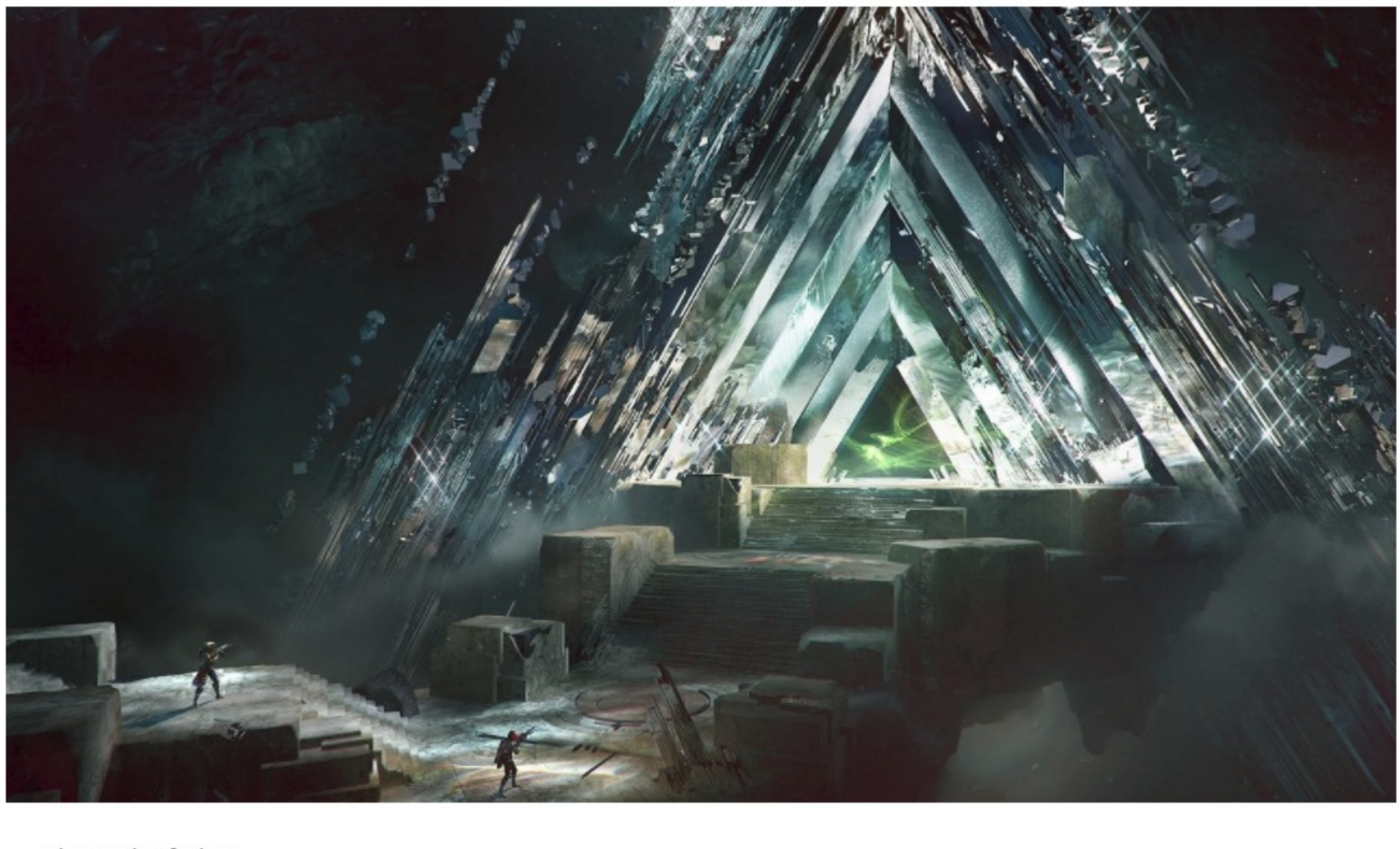


New Secrets Make 'Destiny' Worth Playing Again (And Again, And Again)

By Phil Hornshaw
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The Vault of Glass

The answer to one of the biggest mysteries in *Destiny* was revealed this week. And it was kind of a letdown. For more than a month, *Destiny* players had been working to track down a near-mythical weapon: the Sleeper Simulant. They knew it was out there, in the newly released expansion *The Taken King*. They'd seen it in preview articles and marketing materials. They'd heard it was awesome. And they wanted it.

So players banded together to create a community in search of the Sleeper Simulant, combing through everything from the reams of backstory and lore describing *Destiny's* world, and pouring over hints dropped from developer Bungie on social media and forums. A whole section of Reddit was dedicated to the search.

Players were excited. They were obsessed. And they were totally wasting their time.

As it turns out, the mystery of the Sleeper Simulant unraveled on its own: players who had, more or less by accident, fulfilled the right requirements to get the gun just needed to wait for the right missions to become available. Last week, they did.

What the Sleeper Simulant shows is not that players are jumping at *Destiny's* shadows, however—they're excited about the world, possibly now more than ever, because now for the first time, there are secrets to be uncovered. For the first year of its existence, *Destiny* had few secrets to uncover. So far, *The Taken King* has been full of them, and it's made *Destiny* the best the game has ever been.

THE REWARD FOR NERDING OUT



When you hit the end of *Destiny* and *The Taken King*, you move from completing its many story quests to cycling through what's known in games such as this one as "the endgame." You're pushing your character's stats up to the very peak they can reach, looking for the best gear, and taking part in harder versions of missions you've already beaten on either a daily or weekly rotation. All of this is prep for things like *Destiny's* big "raids," some of the toughest and most involved content the game has to offer.

In the first year, *Destiny* players got very used to playing (or more aptly, slogging) through the same missions over and over. With "The Taken King," Bungie has offered a twist: in September, one such daily challenge contained a secret that wasn't present in the normal version of the mission. It took everyone by surprise.

Most players slammed through the mission quickly, as they always had—until someone discovered a secret door, and made a video. That secret door, as it turned out, housed a whole hidden area filled with even harder enemies than usual. Players had to sprint through it, clearing bad guys, including a giant boss, before a timer ran out. It was an intense challenge that required players to band together with friends, and the reward was the Black Spindle, one of the strongest sniper rifles available in the game—one that hadn't even been available before.

Nobody knew about the Black Spindle until players happened to stumble across it: a reward for time invested in the game, and for knowing, and searching, every nook and cranny of *Destiny's* huge world. With the Sleeper Simulant, players tore up every inch of the game hoping they'd stumble across it the same way. They didn't, but what's important is that Bungie has made them feel like they might have.

THE EXCITEMENT OF DISCOVERY



Sleeper Simulant

The Taken King has done a lot of things right. It's significantly improved how *Destiny* works, alleviating aspects that felt more like a job making license plates than playing a video game, and has made its story a whole lot more interesting and involved than it was previously. But the best thing it has done is seeded little secrets like the Black Spindle throughout for players to find.

Another daily mission, "Paradox," concerns a character called Praedyth, who was lost and presumed killed in the Vault of Glass, a location of one of the game's raids that's populated by time-traveling alien robots. In the mission, Praedyth—part of a team that set out to destroy the robots but which was subsequently wiped out—manages to send out a distress call. When players work through the story, they discover Praedyth's skeleton; he managed to send his signal from the past thanks to some time travel weirdness, but unfortunately, he's long dead.

But when that mission popped up in the daily rotation, if you managed find some hidden items along the way, you could open a secret door that delved deeper into Praedyth's story and added a whole new area and battle to the mission.

Each of *Destiny's* new secrets requires some serious work to achieve. And they're not all just a cool new gun to find—each also adds to the world, expanding it and making it feel like there might be more to *Destiny* than what players have already seen and experienced. There aren't just aliens to shoot here: there are tales to be told as well. And they might be just as exciting.

A COMMUNITY OF EXPLORERS



It's not just that *Destiny* is now peppered with reasons to double check corners and spend time on its Reddit page that makes all these elaborate, ridiculous secrets and mysteries exciting. It's that they're found and shared by thousands of players working together.

Sure, the search for the Sleeper Simulant might have turned out to be like analyzing a hazy shot of Bigfoot or checking a dollar bill for signs of the Illuminati. But that doesn't detract from the huge amount of enthusiasm and teamwork *Destiny's* community poured into the search. And it's not like that community didn't have reason to suspect Bungie might have hidden the gun in its dense, expansive world—especially now, there's plenty of precedent for that. In this case, it didn't pan out, but that doesn't mean it never will.

It has panned out in other instances, like the "Paradox" mission's secret ending and the hidden Black Spindle quest. And the simple fact that the Sleeper Simulant and other mysteries inspire so much from the *Destiny* community says a lot about the people who play Bungie's game.

