

Crusade 1x14 To the Ends of the Earth

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Crusade: To The Ends of the Earth

By JMS

Teaser

Fade In:

Ext. Excalibur – Space

In orbit near a planet. We ESTABLISH UNDER:

GIDEON(V.O.)

Captain's Personal Journal, September third, 2267. Today everything changed.

INT. GIDEON'S QUARTERS

It's dark. Gideon is in bed as the lamp beside his bed glows to life. He pulls himself up to a sitting position and moves off UNDER:

GIDEON (V.O.)

The day started off like all the rest: Too much traveling, too much work, too little sleep. Nothing unusual about it.

INT. GIDEON'S QUARTERS – LATER

He comes INTO FRAME wearing the grey uniform. He pulls on his jacket, looks unhappily at the reflection in the mirror.

GIDEON (V.O.)

Well... almost nothing.

Then he goes to the monitor, touches the screen.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Bridge.

The monitor comes to life with Matheson's image, from the bridge.

Matheson turns into CAMERA, seated in the captain's chair, also in the grey uniform.

MATHESON

Good morning, Captain.

GIDEON

Lieutenant. What's our status?

MATHESON

Eilerson and Dureena just took out a shuttle, heading planetside. They want to check out the ruins again. They still haven't found anything useful, but they want another day to look around, just to be sure.

GIDEON

I guess we can afford it. But no more than a day.

MATHESON

Aye, sir, I'll tell them.

GIDEON

One more thing. These new uniforms, how long have we been stuck with them now?

MATHESON

Almost two months.

GIDEON

And in those two months, have your communications with Earth given you any indication that the change to a more serious uniform has boosted morale back home?

MATHESON

None whatsoever. You ask me, the change was made just to give the brass back home something to do.

GIDEON

I agree. So I want you to send a message back home. Tell them ... (I need bullshit) ... tell them there's been a horrible accident in the laundry. All of the new uniforms have been destroyed. Pending resupply, we're going back to the uniforms we started out with.

MATHESON

Will do. But what happens when they check the computer logs and find out there was no accident?

GIDEON

There will be, John. I'll make sure of it.

MATHESON

Understood.

Gideon clicks off and goes to the closet, where he removes the black uniform. He pulls off the grey jacket ... as suddenly the lights go down. He looks around, noting that the only real source of illumination in the room ... is coming from the seam in the wall panel that hides the apocalypse box. He goes to it, opens the panel and takes out the box.

GIDEON

What's happened?

APOCALYPSE BOX

The ship you have been searching for.

GIDEON

Yes ... what about it?

APOCALYPSE BOX

It is on the move again.

On Gideon's reaction to this, we quick-cut to:

EXT. SPACE

A ship of alien design is being fired on. We can see gouts of burning air spewing from the back. It's taking fire from somewhere behind.

INT. GIDEON'S QUARTERS

TIGHTER now on Gideon.

GIDEON

Are you sure it's the same one?

EXT. SPACE

As the forward alien ship continues to burn, various life pods ejecting,

we now finally SEE the ship that is doing the attacking, tearing the ship apart: the same ship, or type of shadow-ship variation, that destroyed Gideon's ship, the Cerberus. A Shadow hybrid. It fires on the escaping ship again, almost the death shot.

INT. GIDEON'S QUARTERS

TIGHTER now on the box.

APOCALYPSE BOX

Yes. The same.

EXT. SPACE

The alien ship is destroyed by the Shadow hybrid vessel. It then turns and begins picking off the various life pods.

EXT. SPACE – ANGLE ON LIFE POD

As one of them gets away, momentarily obscured by a passing comet or asteroid.

INT. EXCALIBUR – HALLWAY

As Gideon, in black uniform, comes charging out of his quarters, heading down the hall, fast, people getting out of his way. He touches his wristlink.

GIDEON

Gideon to Matheson ... recall the shuttles and get the ground team up here, right now! We're leaving! I found the bastard!

You hear me? He's out there!

EXT. SPACE

As the Shadow-style vessel moves away from the carnage it has created, we

FADE OUT:

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. SHUTTLE

It's heading down toward the planet's surface.

INT. SHUTTLE

Dureena, Eilerson and some of the archaeological folks are present along with a pilot. Eilerson is going over a hand drawn schematic of the ruins.

EILERSON

Okay, so granted I'm not a professional thief, I'm just a plain, old genius-level archaeologist with four degrees and a –

DUREENA

Max –

EILERSON

But I still think the main vault is in this area. Why else would these big towers be over here?

DUREENA

To throw off people like you who think size is everything. If it's big it must be important, and if it's important it must be big.

EILERSON

Well, that's very kind of you, but let's not get distracted.

DUREENA

You are such a –
Just then his link goes off.

EILERSON

Eilerson here.

MATHESON (on link)

We're recalling the shuttle. Get back here ASAP.

EILERSON

What? But we haven't even –

MATHESON (on link)

This isn't a discussion, Max. We're breaking orbit in twenty minutes. If you're not back, we're leaving without you.

Eilerson starts to replay, but Matheson breaks contact. Dureena and Eilerson exchange a look.

EXT. SHUTTLE

As it arcs upward and heads back for the Excalibur. We SEE other shuttles ahead of it, moving toward the Excalibur, much closer.

