. The door opens behind Gideon, and he's ushered out.

EXT. EXCALIBUR

As the shuttle returns to the flight deck.

INT. EXCALIBUR – HALLWAY

Outside the flight deck, Matheson is pacing, waiting, as Gideon enters. They fall into place, moving down the hall.

GIDEON
It appears we're not wanted here, Lieutenant.

MATHESON
I gathered. I finished those other scans you wanted. What are they –

GIDEON
Good. Status of enemy ...
(catches self)
Status of opposition fighters?

MATHESON
They've fallen back, waiting to see what we do.

GIDEON
All right, let's give them what they want. Jump to Hyperspace as soon as we're clear.

MATHESON
Then what?

GIDEON
Then find me Galen...

And they disappear around the corner.

EXT. EXCALIBUR

The fighters in the distance as the Excalibur jumps to Hyperspace. We DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GIDEON'S QUARTERS

Gideon is already there with Galen.

GALEN
I take it then that you don't believe his story.

GIDEON
I believe it. Up to a point. He's hiding something.

GALEN
It is a secret base, Matthew.

GIDEON
More than that. There's a path that leads from the Cerberus right to this base. Could be they're making preparations to deal with it. Maybe something on the R&D board was stolen and they're covering it up.

Either way, I'm going back. I need someone who can slip me onto the planet, get me past the scanners.

GALEN

And that would be me.

GIDEON

Your ship is invisible to every kind of scanner. And if you have any tricks that can help out once I'm on the ground ...

GALEN

I may have one or two.

(beat)

But before I agree... think about what you doing, Matthew. There is a point of no return in such things.

GIDEON

I know it's dangerous –

GALEN

I was not speaking of the physical danger, although that's part of it. You could be killed if you are found in the wrong place at the wrong time. But more than that, if you go, you may learn things you do not wish to know. See things you should not see.

(beat)

There is very little innocence left in you .. are you sure you want to sacrifice the last of it?

GIDEON

I have the lives of three hundred and sixty nine officers and crew on my conscience, Galen. When they died, my innocence went with them. I have nothing else to lose.

GALEN

There you are wrong. But you will have to learn that in your own time; I only hope you do not learn it too late. We will go.

On the weight of this, we

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. EXCALIBUR – HYPERSPACE

Just to re-establish, then:

INT. DUREENA'S QUARTERS

She's in bed, asleep. She awakes to a sound, a shimmering sound nearby. She gets up, crosses to where she has stored the sword she gets in a later episode (which will be aired before this one). She unwraps it. It is glowing slightly along the edges. She holds it up, considering it, as she's started by the door beeping. She covers it again.

DUREENA

Yes?

The door opens, and Gideon enters, in his leather planet jacket. She notes it.

DUREENA (CONT'D)

You're up late. Going somewhere?

GIDEON

I have .. things to do. I need a favor. I'm about to break just about every regulation in Earthforce, and if things go wring, I need to get some information to Lt. Matheson. If I leave it for him directly, it'll look as if he was in on it, when I've deliberately kept him out. He's got a great career ahead of him. I don't want my mistakes to be

his mistakes.

DUREENA

What do you want me to do?

GIDEON

My personal logs are kept in six datacrystals hidden in my quarters. They have all the information I've been able to gather about the ship that destroyed the Cerberus. If this doesn't go well ... I want you to break into my quarters and get the datacrystals.

DUREENA

Where are they?

GIDEON

(rueful smile)

If I wanted them found that easily, I wouldn't come to a thief. Mess up the place, don't be subtle about it. The more they look stolen, the better. When the time's right, give them to John. Tell them to hold onto them until after a cure has been found. Then ask him ... to finish what I couldn't.

DUREENA

Consider it done.

He nods. There's really nothing else to say. Finally:

GIDEON

Goodnight, Dureena.

DUREENA

Goodnight, Matthew

He exits.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – HYPERSPACE

As Galen's ship emerges, then soars back in the direction the Excalibur came from.

INT. GALEN'S FLYER – LIMBO SET

Gideon is unpacking and examining a breather as Galen appears behind him.

GALEN

We'll be there soon.

