

Crusade 1x15 Value Judgements

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TEASER

FADE IN:

EXT. EXCALIBUR (CGI) – AFTERNOON

We see the Excalibur near a rotating space station similar to the transfer point at IO. A large moon and planet are in the BG. The station nearest the moon. Superimpose *Space Dock, Tarriff's Colony*.

GIDEON (V.O.)

Let me get this straight ...

INT. EXCALIBUR BRIDGE

GIDEON is speaking with the GOVERNOR of Tarriff's Colony on screen. MATHESON stands behind Gideon.

GIDEON

You want us to pay a bribe so we can come down to the planet?

GOVERNOR (ON SCREEN)

It's the only way you're going to get down to the moon. Be reasonable, Captain. This is a commercial colony. There has to be something in it for us. Why is this so troubling for you?

GIDEON

It's the principle of the thing. You let IPX and their crew down on the moon for free.

GOVERNOR (ON SCREEN)

That's different. IPX made special arrangements with us when the relic was discovered by our team of ice miners working on the local moon. EarthGov did not. Our economy functions on bribes, bets, and –

GIDEON

And extortion.

GOVERNOR (ON SCREEN)

An unpleasant word. Let's just say we're unconventional.

GIDEON

All right then.

(beat)

I'll make a bet with you. Over a game of poker. If I win, our officers can accompany IPX on the dig for free. That way we can provide proper supervision, get our medical team down to examine anything that might be a cure to the Drakh plague.

GOVERNOR (ON SCREEN)

And if you lose?

GIDEON

Then we pay the fee.

GOVERNOR (ON SCREEN)

I accept. I've never gambled with an officer before. It should be most ... amusing.

The Governor ends the call. Matheson appears behind Gideon.

MATHESON

You'd better win.

GIDEON

It's Friday. I never lose on Fridays.

EXT. MOON (CGI)

A geodesic dome covers a bowl-shaped area cut into the surface.

INT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Stone walls, which curve around bowl-like. EILERSON is working here with a team of 5 IPX Scouts. The mining tunnel gives way to an alien doorway. It's very elaborate and in the center of the door is an obvious locking mechanism. His link BREEPS.

EILERSON

Yes?

GIDEON (ON LINK)

Gideon here. What's your status?

EILERSON

We analyzed the mineral surrounding the vault, and we can't risk blasting our way in. We'd bring the whole place down. We have to find a non-destructive way to open it.

(beat)

We've also made a loose translation of the language surrounding the lock. It makes repeated promises to "enrich anyone's life" beyond the door.

GIDEON (ON LINK)

Meaning, what?

EILERSON

Well, I'm basing their language on something I've seen that's similar, though I really can't make a definitive analysis of the word "enrich." It could be figurative or literal.

(beat)

If it literally means to make us rich, we'd better get more than one IPX shuttle down here to carry away the loot. How are the negotiations going?

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

GIDEON

Lousy. These people definitely have issues with authority figures. They don't like uniforms, officers, or EarthGov, in that order. Keep trying to find out what's on the other side of that door, we'll be there as soon as we can.

(beat)

Excalibur out.

INT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE – MOMENTS LATER

Two of the Technicians are taking surface scans of the door. Eilerson is checking out a third Technician's comp pad report. He hands back the comp pad to the Technician when there is a huge shock wave effect from the door and the two IPX team members are blasted back, dropping their instruments and collapsing to the floor. The surge sends everyone sprawling for a moment. Then Eilerson gets up.

EILERSON

(running to them)
Miller! Thompson!

The two Techs look bad, some blood coming from the mouth and nose.

EILERSON (CONT'D)

Oh, hell.

(into wristlink)

We've had a major accident. Alert Dr. Chambers. Bringing two wounded to Medbay.

We end on the two Technicians being hauled away, and Eilerson looks at the door very concerned.

FADE OUT.

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

EXT. EXCALIBUR (CGI) – AFTERNOON

An establisher.

INT. MEDBAY

CHAMBERS is going over one of the injured IPX Techs. Eilerson is here, in mid discussion with her.

EILERSON

This is my primary team. It's like losing both my hands during a dig. I've got to have them with me. How long will they be out of commission?

CHAMBERS

(point blank)

They've both suffered from a major *stroke*. Major. Meaning life support. You're lucky they're even alive.

This hits Eilerson pretty hard.

CHAMBERS (CONT'D)

Now that we're past the histrionics, tell me exactly what happened.

Chambers goes over to a monitor with brain-wave readouts.

EILERSON

They were conducting preliminary scans on the doors to the inner vault. They weren't reading anything unusual from it when they got hurt.

CHAMBERS

I'm asking because they've been hit by something like a telepathic mind blast. Ever seen what a high level telepath can do to a normal person's brain?

EILERSON

I've heard a few stories ... horror stories from the Telepath Crisis, mostly.

CHAMBERS

Here. Take a look at this.

(pointing to screen)

A high-level telepath can twist up a normal's brain like a wet washcloth. With one telepathic burst, they can send someone into a stroke by twisting neural pathways and synapses. It's a nasty way to screw someone up for life. Paralysis and nerve damage can occur. Miller and Thompson may not recover completely from this.

EILERSON

What are you saying? A telepath mind-fragged my assistants?

Matheson enters the room. From his look, he overheard their discussion, but says nothing.

MATHESON

(To Chambers)

You wanted to see me?

CHAMBERS

Take a look at this for a minute. I've reconstructed a model of the accident based on the condition of each patient's brain.