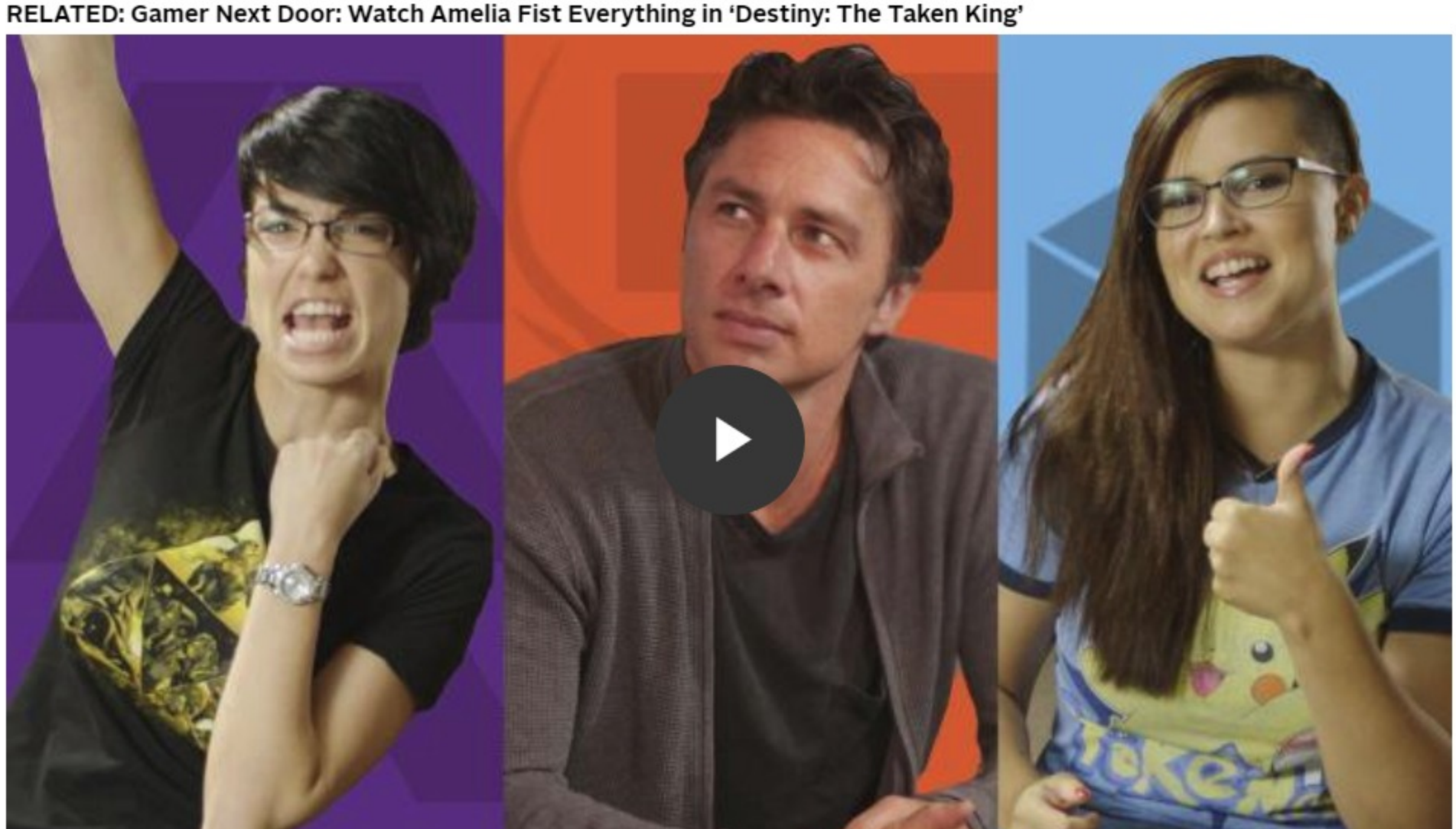
It's almost an unspoken rule that, in *Destiny*, players don't keep secrets to themselves; they share them. That's why, when some discovered weird, lit-up outcrops in *The Taken King's* newest raid, King's Fall, the community took to working on the problem. Days later, they'd finally figured it out, unlocking a hidden "basketball court" in the middle of a massive alien spaceship. They received no reward (besides lots of people watching them play on Twitch), but that's OK, because secrets are fun.

Destiny is finally on the path to becoming what it should have always been: an adventure within which you can get lost, one that feels bigger than the sum of its parts, and alive and dangerous and populated. One of which players are excited to be a part, and which feels like it expands far beyond what's visible on the surface.

Destiny isn't there yet. But every secret room, amazing gun and crowdsourced mystery takes it a little closer.

Phil Hornshaw is a freelance writer and the co-author of So You Created a Wormhole: The Time Traveler's Guide to Time Travel and The Space Hero's Guide to Glory. He was hoping the latter would help him get Han Solo hair, but so far he's been unsuccessful. He lives with his wife and annoying cats in Los Angeles.

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