

Thoughts on Season of [B]lunder

Welcome back to the “Thoughts On” series, where I yet again talk about my thoughts on Destiny seasons and DLCs up until The Final Shape where I can finally retire and play more casually than I usually do. This is yet another season that has me split, so let’s get into it.

Story

This season begins with Eramis waking up from her multi-year long coma in Stasis. She has been beckoned by the Witness to retrieve a set of artifacts from across the system, and she has enlisted the Houseless Old Crews to do so, as well as fortifying them with the remainder of House Salvation. To stop them, Spider has offered you his Ketch and crew to interrupt their mission and retrieve the artifacts yourself.

Assisting you on the journey is Mithrax and his daughter, Eido. Mithrax warns that the Old Crews are dangerous, and Eido is interested in their history. Spider doesn’t care as long as he’s in a safe place, away from the prying eyes of the Reef, who were hunting him down for the events of Season of the Hunt.

As time goes on, we learn that Mithrax has history with the Old Crews, as he’s revealed to have once been a pirate lord himself, wielding one of the artifacts we’re looking for now around his neck. This artifact acted as cursed treasure, corrupting him until he realized that he had gone too far.

We also learn that the Lucent Brood are trying to find the artifacts themselves, for reasons we don’t yet know. Eido tries to appeal to Eramis’s Elikzni pride to join forces away from the Witness, but Eramis is too afraid of it to turn her back. This somewhat changes when Eramis defends Eido from the Lucent Hive and Mithrax spares her life. She leaves the area, and possibly the whole system, as she sees no place for her in the reformed Elikzni under Eido and Mithrax.

We retrieve the relics, which are revealed to be the body parts of Nezarec. Yeah, that Nezarec. Turns out, he was the former Disciple of the Lunar Pyramid, before he mysteriously died during the Collapse and the Witness took over his ship. This also means he visited Sol twice, once during his Sin, and once during the Collapse. Yeah, this is getting kinda interesting.

However, the story isn’t about Nezarec, and as interesting as these lore drops are, they’re mentioned off-hand because the real story is between Mithrax, Eido, and Eramis... and it’s kinda weak.

Eido feels like a different character than she was in Splicer. In the latter, she felt like a young, curious, but extremely wise person. She knew exactly what the history of the Elikzni was, and was able to manage the expectations of House Light and the City with relative ease. In a sense, I felt like she was wiser than Mithrax himself.

In Plunder, however, she feels unbearably naive. There's a point in the story where Mithrax says that she didn't know how terrible the world could be, despite the fact that she knew exactly how terrible it could be in Splicer. All she didn't know was how bad Mithrax's past was, but that's not even something to get angry over... which she does anyway. I get that it's more of a "why didn't you tell me" situation, but knowing that Mithrax has done everything in his power to move past it... I just don't think it's worth the anger.

I'm with Drifter on this, Mithrax is just a guy who did things he ain't proud of, and Eido's reaction to it pushes Mithrax into unnecessary character regression.

My thoughts on Eido aside, I feel like this story is similar to Haunted... as in I could've skipped it and next-to-nothing would've changed. This season feels like filler, and even though I enjoyed the dialogue and the implications of Nezarec, I just felt like this is a bunch of build up that led nowhere, and the parts that did were only half decent.

Activities

To begin this section, we'll start with the Hideouts, which were the general replacement for story missions this season. Not going to lie, I actually liked these. Yes, they were essentially reskinned lost sectors, but they didn't really pretend to be anything more. They were short and sweet, a welcome break from Sever from the prior season, especially since this is the THIRD seasonal activity Plunder had to offer. Unfortunately, like Haunted before it, the first, and only, actual story mission is not repeatable despite how good it is. I don't know why this is such an issue, but I digress.

The second is Expedition, which is essentially an elongated public event which combines the payload mechanics of the Resonant Splinter of the Throne World and the orb throw mechanics from every other DLC. This is what I consider Plunder's version of Containment, a mindless public event-style objective that has a few Champions, or Ruffians in this case, thrown in for variety's sake. For the most part, I think Expedition is a good mindless activity, though the payload mechanics are getting a little old and the spawn rate of Ruffians for a long while were not good for challenge progression. Even still, one often has to gimp their runs in order to farm them efficiently.

The final big activity I'll touch on, and the first you're introduced to after the initial mission, is Ketchcrash, which is also the biggest activity Plunder has. This one is quite interesting, as it involves a space battle between two Ketches, where you infiltrate the enemy ship and fight through it in order to get to the captain. This is easily the most fun and interesting activity. Even without a fireteam, I find it enjoyable in short bursts. The objectives inside are relatively fun and the bosses each have unique enough mechanics to justify their existence. Not to mention, their names are all puns or references and it's funny.

However, it is a pain to get screenshots of them. Don't suffer as I have, for your own sanity.

Overall, I find Plunder's activities to be much better than Haunted, but not as good as PsiOps from Risen.

Gameplay

This season introduced a mechanic in Expedition and Ketchcrash that allows you to spawn in crewmates as allies, and each of them give different buffs. Halsiks promotes precision damage, the Skiffblades improve melee attacks, and Scur-V buffs the absolute shit out of reloads. For that reason, Scur-V is my favorite. Besides, Servitors are adorable. I love this mechanic, but I am a little disappointed that we didn't get to see any House Light combatants rather than Spider's folk. Maybe one day...

Alas, that's about all the real good I have to say here about gameplay that makes this season unique, because the rest is all about the grind.

Good lord, this season is grindy as hell. It's this exact reason why I didn't feel like playing it. There's a step for the story quest that has you kill 50 Champions if you aren't doing Expedition or Master Ketchcrash. Sorry if you're a solo player and don't grind out the artifact, I guess. The overreliance on Master activities, Champions, and whatnot for basic quests is probably the reason why people started their typical "I hate the seasonal model" speech much sooner than usual.

It's also why I grew to somewhat dislike Ketchcrash. To start, I'm already not a big fan of Eliksni architecture. Sorry, it's just not my style. I'm a Vex guy, what can I say? Either way, playing Ketchcrash once or twice is fine, but playing it five times in a row is soul-draining. That wasn't for a seasonal challenge or triumph, either. Actually, I haven't even touched any of those. No, that was for a story step. Yep. Story.

Let's just hope next season isn't as painful to get through.

The H.E.L.M. - Promoting Piracy

The H.E.L.M. has been filled with riches and a star chart to match the theme of the season. I wish I had more to say on that, but I don't...

Oh, right, this is where you put the relics of Nezarec, and I often find that I forgot to do so every once in a while, as there isn't really an objective marker for them. They're important for gathering lore and dialogue, so make sure you actually do place them.

The Eliksni Quarter - Still an Endless Night

The Eliksni Quarter returns, updated to fit the growing population of House Light within the City and the slow rebuilding of the Botza District to fit their aesthetic. Not going to lie, I actually like seeing these guys again, as well as the work they're doing on the area itself. I see you, guy farming in the corner. Also included is a bar, which comes with its own jukebox, which is run by Spider.

Unfortunately, it's still in Endless Night mode, as there is no day cycle.

Festival of the Lost

Festival of the Lost returns and is... about the same as last time. There's additional lore and one new Haunted Sector, but while those are fun, it doesn't really change much.

One thing that I did like, however, was the armor and weapon. This takes after the voted on mech style and it works pretty damn well in my opinion. Perhaps it's not "Festival of the Lost" material, but I still think it's awesome. The weapon also being named "Mechabre" is fun, and the sounds it makes are really cool. If only I could snipe...

The Epilogue - Renovations and Awakenings

The epilogue of this season begins with Mithrax telling you to donate materials to help fund changes to the City, starting with the Elikzni Quarter. Now, apparently, the community completed it in like one day. However, the Elikzni Quarter doesn't look that much better. Sure, it's got Warmind Frames which I don't even know how they're still functional after Arrivals. Sure, it's got a... a town square? OK, what kind of renovations are these?

It really feels underwhelming, which is a good word to describe a lot of this season's story-gameplay translations, but this one might be the worst. It's good to sink materials into, but nothing more.

As for what Mithrax is doing... the interesting stuff, I mean. He's off studying the pieces of Nezarec without us, and it all leads to him somehow being able to pull Darkness from them and convert them into tea in order to wake Osiris from his coma. Now look, I understand that perhaps the relics whispered to him, but did Mithrax seriously think it was a good idea to use one of the most dangerous forces from a being known as the Final God of Pain to wake a close friend's lover? I'm sure that won't have any consequences whatsoever.

Oh, and this is all in a cutscene. You don't witness it yourself. On top of that, Osiris tells Saint about Neomuna, the destination for Lightfall, 3 months before we get there, because Savathun somehow knew about it. There has to be a good reason as to why we don't just beeline it to Neptune next season, otherwise this just feels nonsensical.

This is probably the worst seasonal epilogue yet, with the only good part being Osiris finally waking up, freeing him from the curse of year 4's story, and I'm sure some people will realize how much of a relief that is for me.

Conclusion

Season of Plunder is, unfortunately, not great. It's a season that does little to progress the plot, like its predecessor, but also lacks the good parts that Haunted's story managed to pull off. Plunder's story is filled with character regression, unnecessary drama, and stupid decisions meant to try and make players feel all happy inside. It actually makes me miss Worthy, which is another season I didn't like.

At the very least, Plunder's activities manage to put this season above some of the worst in Destiny history, as they are fun and do interesting things with their encounters. Also, unlike Haunted, Plunder does actually move the overall story forward by bringing Osiris back and unfreezing Eramis, the latter thankfully not going all-in on the Darkness as many of us thought she would.

However, Plunder is another sign that says that Year 5 isn't interested in progression, but filler and drama. We're in the final years of the Light and Dark saga, and there is still so much to do and so many story threads to wrap up that are relevant to it. Instead, we're off galavanting around, playing pirates. After Witch Queen, which set the quality bar high, seeing the other seasons of Year 5 not even match Year 4's seasonal year is kind of sad.

I do still hope for Lightfall, even if Neomuna and Calus take me out of it significantly, but these seasons aren't setting a good precedent, even if Witch Queen did. In a world where Bungie has killed Cayde-6 to make the story darker, we're once more returning to a lighter-toned story at the worst possible time.

Hopefully Season 19 can do better. That's all, see ya.