

After spending some weeks in the WildStar beta, I have to say I am largely impressed. For the most part there is a lot of deep content available for the tinker and collector in me, and I'm sure I'll be spending untold hours hip deep in the housing system when I get the time.

I have one major issue with the game though, and it dives straight into spoiler-infested waters. Because you see, I have an issue with the storyline of the Exiles, and in particular with a lady known as Sadie Brightland. If you're the type that doesn't want to know the storyline of a game before you play it (I'm the same way, which is why I rarely play beta content deeply), you'll need to stop here. Normally I wouldn't discuss storyline because I hate to break the experience for other players, but in this case I have to make an exception.

The Exile storyline begins on a colonization ship heading to Nexus. When you first load into the game after character creation, you are immediately thrown into conflict: the warp jump blew equipment aboard the ship, injuring people still in hyper sleep. Many of the passengers simply didn't make it, but you're one of the lucky ones. Your pod is extracted from the system intact, and you wake up to see the chaos of the attack infecting the entire ship.

The first person you encounter is Mr. Badass himself, Deadeye Brightland, and he begs for your help with extracting one of the damaged sleep pods from the cryogenic system. This pod contains precious cargo, namely his wife Sadie. She emerges from the pod infected with something called cryo sickness, and very, very pregnant.

Having recently gone through pregnancy myself, I was incredibly excited when I saw Carbine had taken the time to create a pregnant character. I eagerly looked forward to seeing how her birth would turn out, to see how she deals with a newborn in the midst of crisis, to learn what childhood is like in this particular Sci Fi universe. All of these are very complex subjects, and I was immediately impressed that Carbine had decided to take on these sorts of stories, not to mention the fact that the second character you meet would need two different models. How wrong I was. For you see, Sadie isn't the second character you meet, she's just a prop for the first.

Evidently every badass needs a tragic backstory, and we have a front seat for watching Deadeye's unfold. First his wife is injured during the attack, then she is healed just in time to get on a shuttle that crashes onto the planet's surface. Finally she gives birth, gets on a third ship and, you guessed it, that shuttle explodes killing both mother and daughter. Maybe the Exiles should look into another form of transportation; shuttles just aren't their thing.

So to recap, Sadie is first the damsel you must save, then she is fridged in order to make Deadeye really hate the Dominion. Not once is she given even the semblance of a real personality, and in fact there is only one brief moment where she isn't prone on her back either dying or in childbirth. Then she's killed off suddenly simply as motivation for the real main character. Not only is this bad writing, it's a horrible portrayal of the first female "character" you meet. On top of that it does nothing but cheapen Deadeye as a character. Let me explain.

If you don't have any lore to read, all your information about Deadeye is received when you first

meet him on the ship. Most of this comes from the clothes he wears and what he says. It's obvious from his manner he's a tough dude who's been in more than a few scrapes. His clothing says he's a space cowboy, as does his speech pattern. Everything about him oozes cool, calm, and in control. It's a surprise therefore when you find out this lone wolf is married, and you naturally see him in a new light when you see how much he cares for her. Adding on the pregnancy is just icing on a very romantic cake. Who knew Mr. Cool had so many feels?

If you think about what we now know of this man: Strong, weathered, competent, and deeply in love with his wife, you can start to get a picture of the sort of woman his wife is. Do you honestly think this man would fall for some shy, simpering airhead? No, he's seen the world, and as a lone wolf no less. It would have to be a very special sort of woman to tame this beast. And an even more spectacular woman, considering she was willing to climb into a cryo chamber while nine months pregnant in order to follow him on this dangerous assignment. If you've known any pregnant woman, you'll know how protective they are of their unborn children. Just knowing Sadie got on this vessel shows an uncommon trust in her husband, and not a little bravery.

Now while it's a bit of a cheap shot to damsel a pregnant woman in order to provide motivation for the player and their guide character to travel around the ship, it's not completely out of the realm of possibility that Sadie would be injured in the attack. She is carrying an additional passenger with her in the cryopod after all. But it's unforgivable to take that brave, bold woman and sacrifice her in the name of Deadeye's tragic backstory. That's just lazy writing, and turns Deadeye himself back into a flat stereotype - a role he had been saved from by being the unusual sort of lone wolf character that had settled down with a family. Plus we have to call his judgment into question, because after two attacks on ships in a day he was idiotic enough to put his entire family on yet another spacecraft. He was practically begging the Dominion to kill them.

How could we save Deadeye from this fate, while at the same time preventing alienation of female players of WildStar? Simple: Let Sadie live.

Here me out: The quests at the beginning of the Northern Wilds are pretty stale - kill Yetis, save crash survivors. This is the perfect opportunity to make Sadie an active agent in her own story. We know from our previous character analysis that Sadie is something special, and she's certainly motivated by something important that makes her get on the ship with Deadeye. It might just be her love of her man, or even better what if it were her assignment, not his?

What if Sadie was, say, a xenozoologist, a scientist who studies alien animal species? With the chance to study the creatures of the Nexus, to make new discoveries and potentially fulfill her own drive for recognition in the scientific community, you can easily understand why she might risk everything for the chance to come to Nexus.

When the shuttle crashes on the planet's surface, Sadie is separated from the rest of the group. Deadeye can't search for her because he's busy trying to save the rest of the people, so he sends you, someone he already trusted with her life once, to find her. The trouble is the area is infested with Yetis, and they are angry. You fight through the Yetis, noticing they seem to be protecting something within a cave to the West. Investigating the cave you discover Sadie, who

has been brought into the cave by the Yetis because they recognized she was in labor and wanted to provide someplace out of the elements for her to give birth. With the unique training of her scientific background allowing her to communicate with the Yetis, Sadie makes them understand that you are there to help and they stop attacking you.

She's in the middle of delivering her child there at the back of the Yeti cave, and you arrive just in time to bear witness to the miracle of life. She's needed no help because she's a strong, capable woman, trained in basic medical practice as she's a scientist. With the baby nestled in her arms, she asks you to take her to her husband, because the Yetis' hostile behavior is an indication that they are being affected by some power source nearby. The Yetis are no longer aggressive, and give you no issue as you make your way out of the cave and down the hill to the crash site.

This suddenly turns the rather bland quests on their ear. No longer are you just killing the monsters in the area because they pose a threat, you are searching for someone you already have a connection to. Maybe you free trapped survivors because you're searching for Sadie. And when you actually find her, you realize that the Yetis weren't a threat after all, and we instead trying to help her.

Sadie for her part is now an active member of the team. She notes that the Yetis shouldn't be awake at this time of year, that they are normally hibernating, and that this indicates that something is keeping them awake. She is the one that gets you pointed in the direction of the Elden power station. Sadie is no longer a damsel.

And when you return to the group you find that Deadeye didn't want to get on that transport ship to begin with: It was all Sadie's idea. He just wants to keep her safe, and she just wants to do her work. Conflict arises, and when he tries to put her on the transport craft to Thayd she refuses because what idiot would get on a third ship when the first two were blown out of the sky? Thus Sadie survives that fate of the ship that explodes as it takes off, and is vindicated in her caution.

Sadie Brightland need not be a throwaway prop simply there to pluck at the heartstrings of the players. She could easily be a great resource for compelling storytelling, for adventures into the scientific discoveries of the Nexus. She could be important, intricate and meaningful. Please Carbine, don't toss this great woman into the refrigerator. She's worth more than that.