GIDEON

Good. I had Matheson scope out the area, didn't tell him why. According to the scanners that place is twice as big below ground as it is above, so that's probably where they're hiding the really interesting stuff. He also found a network of maintenance tunnels leading away from the base. Since there's no other population, and anyone coming in would usually be seen, my guess is the tunnels aren't heavily guarded.

GALEN

And if you're wrong?

GIDEON

Then it'll be a very short trip, followed by a very long stay in a jail cell somewhere.

(realization)

Galen... if you're in here, who's flying the ship?

GALEN

The ship flies itself. It also protects itself against anyone who does not have the proper wards and passwords. Since it would take forever to disarm them all, I suggest you not wander about until we land. To do otherwise could be quite ... messy.

With that, he heads away. Gideon takes a beat, looks around warily, then continues to check his gear.

EXT. PLANETARY BASE (CGI)

As Galen's ship descends into the atmosphere.

EXT. SURFACE (CGI)

Galen's ship swoops in and hovers just above the surface, and through the dust and the wind we can barely SEE Gideon jumping the five or six feet down from the ship. Galen's ship instantly takes off again, and Gideon starts walking as we PAN ACROSS to an access duct set into a hillside.

INT. ACCESS TUNNEL

Narrow, cramped, the opening visible behind him. Gideon, still in breather, armed with a flashlight, makes his way through the tunnel cut into the stone around him. (Double up the shooting in here ... first wide, then backing him up and bringing him in again in close, to make the walk seem longer than it is. Also have a plug to drop in place of the opening, for the same reason.) The only sounds are of his breathing, and the hum of massive machines, which grow louder as he continues onward.

After a bit, he comes to an airlock set into the walls of the tunnel. He touches a panel, and it opens. He steps through. The airlock seals behind him. He removes the breather, gingerly takes a breath, decides it's okay, and moves on, concealing the breather behind some crates.

INT. ENTRANCE TO CAVERN (COMP)

Start with Gideon moving into a lighter part of the tunnel. He continues forward, seeing a way in. He PASSES CAMERA and we follow now, behind him .. as he steps through an entrance to an inner cavern. (CGI COMP similar to the Starfire temple entrance in B5-414.) Then we're fully into

INT. CAVERN – RESEARCH FACILITY (CGI)

Huge, a mile or more across. A great open pit where high tech structures have been built into the walls of the cavern. Catwalks and other support structures ribbon the area above, almost (but not quite) like spiderwebs. Pinpoints of light and spotlights. Large machines on rails move back and forth, carrying pieces of shadow-style ship parts to assembly lines. Give this a good long moment. This has to be our best, most detailed and realistic CGI to date. Possibly use multiple shots. We can make out movement in the darkness, human forms, but they're in darkness and we can't make out details yet.

ANGLE – ON ENTRANCE

We're on a ledge overlooking all this. We INTERCUT the above with close-ups of Gideon, taking it all in, until finally ...

GIDEON
... my god....

Then he hears a sound. Someone has come up nearby. He turns.

And sees something terrible... and impossible. It's a human, or more properly what was once a human female. But its skin is covered with black, hard matter, similar to a shadow vessel carapace. (Prosthetic is similar in some ways to Delenn's shell in "Revelations.") They both freeze for a BEAT, each looking at the other in surprise...

Then she points at him, eyes widening, and lets out an inhuman HOWL (use some shadow-scream sounds in this).

INT. CAVERN – RESEARCH FACILITY (CGI)

Other figures start to attention at the sound ... and we SEE now that there are others here, just like her, toiling in the cavern, on the machines ... and they pick up the HOWL, pointing in his direction. (Possible also: big composite plus multiple single shots.)

ANGLE – GIDEON

He starts to turn, to go back the way he came .. but a DOOR slides down, blocking the way. He races past her, knocking her aside and running down

EXT. LEDGE (BLUE-SCREEN COMP)

He's running for all he's worth, SPOTLIGHTS starting to lock onto him. He shoulders another one of them again. GUNFIRE starts to hit rapid-fire, slamming into the wall above his head. To avoid being hit he leaps onto

EXT. CATWALK

Coming up in a tuck-and-roll ... and looking right into the business end of a heavy-duty rifle held by an Earthforce security marine in full flack gear and looking big as death and twice as mean. Knowing that there is a time and a place for fighting ... and this ain't it ... Gideon raises his hands. From the other end of the catwalk other marines rush in, pin his arms behind his back, and rush him off the catwalk.