INT. DOCKING BAY (COMP)

Galen is in the area overlooking the docking bay, watching the shuttles return in BG (over-shoulder shot). He turns, looks off, his expression troubled.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

Matheson approaches Gideon in the command seat, where he is entering information in a comp pad.

MATHESON

The last shuttle is on board, sir.

GIDEON

Good. Here are the coordinates. Jump as soon as you've laid in the course.

MATHESON

Will do. I've had requests from Eilerson and Chambers ... they want to know what's going on.

GIDEON

(Rising)

I'm sure they do. Tell them to meet me in the conference room as soon as we're underway.

Gideon starts out when:

MATHESON

Sir? Are you sure this is the right ship? You've been – we've been looking for a long time. I'd hate to see you disappointed again.

GIDEON

I'm sure, John.

He exits. Off Matheson's concerned expression, we go to

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

As the Excalibur jumps to Hyperspace.

INT. HYPERSPACE

The jump point closes, and the Excalibur takes a long BEAT heading AWAY from CAMERA. We DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EXCALIBUR – CONFERENCE ROOM

Assembled: Dureena, Galen, Chambers, and Eilerson. They're waiting for a BEAT, then Gideon ENTERS.

CHAMBERS

Captain, I'd like to –

GIDEON

I know, I know ... please, sit. This won't take long. They do. There's a sense of concern, of skepticism ... and of worry; what could prompt this sudden move? During this we INTERCUT FOOTAGE of the flashback scenes filmed earlier.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

It's no secret that the first ship I served on nine years ago was destroyed. According to the official records, the Cereberus went up when her jump engines malfunctioned. I was the only survivor.

(beat)

What is not reflected in the official report ... what has been known to only a few of you in this room ... is that the Cerberus was not destroyed by a malfunction. She was attacked and destroyed by a vessel of unknown origin. I saw it. No one back home believed me.

CHAMBERS

Maybe they didn't want to believe you; there was a lot going on politically at the time. Planetary security was a big issue.

GIDEON

It's possible. The brass might've wanted to keep this hushed up because they didn't want to show any kind of weakness, didn't want news getting out before they knew what they were dealing with ... I don't know their reasons, and at the end of the day, I don't care. All I know is what happened.

(beat)

For nine years, I've been looking for that ship. To prove that what I said was true, and to avenge the officers and crew who died on board the Cerberus.

EILERSON

And now you think you have a lead, is that it?

GIDEON

I do.

GALEN

May I ask how you came by this lead?

GIDEON

Respectfully, Galen ... no.

CHAMBERS

Captain ... I understand what it means to lose your ship, to see

everyone around you die ... as much as anyone can who's never lived through it. But as you said that was nine years ago. The Drakh plague is a problem right now. This ship represents our best chance to find a cure off-planet. Diverting her from that mission so you can go off on what might be a wild goose chase –

GIDEON

It's not.

DUREENA

What are the odds that the ship you saw nine years ago is still around? It might not even be the same one.

GIDEON

I think it is, and I'm willing to take that chance. But I haven't forgotten the importance of our mission, Sarah. That's why I'm leaving the final decision to the four of you. We're en route now to the location of the last sighting, but whether we pursue the target from there is up to you. I know I'm asking a lot. We'll be going AWOL. That's why the decision to go on has to be unanimous. If even one of you says no ... we'll go back.

(beat)

Anyway ... that's all I wanted to say. Take your time ... let me know when you've come to a decision.

With that, Gideon exits into

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE – CONTINUOUS

As Matheson approaches Gideon.

MATHESON

How did it go?

GIDEON

I don't know ... we'll have to see.

(beat)

If they say yes, we've still got another problem. Earth is going to want updates on our location and the status of the mission. They aren't going to authorize this little diversion and I don't want any of our people filing reports that can be proven false later.

MATHESON

Already taken care of. I called Earthdome and told them we have reason to believe there may be hostile forces in the area.

GIDEON

Based on what?

MATHESON

Well, it seems like everywhere we go there's somebody who doesn't like you, so it's a fair assumption.

GIDEON

(amused)

Granted. Go on.

MATHESON

So to avoid trouble, I said we'd be maintaining radio silence for the next few days.

GIDEON

And at the end of that time, if we don't find any hostiles?

MATHESON

Doesn't prove they weren't there. Just means we were successful in evading them if they were there.

GIDEON

You're a good man, John. At times like this, I'm glad you're on our side.

MATHESON

I try, sir.

Clapping Matheson on the arm, Gideon exits the bridge. As Matheson watches him go, Galen comes up from behind.

GALEN

Ask you a question?

MATHESON

Sure.

GALEN

When did Matthew sound this particular alert?

MATHESON

Oh-seven-thirty hours.

GALEN

I see. Interesting...

MATHESON

How so?

GALEN

Well, Matthew generally gets up at seven o'clock. If he'd had something as important as this last night, he would have mentioned it then. That means he didn't have the information until this morning. After all, he had to get it from somewhere.

Did he receive any messages between seven and seven thirty?

In Matheson's reaction, the subtext is that he knows about the box ... and even Gideon doesn't know that he knows about the box. So Matheson evades, to protect Gideon's secret.

MATHESON

I'm afraid that information is privileged. If you'll excuse me ...

With that, Matheson moves back toward the command chair. Galen takes it all in, missing none of the subtext, as Dureena comes up alongside.

DUREENA

What was that?

GALEN

Silence can sometimes be more revealing than an entire book. And the silence of an honest man is the most revealing silence of all ...