(plays brain diagram)

What do you make of it?

MATHESON

It looks like a telepathic attack.

EILERSON

Can you do something like that?

MATHESON

Not at that magnitude. And honestly, I wouldn't want to. That kind of thing can leave irreparable damage.

Chambers and Eilerson exchange a look.

MATHESON (CONT'D)

What did this?

EILERSON

I guess that's what we're wondering. It would appear that someone behind the door attacked my team mates.

MATHESON

Are you sure about that?

CHAMBERS

Since you're a telepath, we were hoping you could tell us more about what happened.

MATHESON

(investigates the screen)

If this is accurate, it didn't leave a psychic imprint. Which means a "person" didn't do it. Which leads me to think it's a defense system of this vault.

EILERSON

Can something like that be possible?

MATHESON

I've heard stories about older races who mastered telepathic activity. They used the energy to set booby traps or lock doors.

(intrigued)

This may be a telepathic lock. But it's incredibly powerful.

EILERSON

Can you disarm it?

MATHESON

I don't know. I'd have to take a closer look at it.

CHAMBERS

Thanks, Lieutenant. At least now we have an idea of what we're dealing with.

MATHESON

Of course. I'll get ready to head down.

(looks at patients)

Are they going to be all right?

CHAMBERS

We'll do the best we can.

(beat)

Lieutenant. I thought no one can go planetside until the Captain works out a fair bargain.

MATHESON

That's right. But it's Friday, so I expect to hear we can come down at any time.

EXT. SPACE STATION (CGI)

Just to establish, then

INT. DARK BAR ROOM

The scene: a darkened table with an overhanging lamp. Gideon and Governor are seated across from each other at the table, playing poker. Both have excellent poker faces. The silence and tension should be obvious to the audience within a few moments.

GOVERNOR

I underestimated you, Captain. Most EarthForce officials are too uptight to play for any odds let alone such high stakes.

GIDEON

Well, this assumption on your part cost you quite a bit of money.

Gideon puts down his cards. It's a winning hand.

GOVERNOR

You are one lucky son of a bitch. Almost too lucky.

(accusing Gideon of being one...)
Telepath lucky.

GIDEON
You can check my records if you like.

GOVERNOR
I'll take your word for it.
(making a point)

We don't like telepaths here. There's only one teep in the whole colony. Name's Al. And we keep well away from him. He lives just outside of town. He's dangerous.

GIDEON
(rising)
Coming from you, I'd consider "dangerous" a form of high praise.

GOVERNOR
(following)
You're a very interesting man, Captain. I thought with a name like Gideon ... you'd be a religious sort. Weren't the Gideons responsible for distributing Bibles back in Earth Territories ... ?

GIDEON
(opening door)
If I lived up to my name, well, I'd be in every hotel room in Earth space.

GOVERNOR
Not that the women would mind, certainly.

Gideon takes a moment to digest this comment.

GOVERNOR (CONT'D)
You're free to come and go with your team. We'll stand down. But, I'd be careful if I were you. You won a card game against *me*, but not against the entire colony. If something happens I'm in no way responsible for it.

GIDEON
Now wait a min—

GOVERNOR
Just a warning, Captain.

INT. STATION HALLWAY

All the sets are modified Babylon 5 walls and dressing; similar space station. Earth-built. The door closes on Gideon. Gideon's wristlink CHIRPS.

GIDEON

Yes?

MATHESON (ON LINK)

There was an accident at the site. Two of Eilerson's crew were attacked by a telepathic device. We think it was part of the vault.

(beat)

I want permission to come down and investigate it.

GIDEON

I don't know. Even though we just got permission to come down, this place is pretty hostile.

MATHESON (ON LINK)

Then I'll come down in plain clothes.

GIDEON

Hell, in plain clothes, we'd need a five o'clock shadow and a few broken teeth before we'd blend in down here. And they really don't like telepaths.

(beat)

Besides, I want a look at this thing myself, before anyone else gets hurt.

MATHESON (ON LINK)

But, sir.

Two seedy-looking Pedestrians walk by Gideon and look suspiciously at him. He's attracting attention.

GIDEON

No, not yet. And I mean that. I'll talk to you later.

Gideon ends the call abruptly and walks away from the two Pedestrians.

EXT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE (CGI)

Two shuttles land near the site. One Gideon's and one is Eilerson's.

INT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Gideon enters and looks at the vault. Eilerson walks into frame.

EILERSON

I understand you wanted the rest of the crew to stay on the Excalibur.

GIDEON

Until I've had a chance to take a look at how dangerous this thing is, yes.

(beat)

So what's she doing here??

DUREENA is standing behind them. Smug.

EILERSON

How did you ... ?

DUREENA

I'm not gonna miss an opportunity to come down to a Thieves Den like this. Besides, you need a real expert to look at this lock.

EILERSON

But how did you get down here? You weren't on the shuttle when I left.

DUREENA

Yes I was.

(beat)

Just because you didn't *see* me doesn't mean I wasn't there.

GIDEON

I see you're taking after Galen again.

DUREENA

Actually, he's been taking after me.

(off their disbelief)

Looks, it's *easy* for a TechnoMage to walk around unseen. He's got half a mile of raw circuitry plugged into his back. He can

do a lot of fancy tricks.

(beat)

But I can do a hell of a lot better being invisible than our TechnoMage. And I don't need anything but my wits for that.

As she walks toward the site's entrance.

DUREENA (CONT'D)

Besides, I came down to help pick your lock. Not to talk shop.

(looking back)

So, are you coming or what?

They go inside, as we pan to a crate of supplies. There's a small hole in one, with a lens inside.

INT. STATION SLUM

Their conversation is being observed on a hand-held TV by THUG #1. He's heard the whole conversation.

He moves off screen to tell his buddies what he's heard.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

EXT. EXCALIBUR (CGI)

An establisher.

INT. EXCALIBUR – BRIDGE

Matheson and Chambers are here. He checks off a clipboard and hands it to an Ensign.

MATHESON

I know it shouldn't bother me, but if whatever's down there really is telepathic, I shouldn't be here on the ship when I know I could be helping.

CHAMBERS

You know Gideon. He doesn't like anyone wounded on his watch. Those two IPX technicians suffered severe damage. He wants to know what we're getting into.

MATHESON

(he's heard this a lot)

A "hands-on" Captain.

CHAMBERS

The best kind. Wouldn't you want to see what you were dealing with before sending off someone you care about to do the same thing?

MATHESON

Yes, I would. That's exactly my point. Why doesn't he let *me* go down and risk it? He's the Captain. He isn't expendable.

(She's shaking her head with smile)

Of course, putting himself in the line of fire is commendable. I just think he's got a death wish some days.

INT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Dureena, without touching anything, is examining the exterior of the lock. She then approaches an on-site monitor with a highly detailed schematic showing all the lock's pathways.

DUREENA

It's pretty much what I thought.

(beat)

These are all feints. Dead ends. The locking mechanisms lead nowhere. It's set up to keep someone preoccupied.

GIDEON

So the person would be a perfect target for an attack. They'd be distracted by tracing the lock back until they hit an advanced, telepathic ... land mind.

DUREENA

Basically. You've got yourself an auto-defense system here. And it's a killer. I know you don't like the idea, but you'd better get Matheson down here to have a look.

INT. STATION SLUM

A few THUGS are gathered around. One of them comes into frame and speaks to the Others.

THUG #1

I just overheard an interesting conversation. There are EarthForce pigs at that dig outside of town.

THUG #2

EarthForce? Must really be something special to draw their attention.

THUG #1

If it's special it belongs to us, not a bunch of Earthers. Besides, it could be valuable.

THUG #2

So how do we get to it?

THUG #1

I got a way. Meanwhile, we wait.

There is general agreement.

EXT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE (CGI)

We pull back from the site, to the upper atmosphere of the planet and then the Excalibur. We see a shuttle launch from the Excalibur and head past the station toward the darkening side of the moon.

INT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Matheson arrives, with Chambers following behind him.

GIDEON

You got down here fast.

MATHESON

I've been ready to go for hours. As we were on approach, I could feel this thing down here. From two miles off.

EILERSON

Interesting.

GIDEON

Not the adjective I would have chosen.

(to Matheson)

I want to know how dangerous it is, without taking any chances that would give my first officer a stroke.

(pointedly)

Are we clear on that?

Matheson nods to Gideon

MATHESON

(to Chambers)

I need you to stick close, in case something goes wrong.

CHAMBERS

(monitoring with a device in hand)

I'm ready.

MATHESON

Let's see what's inside this thing ...

P.O.V. MATHESON (COMP)

Matheson concentrates. Closing his eyes, he seems to be doing okay with his mental search. We can see something visual against the door, letting the audience know there's psychic power there. A COMP like in "The Corps is Mother the Corps is Father." He begins to make some progress and then is hit by a mind blast.

INT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Matheson reels back a bit, but his expression shows he fights most of it off. Chambers and Gideon catch him as he goes down, and Chambers runs a few diagnostics on him with a hand scanner.

CHAMBERS

He's okay. His EEG readings are high, but no damage.

Chambers pops a smelling salt gadget under Matheson's nose and he comes to. He sits up.

MATHESON

(steadying)

What a ride.

GIDEON
What happened?

MATHESON

The attack is ... massive. From my own experiences in the Psi Corps, I'd say it's comparable to a telepath rated P10 or higher.

GIDEON
And you're a P6.

MATHESON

Right. No way I can stand up to that thing. As you ... probably noticed. We're going to have to find a P10 or higher to get in there.

GIDEON

The Governor said there's a telepath back on the station. Everyone avoids him. All I've got is a first name. "Al." With any luck, we might be able to find him.

EILERSON

Well-liked or not, money talks. We can pay him to come here and help us out.

MATHESON
No last name?

GIDEON
Not that he mentioned.

Matheson and Chambers trade a look. Gideon exits, and the others follow.

INT. STATION HALLWAY

Along the hallway are rental quarters, similar to Babylon 5's Down Below. Matheson walks beside Gideon, ahead of the group.

MATHESON
Sir. Can I speak freely for a moment?

GIDEON
Of course.

MATHESON

It would be better, if you'd let me come planetside more often. I could have helped Eilerson with this vault ... could have prevented the accident with the technicians.

GIDEON

You can't be everywhere at once to protect everyone.

MATHESON

That's an odd statement, coming from you.

(off his look)

Look, it's just ...

GIDEON

(with feeling)

John, the Excalibur means more to me than my own life. I am expendable. This mission is not. And Excalibur is the very symbol of this mission. When I leave her in your hands, I can focus on the task at hand. If I have one hundred things to worry about, I know that one of them is safe with you.

(beat)

I know I don't say it enough, but you're my right hand. Excalibur is the one constant in my life right now and when I'm away from her, I can rest assured that she's going to be all right, no matter how long I'm away, or what might happen, as long as she's under your charge. I don't want to jinx that. You understand?

MATHESON

(a bit proud)

Yes, sir. I do. Thank you.

INT. BESTER'S QUARTERS

During this speech we pan the room, starting on a far end with his mementos. We come to focus on a hearth burning. We slowly realize this is an environmental video of a hearth, a la "Video Aquarium".

VOICE (V.O.)

You have been stripped of all rank and commission. You are no longer a member of the Psi Corps. You have undeniable misused your power. The following charges have been brought against you.

(the first in a list)

You are charged with the innocent slaughter of normal Human citizens during your previous employment as a member of the Meta Pol.

We begin to pan slowly again. There are feet resting on an ottoman nearby, in black slippers with the hint of a lap-blanket thrown over the legs.

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(beat)

How do you plead?

BESTER (V.O.)

Not guilty.

VOICE (V.O.)

We have witnesses sworn under oath, interns who served under your command who testified to the acts you committed. They confirm your guilt –

BESTER (V.O.)

Under torture ... anyone will admit anything about anybody. These are false accusations.

The sound of a crowd can be heard loudly and angrily SHOUTING at the comment and insinuation made.

The sound of a Judge BANGING his gavel upon a podium.

VOICE (V.O.)

(above the noise)

YOU have been ACCUSED of crimes of war. Committing acts of murder and inhumanity against normal citizens during and before the war.

(beat)

Committing blackmail, extortion, use of bodily harm, and the systematic murder of your own people. The Corps does not kill its own telepaths. And yet this court has evidence that you killed anyone who opposed your views.

The crowd is LOUDER, sounds of CHEERING ON and ANGER are growing.

We PULL BACK to

“AL” BESTER, sitting back in his large wingback Victorian chair. You can’t see his face, because he is sitting facing the fireplace and his body is enclosed in Shadows.

VOICE (V.O.) (CONT’D)

HOW ... Do ... You ... Plead?

Despite what is playing in his mind, Bester’s entire demeanor is one of peace and serenity.

We MOVE IN close to a head and shoulders hot for his line.

BESTER

(quietly, resolutely)

Not guilty.

SHOUTS are heard. CRIES ring out to “KILL HIM NOW” and “JUST SHOOT HIM.”

The CROWD starts to die down, but we hear the VOICES of the team from the Excalibur. They sound distant, but then they begin to get closer.

Intercut this with the team approaching his quarters.

“AL” BESTER sits up, realizing these are real voices, real minds coming toward his house. He is still in Shadows.

GIDEON (V.O.)

We’d better hope he’s strong enough to get us into the vault.

INT. HALLWAY TO QUARTERS

EILERSON

Maybe we can combine forces, Lieutenant Matheson and he could ...

INT. BESTER’S QUARTERS

Closer now. AL throws the blanket of his legs and stands up. Note to wardrobe: he has no gloves on.

MATHESON (V.O.)

It *doesn’t* work that way, Eileron.

DUREENA (V.O.)

Well, if he's not strong enough to help us, we'll just have to look elsewhere.

CHAMBERS (V.O.)

But we have to think about the time involved ...

AL puts his tea cup down. He removes his slippers and puts on a nice pair of shoes from a nearby shoe rack.

We see only side or back profiles of his face. Nothing definitive as he evades the camera angles for a face-on shot.

He stays in his smoking jacket. It's a nice black velvet. In fact, everything he's wearing is black.

INT. HALLWAY TO QUARTERS

Gideon looks back to Chambers

GIDEON

That's the problem. We're always on a clock. But the faster we get into this vault, the sooner we learn if it holds a cure for the plague.

INT HALLWAY / BESTER'S DOOR

Gideon and the crew walk up to the door, and just as he's about to use the chime, the door opens. Bester greets them with a smile.

BESTER

Hello, Captain Gideon. Dr. Chambers. Dureena Nafeel. Mr. Eilerson. And of course, a cordial greeting to you Lieutenant Matheson.

(beat)

It's been a very long time since we last saw one another.

We close in on Matheson's expression of recognition and alarm.

MATHESON

Al ...

(beat – horrified)

ALFRED BESTER!!!

Gideon turns around quickly, stunned by the admission. On this we ...

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. HALLWAY / BESTER'S DOOR

Right where we left off.

MATHESON

Captain, we have to take this man into custody. He's ... it's Al Bester. A war criminal, indicted after the Telepath Crisis.

BESTER

Crisis.

(sniffs derisively)

It was a WAR, not a crisis. I don't know why everyone feels the need to minimize it.

(beat)

Won't you come in? I was just having some tea. I can make some for us all.

GIDEON

Just a minute.

Bester turns and looks back at them.

GIDEON (CONT'D)

That's all you're going to say? It was a War, not a Crisis .. won't you have some tea?

BESTER

Yes.

(beat)

And the tea is getting cold.

Bester enters into his quarters. Gideon looks to Matheson.

MATHESON

You can't ask that man for help. He's guilty of the slaughter of hundreds of innocent mundanes. He's a notorious criminal. The Government's been trying to catch him for years. Each time, he's managed to escape before they could get to him.

EILERSON

I happen to *like* tea.
(he steps inside the doorway)

GIDEON

We should at least consider *all* the possibilities, Lieutenant, before we make any judgements.

Gideon hesitates a moment. Then enters. The others follow him hesitantly. Matheson does not go inside. We stay on Matheson, angry, at the doorway. Wondering what to do.

INT. QUARTERS – LATER

Eilerson and Bester are having a cup of tea in the same small front room, in two wing-back Victorian style chairs.

EILERSON

So as you can see, IPX has a vested interest in this site.

BESTER

Yes ... I know all about IPX and its vested interests, Mr. Eilerson. But, you haven't named a price.

GIDEON

(stepping in)
The price is negotiable. What isn't is turning yourself in if you are indeed a fugitive.

BESTER

I never fancied myself a martyr.

GIDEON

It's not martyrdom. It's due process.

BESTER

I'm sure there are a lot of women from the Salem Witch Trials who would argue that point with you, Captain. They would

make you understand that to pacify an angry crowd, scapegoats must be found ... Not that our telepath crisis is over, the *right* people must be punished and history must be rewritten from the point of view of those who won.

(beat)

My interrogators would not find my arguments or evidence sufficient. They've set my trial for failure. I would be killed.

GIDEON

Even though it's disbanded, I didn't think the Corps was allowed to kill its own members. Wasn't that against Psi Corps regulations?

MATHESON

(entering behind Gideon)

Yes, it was. Disbanded or not: murder, dissection, torture ... was all against Psi Corps regulations. Right, Mr. Bester?

BESTER

(to Gideon)

Teeps don't fight other teeps. When you are taught that the Corps is your Mother and Father ... each telepath becomes your brother or sister.

(beat – to Matheson)

It is never right to divide a family. Or to kill them. For any reason.

MATHESON

(taking the challenge)

And what about killing normal Humans? Why don't you tell them how many normals you killed while you were a Psi Cop?

BESTER

You see, Captain? These are the kinds of insults I would be forced to hear if I were to turn myself in, as you suggest. My track record is clean. But apparently someone somewhere is making sure that it isn't clean anymore. And as long as they aren't playing fair, well then, neither am I.

EILERSON

I don't mean to butt in ...

(obviously he is but he continues)

But we still need your help to unlock the door at the archaeological expedition.

(beat)

None of this has *anything* to do with why we're here.

He is met by a resentful, but full, silence.

EILERSON (CONT'D)

(to Bester)

So, will you help us?

BESTER

Of course. In exchange for help from you.

GIDEON

What help?

BESTER

It's time for me to leave this planet for greener pastures. They tire of me here, and there is very little to keep me among such .. endearing people.

(beat)

There are bloodhounds out there, looking for me lately. I've had reason to believe they're closing in. I need a way out.

(beat)

I want the Excalibur to take me to my next destination. No one is going to look for a war criminal there. I want off-planet with no questions, no conditions, and no snooping. Or we have no deal.

Gideon looks to his crew. There is mixed response. Eileron looks like he has no problems with it. Dureena looks skeptical, Chambers and Matheson look obstinate.

GIDEON

Give us a chance to talk it over. Because ... what you're asking isn't right.

BESTER

I guess it depends on which side of the right you're on. How much do you value what's in that vault? How much do you need my help to get it? How little time do you have left to find a cure before the body count starts?

Gideon stares at him for a moment, and then Bester leaves into an adjoining room.

EXT. DARK SHIP (CGI)

It looks like an Earth design, but sleek and silent. Like the 2267 equivalent of a Stealth Bomber.

INT. DARK SHIP

Inside there's a helmeted pilot.

PILOT #2 (V.O.)

We've just received confirmation. Mr. Bester is on Tarriff's Colony. Preparing strike mission to recover him.

PILOT #1

Good. I'll send word to Top Dog. Make your best speed and run silent on all channels.

PILOT #2 (V.O.)

Aye, sir.

EXT. DARK SHIPS (CGI)

Another ship pulls up alongside the first one, seemingly out of nowhere (though not technically out of nowhere). And the two ships glide off through the darkness of space.

INT. BESTER'S QUARTERS

Gideon, Matheson, and Chambers are seated. Dureena is standing and Eilerson is pacing a bit. Bester is still in the back room.

DUREENA

Look, we need to make a decision. Personally, I don't care.

(off Matheson's look)

I don't! I don't mean to offend you, but I'm putting the mission before everything else.

(beat)

What's in the vault might be the cure. Don't you think that's worth it?

CHAMBERS

The Rangers *said* this was a very good possibility, if not for a cure, then for the medical knowledge available within the site. It's not a sure deal but it's too good an opportunity to pass up.

MATHESON

We can send for another telepath. It will only delay us a few days. We *can't* help this man.

DUREENA

How do you know he's guilty?

MATHESON

I read the charges against him.

DUREENA

Charges are one thing, guilt is another. How do you *know*?

MATHESON

I just do.

DUREENA

Were you ever around when he committed any crimes against normals?

MATHESON

No! Of course not!

(restraining himself)

That would make me an accessory.

DUREENA

Then how do you know the records aren't lying about him?
What makes you *sure* he's a bad person?

MATHESON

For a telepath, it's a gut instinct ... only stronger. You won't get a clearer signal about someone unless you read their minds.

INT. ADJACENT ROOM

Bester is seated at his desk. A small pocket-com sitting on the table goes off with a red indicator light. He watches it, with a pensive expression. It reads: *Warning. Pursuit team en route, sighted in this sector.*

MATHESON (V.O.)

I met him a long time ago. I signed up for the internship exam for Psi Cops once. I didn't pass the exam, but I met him and I knew then and there that he wasn't quite ... whole. There was

something cold and empty about the man.

INT. BESTER'S QUARTERS

Matheson finishes up.

MATHESON

There were always rumors about how he'd bend the rules or do things to hurt mundanes. Because of what I'd heard, I stayed away from him.

DUREENA

So, based on a few rumors, you want us to forget his help –

MATHESON

(standing)

I don't expect you to understand. I'm just asking you to trust me on this.

GIDEON

All right. I told you I trust you, John. So, we'll wait and get help. However you want to handle this ... it's .. your people, so it's your call.

The door opens quietly from behind them. Bester comes out.

BESTER

I've decided. I'd like to help you out. If not for your people, then for the thousands of telepaths that will die on Earth, if we don't find a cure to the Drakh plague. More importantly ... your incessant arguing is giving me a migraine ... so I've come up with a proposition that will make the decision easy for you.

There's a pause as everyone steps away from him and looks with concern.

GIDEON

But we've already made our decision.

BESTER

Then, you've made the wrong one.

(beat)

You *will* take me with you.

(off their reactions)

Did you think that I'd let you argue all this time, so that you could simply decide "No, let's turn him in and go about our business quietly, that's the right thing to do" ... ?

(beat)

Don't worry. I won't re-wire your minds to a different decision.

(beat)

As I said, I am running out of time. My enemies are on the move to find me again. If you don't take me with you, and I am captured, I have no qualms about naming Lieutenant Matheson as one of my conspirators during the Telepath Crisis.

(beat)

I assure you that anything I am found guilty of ... torture, conspiracy, or murder ... I will make absolutely certain that he is implicated as well.

We CLOSE IN on Gideon's reaction to this cold twist of the knife. Matheson looks like a crushed man, completely at the whim of this devastating, loathsome person as we

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

They come in through the doorway with Bester in the lead.

BESTER

It will take me a moment to prepare. Be aware that anything meant to distract me will only result in all of us suffering from massive brain trauma.

(beat)

Because when that lock and I come in contact with one another ... the radius of affected beings will be much, much larger than it was before.

GIDEON

I think I'm beginning to understand what you mean by a bad gut feeling. Remind me never to doubt your instincts, Lieutenant.

MATHESON

Yes, sir.

CLOSE UP – BESTER

Bester takes a moment to concentrate. We hear GEARS and MECHANISMS start to unlock deep within the vault. We see the same effect we did with Matheson earlier.

CLOSE UP – DOOR/LOCK

There are sounds of depressurizations, and a bit of steam or fog comes rolling out of the door. It was once seamless but it's now split in a jagged edge down the middle making two doors sliding apart and open from each other.

INT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Bester steps back, a bit woozy for only an instant. Eilerson peeks in. Chambers is right behind him.

INT. VAULT

We see Eilerson walk inside, carefully. Chambers right behind him with a scanner out, making sure it's safe.

We PULL BACK to reveal the inner chamber. It's empty. The walls are made from bedrock. They are cragged and irregularly cut. It looks natural, not finished over.

PUSH IN on Eilerson's reaction. We hear RUNNING WATER.

EILERSON

This is it?

CHAMBERS

Looks like we went all this way for nothing.

DUREENA

(behind them)

You guys are always missing the point.

(moving forward)

I keep forgetting that your culture has come to rely on everything but

nature.

Dureena goes to the far end of the room, where we see a waterfall, very small, like a trickle, cascading down the rocks. Where it falls against the rocks, we see they have been turned a beautiful emerald green, and clear.

CHAMBERS

What do you mean?

DUREENA

There are other healing alternatives. My people, for example, stayed away from doctors. No offense.

(beat)

It wasn't customary to seek that kind of medical help. We preferred natural remedies instead. We had what you would consider Herbalists. They knew the secrets of nature. The healing properties of the earth, fire, wind and

(lets water run over her hand – looks to Chambers)

... water.

Dureena turns to look at Chambers, who gets what she's saying.

CHAMBERS

(pulling out a container from her pack)

Right. We can analyze this.

Chambers gets the container under the waterfall and fills it up. Dureena bends down and gathers up some of the clear green rocks that have fallen to the base of the wall.

CHAMBERS (CONT'D)

Do you think they're valuable?

DUREENA

I think they're probably a part of this place. A potential cure.

(beat)

We can't afford to overlook anything.

INT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Dureena and Chambers walk out of the vault. Eilerson is still looking on the ground for anything of value.

CHAMBERS
Finished.

Behind them, the door starts closing.

INT. VAULT

Eilerson has found something, a scroll case, which was dug into the ground and covered by dust. He's digging it out when the door starts to close.

Eilerson sees the door closing and he digs faster.

INT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

GIDEON
EILERSON!!! Get out of there!

EILERSON (O.S.)
I found something.

GIDEON
(to Bester)
Can't you keep the door open?

BESTER
No. It's closing because you got what you came for.

INT. VAULT

Eilerson gives one final yank to the scroll and it comes out of the ground.

He launches himself toward the door.

CLOSE UP – DOOR

Eilerson comes sliding out of the door, narrowly avoiding being crushed.

GIDEON
What's that?

EILERSON

I don't know. I'm hoping it's instructions.

Dureena and Chambers exchange excited smiles.

EXT. ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE (CGI)

A shuttle takes off.

INT. SHUTTLE

As the PILOT looks to Gideon.

SHUTTLE PILOT

We're getting a signal from the station – Governor wants to talk to you before you can take this stuff on board the Excalibur.

GIDEON

Everywhere you go there's always a bureaucracy. All right. This shouldn't take long.

INT. SPACE STATION – CARGO BAY

The group comes through. Bester is the last out of the shuttle.

As the group comes out of the entrance, they're ambushed by 12 THUGS. Most of the Thugs have weapons out.

A fight breaks out.

GIDEON

(during the fight)

What the hell do you want?

THUG #1

We want the loot you came here for. We're not letting EarthForce scum take anything valuable off our planet.
(throwing a punch)

GIDEON

(ducking it)

We don't have anything! There was nothing in there.

THUG #1

Yeah, right! A lying, EarthForce scum and his telepathic pals. I'm not buying it.

Gideon gets a solid punch on the Guy, but is tackled from behind by Another One, holding a knife.

Matheson who has managed to duck out of most of the fighting, sees Gideon go down with the Guy with the knife. He jumps into the middle of the fray.

MATHESON

Matt!!

Matheson pounces on the Guy with the knife. He wrenches the hand with the knife behind the man's back.

Another Thug comes up to Matheson from behind. Matheson is engrossed in the one he's on, and the second Thug goes to hit Matheson over the head with a stern looking police club.

P.O.V. MATHESON (COMP)

We see the Thug pull back for a strike, and then he is in massive pain. (We see a shock wave effect of a mind blast here at the Thug). He drops the club and grabs his head, screaming. He falls to the ground, dead.

Directly in Matheson's eye line, after the man drops, we see Bester.

INT. CARGO BAY

Matheson looks to everyone. They realize Bester saved Matheson's life.

The other Thugs see this and without much delay, they haul off, not wanting to be another target for Bester's powers.

CLOSE UP – MATHESON

He realizes Bester just saved his life.

EXT. EXCALIBUR (CGI) – LATER

The ship jumps into HyperSpace.

INT. MEDBAY

Chambers is here with Dureena, and they're analyzing the stones and the spring water they found at the planet.

CHAMBERS

We'll know more in 48 hours.

(petting the machine)

This thing cost my people back home a fortune, but we put every penny into it, because when it scans, it leaves no stone unturned.

DUREENA

Great.

They sit in silence for a moment, watching the spring water swirl through several clear tubes, vials, tumblers, through different lights. The machine sounds like a CPU on a computer with a slight whirring noise as it works.

Eilerson enters.

EILERSON

(stops before them)

I've been working on the translation.

DUREENA

What's it say?

EILERSON

It's quite interesting.

(he unrolls the scroll)

"We left because we no longer needed this sacred place. We had evolved in such a manner that our own bodies were timeless, formless, and perfect. We left our shells behind, we left this spring behind.

(beat)

We have gone to great lengths to protect it. For in protecting what is sacred, we know we preserve it. We do not know where it comes from, or why it is so potent. Only that it helps to prolong life, and soothe the sick.

(beat)

If you have found it, you are worthy of its blessings. We leave it, wholly, unto you."

Eilerson looks up, rolling the scroll back up. Chambers and Dureena get up. Dureena moves toward the door.

CHAMBERS

48 hours till we know what it does.

DUREENA

I think we already know what it's capable of.

CHAMBERS

I won't get my hopes up. I've been disappointed too many times so far.

(beat)

48 hours.

Chambers starts to write down in her medical journal. Dureena and Eilerson leave her alone to her thoughts.

INT. FLIGHT DECK (COMP)

Bester is waiting for a shuttle. Matheson approaches.

MATHESON

Your shuttle is ready.

BESTER

Tell me. What is it like in EarthForce?

MATHESON

It's everything I dreamed it would be. I know not, that I was not very happy in Psi Corps. I am happy here.

BESTER

You're happy, despite the discrimination? The distrust?

MATHESON

Actually, I'm more trusted here than I ever was in the Corps. My commanding officer, my team ... they never wonder if I'm going to betray them.

(beat)

On the Excalibur, I don't have to prove my loyalty. With the Corps, my loyalty was always tested. Always questioned. The Corps was so paranoid.

BESTER

We had to protect ourselves from people on the outside who didn't understand us, and people on the inside who refused to be a part of us.

MATHESON

I can't live like that.

BESTER

What is the alternative? Living among mundanes who will never understand us? I have stared intolerance in the face for more years than you have been alive.

MATHESON

Things change.

(beat)

Why did you save my life back there?

BESTER

Because you are a telepath. I became a Psi Cop to protect the lives of all telepaths. Even the ones who don't want protection.

MATHESON

But you're not a Psi Cop anymore, and the Corps is disbanded.

BESTER

I will *always* be a Psi Cop. It's who I am. What I was ... conditioned ... to do. Because it's the right thing to protect the family.

MATHESON

Is that why you murdered during the Telepath Crisis?

BESTER

I did what was necessary. There were casualties on both sides of the war. The difference is, when you win the war, you're a hero. When you lose, you're a war criminal.

(beat)

I did things the current administration disapproves of, because *they* are the heroes, and I am the war criminal. But if the tables were turned, I could easily accuse them of the same crimes.

(beat)

So, I will not turn myself in. I did what was right. They'll never prove I did anything else.

(beat)

In the end, everything I did was for my people.

MATHESON

I'd like to believe that. But if you're running, you must be guilty of something.

BESTER

(laughing)

I remember being your age. Things seemed more fair then.

(beat)

I once had a mentor named Sandoval Bey. You may have heard of him. He never learned when to run and when to stand his ground. He was innocent, so he didn't run from the mundanes who killed him.

(softly)

He was so vulnerable and he never even realized it.

(beat)

No, John. I'm running from the mundanes – the wrong people with the wrong intentions toward telepaths.

(looks off screen)

We can no longer understand each other. Because we are no longer the same beast.

INT. MEDBAY

Chambers is here. Gideon enters.

GIDEON

Good news or bad news?

CHAMBERS

It's always either one or the other, isn't it? Sometimes I think I dole out more good news than bad. But, in the end, our mission was fairly successful.

(holds up vial)

This is the most potent pain-reliever we've ever had. Doctors always struggle to make the suffering tolerable when they can't find a cure for it.

(beat)

Throughout history, patients who used to suffer from AIDS, cancer, and other diseases were in so much pain, and we could do very little to ease it. This will help people back home when the plague beings to break out. And, it may even prolong life

spans up to six months, by staving off some of the symptoms.

GIDEON

All in all then, we did the right thing.

CHAMBERS

We did the right thing. But I'm not so sure what we're doing now is right.

GIDEON

We *will* follow through on our word, and drop Mr. Bester off at his rendezvous point. Even if keeping a promise is the only honorable thing we've done all day.

EXT. EXCALIBUR (CGI)

As it travels through HyperSpace, we

FADE OUT.

TAG

FADE IN:

EXT. EXCALIBUR (CGI)

It's stopped in HyperSpace.

CLOSE UP – FLIGHT DECK AND SHUTTLE (CGI)

A shuttle, simple, not much more than a life pod thrusts out of the flight deck and sits in HyperSpace.

INT. EXCALIBUR BRIDGE

Gideon sits in the Captain's chair. Matheson comes up behind him, looking out the view screen at the tiny, floating shuttle before their massive ship.

GIDEON

Bester's just going to sit there. With 24 hours of life support.

MATHESON

That's what he said.

GIDEON

And if no one comes for him in 24 hours? ...

MATHESON

Then I guess he runs out of oxygen and dies.

GIDEON

Maybe it might be better to spare him the agony. Just put him out of the misery now with one of our forward guns.

Matheson is supposed to agree, given his former position. However, we CLOSE IN on his face, hearing Bester's voice in his mind:

BESTER (V.O.)

He was innocent, so he didn't run from the mundanes who killed him.
(beat)

He was so vulnerable and he never even realized it.

EXT. SHUTTLE (CGI)

As it sits helpless, like a dot, before the Excalibur.

BESTER (V.O.)

I'm running from the mundanes – the wrong people with the wrong intentions toward telepaths.

INT. EXCALIBUR BRIDGE

Matheson looks at Gideon, who doesn't notice he's being observed.

BESTER (V.O.)

We can no longer understand each other. Because we are no longer the same beast.

Matheson shakes his head.

MATHESON

No sir. I ...

(beat)

We'd just be sinking to his level. One day someone will catch him, and put him on trial for his crimes. And he'll get what he's due.

GIDEON

You're probably right.

(beat)

Take us away.

MATHESON

Aye, sir.

EXT. EXCALIBUR (CGI)

The Excalibur leaves the small shuttle alone in HyperSpace

EXT. HYPERSPACE (CGI)

A pause.

A Mothership comes through the dense HyperSpace veils. It's a Psi Corps Mothership.

The small shuttle moves slowly toward it.

INT. MOTHERSHIP FLIGHT DECK (COMP)

A ROGUE Psi Cop is standing here, waiting for Mr. Bester. Mr. Bester comes from the shuttle (off screen) to meet up with him.

ROGUE

Mr. Bester. It's been three years since we last hooked up. We were starting to think you'd fallen off the Rim.

BESTER

Not yet.

(beat)

It is a little unnerving when a Psi Corps Mothership comes looming down on one's tiny craft. But it helps to know that the remaining few death wagons are in good hands.

ROGUE

Thanks to you, Mr. Bester.

BESTER

Nonsense. It was simple enough. EarthGov would never admit having built offensive ships for the Psi Corps in the first place. It would look very bad.

ROGUE

And we have a weapon to strike back with.

BESTER

When the time is right. Meanwhile, if EarthGov can't declare these ships exist, then they can't send out forces to find us.

(beat)

And that fact ... is the beginning of a beautiful thing.

They walk off together.

EXT. SHIPS AT SPACE STATION

The dark ships have reached Tarriff's station.

INT. BESTER'S QUARTERS

PILOT #2 is here.

PILOT #2 (INTO LINK)

I checked out the station, his quarters, everything. He seems to be gone.

(beat)

I don't understand it. There are no records of any ships leaving here with him on it. Though, the Excalibur was here. That's odd.

Intercut with

INT. DARK SHIP

PILOT #1 (INTO LINK)

Yeah, I heard that. They were investigating something down on the moon.

(beat)

Top Dog just wired in. He wants a full report.

INT. BESTER'S QUARTERS

PILOT #2 (INTO LINK)

You go right ahead. I hate telling him bad news. He gets really cranky.

PILOT #1 (ON LINK)

Thanks.

(beat)

Computer begin recording transmission to MarsDome.

INT. DARK SHIP

There is a BEEP

PILOT #1

This is Under Dog to Top Dog. When we arrived at the colony, Al Bester was not here. There are no records of him leaving the planet.

INT. OFFICE ON MARS

We are CLOSE on a HAND at the desk, turning off a desk link. We see MARS through the window in the background.

PILOT #1 (V.O.)

I'm sorry, Mr. Garibaldi. He got away again.

FADE OUT.

THE END