INT. BRIG

A standard cell. Gideon is alone, pacing. Waiting. We give it a BEAT, then the door opens and Major Lee enters, with several well-armed marines standing guard at the door.

GIDEON

Major. Long time no see.

LEE

Captain ... I want you to understand something very important. At this precise moment in time, the only thing standing between you and a firing squad ... Is me. It is therefore in your best interests not to piss me off more than you already have. And that is considerable. Am I clear?

GIDEON

Yes, sir.

LEE

The others said you were a stubborn man, that you wouldn't just take no for an answer and leave. I made the mistake of assuming you were stubborn but smart. Apparently I was wrong.

(beat)

It will take exactly one call back home to have you listed as missing in action. As far as anyone will ever know, you left your ship alone, and never made it here. It'll be written off as an accident in Hyperspace. What happens in the next two minutes will determine whether or not I make that call.

GIDEON

Are we talking a deal here? Why?

LEE

From time to time, others have tried to find out about our little operation. You're the first one to have gotten this far. That indicates a highly evolved degree of intelligence, ability and tenacity. You could be a valuable resource. Or you could be a short lived threat to our security. By the end of this conversation, we will establish which of those possibilities we're dealing with here.

GIDEON

All right .. then let's talk. I'll start. What is this place? What were you doing down there?

Lee approaches, sits across from Gideon as he speaks.

LEE

Your ship is a combination of Minbari and Vorlon technologies, highly advanced, reverse-engineered so that we could incorporate them into our own designs. Did you think she was the only one of her kind ... or that we weren't looking at other possibilities?

(beat)

There was another race, just as old as the Vorlons, and just as advanced.

GIDEON

The Shadows.

LEE

They were known by many names. That's one of them. They were a million years ahead of everybody else.

(beat)

A little over ten years ago, during the last war, we came across some of their artifacts. Once we realized what we had, we were authorized to conduct covert research and development on these artifacts. We wanted to see if we could adapt that technology and make it work for us. When the Drakh used some of this same left-over Shadow tech to hit Earth with a plague, our work gained even more importance. Hell, it's altogether possible that we could find a cure here a hell of a lot faster than you could by wandering around the galaxy digging holes.

GIDEON

Do all the Joint Chiefs know about this?

LEE

Some do, some don't. It's on a need to know basis ... and we get to decide who needs to know. Given the importance of this mission to Earth security, anyone lower on the food chain who shouldn't know about this ... doesn't stick around very long.

GIDEON

Is that what happened to the Cerberus? Did Captain **NAME** find out something he shouldn't have? Did he see something he shouldn't have seen?

Lee gets up, moves away. This is a sore point for him.

LEE

What happened to the Cerberus was a tragic mistake. Shadow tech is organic, it incorporates living being into its operating system. Sometimes the mix goes well, sometimes it doesn't. That's why the Alliance considers it forbidden tech. Sometimes the subject .. goes mad. And the ship that's a part of him also goes mad. Something went wrong during one of those merges. The ship broke free, went on a rampage. We couldn't stop it in time. The Cerberus was in the wrong place at the wrong time, that's all.

GIDEON

That's all. Three hundred and sixty men and women die, never knowing why, and all you can say is it was a mistake? And what about those people I saw underground? Where do they fit into this?

LEE

I've been cleared to talk to you about a few things, Captain. That's not one of them.

GIDEON

Why? Because they're more of your "mistakes?"

LEE

I don't see why you're being so judgmental about our tactics, Captain. After all, someone very close to you has been using Shadow tech for a very long time.

This stops Gideon. He isn't sure initially if they're trying to mess with his mind or not .. but he senses that maybe he's telling the truth.