He moves off, Dureena taking a beat before following.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – HYPERSPACE

It moves past us, moving fast, none of these slow-panning shots, take it from far away and whip it past us to distant BG.

INT. GIDEON'S QUARTERS

Gideon is looking at a picture of the crew of the Cerberus. We slowly PAN around him, and either INTERCUT with past footage, or just HEAR the audio of the first encounter.

FLASHBACK

Damn it, lieutenant, something's shooting at us... we've been holed, C deck losing pressure ... Gideon, we need you out there ... moving five degrees off axis ... get us the hell out of here ...

And then we see (or hear) the explosion, by which time we're CLOSE on Gideon. We give him a BEAT, then his wrist link goes off.

GIDEON

Yes?

MATHESON (on link)

They're ready to see you now.

GIDEON

Thank you, Lieutenant. Tell them I'm on my way.

He rises, puts the picture back. We STAY on it as he moves OS and we DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EXCALIBUR – CONFERENCE ROOM

The same group as before (Eilerson, Dureena, Chambers and Galen) is waiting for Gideon as he enters.

GIDEON

So ... what's the verdict?

DUREENA

Are you sure it has to be unanimous or we turn around?

GIDEON

We're going AWOL. That seems only fair.

GALEN

The vote ... was three yes, one no.

Gideon assumes the same thing we would, and looks to Eilerson.

EILERSON

Don't look at me ... I can understand revenge. It's healthy; you take it and you let it go. So I voted yes.

CHAMBERS

I was the one who voted no. I understand your grief; I've buried a lot of people close to me, nearly all of them long before their time. Contrary to Mr. Eilerson, I can even understand revenge. But I have an obligation to the lives at risk in the here and now. We can't afford delays or diversions, however strongly we feel about it. We have to leave the past where it is, and concentrate on the present.

Gideon is struck by this ... it's not what he wanted to hear ... but whether or not he plans to contest it we will never know because that that moment Matheson appears in the adjoining room.

MATHESON

Captain ... we've arrived at the location where the ship was sighted.

(beat)

I think you should see this.

At the ominous tone in his voice, they turn and enter

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

They approach the main viewport and look out. We INTERCUT their reactions in CLOSE to what they see:

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

The wreckage of the alien ship is still drifting from the main husk of the vessel ... torn and burned almost beyond recognition ... bodies floating past. Hundreds of them.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

It's a sobering moment. Quietly:

GIDEON

How many dead?

MATHESON

Hard to say for sure ... some of the bodies are only partial ... estimate seven, eight hundred.

(beat)

Whoever did this, they even destroyed the life pods to make sure no one got away alive.

(beat, listens)

Correction: We're getting a distress signal from one of the pods.

GIDEON

Set course to intercept.

(to Chambers)

You said we should leave the past where it is, and concentrate on the present. Seven hundred people were just murdered in the present. Are we going to turn our backs on them, Sarah? She considers it for a BEAT, and glances out at the carnage.

CHAMBERS

No. Keep going. Find the bastards.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

As it closes in on the life pod, we

FADE OUT

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

Still in the area of the carnage.

INT. EXCALIBUR – MEDBAY

An alien rescued from the ship has been brought in and set up in the medbay, but not hermetically sealed behind glass. Chambers is working on him, but he doesn't look good. Gideon and Eilerson are also present, Eilerson speaking quietly to the alien and writing down what he's whispering back as Chambers goes to Gideon.

GIDEON

How is he?

CHAMBERS

We've done all we can, but he was badly injured before he even got into the life pod. Eilerson's getting a statement now,

translating it on the fly.

GIDEON

Did he describe the ship behind the attack?

CHAMBERS

(nods) It sounded like something out of a nightmare.

GIDEON

That's about right.

They look up to see Eilerson nodding for them to approach. He consults his notes.

EILERSON

I think I got most of it ... main thing was getting the coordinates of the location where they rain into the other ship.

Apparently it pursued them to this sector before finally attacking.

GIDEON

Probably didn't want to knock out the ship in its own backyard in case anyone tracked it back.

EILERSON

He said they attacked out of nowhere. No warning. No mercy. His people were completely outgunned. But he thinks they were able to damage the ship's jump engines.

CHAMBERS

If we know what sector they came from, and we know they can't jump ... then we still have a chance to catch them on their way back.

They turn at a sound from the alien, a low moan. Gideon approaches.

ALIEN

Ni Taru ... ni taru dalee ... ni taru.

GIDEON

What's he saying?

EILERSON

Find them. Avenge my people. Find them.

The alien reaches out, desperation and fear in his eyes. Gideon takes his hand.

GIDEON

I will.

Eilerson doesn't translate, but the meaning is clear. The alien closes his eyes, and expires. Gideon speaks without turning to look at the others.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Give the coordinates to Lieutenant Matheson. We're going after them. Full burn.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

The engines FLARE to life and the Excalibur blasts away from the area

of the carnage. This should feel as fast as the last moments of the escape from the Shadow planet killer in “Call.” Maybe split it into two shots to accommodate this.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

We PAN to FIND Gideon in the command chair, Matheson nearby.

GIDEON

What’s our current speed?

MATHESON

Point seven five percent of light speed. We can’t go any faster than that in normal space.

GIDEON

Assuming they have the same limits we do, the laws of physics being what they are, their maximum speed should be roughly the same as ours.

