



GAME REVIEW

THE LONG DARK

DO NOT GO GENTLE INTO THAT GOOD NIGHT

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I'm sprinting, trying to navigate through the maze-like tunnels of this deep mineshaft. To my hypothermic, overburdened self, the flickering matchstick makes every wall and turn look identical. My character's so cold that he's starting to feel warm, which is bad. I have to build a fire to heat up, but I need to get outdoors first. With a last few flickers, the match goes out. My penultimate moments are spent in claustrophobic darkness.

These are the kind of stories that stick with you when you play "The Long Dark", one of the most unique post-apocalyptic games on the market. In this world, instead of having nuclear war or hordes of brain-eaters, a geomagnetic disaster renders all technology useless and you must survive in the hellhole that is northern Canada. The location is bland, desolate, and unlike most things Canadian, does not apologise for murdering you in cold blood. Everything is frozen over, and it only gets colder and wetter. The wildlife isn't much better either, as bears and wolves will hunt you down if you get close enough. All in all, "The Long Dark" nails the oppressive environment of an apocalypse. It looks the part as well, with a hand-drawn graphical style that looks gorgeous, especially when the lighting effects are added. True to its name, the game gets dark and the different light sources look breathtaking at night. Upgrading from the weak flickers of a match to the steady beams of a lantern for the first time is something you'll remember for a good while.

From the get-go the game is clear about its pace and difficulty. It's not one of those limitless crafting games where you can horde resources and craft endlessly to make it to the top of the food chain. In "The Long Dark", you are a poor soul doing everything you can to survive. The pacing of the game fits this idea well, because everything you do feels intentionally sluggish. Exploring is key to scavenge what you need to stay alive, all

only the decision that will let you survive for one more day. Some of the gameplay mechanics only accentuate the game's hardcore survival theme. If you really need drinking water, you can boil snow in a fire to make it drinkable. Leave it on the flame for too long, and all of it will evaporate. This attention to detail blew me away the first time I played the game, and my character died thirsty, but wiser. You can hunt, fish, craft tools and gear. Most

night in this game is comparable to getting through the first night in Minecraft, which is the highest compliment for a survival game.

There's an episodic story mode as well, which is surprisingly good. It follows the journey of a pilot after his plane crashes, and he must find his ex-wife after they get separated. This mode slowly introduces the game's concepts and tells a captivating tale. There are some great NPCs you interact with, and some of them are crafted expertly. Grey Mother in particular feels like a real person, both because of the great dialogue as well as the hauntingly beautiful delivery by the voice actor. Some of the moments in the story mode will make you feel the hopelessness of the apocalypse, as you slowly unravel what happened to the world. Other parts of it, though, will fall into the trap of turning unique situations into fetch quests for the sake of progressing the story. Two of the five episodes have been released so far, but if these two are anything to go by, the story will be well worth the wait. Fun fact: "Do not go gentle" is the name of the first episode of the story mode, "Wintermute".

This game is not something everyone will appreciate. If you like the thrill of The Forest or the freedom of crafting and light-heartedness of Rust, this game is not for you. If you are into slow burns and games which always keep you on your toes, however, then you will love the quiet apocalypse that is "The Long Dark".



the while prioritising what you can spend time getting. Survival is never easy, especially because of how many things you watch out for. Your character gets hungry, thirsty, cold, tired, sick, and dies a lonely death.

Will you build a fire in a sheltered cave so you can stay warm but hungry? Or will you brave the blizzard to walk to the town in the distance, even though you are only minutes away from hypothermia? There is never a right decision to these questions,

importantly, you can knock rabbits out by throwing rocks at them.

Survival mode is the best way to experience the game, as the harsh wilderness hits you head-on. Without any hand-holding, it lets you figure out your path in an experience that is equal parts hopeless and rewarding. With everything stacked against you, you should be dead. Every night you manage to hold on feels like a success of epic proportions, mother nature be damned. Surviving the first

Wasique Hasan remembers the green green grass of home, but home is 12000 km away. Pay your respects at: fb.com/hasique.wasan