GIDEON

What're you talking about? Are you saying Eilerson –

LEE

No. Not Max Eilerson. Gideon

On this revelation, and Gideon's reaction, we

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. PLANETARY BASE (CGI)

Just to establish, then we're back into:

INT. BRIG

Lee, Gideon, and the soldiers.

GIDEON

Galen would never use Shadow tech. It's simply not true.

LEE

Is it?

EXT. PLANETARY BASE (CGI)

FAVORING a glass-surrounded control tower.

INT. CONTROL TOWER (BLUE-SCREEN COMP)

Two men stand in front of a window looking out past the dome. Man #1 has a comp pad/hand scanner he's using to scour the horizon.

MAN #1

I'm telling you, I saw something.

MAN #2

If there was a ship out there, we'd see it on the scanners. Come back inside –

MAN #1

No, not yet...

INT. BRIG

As before, Gideon and Lee

LEE

Captain, where do you think the technomages got all that advanced technology? Technology so advanced it looks like magic ... ships that have a mind of their own ... personal control systems that are merged right into their own bodies. It's organic tech, light years beyond anything anyone has got. Shadow tech, Captain. Stolen. Same as ours. That's why they left known space during the war. They weren't running from the Shadows. They were running from us. Because we wanted what they had ... and they wouldn't share.

(beat)

So now you know the truth. The question is .. what do you want to do from here? The Cerberus was an accident, the unfortunate by-product of our efforts to try and keep Earth at the forefront of new technology. You're a sharp man. You can choose to join the right side and be a part of the solution, or make yourself part of the problem. So what'll it be, Captain?

GIDEON

At this point, I'd have to be a fool not to join up. I'm many things, but a fool isn't one of them.

LEE

Then you won't mind if we send for a telepath to verify the sincerity of your offer. If he says yes, you walk out of here and join us. If he says no, this discussion is over and you will never leave this room alive. As a further show of your sincerity, once you're back on the Excalibur, you will turn Galen over to us. We're still having some problems adapting the Shadow tech, and he might be able to solve them for us. I've always wanted to meet a technomage face to face.

GIDEON

(hidden meaning)

I think that can be arranged.

INT. CONTROL TOWER (BLUE-SCREEN COMP)

As before, Man #1 is working a comp pad, holding it up to scan the area. Suddenly his eyes go wide.

MAN #1

I'm picking up a massive EMP surge ...damn, it's big enough to shut down the whole...

(looks up)

Oh, hell...

ANGEL – PAST MAN #1

Galen's flyer looms big, as if on a collision course. Then it FLARES.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING – HALLWAY

A couple of staffers are walking along as the LIGHTS go out.

INT. BRIG

As the lights go out, replaced by red emergency lights that glow dimly.

LEE

What the hell –

Then the door BLOWS IN, knocking Lee and the guards to the floor, unconscious. The guard nearest Gideon isn't directly hit, so Gideon takes him out in a quick exchange of punches. In the smoke and red glow from the hall, Galen slowly APPEARS in view. He has his staff with him.

GALEN

Did I wait long enough?

GIDEON

It'll do. Come on!

They run out.

INT. OFFICE BUILDING – HALLWAY

At first we SEE only a distortion against a wall as people run past .. then we PUSH IN through the distortion field (ROTO) to FIND Galen and Gideon.

GALEN

Stay close. We have to go back the way you came. My ship will land exactly where it dropped you.

GIDEON

(re: the field)

What is this?

GALEN

A distortion field. It bends the light around us and affects their optic nerves. They won't see us unless they run into us. It takes a great deal of energy to cover both of us, but without you running around the back door to distract them from me coming in the front, we don't have much choice.

GIDEON

So this is how you get around without being noticed. Affecting the optic nerve, a ship that thinks for itself ...
(beat)
You might almost think this was organic tech, wouldn't you, Galen?

Galen looks at him sharply ... he knows more than Galen had hoped. And he doesn't answer the question. They hurry OS.

INT. CAVERN – RESEARCH FACILITY (CGI)

Galen and Gideon, inside the distortion field, emerge into the cavern. And Galen stops at what he sees.

GIDEON

Galen? Come on, we don't have much time, they'll get the power back on any time now.

