

No Man's Sky: They Nailed It!

By Holly Lisle

In spite of everything (and there's a lot of "everything" going on right now), I took the entire day off yesterday to play a video game.

Not just any video game, though. The one for which I went out and bought a Playstation several years ago, and the one for which I dug out my X-Box and bought a NEW copy of the same game I bought two full-price copies of the day it went on sale the first time.

Why would I buy three copies of the same game?

First, because...

...when I was eleven and really understood who I was for the first time, I came up with this prayer:

*Now I lay me down to sleep
I pray the Lord my soul to keep
If I should die before I wake
Please don't make me go to heaven*

Let me go to space.

The coda of that prayer included a request for a pony, and I was already well on my way to atheism at that point, and by praying at all was basically covering my bases.

But I wanted to go to space more than anything, including the horse.

And when I found out that to go to space, you had to be REALLY good at math (and I suck at math to this day) I was devastated.

I never considered that being female might be an obstacle – not even in 1970-71. I never let it be for anything else that I wanted that was within the reach of possibility.

I got the other things I wanted in my life. My one person to spend my life with, my kids, writing science fiction for a living. (Along with a lot of other stuff.)

Second, because...

...the guys who built the game stood by it even when, on launch, the most astonishing collection of asshats and douchebags crawled out of the woodwork to complain about everything.

I bought this third copy to support their quiet resolve to not let Sony's premature forced launch kill something wonderful, and I got out my dusty X-Box and bought it for that system SPECIFICALLY to reward them for sticking with it in spite of Sony's fuck-headed premature launch.

Third, because...

...it is as close as I'll ever get to that kid's yearning prayer, and the closest I'll ever get to the dream.

Wake up on an alien planet. Fix your spaceship. Go to space. Explore strange new worlds and alien life. Find mysteries. Watch wonders. Be the best of what we as human beings are – creatures who can think and wonder and create and explore and achieve.

So yesterday morning at two minutes past nine, when the game went live for me, I woke up on an alien planet. Struggled with horrific weather, made it to my spaceship, and began exploring the mysteries.

As always, I started with a clean slate. No saves, complete do-over, the chance to see the game brand new and fresh.

And it's magnificent.

I flew through the rings of a planet, built tools, discovered ruins, built a little wood shack next to an isolated middle-of-nowhere shop kiosk as my first base, and while I was building, watched a herd of antelope-y creatures gallop past me, chased by a dinosaur-ish beast.

And they were a herd. They moved together until obstacles in their path forced them to split, then wheel in different directions... at which point the hunter split off a group, and killed and ate one of the smaller ones, and then the bigger one that had stayed close to the smaller one.

While exploring a crash site, some enormous, heavy-bodied bat-winged nightmares flew overhead, and I stopped, stunned, to watch them (in spite of taking quite a few rads while doing it).

I started over several times, because I was trying different things, seeing how they worked – and I finally settled on my “keeper” world and system at around four or five in the afternoon. Deleted the other saves, and settled in. I'm playing slowly. Not racing out to chase the game objectives. I'm getting a feel for my world, my system (which has a lot of planets... and I have not yet been to any of them).

For me, this game is about finding life forms, playing with terrain manipulation, building stuff. Dealing with the intelligent aliens. Learning the languages. Hunting for the secrets.

Flying from planet to planet, stepping on new worlds, discovering what's out there.

Stopping to stare at something unlike anything I've ever seen before flying overhead, thinking, “God, I hope that's not carnivorous.”

Knowing that what I'm seeing, no one else anywhere has ever seen.

I'll get out into deep space eventually, but at this point in my current game, I haven't even left my home planet yet.

I'm still discovering species (and worrying a bit about the big-ass T-Rexy thing that has set up housekeeping in my neighborhood).

I played until 11 PM with just the one break for the daily meal.

Forgot to take screenshots, so I don't have any pictures for you.

But I'll get them.

Here's the thing: I'm essentially a loner – you can't be a writer if you don't enjoy spending a lot of your time alone inside your own head.

So I have not looked at or investigated the multiplayer options.

They may be wonderful. They might give you everything you want from the game. And I might eventually try that part of the game myself.

I don't know if I will, though.

So for now at least, I cannot report anything about that very new part of *No Man's Sky*. It may be wonderful, too.

But I got what I was looking for without it. I got an amazing, delightful, deep, beautiful, challenging trip to space.

So In Closing...

To the guys at Hello Games who did not let themselves be

crushed by the herd of “me too” shitweasels who ripped them apart when *No Man’s Sky* first launched – who instead of quitting, stood by what they were creating, and who kept making it better, and better, and better, until now it is magnificent:

Thank you. Your dedication, determination, integrity, and courage have been inspirational, and your work is worthy of admiration and deep praise.

From one player who has been there since the beginning... and who’s been waiting for this my whole life... thank you for giving me space.

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