MATHESON

Correct. And they have a two day head start. So unless something happened along the way to slow them down, catching up is going to be difficult. And if we jump to Hyperspace, we could flash right past them, lose them altogether.

GIDEON

Not necessarily. We don’t have to jump light years at a time. Set the jump engines to the maximum distance the scanners can cover. We’ll scan the distance in between, then jump to the furthest perimeter, do another scan, then jump again to the next perimeter, on and on until we find her. It means taking baby steps with the jump engines, but we’ll cover more terrain faster than staying in normal space the whole time.

MATHESON

That’s going to put a hell of a strain on the jump engines, Captain. We could burn them out. Even if that doesn’t happen, we’ll still have to divert most of our power to the engines just to keep going.

GIDEON

Then do so. Plot a course solution and implement. Just leave enough power for gravity control and life support.

MATHESON

Aye, sir.

(to navigation)

Navigation, maintain course and heading. On command, jump to edge of scanner range.

NAVIGATION

Standing by, jump engines on line.

GIDEON

Jump.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

Shooting PAST IT toward where a red planet is visible in front of the Excalibur in the far distant BG. A jump point opens, and the Excalibur jumps to

INT. EXCALIBUR – HYPERSPACE

The Excalibur finishes the jump, coming TOWARD CAMERA. It PASSES CAMERA and goes forward just a bit, then another jump point opens, showing normal space in front of the Excalibur.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

As it jumps out, coming toward CAMERA. In the distant BG, the red planet we saw a moment ago far in front of the Excalibur is now far behind it.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

Matheson checks the nearest console.

GIDEON

Anything on the scanners?

MATHESON

Negative. No sign of the target.

GIDEON

Jump.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

As the Excalibur jumps again.

INT. EXCALIBUR – MEDBAY

As the lights dim briefly, Dr. Chambers notes it. She glances to a tech.

CHAMBERS

What the hell are they ... no never mind. I'd rather not know. I'll worry less that way.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

Gideon pacing, waiting.

EXT. NORMAL SPACE

As the Excalibur jumps out again.

INT. EXCALIBUR – HALLWAY

Galen walks down the hall as the lights dim. Some of the other crew look a little nervous about this. Galen just notes it and moves on.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE (COMP)

CLOSE on one of the crewmembers with navglasses, as we SEE the jump point to Hyperspace forming reflected in the glasses.

INT. EXCALIBUR – ENGINE ROOM (CGI)

Our first shot of the engines, and they're straining to the max. We SEE a power glow coming from somewhere down the long shaft that powers the immense ship.

ANGLE – A WALL

Where a worker in the engine room is looking on, the GLOW of the OS

ENGINES rising and falling on his face, looking very nervous.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

ON Gideon for:

GIDEON

Jump.

EXT. HYPERSPACE

As the Excalibur jumps in.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As Matheson looks to Gideon.

MATHESON

Sir ... engineering reports jump engines are running five hundred degrees above recommended safe limits.

(no reply)

Our tolerance levels are –

GIDEON

She can handle it, Lieutenant.

MATHESON

Aye, sir. Ready to jump.

GIDEON

Jump.

EXT. NORMAL SPACE

As the Excalibur jumps back to normal space.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As Gideon approaches Matheson, at one of the consoles.

GIDEON

Anything?

MATHESON

I'm not sure ... power drain has interfered with the scanner array. I'm having a hard time getting a coherent signal.

He works the console for an agonizing moment.

GIDEON

Lieutenant ...

MATHESON

I'm almost ...

And he stops. He slowly raises his eyes to the main screen.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

There it is.

Gideon looks up ... and sees something he thought he might never see again.

EXT. SHADOW HYBRID

Moving for all she's worth, the damage from the prior battle visible.

The Excalibur is a dot far behind, barely visible.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

For Gideon this is a moment of elation but also great caution: he finally has some of the proof he's always wanted ... but he knows that what's out there is dangerous and could kill his ship.

GIDEON

Got you, you son of a bitch ... battle stations ... monitors on ... by god, this time I'm going to have a record. Engines, full ahead.

MATHESON

Engines are below capacity, the microjumps took a lot out of them.

GIDEON

She's not getting away, Lieutenant, not this time.

MATHESON

Picking up ion discharges... she's launching fighters.

EXT. SHADOW HYBRID

A series of fighters are already peeling away from the shadow hybrid, heading back toward the Excalibur as the hybrid continues to try and escape. On this, we

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

In BF as the Shadow hybrid fighters race toward it.

MATHESON (V.O.)

Enemy fighters on approach.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As the scene continues.

MATHESON

Standing by to launch fighter wing.

GIDEON

Belay that. They want us to get bogged down so the main ship can escape. They know if we launch fighters we can't just abandon them. By the time the fight's over and they're back on board, the target will be long gone.

(beat)

Maintain course and heading, engines at maximum. We'll go right down the middle. Once we're past them, they won't be able to keep up.

MATHESON

Even with the interceptors going, we'll take some fire.

GIDEON

I know. Ready all guns.

Several of the crew members exchange nervous glances at this; he's taking a risk.

MATHESON

Aye, sir ... all guns prepare to fire.

(beat)

Here they come.

GIDEON

Fire at will.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

A SERIES OF SHOTS of the Excalibur charging right down their throats, FIRING from all sides. The ship is moving fast, as fast as possible, the fighters FIRING back and trying to stay in front of the big ship. Some of the bursts hit.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

Intercutting shots as the place RINGS with impacts.

INT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

Another SERIES OF SHOTS as the Excalibur starts to get past them, still taking hits. Then one of the fighters still in front of the ship swings out in direct front and starts toward the bridge area.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As Matheson REACTS to this.

MATHESON

She's on a collision course!

GIDEON

Brace for impact!

EXT. EXCALIBUR – WEAPONS ARRAY

As it FIRES at

EXT. SHADOW FIGHTER HYBRID

It dodges the first incoming round, then is HIT by the next. It spins out of control and starts to come apart, going end over end, until one of the burning segments hits

EXT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE (COMP)

It slams into the side of the bridge section away from the viewport.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

The place ROCKS, smokes and a FLASH from one side of the bridge, and one of the crew is thrown clear of his seat.

MATHESON

Damage control!

Several techs run in with extinguishers to put out the blaze as Gideon goes to the downed crewman.

GIDEON

Get a med team up here, fast!

He pulls his hand back from the crew member's head, and it comes back wet with blood.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

As the Excalibur pulls away from the fighters; then try and pursue, but they can't keep up, and begin to fall behind.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

A medical team with a stretcher has picked up the crew member and hustles out (down the left hallway would be easiest). Gideon moves to the command chair.

GIDEON

Status ...

MATHESON

Minimal damage to hull ... autorepair systems engaged... enemy fighters are falling behind. We're outrunning them ...

GIDEON

What about the target?

MATHESON

She's pulled ahead N-space engines are at maximum ... we can catch up but it's going to take time. Estimate at least eight hours.

GIDEON

Stay with her ...

MATHESON

Aye, sir.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

As it moves AWAY FROM CAMERA, still in pursuit (the enemy ship is now long beyond visual range), we DISSOLVE TO:

INT. EXCALIBUR – MEDBAY

The medical team is working on the bridge crew member in one of the isolation rooms. Several other crew members with less serious injuries are also being treated. Chambers is moving through it, coordinating the treatments, as Gideon ENTERS.

CHAMBERS

-- we need plasma, lots of it ... where the hell are those bone-scans? ... can we get a hand over here?

GIDEON

How is he?

CHAMBERS

We're doing all we can ... we'll know in a few hours. Most of the serious injuries have been moved to the standby medbay.

GIDEON

Any fatalities?

CHAMBERS

No.

(with meaning)

Not yet.

GIDEON

Having second thoughts about your vote?

CHAMBERS

I'll let you know. Right now isn't a good time to ask me.

She moves off to one of the other injured crew members. Gideon looks to the one being operated on, then turns ... and his eyes meet the other crew members sitting or propped up on one elbow. Their faces smeared with soot or banged up, their gaze is not accusatory ... but they are scared, through trying not to show it. Gideon takes a BEAT in the face of that, then continues out.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – SPACE

Continuing on its way.

INT. EXCALIBUR – MESS HALL/WARDROOM

Gideon is sitting alone at one of the tables, something resembling coffee sitting cold and untouched on the table in front of him. There's no one else in the place. CAMERA PANS around him slowly. As it comes around again, we now see Galen sitting in a chair behind him, almost back to back, also with a cup of coffee in front of him.

GALEN

It's cold.

GIDEON

Yes, it is.

GALEN

I meant the coffee.

GIDEON

I didn't. Times like this ... it's like the temperature drops ten degrees all around me. I wrapped my hands around the cup, tried to get warm. Couldn't. Finally just gave up.

(beat)

I know what that ship is capable of doing, Galen. It killed the Cerberus without even trying. I think the Excalibur has a better chance against it, but the truth is, I still don't know for sure if we can take it. I'm risking everyone's life chasing this thing ... and I don't know if I'm doing the right thing.

GALEN

If we survive, then we did the right thing. If we don't ... well, at least we won't have to put with anyone saying "we told you so."

(beat)

You could always turn back.

GIDEON

I can't.

GALEN

Won't.

GIDEON

Same thing. You know what this means to me, Galen. You were there. Someone has to speak for the dead.

GALEN

Pity no one ever asks the dead what they would want to have said on their behalf. It might sound like “Honor us by staying alive, so that at least one living person might remember us.” But I understand what you’re feeling, Matthew. I have settled my own debts with the dead.

(beat)

I once gave you my word that I would stand by you in your own quest for justice, and I have no intention of breaking that promise. I will accompany you into any darkness and down any road you deem necessary.

(beat)

But ... there is one thing in all this that does concern me, Matthew.

GIDEON

What’s that?

GALEN

A technomage has ways of knowing things that seem ... well,, mysterious to outsiders. Sources of information not generally available to the public. Some of them are quite dangerous. From what I’ve been able to piece together, you did not find out about this ship through conventional means. That leaves only unconventional means.

(beat)

I worry, Matthew. I worry that you are holding something back. I worry that you may be using something quite beyond your control... and that something quite beyond your control may be using you.

During this, we have PANNED AROUND so that Gideon is the only one on CAMERA.

GIDEON

You don’t have to worry, Galen. I know what I’m doing.

(no reply)

I –

He turns, and Galen is gone, along with his cup of coffee. He looks around, alone. We PULL BACK on him, seated by himself, and hold for a BEAT before his link beeps. He touches it.

GIDEON (CONT’D)

Yes?

MATHESON (on link)

Captain, I thought you should know: We’ve lost contact with the enemy.