GALEN

Monstrous .. I knew they had figured out some of it, but I had no –
(sees something)
dear god

He looks to one of the affected people, who wanders past them, looking dazed, confused, like a child when the lights have been turned out ... and his heart is torn between the anger and sympathy and deadly outrage. His eyes harden and he hands Gideon his staff.

GALEN (CONT'D)

Take this. Hold it close. It will cover you until you are clear.

GIDEON

Wait a minute ... what the hell are you going to do?

GALEN

End their misery. Go on.

Reluctantly, Gideon does.

ANOTHER ANGLE – WIDER (COMP)

As Gideon moves away, taking the distortion field with him, the result looks as if Galen emerged from behind a passing haze. He looks around, as

ANGLE – THE OTHER HUMANOIDS

Begin to notice him.

INT. ENTRANCE TO CAVERN (COMP)

Gideon makes it there, and looks back.

INT. CAVERN – CATWALK

Galen stands in the middle of it as the affected people come toward him. He reaches out and places a hand on either side of the metal catwalk.

ANOTHER ANGLE – FAVORING GALEN (COMP)

Black metal seems to extrude over his face and hands from the area at his back .. covering him. It's similar to what we're seeing on the humans, but more sleek and controlled. Where he has his hands on the metal catwalk, ENERGY begins to spike outward, ribboning away ...

INT. CAVERN – RESEARCH FACILITY (CGI)

Energy flows outward from Galen and suddenly the whole place is engulfed in a series of chain reactions.

INT. ACCESS TUNNEL

Gideon is hurrying along when there's an EXPLOSION from back the way he came that throws him to the ground. SMOKE and a sense of fire RIPPLE past him. He gets to his feet and staggers forward.

INT. ACCESS TUNNEL – MOMENTS LATER

Further down the tunnel, toward the airlock. Gideon finds the breather where he'd left it .. and TURNS at the sound of someone coming. He whirls around ... and finds Galen there, looking much the worse for wear. He takes a step or two forward, and collapses. Gideon catches him before he can reach the floor, and drags him on.

EXT. ROCK WALL

Gideon drags Galen with him, through the roaring wind and dust. He pulls off the breather, lets Galen take a breath or two, and looks up.

HIS POV – THE SKY

We SEE Galen's ship starting to descend.

EXT. ROCK WALL

Galen hands back the mask, and they continue OS.

EXT. PLANETARY BASE (CGI)

As Galen's ship rises.

INT. GALEN'S FLYER – LIMBO SET

They both slump to the floor, exhausted. For a moment, neither wants to look at the other. Then Galen risks a glance back.

GIDEON

You were right about one thing, Galen. I did learn things I didn't want to know. About you, and the other technomages.

GALEN

What you saw back there ... those things ... that was why we left. That was the secret we were afraid they had discovered. That –

GIDEON

... can wait.

(beat)

You know ... I must be an entirely new and undiscovered kind of stupid not to have put it together until now: Why you and all the other technomages who were running away just happened to be passing right through the area where my ship was destroyed. Why you've been keeping an eye on me ever since. Why you can back from your hiding place. And why you volunteered to come along. You wanted to find out how far we'd come in trying to adapt Shadow tech.

GALEN

(reluctantly)

My job ... my responsibility ... was to keep track of left-over Shadow tech. It was the only thing that could pose a threat to us. Whether it was the Drakh, or our own race ... didn't matter.

GIDEON

Is that why you saved my life ten years ago, Galen? And why you've stayed so close to me ever since? Because you know that I was a connection to that technology? That sooner or later I'd lead you to it?

(beat)

All this time, Galen... have you just been using me?

Galen looks to him ... and he is wounded by the thought. Saddened more than angered ... just as Gideon is more saddened than angry to ask the question.

GALEN
What does your heart tell you?

GIDEON
Not to trust anyone. Ever again. For any reason.

Galen nods, distant. He pulls himself slowly and painfully to his feet. Starts off.

GALEN
I should give the ship new orders. They will try to follow us.

GIDEON
One more thing. I want you to drop me off at Mars. Tell the others to meet me there. I'm going to blow this little secret wide open, and I'll need their help to do it.

GALEN
And what do you want me to do after that?

GIDEON
Just drop me off ... Then ... go away.

GALEN
For how long?

GIDEON
I don't know, Galen. I honestly don't know.

Galen nods, and moves off. We HOLD on Gideon, who feels that he has lost the only friend he had, the only one he could count on.

EXT. GALEN'S FLYER

As it soars away from us, we

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. MARS

We PAN UP to find the Excalibur UNDER:

GIDEON (V.O.)
Max... you ready to go?

INT. EXCALIBUR – EILERSON'S QUARTERS

Gideon is on the screen as Eileron pulls on a jacket. Gideon is calling from a commercial com system on a Mars street.

EILERSON
I think so.

GIDEON
Good. I'll meet you in Mars Dome One outside the IPX building and we'll go from there.

EILERSON
Why not come here first?

GIDEON
For the same reason I'm not going through Lt. Matheson to set up this meeting. I want to keep him and the

rest of the crew as far away from this as possible. Besides, Mars is your turf. You have the connections to set up a meeting with the provisional government. If I go through channels to set it up, the wrong people will hear about it and stop it from happening.

EILERSON

All right... I'll set it up, but it'll take a few hours. This is awfully short notice.

GIDEON

Understood. Signal me on this frequency when everything's set.

EILERSON

What about Galen? Will he be there?

GIDEON

No... no, he won't.

EILERSON

But –

GIDEON

Gideon out.

The connection is cut. Eilerson wonders what the hell's going on, but knows now isn't the time. He touches the screen.

EILERSON

Ship... give me a signal to the Mars Provisional Government.. the Office of Planetary Security.

INT. MARS DOME ONE (CGI)

Juts to ESTABLISH, then:

EXT. STREET

Gideon is waiting, in civvies. He's restless, people passing. He moves off a bit. As he does so, we SEE Galen come around a corner in BG, keeping an eye on Gideon.

EXT. STREET – CONTINUOUS

Further down, Gideon looks up and sees Eilerson, Chambers, Matheson, and Dureena coming toward him. He's both pleased and pissed.

CHAMBERS

Hello, Captain.

GIDEON

What the hell are all of you doing here? I gave explicit instructions –

MATHESON

I know. But we talked it over, and if you're going to take this on, we want you to know we stand with you.

GIDEON

(light scolding)

You... You're not even supposed to know about this.

MATHESON

Captain... I'm a telepath. Even when I try not to know things... I know them.

POV SHOT – GIDEON – THROUGH SNIPER SCOPE

It's a DOWNSHOT toward him. His voice is ELECTRONICALLY ENHANCED.

GIDEON

Well, I appreciate the support. Thanks. Max, you've set up the meeting?

EILERSON

I wasn't easy, since you didn't give me much to go on ... but yes, it's set up. They're waiting for us now.

BACK TO SCENE

As before

MATHESON

I still think one of us should have gone first, in case there's a problem.

GIDEON

None of you saw what I saw; it's only hearsay. I'm the only one who can testify as a witness. So let's get this over with.

They nod, and start off together. We TRACK them a bit, INTERCUTTING WITH the SNIPER POV as he draws a bead on the middle of Gideon's chest.

ANGLE – GALEN

Emerging from the shadows, watching... then he glances up.

GALEN'S POV (CGI)

An upshot of a tall building .. as he SEES something glitter on the edge of a rooftop ... and we ENHANCE SHOT to reveal a SNIPER.

ANGLE – GALEN

He REACTS to what he sees.

GALEN

No!

As he suddenly RUSHES FORTH, knocking people aside. (Possible SLOW MOTION here.)

GALEN (CONT'D)

Matthew! Matthew! GET DOWN!

Matthew hears his voice, starts to turn.

The sniper-scope is trained directly on Gideon's chest.

The sniper's finger pulls the trigger.

ON GIDEON'S FACE

Turning back INTO CAMERA as we HEAR the CRACK of the gun firing ... there's the FEEL of impact in the look on his face ... and he FALLS BACK SLOW .. and we FADE TO BLACK as he strikes the pavement, then SUPERIMPOSE: To be continued ... as we

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW