

Quick, Dirty, Cheap, and Good: Mass Effect 3 Fixes

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Mass Effect 3 has the worst endings of any game, ever. Maybe that's a little over the top, since I have not plumbed the depths of video gaming history. Perhaps it's only in the top five worst game endings. Their two attempts to fix this, the Extended Cut and the Leviathan DLCs, opened up more plot holes than the original did. You could lose a Dodge Charger in some of them, they're so big. I have heard excuse after excuse for this poor craftsmanship from desperate fans and Bioware PR flacks, always predicated the same way: "If only they had more time"; "If only they had more money"; "EA forced them to release early"; "The pre-release leaks made them change the story at the last second."

That's no excuse. Since time immemorial, writers have been working on deadline, have been forced to rewrite scripts because the budget for special effects dropped off a cliff, or have been told to rewrite parts of the story at the last second. No epic fail, no whining, no repulsive excuses, no beating up on the fans. They tightened their belts, rolled up their sleeves, and did it. Clean kill. Boom, headshot! No fuss. No bother. They acted like pros.

So to honor the thousands of professional writers who did suck it up, I present ten, yes, TEN cheap fixes to Mass Effect 3.

Here's how the fun works. These aren't the best fixes for ME3, since those would require a major rewrite. Because it's cheap and quick, dependent upon cinematics and dialog, not much in the way of combat can be included. To design a single-player campaign with levels, maps, enemies, allies, conversations, and all the other ancillary elements involved would be time-consuming and...money. Can't do that. We can't get rid of the Crucible, since that would be in the realm of a major rewrite, so we're stuck with it. We can make minor dialog changes in the body of the game and add a cinematic or cutscene here and there. There are other constraints. We're here to fix things, so we have to patch the three major plot holes. We can't add new ones, so we cannot portray Sovereign and Harbinger as liars. They say they are the technological equivalent of Lovecraft's Great Old Ones, okay, that's what they are. We don't want to weaken them as bad guys even though we are making them more vulnerable. Invulnerable bad guys and heroes are the most boring creations in the history of storytelling. Anyone who has played God Mode for more than five minutes knows this. Even the gods of Greek myth could be defeated. The things we can do have to match the story up until the operations on Earth begin. However, we have a big advantage. Because the ending is just soooooo damned bad, it has almost no relationship to the rest of the game. This

is good for any script doctor or ghost writer brought in to fix things. We have to explain the ME1/Catalyst plot hole (the worst one). We don't have to keep the Catalyst, he's an optional accessory in this environment. Shepard can travel with companions up to the Citadel, no reason to rule that out. All the endings listed come with associated partial victory (victory but Shep or companions die), fail with hope and total fail endings. The one good thing about the Extended Cut is the Refusal choice. It is the perfect Defeat With Hope ending. Not one change is needed. The Total Victory ending comes with a Shepard voice-over which details the rebuilding and the fate of Shep and her friends. This would be comparable to the epilog in Fallout New Vegas (also known as The Animal House Epilog for its use in that movie..."Senator and Mrs. Blutarsky"...).

ENDINGS WITH AN S

Ideally, every RPG game should have at least six endings. Some have upwards of twenty or more and that's great. Such games keep to the storytelling heart of the RPG. Here are my fundamental six. Without these endings, an RPG would feel second-rate.

1. Total Freaking Victory (rainbows and unicorns and everything).
2. Partial Victory (friends and love interest die).
3. Tragic Victory 1(protagonist dies but enemy defeated/goal fulfilled).
4. Tragic Victory 2 (protagonist doesn't die but everything else is destroyed, including most of the protagonist's friends).
5. Defeat With Hope (a daughter is born, the legacy continues, friends fight on, message in a bottle).
6. Total defeat (complete freaking fail).

But since this is a budget-basement kinda save, we can only have four endings.

1. Total Freaking Victory (Shep kicks ass, blue babies).
2. Tragic Victory 1 (Shep dies, viking funeral, galaxy saved).
3. Defeat With Hope (Liara's message in the bottle).
4. Complete Fail.

All can be accomplished with cinematics and dialog choices. It's amazing what a few storytelling elements can do. Just a few words in the right places and a brief

cinematic could have saved the day for EA/Bioware. See Number Ten on the list if you don't believe me.

COMMON ELEMENTS

So much was broken by the ending, not everything can be fixed. But we have to fix the three most glaring plot holes. They have to be patched up, have to be. These three are so cosmically huge as to induce comas in hardcore fans. We have to smooth and coolify these specific elements of the story, otherwise, all our efforts will be for nothing. We can't make out Sovereign and Harbinger as liars, but we need to add a little clarity to what the reapers are. Second, damn but we gotta fix the crater-sized plot catastrophe of the ending to ME1 and the existence of the Catalyst. Third, the Leviathan DLC, meant to reinforce the ending, it only makes things worst.

Big Giant Plot Hole #1. Sovereign and Harbinger both claimed that the reapers are immortal, imponderable. Let's take them at their word. So how does one become immortal in a universe where things break, people can shoot you, and stars explode? Only their minds are immortal. The originators found a way to embed thought directly into the fabric of spacetime. So they are, indeed, immortal. This is the old play on the duality of the body and soul, something fought over (literally) by religions since the dawn of time. It even moved over into philosophy a few hundred years back with the mind/body duality question. Is the mind/soul separate from the body? In the case of the reapers, yes. They are in reaper heaven. But to affect reality, they need a physical presence. Destroy the reaper bodies, as hard as that might be, and the immortal reaper minds cannot act within our reality. They are trapped inside their own Mount Olympus. Liara explains this theory to Shepard if the Catalyst is missing from the rewrite.

Big Giant Plot Hole #2. As for the giant plot hole of ME1 and the Catalyst? "I have to be awakened by an outside action. The Keepers were supposed to do this, but they and their instrumentalities had been tampered with at the end of the last cycle. A vast machine, like, say, the Crucible, trying to integrate itself into my systems would tend to activate me, as it did. Do I not stand before you?" Problem solved. The Catalyst is designed to be physically activated by the reapers. His job in the extinction cycle is to network with all the reapers at once in order to coordinate attacks utilizing the databases the Citadel keeps on relay travel and settlement patterns. He can be remotely "possessed" by individual reapers. This can be explained by the Catalyst, assuming we want to keep the Catalyst around. That's another solution, get rid of him. I have several fixes below that don't require the Catalyst. And, just because I can, I included a third solution: he's never been on the Citadel, he's a hack put on the Crucible by an indoctrinated Prothean scientist. I literally can't imagine the kind of slap-dash mind that would come up with the Catalyst as he is. That's just so lazy, it's lying

in bed all day smoking dope lazy, not taking the trash out for two months lazy, sleeping on the job lazy. How could anyone be that lazy? It's...inconceivable.

Big Giant Plot Hole #3. Get rid of the Leviathan DLC. Delete it, flush it down a black hole. Leviathan introduces a whole new set of crazy-ass plot holes. It was intended by the idiots at Bioware who call themselves writers as a reinforcement of the existing ending, but it only opens up the old plot holes even wider while adding new plot holes around the last battle. The new ending dialog only makes the rip-off from old episodes of *Star Trek* even more obvious. While watching it, I half-expected Kirk and Spock to pop up with their patented logical-paradox-computer-smash attack. It is possible to fix the Leviathan DLC if the time and budget allow. A slight rewrite of the Lev/Shep convo makes it clear that the Levs will wait out this cycle. They have given up hope and are filled with regret. Over the long years, they have repented of the behaviors that led to the reapers, they only wish to be left alone, and in the fullness of time they will pass away. "So you will sit here in the depths, wallowing in your despair, not doing a thing to help?" "Your words are meant to persuade, but we cannot hear them from under the shroud of our regrets. Leave us to our sorrow!" If necessary for an ending fix, they give Shep a gift that she might use in the final battle, a gift meant to get her to just go away. If not, forget about it. Shep leaves. There is no reaper attack on the planet, there is no Lev omnipotence on display. Shep leaves. "Nothing here for us," she tells her companions.

THE ENDINGS

Please keep in mind that each ending has attached to it one or both or all three of the plot hole solutions above, plus all four endings. Also, TIM is an acronym for The Illusive Man, the leader of Cerberus, one of the central characters in Mass Effect 3 — like you didn't know that. Frankly, I didn't put all the endings into each one because the fail and partial victory endings are so similar in tone, even though the exact details might differ a little. Defeat With Hope is the same in every one of them. Why repeat myself endlessly? Several of the descriptions are short for the very same reason, mostly because they are variations on the Big Gun idea. Also, I have to admit this, can't be a liar, I like big guns in video games. The Fifty Caliber in Fallout New Vegas, such joy! My modded Dragunov in Fallout 3, it's as freaking long as the Lone Wanderer is tall! If you can't see the point, I have one line of dialog to convince you: "Say hello to my little friend."

NUMBER ONE:
Does Not Compute

The second-cheapest ending of the bunch and the most science-fictional, the one, the only, the Kirk/Spock Circular Logic Smash Attack. It's Landru...with reapers...run for your lives! Syllogisms and Contradictions set for stun. Prime the Logic Bomb! Do I actually need to describe this? It's a well-known *Star Trek* meme, used not only on Landru, but the Oracle (might have been a hardware hack), M-5, Nomad, Losira (Kirk using a social hack to screw with her programming until Spock could nuke the computer), Harry Mudd's androids, Roger Corby, and Redjac (who, technically speaking, was not a computer but a computer program when it "possessed" the Enterprise computer — "Compute to the final digit the value of Pi" — "Noooooo!"). It could be updated and tricked out for ME3, with perky dialog and profundities sprouting like weeds from Liara's mouth. That's the secret, make the Catalyst confrontation into a multimodal dialectic by allowing the player to bring his companions along.

Paragon/Renegade ratings, character level, and the specific companions determine success or failure. Liara and Tali would be the best for this. One of Liara's smackdown lines: "You claim to be protecting and preserving organic life through the harvesting process, yet it is obvious that organic thought processes depend upon biological components for their uniqueness. Virtualized personalities are only imperfect simulations of the organic mind." Player dialog choices unlock companion dialog and Catalyst responses, leading to the intellectual defeat of the Catalyst. After this, he either dies or turns over a kill-switch for the reaper bodies to Shep (with accompanying explanation of why a kill-switch was thought necessary — something the Catalyst hid from the makers, dooming them). Of course, to make this work, your companions have to travel up to the Citadel with you. One can put TIM into this segment as in the original or leave him out (supplying TIM's closure through a voice-over with cinematic in the wrap-up during the Victory ending). Shep can die if a Tragic Victory convo thread is completed (self-destruct). Failure is easy here. One wrong word....

NUMBER TWO: Double-Crosses Are My Business

The *Maltese Falcon* trick-within-a-trick ending. This is the most fun, but it requires several brief additions to the dialog and cinematics in the body of ME3. Without a set-up, it will fail. Hints are laid by Mordin, Salarian scientists, a communication from the Rachni queen, several other people, brainiacs every one. Jacob gets in on the action and snarks Shepard at one point. Cryptic remarks, smiles. "Something's up with the nerds." Skip to the end. The Crucible docks, but something's happened, it doesn't do whatever it's supposed to do. Shep and his companions fight their way to the uplink and end up on the Citadel. Once again, TIM can be there or not. A confrontation with the Catalyst ensues, only, he was never on the Citadel (plot hole filled), he was secretly

written into the code for the Crucible by an indoctrinated Prothean scientist, just in case the Protheans got the thing to work. He's basically a network protocol that allows a reaper mind to possess the Crucible. The pompous little ass then goes on to spout out endless admiration for the Crucible, "my home." "...but all good things have to come to an end. You do know who you're talking to, don't you?" "Harbinger." "You are quite bright, for an organic. I will relish your ascension. Think of the fun I will have with your mind for all eternity." Mordin's voice, of beloved memory, echoes out from nowhere in particular. "I don't think so." The nerds found the ancient reaper hack and hacked it back with a VI programmed to emulate Shepard's dead friend. The Mordin VI crushes Harbinger's virtual self. "Never saw me coming." After that, well, the Crucible is powered by the Citadel's internal relay, plenty of power, it can be whatever weapon anyone wants. Perhaps it can hack the relays and turn them into weapons systems as well, a galaxy full of transluminal railguns. Reapers die. There is possible failure here, if the right people aren't recruited to work on the Crucible, if not enough resources are found, if Liara isn't with you.

NUMBER THREE: I Brought All My Friends

This is my favorite of the cheap endings. It is the most epic and very easily told with just a few cinematics. Remember, when I was a kid way back when, publishers were reprinting the works of E. E. "Doc" Smith. Yeah, I've read him. If you read him, ignore the pulp prose and pay attention to the ideas, to the imagery. "Planets, seven of them, armed and powered as only planets can be armed and powered." Think big, deep time big, the wild-ass theorizing of crazed theoretical physicists big. This version doesn't need any of the elements existing in the current or EC endings. Nor does it need any set-up as some of the other fixes. The dev team can take a machete and whack off the last bit and weld this ending into place without any worries.

Shepard stays on Earth, fighting side-by-side with Anderson, the Krogans, her companions, all told in cinematics according to who has been recruited. The last, desperate moment has been reached. Shepard looks at her love interest.

"We tried."

Liara takes her hand. "We came close, my love, closer than anyone else has ever come."

Shepard raises her voice, everyone turns to listen. "Let the memory of our last stand haunt the reapers forever!"

Everyone cheers. The battle intensifies. Both on Earth and in the orbit, the races of the galaxy are losing. Everything hangs on the edge of a knife.

The Crucible docks, the thing fires up....A message pulse comes through to the fleet. EDI receives it, translates it, and beams it down to Shepard. "To you, we are dust. But we come forth from death and despair to aid you. Help is on

the way.'" Giant wormholes open up around the Citadel. EDI explains it to Shepard. "These are wormholes, only, Shepard, wormholes not through space, but through time." The last-stand fleets of every race ever consumed by the reapers join the fight. Each race, just at the end, put the spacetime coordinates of their surviving forces into the plans for the Crucible. They are all coming to this party. Immense strange machines, ships, fleets, pour out of the wormholes to end the reapers. A gigantic space battle ensues. The reapers now know fear.

If there's enough budget left for a combat map on the surface, Shepard and her friends fight the husks. If not, epic cinematics of the space battle. Shepard explains just why this was the last cycle in a voice-over. "All their plans depended upon the creation of an empire controlled by a single race. Sovereign's agents whispered poisoned thoughts into the minds of the Rachni, who were supposed to end all but the Asari. But something happened that had not happened before. Three races joined together to defeat the Rachni. Then his poisoned tongue whispered again, to the Krogan warlords, but the Turians had joined the fight. And then at last, he decided to end the cycle personally, but humanity was there to stop him. We triumphed through our diversity, the strength of each race complementary to the others. The precursors to us knew that someday this would happen. Perhaps even a billion years in the future, a moment would come when the impossible would become possible. So they laid their plans and each succeeding race put down another layer in the great scheme." Cinematics fill in the details after the battle. Shepard's voice-over goes on to tell a story of rebuilding and a new golden age. "All those who died now live again. But we are, every race, vigilant. The eternal minds of the reapers cannot die. They plot, always, in the hidden places where their minds dwell, for our overthrow."

NUMBER FOUR: Shepard Goes Ballistic

This is another very cheap fix. Once again, the Crucible was a scam. Indoctrinated Protheans inserted a reaper VI into the plans. It's actually a vast reaper networking device, meant to enable our extinction by allowing for the instantaneous communication between reaper minds. The smarmy Catalyst even explains the device to Shepard. Shepard blows it up. "But you will die, too. I offer you immortality, life as a reaper mind. Live forever!" "No. No to unending cycles of genocide. No to tyranny. No!" Ka-boom. Shepard gets a Viking Funeral. Shep's love interest narrates the aftermath cinematic. The trick to this version, you can choose to be a reaper ("Shepard has saved herself, but at the cost of betraying the galaxy. Her name will survive this extinction cycle to become the byword for treachery and betrayal."). If your dialog choices are off, the Catalyst realizes what you are about to attempt and electrocutes you. One cool thing about this version, the Crucible remains a true McGuffin, that is, a

complete mystery as to its original function before it was hacked by the reapers. TIM can be there or not, the game can be exactly the same up until the conversation with the Catalyst. Very cheap fix, bitter-sweet, but very satisfying at the same time.

NUMBER FIVE: I've Got My Quantums

See what an eternal mind looks like on the inside. This ending plays with the idea I use to fix Plot Hole Number One. Everything can be the same up until Shep reaches the control pod at the top, where the Catalyst is in the original ending. The Crucible enables Shepard's trip down the rabbit hole to visit Harbinger. It is deliberately written to echo certain aspects of Shepard's experiences inside the geth collective and the "possession" section of the Overlord DLC. Harby gets to know Shep up close and personal.

This is the most conceptual, dialog-driven ending of the ten, a meditation on immortality, hubris, self-sacrifice, and morality. You want SERIOUS THOUGHTS, an ARTISTIC ENDING, here it is. The player gets to test his wits against Harbinger inside Harbinger's own mind. This would allow for some interesting dialog blocks, since both Shepard and Harby are in each others' heads. Lying cannot occur. Emotional and factual truth are the only weapons in use here. The dialog and cinematics show Shepard's search for who the reapers are and how they came to be.

The down side for this isn't with the player, because it will be a lot of fun trying to weave through the dialog choices to victory. The down side is in the writing. This is Shirow-level intellectual combat. To those who are not familiar with the *Ghost in the Shell* franchise, let me explain. It is a series of anime movies and TV series based around the highly successful AND highly cerebral manga of Masamune Shirow. Both anime and manga have been traditionally viewed in Japanese society not just as entertainment for kids, but as media for serious mature entertainment. Japanese writers are expected to be well-educated and highly literate. My gods, the first TV series had at its base an intellectual puzzle based around the works of an American author, J. D. Salinger!! Mechs, cyborgs, terrorists, government conspiracies layered on top of that! It would take a great deal of work to pull this off, and I'm not sure the writing team at Bioware is up to it. From various reports and rumors, at least one of the members of the writing team can't stand science fiction, another hates video games (how the hell was this writer even hired?), and another member of the team came not from a creative environment, but from a management background. Then there is the departure of Drew Karpyshyn, the intellectual heart of the Mass Effect franchise. If these rumors about the remaining staff are true, then a new team will be needed for this ending.

After many turns and twists in the conversation, cinematic asides to update on the battle, other cinematics used to illustrate the virtual space inside Harby's

mind, after many potential points of failure, Shepard pulls it off. We know we've found something in our battle of wits with Harbinger, but exactly what, we're not sure.

The reapers break off and run away. It's a mystery only solved when Shep's love interest rescues him from the control pod in the Catalyst.

Shepard wakes up in sick bay, his friends around him. "What happened, why did they run away?" Liara asked.

"I told Harbinger something."

"What was that?"

The moment of defeat for the reapers in one line from Shepard: "I know where you live."

NUMBER SIX: It's Just A Big Damn Gun

Kaboom! A few things are stressed in this version. First, somewhere in the middle of ME3, a dialog insert is put in, between one of the Crucible team and Shepard. It is explained to Shepard that the Crucible is designed to pull a great deal of power out of the Citadel's relay: "Whatever it is, it'll be a heavy hitter." In another dialog segment, Liara explains the reapers, perhaps after she and Tali climb all over the dead reaper. Nothing of the previous ending is kept. There is the classic BIG GUN REVEAL about two thirds of the way through, which only involves an edit to the conversations and dialog options, no new visuals. TIM's fate can be explained in the post-victory wrap-up, narrated by Shepard. Or, if EMS/war assets/whatever are too low and Shep dies, her love interest narrates. The action is straight-forward and mean as hell. There's this great little song in my mp3 collection by Jesper Kidd, named "Bring Your Guns." Get it and get it playing in your ears while you contemplate THE BIG DAMN GUN. Yeah, like the title says, IT'S A BIG DAMN GUN. The Crucible turns out to be one hell of a shooter opportunity. If the budget allows it, the player can control the gun. Each time it fires, one or another of Shepard's companions makes a crack. The best lines are given to Garrus (of course, the Crucible being A BIG DAMN GUN and all). If I were on this hypothetical dev team, I'd push for an interactive Crucible Cannon for the sheer fun of it and the replay value (the companion dialog is the key — gotta hear what they all say!). The reapers try to flee, they don't make it very far...Shepard voice-over of the destruction. The fun of this version isn't in the inventiveness of the ending — pretty standard BIG GUN — but in all the fun that can be had in dialog about the big gun, not just the end-game shooting comments, but all through the last part of the story after the reveal. This will require a small bit of editing to the dialog choices and conversations. "Jealous, Garrus?" "I'd love to do some calibrations on that thing." The final word is left to Wrex, who says at the end of the fight: "Can I borrow that?" "No, you may not." "Just like you Shepard, always stingy with your best gear."

NUMBER SEVEN:
The Wormhole Rodeo

This one resembles It's Just a Big Damn Gun, with cool visuals of wormholes swallowing the reapers and transporting them to the corona of a blue giant star. That's the payoff for this version, the fate of the ancient horrors who have inflicted themselves upon the galaxy. Burn, baby, burn.

NUMBER EIGHT:
It's the Star Forge, Bitches

Another variation on It's Just a Big Damn Gun, except it spits out drones, not neutron beams. The Crucible taps into the power of the Citadel's relay to make an inexhaustible supply of attack drones. Woot. It's Death of a Thousand Cuts for the reapers, man. I doubt there'd be enough money to do this, but hey, asking can't hurt: a mini-game in the finale, piloting drones in attacks on the reapers, even suicide drones to ram into their laser emitters. "Go for the optics!"

NUMBER NINE:
My Kung Fu is Better

Tali wins the day. It doesn't have to be her, anyone with tech powers could do it...but who you gonna call when you need an AI hacked? Hmm? In this one, the Catalyst is the network hub for the reapers (I mentioned it above), activated by them when they invaded the Citadel. The player character has to have tech powers or has to have brought along Tali, a tech character, or EDI, or both Tali and EDI, and has to be at a high level...Catalyst hacked. Shepard and his companions distract the Catalyst with conversation while hacking the control features. Game over, reapers. The Protheans knew about the Catalyst, and rigged the control elements in the Crucible to possess it, only, someone has to do the dirty work of establishing the final links between the two. Tali's up for the job. Catalyst's mind is crushed and Crucible breaks the entanglement link that binds the reaper minds to their bodies (Once again, I mentioned this earlier, remember the fix to Big Giant Plot Hole #1?). The reapers become floating hulks, which leads to an epilog scene inspired by my favorite bit of fan art. Shepard, her love interest, Garrus, and the rest of the gang at the beach. Giant reaper corpses are in the bay. Little kids throw rocks at them as the gang relaxes with a few mai tais.

NUMBER TEN:
Refusal+

The cheapest of the cheap, yet still with a punch. The current EC plus a Refusal victory option if the EMS is high enough. Normandy rescues Shepard from the Catalyst hideout after the Refusal choice. Cinematics of battle. War-torn planets. Shepard's voice narrates the battle. Eventually the camera comes back to Shepard, standing by her love interest. The screen slowly begins to blur as Shepard's voice fades out, to be replaced by another voice. The screen goes to black as the next voice takes over the story. Then another. Each one tells a brief account of conflict with the reapers. Each one fades out and the next begins, each one starting with: "My name is John Shepard, my mother..." "My name is Tessa Shepard, my grandmother..." Most of them human, but a few Quarians, Turians, Krogan, geth, and Asari, each with a word or two to explain how they are in Shepard's extended family, some of them mentioning Shepard's love interest. The voices begin to pile up, Several female and male voices speak at once, a jumble. A few words here and there can be made out. Eventually the other voices fade away, like Shepard's did, down to one voice. As this last voice becomes predominant, the screen fades from black to a person standing as Shepard did a moment before. Only it is not Shepard. She is an Asari. She starts speaking. "My name is Aresta Shepard. I am the seventh generation of my family to fight the reapers since my beloved ancestor, the first Shepard, began the fight. The war has lasted for five hundred years, but we have the final reaper trapped. He was the first, now he will be the last. Harbinger..." The camera flies from this generation's Shepard outward, to present a tableau over a beautiful gas giant with many moons. A vast fleet of Asari, human, Krogan, Rachni, Elcor, Quarian, Geth, Salarian, Turian, Batarian, and Volus ships is in orbit over the giant planet. Every race in the galaxy is present. Down below, in a decaying orbit, is Harbinger, wounded, dying. "Shepard," it calls out. "Yes," Aresta replies. "I am here." "We are eternal. You think you have defeated us, you think this is an achievement? I remember you at the start of it. Your foolish stubbornness will end your race. Ours is the only path to salvation." "Your song never changes," Shepard's descendent replies. "Ours does. It grows over time. It becomes richer, louder. That is the great power of life over death." Harbinger tries to interrupt. "Listen to me," the Shepard says. "One of us will always be here. There will always be a Shepard to confront you. Remember that in the afterlife, if you are ever tempted to return." "Shepard!" Harbinger screams. The fleet fires. The last reaper dies in a great explosion. "Now, now we are free..."

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