On Gideon’s reaction, we go to

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE (COMP)

Shooting PAST Gideon and Matheson to the window, where we can SEE an asteroid field in front of us.

MATHESON

We lost scanner contact with the ship just as it approached this asteroid belt. The heat signature faded out and disappeared. It could be anywhere.

GIDEON

No .. it's in there. If she'd jumped to Hyperspace, the signature wouldn't cut out hard. It faded because they cut their engines and glided into the asteroid field. They're running silent, hoping we won't be able to find them in all that.

MATHESON

Assuming you're right ... what should we do?

GIDEON

The same thing. Go into the asteroid field, cut our engines and go cold. Then we wait until they think we've gone. Once they cut in their engines, we'll pick up their location again.

MATHESON

Sir ... if they're running engines cold, that means they can't navigate, can't avoid being hit by one of those asteroids. If we go in after them and cut our engines, we run the same risk of being destroyed if we're hit by a big one.

GIDEON

I know .. I think the operative phrase here is "playing chicken."

(beat)

Move us into the field, Lieutenant.

MATHESON

Aye, sir.

And he moves off to comply.

EXT. ASTEROID FIELD

As the Excalibur moves into the asteroid field.

There's general nervousness about this, except from Gideon.

GIDEON

Cut engines. Run silent.

MATHESON

Powering down. Running cold.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – ASTEROID FIELD

FAVORING the engine nacelles as they power down.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

The lights lower, the bridge goes silent.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – ASTEROID FIELD

As it moves through the field. A small piece bangs off the front of the

ship.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

The sound of the impact rumbles through the ship. The techs look to each other, nervous. Gideon paces into the chart room, trying not to think about what he's doing.

NAVIGATION

Sir ... how long are we going to stay in here?

MATHESON

Until the captain says we leave.

And there's another OS impact.

EXT. ASTEROID FIELD

FAVORING the Excalibur as smaller asteroids ricochet off it, we

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

EXT. ASTEROID FIELD

Again favoring the asteroid field as bits continue to rumble off the Excalibur's hull.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

The place shudders with impact. Gideon is in the chart room, pacing. The crew is nervous.

NAVIGATION

(to adjacent crewperson)

He's crazy .. he's going to get us all killed ...

MATHESON

Ensign, come here.

He was hoping Matheson wouldn't hear ... but he did. The ensign gets up, crosses to Matheson, who goes practically nose to nose with him. His voice is low, we don't hear what he's saying, he barely even moves, but from his expression and the intensity of it we know that he's telling the Ensign that if he ever says anything like that again he will personally scoop out his eyes and serve them on toast for breakfast, and other assorted wonderfulnesses. After a BEAT the ensign returns to his place, looking pale. The crewperson beside him leans in quietly.

CREWPERSON

What'd he say?

NAVIGATION

Let's ... just say I'd rather face whatever's out there than what's standing behind me...

A BEAT and Gideon comes toward Matheson

GIDEON

Any problems, Lieutenant?

MATHESON

No... no problems, sir.

EXT. ASTEROID FIELD

FAVORING the shadow hybrid, as it RISES into frame behind the Excalibur (the Excalibur in far BG, there's quite some distance between them). A huge asteroid, a ship killer, rolls toward the alien ship ... and it FIRES a thruster to avoid collision.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As the crewmember REACTS to his controls:

CREWPERSON

Sir! Scanners report thruster fire!

GIDEON

Where?

CREWPERSON

Getting a fix, it's ... sir, it's right behind us!

GIDEON

Dive, 180 degrees relative!

MATHESON

Downangle, 180.

GIDEON

Deploy countermeasures!

EXT. EXCALIBUR – ASTEROID FIELD

As it BLASTS straight down, a flurry of round crystalline objects flying out of the back of the ship just as

EXT. SHADOW HYBRID

FIRES, the beam striking the countermeasures, which deflect and refract the beam into various colors as they break it down into its various frequencies (many of them are destroyed in the process).

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As the place still takes a good shot from the reduced beam.

MATHESON

Countermeasures functional ... refracting energy into component frequencies. If they'd hit us full on—

GIDEON

We can't give them the chance. Rear guns, target enemy vessel, weapons and navigation only, I want that thing in one piece.

CREWPERSON

Aye, sir.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – ASTEROID FIELD

As it RETURNS FIRE from rear-mounted guns. Most of the burst are intercepted by the asteroids in-between them and the target, but a couple get through, scoring good hits.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As Matheson turns to Gideon

CREWPERSON

Partial hit ... minimal damage.

GIDEON

Come around for another pass. We have to cripple her before

—

MATHESON

Sir! Picking up power build in the enemy jump engines. They must've finished their repairs.

GIDEON

Damn it, if she jumps we'll lose her. Do we have a shot?

CREWPERSON

Negative. Too many asteroids between us.

Gideon looks to the screen, which shows the asteroid field and their relative positions there, with the two ships blocked from each other by the floating mountains.

MATHESON

She's accelerating ... ready to jump.

GIDEON

Stand by main guns. Target that asteroid, dead ahead of them.

MATHESON

Main guns on-line.

GIDEON

Fire.

