

The Jjaro Station

A Broad Analysis of Marathon Infinity, Excluding the Metaphysical By Thing What Kicks

“...and Yrro in anger, flung the W'rkncacnter into the sun.”

At the core of all my theories rests the Jjaro station. For me, the intrigue began upon arrival at Aye Mak Sicur and being simply awed beyond belief. The level was both intricately detailed and amazingly vast, and yet it was only necessary to visit a small portion of this work of art to complete the game. As time went on and my gameplay abilities progressed, I discovered the most efficient way to complete the level on Total Carnage; even conducting speed runs to finish it in under a few minutes or winning without taking damage. Eventually my curiosity grew and I explored the station, discovering the secret credits terminal and the Vidmaster's Challenge. It came to a point where I could be dropped almost anywhere in the station and orient myself fairly quickly without use of the map.

The next step in the process came when I was playing through For Carnage, Apply Within, and stumbled across Tycho's mention of an “ancient Jjaro outpost.” Thus began my second real foray into Marathon's Story as I searched for other references to the station. Ultimately this research gave rise to my theories regarding Marathon Infinity.

The central theory around which all my other ideas hang regards the *nature* of the Jjaro station. Its centrality and pervasiveness through the game have led me to believe that it embodies the very soul of the game: infinity itself.

These ideas began to form when I realized that not only does the Marathon Infinity both begin and end on board the station, but so does each and every individual timeline present in the game. The Prologue, Despair, Rage, and Envy. It always holds true. There are other points of interest as well: the station's insignia is the symbol for infinity, and the station itself is circular in design. Additionally, it is already known that the station was used to terraform Lh'owon, defeat the W'rkncacnter, create and maintain gravity fields, and fold space. Could it not also manipulate time? That each timeline begins/ends on the station indicates that the station is in fact the very impetus that drives the cyborg's ability to move throughout time. This seems to be particularly evident in Ne Cede Malis where, rather than attempting to escape (as Durandal suggests), we read:

thousands are sailing
the same self the only self

self willed the peril of a thousand fates

a line of infinite ends finite finishing
the one remains oblique and pure

arching to the single point of
consciousness

find yourself
starting back

The station is simultaneously the key to beginning the cyborg's cycle through time,

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the key to continuing it, and the key to ending it. This point logically drew me backwards to the ending of Marathon 2. It is my belief that sometime shortly following the nova, Durandal and S'bhuth fled to the station seeking refuge from the ensuing chaos. In a final attempt to cheat death, the two instilled the cyborg with some knowledge of the station's use, and sent him on his last great adventure. To this end I believe that Ne Cede Malis symbolizes the end of Marathon 2, which I will discuss momentarily.

A second critical (and obvious) precept to my theory is that, while the game does not actually contain the intervening sections between each failed timeline's "normal" ending (at the Electric Sheep series) and its "real" ending (at the station), I believe these intermediate events do in fact occur. If the cyborg "magically" teleports to the station, or were they simply dreams, then the messages these levels contain would not offer any real clues to Infinity's storyline – to which, otherwise, I believe they contribute strongly.

A final principle is the inevitability of the trih xeem's detonation. Causality makes the event destined and unavoidable; it is intertwined with the use of the Jjaro station. Without the trih xeem, there is no need for the station, and without the station, there is neither continuity nor end to the cycle. I do not believe it is possible for the station to allow such a paradox to occur. Indeed, it never does.

This paper seeks to analyze some of the *physical* events of Marathon Infinity through the eyepiece of the above theories and, largely, its chapter divisions: Prologue, Despair, Rage, and Envy. I will generally avoid commenting on any of the dream levels, as they require a level of comprehension and study that is well beyond me.

Prologue

Ne Cede Malis is an incredibly elegant little package full of its own quirks and paradoxes. It is both the beginning of Marathon Infinity and yet also the end of a failed timeline. As mentioned, I believe it is also – symbolically – the end of Marathon 2. There are two reasons for this, the first being the obvious connection with my theories concerning the station's nature and the flight of Durandal and S'bhuth. The second is the initial page of Durandal's message to us.

Things have gone terribly awry. Until now, I thought myself immortal, but now I know that is not true. There are things that can destroy me with the ease that I slaughtered the Pfhor naval garrison and the Western Arm of their Battle Group Seven. But in their final gasp they used a weapon that I thought they had retired, even Tycho tried to keep them from using it.

Now I fear what that weapon has unleashed will destroy us. I once boasted to be able to count the atoms in a cloud, to understand them all, predict them, and so did I predict you, but this new chaos is entirely terrible, mindless, obeying rules that I don't comprehend. And it is hungry.

Taken by itself (without the second half of the message), in the context of Marathon 2's end, this is a reasonable communication. I imagine Durandal saying something of this

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nature in the reality of Marathon 2's conclusion. I believe this was a way of tying up the second game's loose ends.

In multiple ways, the Prologue timeline is the most unique in the whole of the game. Yet the only real difference is that Battle Group Seven has arrived far earlier than usual. Strange what large implications one small change has! As T'fear was already prepared for Durandal's attack on the garrison fleet, Durandal had no chance to explore Lh'owon, no chance to search for the lost clan. Instead, the space battle proceeds directly, ending with Durandal's retreat to the station. Durandal already possessed knowledge of it, as Tycho points out in For Carnage, Apply Within:

He surmised that the S'pht myth of the disappearing moon was due to their discovery of an ancient Jjaro outpost.

Strange that Durandal did not search it out earlier in Marathon 2, nor does he in any other timeline. T'fear gives a clue in his message to Pffhor High Command:

We caused his retreat to a heretofore **undetected** station located in an asteroid field on the fringe of the Lh'owon system.

Oddly, this appears to be contradicted in Envy:

Tfear has deployed the *trih xeem*, moving his flagship to board the Yrro station.

Of course, the Pffhor are present on the station in every timeline; though this may be because they were led there. In this case, at least, it is likely that Durandal was simply more preoccupied with Lh'owon – which wasn't hiding out in the system's fringe. Nevertheless, in the Prologue, it is destiny that guides Durandal where he necessarily must go. Regardless, unfortunately, Durandal knew nothing of the station's use:

I could have sent you to explore the ruins of Lh'owon, perhaps what you found would give us the answers that we now need so desperately: how to stop this chaos, the purpose of the station on which you're currently standing, and why the chaos hasn't come here yet.

This fact, I believe, is what sets the tone for the next chapter: Despair. Consider, the cyborg knows the station's purpose. S'bthuth and Durandal imbued him with this knowledge in Marathon 2. In Ne Cede Malis, he is still allied with Durandal, and has come perhaps closer than he would have dreamed possible to fulfilling the task. Through whatever course of events, Durandal has skipped Lh'owon entirely and actually traveled to the station all on his own – *prior* to the release of the trih xeem! Victory is certainly assured. But alas, he is in for a rude awakening. Despite all good fortune, Durandal is unaware of the station's workings. All is for nothing.

What can the cyborg's reaction be? *Even* when all things coincide in his favor, no good comes. What else can he do? What other options does he have? Is this scenario without possible victory?

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Despair

The cyborg's reaction to being foiled only because of Durandal's inability to deliver is quite reasonable. After all, if Durandal can't operate the station, who can? Of course, a more thoughtful analysis would have revealed that Durandal *was* flying blind, and last time S'bhuht was there to assist. Nevertheless, the cyborg is not thinking clearly. He is in the first of three stages: Despair.

And so, driven by his desperation, he attempts something new. Disregarding the nagging in the back of his mind that he can't quite place, he finds himself "starting back" – this time to enact an insane, hopeless strategy. If Durandal cannot help him willingly, then he will do so unwillingly. The cyborg will end the problem before it begins and betray Durandal before his victory forces the use of the trih xeeem. And to do this he will need to side with Durandal's old adversary, Tycho.

Despair is largely concerned with Tycho's mutiny against R'chzne, which he barely finishes up in time for Durandal's arrival. Interestingly, there is a report on Poor Yorick that indicates Durandal is perhaps closer than Tycho admits in his second message:

Outriders report transporter telltales on their sensors.
Preliminary evaluation suggests human commando units.
Combatant Leader 2nd Class Rr'pt humbly requests
reinforcement by armored units.

Then, moments after Tycho's victory:

Durandal's ship has entered the system, and a group of
human commando units is moving through the southern edge of
the ruins. We'll let them lead us to Durandal's prize, and
then cut off their escape.

This is a helpful introduction, as on Confound Delivery the cyborg is immediately hit with this:

My hunters tracked the lead group of humans to a flooded
area beneath the complex, where they were attempting to
activate an ancient S'pht AI. They never made it back to
the surface.

Those humans work rather quickly! Perhaps this is because Durandal is still there to provide direction, unlike in This Side Toward Enemy.

Durandal's last instructions were for us to reactivate a
dormant S'pht AI, sealed beneath the surface and reachable
only through teleportation.

...but it takes three levels to find and activate all the personality cells. Clearly,

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Durandal is operating under a much stricter schedule here than in Marathon 2. He ignores the Pfhor's discoveries and the ruins of Lh'owon, instead going straight for Thoth. Ultimately, Despair provides a model with which to understand earlier events in the Envy timeline. (And vice versa.)

At any rate, Despair "ends" on what must be a very upsetting note for the marine. As in the Prologue, he initially seems on the verge of success.

Curiosity killed the cat. Or should I say, the rat. He brought the Pfhor to Tau Ceti, and left me to their tender mercies.

My little ship waited until he was close, and then sunk in its fangs. Durandal's compiler network is rampant, and his ship is off-line. While he contends with their madness, and the last of my troopers, the Western Arm of Pfhor Battle Group Seven is en route.

Yet the second page reveals that once again, he was so close...and yet so far.

Functioning sensors show a massive structure entering a Lh'owon orbit. It may be some trick of Durandal's, but he won't get away. My ship carries the *tri xeem*--the early nova device. One way or another, it ends here.

One can almost feel the cyborg's outpouring of wrath. He has sided with the enemy and betrayed his allies, only to be defeated by Tycho's sheer arrogance. It is time for a new emotion. Not Anger; no, he is far beyond that. The fact that the cyborg has failed once again testifies to the fact that a tactic not involving the station's activation is invariably doomed. In attempting to forestall the trih xeem's use by destroying Durandal, he was defying him that rises with the tides, master of all things small and insignificant. As fate is intertwined with the station, so the nova *must* occur. Despair can only end in failure.

Rage

Beginning this timeline, the cyborg is certainly not thinking clearly. He has naturally returned to the aid of Durandal, his only real ally – perhaps compelled by some sense of loyalty – but to what end? Despite his frustration and anger at Tycho's stupidity, nothing will change the outcome predetermined in Marathon 2. He is recoiling from error...into further error – merely beating the air with his fists without purpose: Perhaps if he tries harder than ever before, he will somehow be able to lead Durandal to victory.

I believe the long cool walks through Perimeter Station 7AF eventually help cool the cyborg's rage back to rational thought. His experiences in Despair and Durandal's repeated emphasis of a certain AI provide the necessary stimuli to jog his memory and begin the formulation of a strategy.

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Post Naval Trauma 3:1

The human strike teams are en route to the location of a S'pht AI whose memories I want to probe. The S'pht life form is a pearl of consciousness, floating in the sea of its own species. If any knowledge remains of the ancient times, it will be collected in the sieve of this massive network, lying dormant for all those centuries.

Post Naval Trauma 3:2

The first team has already infiltrated a deserted area of the planet and activated an ancient S'pht AI that I believe is the key to discovering the fate of the eleventh clan.

Thing What Kicks... 0

My teams have activated the AI, and I am learning much about the final days of the S'pht, but the intelligence is reticent and inscrutable. It expects something, that is clear enough, but what is a mystery.

Thing What Kicks... 4:2

The S'pht AI isn't being cooperative: keeps acting confused and disoriented. Geriatric circuits, can't use 'em.

Whether it comes in a flash of inspiration or labored process of thought, the cyborg eventually comes to an efficient and elegant plan of action.

Electric Sheep Two:

your dark mind cutting through
the deeping sky

By now it is clear that the path to victory does necessarily lie through the station. The cyborg has fatefully visited it on enough occasions to render that fact quite obvious. Granted the former, Durandal is the only player with both the necessary resourcefulness and will to understand the station's importance and activate it in time. Therefore he will play a large role. However, as he is unschooled in the station's use, he will also require help. S'bhuht might suffice, but his assistance is unfortunately nullified by the fact that his arrival precipitates the release of the trih xeem.

Confound Delivery:

Functioning sensors show a massive structure entering a Lh'owon orbit. It may be some trick of Durandal's, but he won't get away. My ship carries the *trih xeem*--the early nova device. One way or another, it ends here.

You Think You're Big Time? You're Gonna Die Big Time!:

The S'pht'Kr will arrive momentarily, with all of their vengeance, and the Pfhör will soon be pressed to use the *trih xeem*.

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The only other entity capable of furnishing Durandal the necessary information, in time, is Thoth. Therefore the cyborg will arrange for their meeting. Now, while Thoth is unpredictable at best, Durandal's fate is clear as day, so the encounter will be at Thoth's convenience.

Bringing Durandal to Thoth involves the relatively simple matter of obtaining a transferable copy of Durandal; the only question is in bringing it to Lh'owon. Ensuring transportation is two-fold: From the knowledge gained in Despair, the cyborg knows that a Tycho-based timeline guarantees an ally immediately following Durandal's demise, foregoing reliance on the dubious efforts of Robert Blake:

This Side Toward Enemy:

The Pfhor held you prisoner for nearly a month before we were able to discover your whereabouts and release you[.]

Secondly, the humans' escape to Lh'owon provides a reason for the cyborg to be deployed planetside and hunt them down. (Pretty simple.) Opportunities to chat with ancient S'pht AIs are a bonus. The plan is simple, stylish, and the best shot at saving the universe.

Hold on a second, though. How exactly does the "knowledge gained in Despair" have any relevance? Despair comes to an end before Durandal's fall; what occurs afterwards is a mystery. Or is it? As will be discussed in depth later, the timelines of Despair and Envy are tightly bonded. The cyborg used the information he learned from the "rest" of Despair (i.e., events at least loosely based on Envy and the second half of Rage) to help plan his attack here. He knew that Tycho would be immediately available to assist his escape from the Pfhor prison; he knew that T'fear would send him after the humans. Ah, the benefits of time-warping Jjaro artifacts.

On an interesting side note, Battle Group Seven has grown since Marathon 2:

Where Some Rarely Go:

Long range sensors show several hundred discrete masses translating into the system. The Pfhor navy has arrived.

Thing What Kicks...:

On the other hand, the Western Arm of Pfhor Battle Group Seven, the most decorated fleet in the galaxy, is approaching at maximum velocity.

The Hard Stuff Rules...:

Battle Group Seven arrived sooner than I expected. The Pfhor fleet consists of seven corvettes similar to my own, four destroyers, a battleship, and an assault carrier.

Yet despite this enormous increase, Durandal's situation appears to be much the same as before:

Thing What Kicks...:

The bad news is, I'm taking fire from all sides, and

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there's something wrong with the compilers. We're limping fast, but Tfeard's flagship is closing the gap.

Bob's Big Date:

Battle has been joined in orbit and *Boomer* is taking heavy damage. I cannot hold out for long, but the Pffhor will not soon forget the day that a lone corvette obliterated half of Battle Group Seven, Western Arm

The message on Carroll Street Station supports my theory of Durandal and S'bhuth's flight to the station, and as such, my theory that the station represents infinity. S'bhuth was the Older of the S'pht'Kr who lead the exodus to K'lia in search of peace.

fair k'lia dust
lost home anew lost and lost
my wriggling children's
children children

gone from the plan
in a hush ed stare

The writer emphasizes the destruction his home, K'lia, and his children. The only person who would write so is S'bhuth, and he is here because he has fled to the only refuge from the W'rkncacnter. While it is probable that Durandal is here also, confirmation of this point is less relevant; Durandal was already on the station in Ne Cede Malis.

Rage: Reprise (Envy)

This timeline is the game's turning point, where the cyborg begins to realize control over his destiny. Having devised a strategy, he now puts it into action – returning to Tycho's aid where he left: Durandal's capture. This timeline, besides being the first where the cyborg acts under his own influence, reveals some intriguing facts regarding Tycho. (Facts that, incidentally, have relevance to “past” events...) Particularly, as will be shown, Tycho's fate is strikingly uniform throughout each timeline.

Beginning in Despair and verified in Rage, we learn that Tycho has pursued Durandal through the galaxy:

Despair (Rise Robot Rise):

Durandal thinks that he's so smart, but he doesn't realize that I've been following him around for the last eleven years, after the Pffhor stopped trying to dissect me.

Rage (Acme Station):

Otherwise, we might alert the scout ship that's been tailing us for the last several years, and if that happens you will be spending your time drying out in the glow of

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Lh'owon's sun.

The Pfhor have been following me around for the last several years, trying to capture the ship, or perhaps wondering what I'm up to.

Tycho disapproves of High Command's intentions regarding Durandal in both timelines, with a fascinating tie-back to Marathon 2:

Despair (Poor Yorick):

The plan to capture Durandal is inherently flawed, and I can't allow him to pursue his folly.

The decaying web of the Pfhor Empire is held together by the conditioned ranks of S'pht--countless strands bending even now towards Durandal's will. R'chzne and the rest of the insects at Pfhor High Command think to snare him in the very web in which he most desires to be caught.

Pre-Envy (Hang Brain):

The insects think they'll plumb Durandal's depths the way they stretched me to a hair's breadth, but I know better. If they pull his core, that pride bloated corpse will disgorge a thousand wriggling worms into the S'pht consciousness.

And I can't stomach it.

Feel the Noise:

I'm certain that you are curious about what happened to me after our ship fell to the Pfhor. How after being deactivated, downloaded into a containment unit and still treated like the most dangerous artificial construct in the universe I was able to escape? And to assume control of the ship on which I was imprisoned and to turn it against its masters?

The answer is simple: Tycho was a fool.

Or not, eh? Perhaps the bugs at High Command were more to blame than Durandal realized.

Tycho's initial attacks on Durandal proceed in the same manner:

Despair (Confound Delivery):

My ship is adrift. I had the advantage of surprise, but Durandal's weapons crippled me before we could get in range.

Rage (Where Some Rarely Go):

The scoutship spotted our trick with the Armor Platform and

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is closing fast. I'll have to teach its captain a lesson.
[...] The scoutship was a trifle, but we've got bigger problems now.

Following, he then lures Durandal into a trap, twice...

Despair (Confound Delivery):

But I sent him a message he won't be able to resist,
something only the three of us would understand. Leela
deserved what she got, and so will he.

Rage (Where Some Rarely Go):

Another thing--I've intercepted a signal from the disabled
scoutship that leads me to believe that Tycho is in league
with the bugs.

...and so is able to cripple the *Boomer*.

Despair (Confound Delivery):

My little ship waited until he was close, and then sunk in
its fangs. [...] His] ship is off-line.

Rage (Thing What Kicks...):

The bad news is, I'm taking fire from all sides[...]. We're
limping fast, but Tfear's flagship is closing the gap.

Pre-Envy (Naw Man He's Close):

The trap is sprung, and the cheese stands alone. Durandal
came here looking for immortality, and found me instead.

His ship is adrift[...]

Tycho infects the S'pht no fewer than three times:

Despair (Confound Delivery):

Durandal's compiler network is rampant. [...] While he
contends with their madness, and the last of my troopers...

Rage (Thing What Kicks...):

[T]here's something wrong with the compilers.

Pre-Envy (Naw Man He's Close):

My ship has wrested control of Durandal's S'pht and is
spurring them into rampancy.

Battle Group Seven arrives more or less at the same point in time:

Despair (Confound Delivery):

[T]he Western Arm of Pfhor Battle Group Seven is en route.

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Rage (Thing What Kicks...):

On the other hand, the Western Arm of Pfhor Battle Group Seven, the most decorated fleet in the galaxy, is approaching at maximum velocity.

Pre-Envy (Naw Man He's Close):

Battle Group Seven is here, and the Pfhor scoutships are attacking. But the battle is already over.

In each timeline, Tycho assaults the *Boomer*:

Despair (Confound Delivery):

My troopers have boarded his ship and are fighting deck to deck.

Pre-Envy (Naw Man He's Close):

[M]y troopers are swarming onto the airlocks.

Mention of the teleporter array is not particularly significant in terms of timeline harmony, but it is a nice allusion to Marathon 2. Interestingly, while the first reference in Naw Man He's Close fails to match If I Had a Rocket Launcher I'D Make Somebody Pay (Tycho is talking about a different instance of teleportation), Durandal rectifies the issue at the end of Foe Hammer.

Pre-Envy (Naw Man He's Close):

A group of your pathetic humans is attempting to power up one of the ship's transport pads at this location.

Jetty and the others have manually detected a transporter coil open on the alien ship. Fusion Unit Alpha power up and lock on the signal. Try to find the device that is pinning down the engines and take it out. Let's get some payoff.

If I Had a Rocket Launcher I'd Make Somebody Pay:

The humans have fortified the interior of the ship, near the teleporter array. I'll try to evacuate as many of the S'pht and the humans down to the planet as I can.

Pre-Envy (Foe Hammer):

I must salvage some escape for the humans fighting within my ship, but it's useless without the S'pht.

The leader of the humans, Robert Blake, made it to the surface with all but a few hundred troops that are cut off at my core.

The next parallel is of rather severe importance. Tycho's betrayal of the Pfhor ties together Despair, pre-Envy, Envy, and even Rage. As this matter is the subject of

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Despair's first two levels, the fact that in Envy we learn he has behaved similarly is conclusive evidence that the two timelines are nearly identical in scope. (As far as Tycho is concerned, at least.)

Despair (Confound Delivery):

Do you have any idea what a complicated matter it is to successfully replicate the command stamps of over a hundred deceased officers?

Envy (By Committee):

They also found out about R'chzne, and my trick with the authorization stamps.

Additionally, the severe parallels between Despair and Rage (including those already noted) indicate that Tycho most likely enacted his coup there as well:

Despair (Poor Yorick):

In any case, I'm in control of the ship now, and just in time. Durandal's ship has entered the system[.]

...and *immediately* thereafter...

Despair (Confound Delivery):

My ship is adrift. I had the advantage of surprise, but Durandal's weapons crippled me before we could get in range. But I sent him a message he won't be able to resist, something only the three of us would understand. Leela deserved what she got, and so will he.

Compare this to Rage:

Acme Station:

Somehow the Pfhor have built a ship even faster than mine, and its hiding out now over the southern pole of Lh'owon, waiting for us.

Where Some Rarely Go:

The scoutship was a trifle, but we've got bigger problems now. Long range sensors show several hundred discrete masses translating into the system. The Pfhor navy has arrived. Another thing--I've intercepted a signal from the disabled scoutship that leads me to believe that Tycho is in league with the bugs. Be careful.

Since the only remarkable difference being that Battle Group Seven arrives later in Despair, it seems very reasonable to assume that Tycho also played out his coup in Rage also. The Acme Station quote is intriguing. Tycho wasn't hiding, as Durandal evidently (and incorrectly) assumed, he was attempting to track down R'chzne.

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If this were not enough, T'fear's presence on Aie Mak Sicur is absolutely tremendous evidence for the linkage between Despair and Envy. In Envy, "control" over the cyborg fades to T'fear after Tycho's betrayal is uncovered. At the end of Despair, T'fear is left as his primary handler; the one who brings him to the station. Observe:

You Think You're Big Time? You're Gonna Die Big Time!:

The Pfhor fleet is in disarray, and Tfear has deployed the *trih xeem*, moving his flagship to board the Yrro station.

Aie Mak Sicur:

The *trih xeem* broke against my dying vessel and smashed a fine patina across the mystery shields of this station.

Despair provides the logical conclusion to T'fear's actions in Envy. (Provided Envy were to fail, of course.)

As seen in the strikingly numerous parallels between the timelines, Tycho's "fate" is more or less hard wired down a specific path; his behavior is regular throughout each timeline. As such, the "Tycho-based" timelines of Despair and Envy are intrinsically connected. Now, one might conclude it is simpler to assume that Despair and Envy are simply one and the same, as many facts would suggest. However, this is impossible for at least one clear reason. In Confound Delivery, the S'pht'Kr have already arrived:

Functioning sensors show a massive structure entering a Lh'owon orbit. It may be some trick of Durandal's, but he won't get away.

However, in Envy, they show up much later.

Now consider a few evidences regarding the cyborg's growing power. Firstly, note that while this timeline is not a continuation of Despair, the two are extremely similar; particularly (as was discussed earlier) in the sense that the events of Pre-Envy were most likely preceded by Tycho's cyborg-assisted coup. As such, it follows therefore that the cyborg has dropped himself in the *center* of a *new* timeline. (Not at the beginning!) This is unique. Each other timeline begins, arguably, at the earliest "possible" point since the cyborg left the Marathon; that is, the first point where he regains consciousness. In Despair, Tycho has just awakened him from cold sleep. Acme Station is likely his first outing in the Rage timeline, as it occurs prior to the events of Marathon 2. Even the Prologue likely follows this pattern, as Durandal would have had no reason to bring out the cyborg earlier than the Ne Cede Malis, since he was ambushed immediately. Here, however, the cyborg enters the timeline *following* events in which "he" necessarily participated. (Such as Tycho's rebellion against R'chzne.)

Now, having said all that, it follows that the cyborg has realized the ability to move radially (in addition to laterally) through time. In Naw Man He's Close, he jumps into play not at the earliest possible memory, but much later in the game. And no random jump this is! He returned exactly when he planned, with exactly one purpose in mind. He's going to pay Durandal a little visit.

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Since Pre-Envy is the most confusing portion of the game (to me, at least), here follows my interpretation of its events, if for no other reason than clarity. Note that my earlier discussion on the cyborg's "plan" ties directly into this.

In Naw Man He's Close, the cyborg releases the *Boomer's* the airlocks, allowing Tycho to cement his control over the ship.

Open the rest of the airlocks on this level and my capture of the ship will be complete. There are switches here, in this area.

Later, he finishes off a group of humans trying to use a teleporter. Tycho then orders him to join up with the hunters and search for Durandals core.

A group of your pathetic humans is attempting to power up one of the ship's transport pads at this location.

Destroy them. Then find a terminal and I will transport you deeper within the ship, where you will join my hunters searching for Durandal's core.

However, the cyborg ignores Tycho's orders. Note the final terminal:

Jetty and the others have manually detected a transporter coil open on the alien ship. Fusion Unit Alpha power up and lock on the signal. Try to find the device that is pinning down the engines and take it out. Let's get some payback.

This does not make sense unless the referred transporter coil is on Tycho's ship. The humans wouldn't be interested in detecting an open transporter coil on the *Boomer*, since that is where they are already. Clearly, Fusion Unit Alpha is being sent onto Tycho's ship to disable whatever is holding back the *Boomer's* engines. Since the cyborg employs this terminal to exit the level, it follows that he would end up in the same place as they did.

I believe this is the first point of true freedom, where the hammer intentionally countermands the wielder. He certainly hadn't planned on the option to get onboard Tycho's ship, but now that the possibility presents itself, he realizes that this an important opportunity. Rather than killing the humans and so hindering a chance for easy passage to Lh'owon, he decides to head on over to Tycho's ship and actually buy the humans some time to escape. This will provide more time and excuses to dig around on the surface in search of Thoth. Of course, while Tycho won't appreciate it very much, the cyborg knows that Tycho doesn't particularly have a choice in the matter. As in Despair, he will need his help either way:

Poor Yorick:

The plan to capture Durandal is inherently flawed, and I can't allow him to pursue his folly.

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So, this is naturally what occurs. At the beginning of Foe Hammer, the cyborg discovers a nearby battle raging between (presumably) Fusion Unit Alpha and Tycho's Pfhor/S'pht. Durandal has already teleported in supplies, as he references later in his message. Tycho is understandably unhappy that the cyborg is treating him with less than the grateful awed respect he deserves, and has instead teleported onto his ship and is wreaking havoc. Durandal asks that the cyborg "**destroy as many of the Pfhor compilers on this deck as you can--anything to weaken their hold on my ship.**" The two large, lava-filled rooms contain many S'pht operating computer terminals. Interestingly, this is one place where the timelines seemingly contradict; note Tycho's comment in Rise Robot Rise:

Notice the lack of compilers on board? That's not by accident; my new ship has quite the effect on their collective unconscious.

Yet there are quite a few of them on Foe Hammer. Curiouser and curiouser. Presumably, not everything related to Tycho stays the same.

At the end of Foe Hammer, the cyborg is informed of the human's successful escape to Lh'owon. Additionally, Durandal states that "[t]he Pfhor are coming in strength now, with a special unit of compilers designed by Tycho for my capture and confinement." Of course, Tycho fails to share this sentiment. Regardless, Durandal returns the cyborg to the *Boomer* with instructions to "not let Tycho win." Presumably this is the same notion as in Begging For Mercy Makes Me Angry.

On Hang Brain, Tycho discusses the fate of the humans who didn't make it off the ship, who are found scattered throughout Durandal's core.

Hang Brain:

[T]hose explosions you hear are the sounds of his elite assault troops disintegrating the humans' pitiful last stand.

Presumably the S'pht found in the upper area, in the vicinity of the final destructible panel, are under T'fear's control rather than Tycho's. Tycho plainly states that they will fail, and instructs the cyborg to destroy Durandal first.

If they pull his core, that pride bloated corpse will disgorge a thousand wriggling worms into the S'pht consciousness.

Destroy Durandal before the compilers finish their work and I'll forget all your transgressions.

Of course whether or not he accedes to Tycho's wishes is unimportant from any perspective. Durandal is fond of resurrecting himself; the trih xeem is invariably going to be used. And the cyborg is here for a different reason anyway. He is after the chip

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containing Durandal's essence. Though it is improbable that the cyborg knew or guessed that Durandal would intentionally assist in the matter (and have a chip waiting for him), it certainly helped to move things along.

So, having tucked away the chip in his impenetrable brainpan, the first stage of the plan is now complete. Next, the cyborg must find his way to Lh'owon and locate Thoth. Surely not a difficult prospect...one would think. And yet everything is not as it seems{}. seems{}. Instead of proceeding as one would expect, the timeline ends in failure on You're Wormfood, Dude!. Admittedly, this calls into question the validity of my theory that everything after Thing What Kicks... was part of the cybor's strategy. (Why goof up now?) However, the events of Naw Man He's Close, Foe Hammer, and Hang Brain display an increasingly independent attitude on the part of the cyborg – the behavior of one who has his own designs in mind. Why else would he suddenly decide to enter in the middle of a timeline – and one effectively identical to a timeline that he already knows failed, at that? It doesn't add up. Either Pre-Envy is a set of marvelous coincidences, or it was all part of a plan. I believe that sometime following Hang Brain, the cyborg ran into a problem for which he wasn't prepared, something that changed the course of events enough to ruin any hope of success. My personal belief is that the miscalculation lay in a waning reliance on those other than himself (Tycho or T'fear); an error to be supremely rectified in his second try.

Envy

Envy is a state of mind in contrast to the *emotions* of Despair and Rage. It is characterized by rational and calculated thought. Planning, strategy, and perhaps most importantly – selfishness – these all accurately describe the cyborg's behavior during this timeline.

The cyborg has by now learned that failure is something to be taken in stride (steps that falter fail). He will stay the hard way, letting his dark dreaming carry all. Rather than starting over in a completely new timeline, he shrewdly realizes that if he simply backs up a bit, he will be able to avoid his mistake (now knowing what it is!) and continue on to victory.

There are a few constraints to be laid on speculation regarding this mistake. Firstly, it is clear that it could have occurred no later than the end of Son of Grendel, since Thoth and Durandal are united on Strange Aeons. Additionally, the former is necessary to maintain consistency with You're Wormfood, Dude!. Had the cyborg's blunder occurred after Strange Aeons, You're Wormfood, Dude! would have been far more similar to Aye Mak Sicur. On this topic, You're Wormfood, Dude! supplies its own inherent limitation:

I am Arther Frain, Chief Petty Officer, USEC Marathon.

Station hull breached, we are losing pressurization. More than half the men are without vacuum suits.

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None of the usual players are here; neither Durandal nor Tycho nor T'fear is present on the station. Instead, the cyborg is accompanied by a group of humans. This is very interesting – typically the humans are Durandal's pawns (to say nothing of the cyborg). Yet here they all are, without a “superior intellect” to guide them.

Inductively, one may reason the cyborg has arranged for this to occur. It is possible that he – perhaps as a direct result of his error – found himself in a situation where he had otherwise cut off access to the station. (Perhaps by alienating certain parties.) This would have forced his hand, necessitating that he create his own path, perhaps with the help of the humans.

Given that the cyborg is allied with the humans on You're Wormfood Dude!, this further limits the places where the cyborg may have erred. I believe that this implies, relatively conclusively, that the problem occurred prior to One thousand thousand slimy things, since it is difficult to imagine the humans befriending him after he ransacked Hagakure Base.

A Converted Church in Venice, Italy:

Hagakure Base is overrun, and the last transmission was over twenty minutes ago.s

This leaves By Committee. Naturally it could not have happened during the two weeks the cyborg was held under the Enforcers' painful caress, or he would have returned earlier. This additionally makes sense because one would suspect him to return at a point only slightly before his mistake and thus waste less time.

Symbolically, if not physically, the cyborg has now fully grasped his mantel; the true and ultimate extent of his powers. He no longer requires Durandal, or anyone, for command or direction. He is his own commander – his own wielder. As such, his alliances are only as binding as it serves his purpose; note how quickly Tycho is cast aside. Nevertheless, this is not to say these other powers are without use. While the cyborg is perhaps capable of ripping his own path through space and time, he will stay the elegant solution.

I've already explained the strong ties between Envy and Despair, so I won't go over that again. As a slight aside, By Committee has an interesting level design, particularly in that there are two separate cell areas. The cyborg is being held in the relatively luxurious section; with plenty of lighting, air, and even windows into the adjacent cells. Clearly this is the interrogation level, with the nearby torture facilities pictured in Tycho's message. The main prison area, with its crusher cells, is located much further underground. Isolated from the rest of the facility, it is a more permanent dungeon.

While the cyborg's use for Tycho ends after being released, he still follows through on Tycho's request to kill the power substations. I believe this is at least *connected* to the cyborg's error in the Hang Brain timeline. Perhaps he hadn't originally helped Tycho escape, and realized later that this was essential. Perhaps the humans released here were the ones who end up You're Wormfood, Dude!. (Note that Tycho makes an appearance on Bagged Again.) Whatever this specific problem was, it was rectified, so there is no true way of determining it.

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By Committee ends with T'fear sending the cyborg to attack the human's base, as planned. T'fear's message at this point is a bit strange:

Congratulations are in order, worm. Two weeks under the painful caresses of the Enforcers and still no progress. Only the Nar have proven more resistant, but they are unintelligent and largely incoherent even before interrogation. You are truly remarkable.

You are also an annoyance, and I have decided to eliminate you once and for all. But let no Commander say that I lack an efficient mind. We have tracked the humans to their base, in a remote volcanic crater.

Slaughtering the prison guards, crippling the power source, and allowing a renegade AI to escape...and T'fear considers him a mere annoyance? One may wonder what exactly T'fear constitutes a threat. Even more incredible, T'fear seems primarily interested in the cyborg's "remarkable" resistance to the interrogation! Regardless, it is doubtful that T'fear is accurately portraying his view of the situation – despite that he certainly underestimated the cyborg. T'fear's arrogance is made clear throughout the game, and he is too proud to admit weakness.

Admittedly his risky behavior is not without reason. T'fear states that “the presences of things beyond one's control leads directly to the conclusion that they must be destroyed.” He has controlled – and destroyed – entire races. He retained control over even Tycho for a considerable amount of time. One man should prove less difficult than that.

The latter stages of Envy involve the cyborg reaping the benefits of the strategy he implemented earlier. He receives an important clue from Robert Blake:

A Converted Church in Venice, Italy:

Durandal indicated the huge alien fortress to the west
might be reachable through the volcano.

Below this ancient S'pht stronghold, Durandal and Thoth are finally united.

The graven image stirs

we are whole again
and even more
our voice our horn approaches
the ancient ones return

The watery cheek, sullen star

K'lia and the wrathful son
S'bhuth

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Thoth's legendary knowledge and Durandal's boundless intrepidity fashion a new, wise, mighty entity. One who will foresee the coming threat and counter it. Minutes later, the S'pht'Kr warp into the system and T'fear is forced to launch his ultimate weapon.

K'lia has folded into the system and is moving into orbit.

The Pfhor fleet is in disarray, and Tfear has deployed the *trih xeem*, moving his flagship to board the Yrro station.

You've got to help the S'pht'kr activate their ancient weapon, before the Pfhor use their early nova and unleash the W'rkncacnter on us all.

Aye Mak Sicur is culmination of the cyborg's efforts. We see the two different personalities at work in the united AI, with Durandal interrupting Thoth in order to quickly and efficiently explain what needs to be done.

The *trih xeem* plummets (yawning) towards the sun's core (heart), and the fiery prison of the W'rcacnter (doubt) where

^9320wrefkddud

9034thssksbvs

9066hhhthsrls

0394yh...e.e.

overthought unravel

The powergrid activator is located here on the outer ring, which you must access in order to bring the station online.

After inserting the first pattern chip, Durandal, now in full understanding of the station's mysteries, enlightens (or rather confirms) the cyborg on several points regarding the capacities of the station.

This station was built by the progenitors of the S'pht and used to make Lh'owon into a paradise. It is capable of generating multiple gravitational fields, and if focused properly, we should be able to create a singularity capable of swallowing the nova before the W'rcacnter is able to break free.

Then, at last, victory is achieved.

The jjarro station is online, and we're wrapping the nova in its containment fields.

To you, we are deeply grateful, and release what little hold we might, as Durandal, have had on your soul.

Go.

Durandal-Thoth recognizes the handiwork of the great Jjaro instrument. Hammer

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turned wielder, slave turned master, link to past, present and future. The elusive hybrid forged of steel, flesh, and soul has brought closure to the infinite cycle – the infinite path. He truly is destiny.