The lights DIM.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – ASTEROID FIELD

As the main guns FIRE.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – ASTEROID FIELD

As the mountainous asteroid (practically a planetoid) ahead of the hybrid is HIT, and blasts into a million pieces, racing away in every direction at top speed, a cloud of them slamming into

EXT. SHADOW HYBRID

The cloud of supersonic hard rocks SLAMS into the hybrid, practically shredding it .. skinning away weapons and just wrecking all kinds of hell, incapacitating it.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As Matheson looks to Gideon, pleased.

MATHESON

Scanners are barely functional, but it looks like the debris has shredded the enemy instrumentation, navigation, and weapons. She's intact, but floating dead in space.

(lights rising)

Power returning. We can navigate.

GIDEON

Bring us closer. And scramble a boarding party.

MATHESON

Aye, sir.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – ASTEROID FIELD

As it closes on the enemy ship, floating dead in space.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE (COMP)

As they approach the main window, through which we can SEE the shadow hybrid.

MATHESON

That's really it, sir? The same one?

GIDEON

The same one ... or a modified version. It looks like there have been a few changes since it killed the Cerebus.

MATHESON

We're picking up a signal from the enemy ship.

GIDEON

Is it for us?

MATHESON

Negative ... it's a coded message.

GIDEON

Record it. Let me hear.

He touches a button, and we HEAR the digitally encoded signal, which sounds identifiably strange ... an almost melodic but scary quality to the sound. Then, abruptly, it cuts out.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Did we get it?

MATHESON

Aye, sir, it's –

CREWPERSON

Captain, jump engines on enemy ship are charging up.

GIDEON

I thought she couldn't navigate.

MATHESON

She can't.

GIDEON

Hell... get us away from here! She's going to self-destruct!

MATHESON

Full reverse, maximum burn!

EXT. EXCALIBUR – ASTEROID FIELD

As the Excalibur begins moving backwards as fast as the retros can move her.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

A sense of urgency:

CREWPERSON

Estimate twenty seconds to critical mass!

MATHESON

We're still inside the blast range.

GIDEON

Can we jump?

MATHESON

Not this fast after firing the mains.

CREWPERSON

Ten seconds –

MATHESON

It's going to be close –

EXT. ASTEROID FIELD

SEVERAL SHOTS:

The Excalibur racing backwards, knocking aside smaller asteroids,

The Shadow hybrid starting to glow up ...

Then the EXPLOSION, which shatters all the asteroids surrounding the Shadow Hybrid...

Sending a ripple effect of debris away ... the first shock waves hitting the Excalibur –

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

The place SHUDDERS badly with the impact, the lights momentarily dimming ... a couple of small spot fires break out here and there ... then the lights snap out...

EXT. EXCALIBUR – ASTEROID FIELD

The ship lurches badly for a moment, but steadies herself. The last vestiges of the blast, the second shock wave, rolls over the scene, but is partially blocked by a planetoid sized asteroid... if not for that, the Excalibur would be destroyed. The effect is that of an eclipse, the Excalibur in front of the Asteroid, which is in front of the coming shock wave, and the fiery corona silhouetting the asteroid momentarily wipes out our view of the Excalibur, unit finally

EXT. ASTEROID FIELD

As the light dies down, revealing the Excalibur damaged but intact.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

As the lights slowly come up again, people picking themselves up off the floor.

GIDEON

Damage report...

MATHESON

Power restored on all decks ... damage to forward hull, repair teams en route ... getting reports of injuries from several decks, Dr. Chambers is coordinating medical response...

GIDEON

Anyone killed?

MATHESON

No sir, not as far as I can tell.

GIDEON

Thank god for that much ... send a survey team out there, check the debris, if there's anything intact out there, I want it brought back.

MATHESON

Aye, sir.

Matheson moves off to comply. Gideon looks to the navigator, who was injured during the battle. His eyes saying what he can't ... that the captain's obsession did this. Gideon notes it, and moves off.

EXT. EXCALIBUR – ASTEROID FIELD

As an EVA team moves away from the ship, we PAN UP to a porthole.

INT. EXCALIBUR – HALLWAY (COMP)

Galen stands at the porthole looking out into space as Dureena joins him.

DUREENA

Is it over?

GALEN

For a little while.

DUREENA

I noticed you didn't get directly involved in the battle.

GALEN

It would not have been appropriate. There are some battles that cannot be fought by anyone but yourself. This was ... is .. one of them.

DUREENA

But you didn't leave, either. If we'd been destroyed, you would have died right along with him.

GALEN

We are entwined. It is our path.

DUREENA

Great. So where do I fit in?

GALEN

Squarely in the middle of the fire.

With that, Galen moves off.

DUREENA

I really hate it when you do that.

With no reply coming, she turns her attention back to the porthole.

EXT. ASTEROID FIELD

It's later, and we SEE a group of EVA suited hazmat teams coming back toward the ship.

MATHESON (V.O.)

EVA team reports they couldn't find anything larger than an

inch across. Everything was burned beyond recognition.

INT. CONFERENCE ROOM

Gideon is seated, going over the report, as Matheson waits.

GIDEON

All right ... continue on to the coordinates we got from the alien. We'll check out the area where they first ran into that thing, maybe we'll find something useful.

Matheson nods, exits, as Eilerson ENTERS.

EILERSON

I've been studying the record of the battle, and I found something I think might interest you.

He pops in a datacrystal which shows a distant shot of a Shadow vessel and the Shadow hybrid side by side.

EILERSON (CONT'D)

These ships were built by the Shadows, and ancient race that left known space about five years ago.

GIDEON

I've heard of them. The Drakh worked for them.

EILERSON

Yes, but this design isn't Drakh. It's definitely Shadow in origin. There aren't many close pictures of Shadow vessels because if you got too close you usually got destroyed, but as you can see, there is a definite resemblance.

(beat)

What if someone else ... has been doing the same thing?

Off Gideon's reaction to this, we go to

EXT. EXCALIBUR – ASTEROID FIELD

As it pulls away from CAMERA, we move into the floating maze of debris ... and something slowly tumbles toward us out of it. As it does, we see it more clearly: an old Kennedy silver half-dollar. As it continues moving end over end, PAST CAMERA, we

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT FOUR

TAG

FAD IN:

EXT. PLANET

It's a very nice planet, but that's not our main interest right now. We PAN ACROSS to the local moon, the Excalibur in FG between us and the moon.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE (COMP)

Gideon and Matheson stand at the window, looking out at the moon.

GIDEON

You sure these are the right coordinates?

MATHESON

Aye, sir.

GIDEON

Any sign of life?

MATHESON

Negative. High methane atmosphere, uninhabitable without breathers ... massive cratering in one area ... looks recent.

GIDEON

Yes, it does.

(dawning realization)

We're going down.

MATHESON

All right, I'll prep a shuttle.

GIDEON

No. Just a fighter. I'll drive. You'll fly GIB.

MATHESON

Aye, sir.

They move OS, Matheson curious about this.

EXT. MOON

As a thunderbolt races over the surface at a few hundred feet above the ground.

INT. THUNDERBOLT

Gideon's driving, Matheson riding GIB (Guy In Back).

MATHESON

There it is, sir.

EXT. MOON

As the thunderbolt races overhead, we PAN AROUND to REVEAL an area that has been glassed over, burned by a superheated blast sufficient to fuse sand. There's some sign of heavy lifting equipment sticking out of the fused sand.

MATHESON (V.O.)

Whatever was here ... it's gone now. An area this big ... could it have been a construction site? Maybe this is where they made that ship.

INT. THUNDERBOLT

As they continue their flyby, we begin to FEATURE Gideon.

GIDEON

Maybe ... that's one of the three things that worry me. You don't just build one ship like that. If there's one ... there are bound to be more.

MATHESON

What are the other two?

GIDEON

If there are more than one of those ships, the one we chased may not have been the one that killed my ship. Which means

there's still a score to settle with somebody. Beyond that ... take a good look at that blast site, Lieutenant. The way the impact has fused the sand into glass. Look familiar?

MATHESON

(realization)

It's the same signature blast made by the main guns on the Excalibur.

GIDEON

Exactly. That's why I didn't want anyone else on the crew to see this.

(beat)

It appears that we have an opposite number, Lieutenant.

EXT. MOON

As the thunderbolt zooms past overhead, reflected in the fused sand beneath.

INT. EXCALIBUR – MEDBAY

It's calmer now, Chambers sitting at last, looking bushed, as Dureena ENTERS.

CHAMBERS

Well ... it's our wandering star. You've been all over the place today.

DUREENA

Just thought I'd come by and see how you were doing.

CHAMBERS

Exhausted ... but the good news is, we didn't lose anyone. Not one person. Came close a few times, but we got through without any casualties.

DUREENA

The captain will be pleased ... it'd be hard to explain fatalities when we're supposed to be just sitting quietly in sector 840 and avoiding trouble. As for the wandering ...

(beat)

I always feel useless during the big fights ... not much for a thief to do against a big ship. Staying busy keeps me from thinking about that. I just wish there was more I could do.

CHAMBERS

Be careful what you ask for, Dureena. So where's Galen? Usually where you are, he isn't far behind.

DUREENA

He's in his ship. One thing I've learned: When he's in there, I don't bother him. Ever.

INT. FLIGHT DECK (COMP)

We SEE Galen's flyer parked among the other ships.

INT. GALEN'S SHIP (COMP)

As before, we see nothing of it except the shadows and the darkness. Except this time, there's a translucent god-screen at one side, where we SEE another technomage, DIRK.

DIRK

Are you sure it was Shadow Tech?

GALEN

Positive.

DIRK

Then it seems your choice to leave us was correct after all.
Does the captain know of our involvement?

GALEN

No. Not yet. But he will, in time.

DIRK

Perhaps. But you should do all you can to delay that particular
revelation.

GALEN

I will do ... what is right.

DIRK

That is not an answer, Galen.

GALEN

Quite true.

With a motion, the image disappears, leaving only Galen. He moves
off UNDER:

GIDEON (V.O.)

Today everything changed.

INT. GIDEON'S QUARTERS – NIGHT

Gideon is restless, moving through the room until finally sitting on the
bedside UNDER:

GIDEON (V.O.)

Until today, there were still days when I doubted myself ...
wondered if I'd really seen what I saw that day. No more. I've
proven that these ships exist. But that's not the same thing as
proving that one of them killed the Cerberus. Before I can
bring this back home, I need more information, to narrow the
gap between what I know ... and what I can prove.

He toggles his wrist link.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

Ship ... Executive order: maintain scan 24 hours per day for
the frequency we intercepted from the enemy ship. Notify me,
and me alone, if the signal is detected.

COMPUTER

Confirmed.

GIDEON

Play it again.

The sound of the signal we heard before fills the room. As Gideon lies
back on the bed, to listen, to memorize it, we

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW