

# Game Review: *Destiny 2's Starcrossed* Exotic Mission

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## Introduction

November 28<sup>th</sup> saw Bungie launch *Destiny 2's Season of the Wish*. In week 3, players gained access to the Exotic mission *Starcrossed*, and through it, the Strand Exotic bow Wish-Keeper. For my review of this mission, I will discuss the story, visuals, audio, mechanics, level design, and any bugs or issues I encountered. During my playthroughs of *Starcrossed*, I used two Hunter builds: a Duskfield grenade Stasis build, and then an invisibility Void build for third encounter, both with the Wish-Ender bow, a rocket launcher, and either grenade launchers or automatic rifles.

## Visuals, Music, and Story

In *Season of the Wish*, players help recover the eggs of the deceased Wish Dragon Riven. In *Starcrossed*, one of the eggs is hidden in the Black Garden. The mission mixes the Black Garden's beautiful otherworldly landscape with invasive Vex architecture nicely. The musical styles and motifs used match the story and involved factions. However, the music is not intense enough during encounters, only using proper action tracks in the final boss room, undermining the mission's sense of importance. Narratively, *Starcrossed* offers a short mystery. Its specific part of the Garden is revealed as the lair of the Wish Dragon Taranis, Riven's mate, who scattered their eggs to protect them. His bones are found at the mission's end, with a sad but wholesome cutscene fleshing out their history.

## Mechanics

Mechanically, *Starcrossed* is centred around two buffs. One is required to damage Taken mini-bosses and to see symbols indicating which order to kill them in. Another is required to traverse red-tinted areas without taking damage. Each is awarded by running over matching nodes. The first two encounters focus on one buff each, with preceding areas teaching that buff, which is good for players unfamiliar with them. The third encounter uses both buffs, while the final boss fight is entirely within a red-tinted area and both buffs are required to damage the final boss. Each encounter escalates the difficulty nicely, requiring either a more dangerous buff or both, and increasing the red debuff area.

## Level Design

*Starcrossed's* level design is mostly solid. Each encounter positions mini-bosses in separate areas, with enough cover that you don't have to fend them all off at once and can hide to regain health. Each encounter either has multiple buff nodes, positions nodes in convenient locations, or is in a small area. Each encounter featured areas where you could fall off the map. While most were obvious, the first encounter did have a couple of smaller crevices that you could fall into if you were inattentive while also trying to survive, which wasn't fun. The jumping puzzles between encounters had enough difficulty traversing small ledges and avoiding moving blocks that each might take a few attempts, but weren't so hard that you'd be stuck for hours. Hidden chests throughout the mission gave a nice incentive to explore. My only issue with the level design was a section before the third encounter where the player must jump from a ledge into a swarm of enemies with tracking attacks. Staying on the ledge provided insufficient cover to avoid them, rapidly killing powerful enemies is not something every build

is designed for, particularly while waiting for appropriate abilities to recharge from prior use, and jumping amongst enemies leaves you exposed and is not a playstyle that everyone enjoys.

## Bugs and Other Issues

For the most part, the mission was bug-free, with a few minor hiccups that could be put down to network issues. The final boss fight does however have a major bug. Before you enter the final boss room, you can see the boss through a window. While the window should be impenetrable, anti-barrier weapons can shoot through it, letting you kill the final boss easily. This bug is particularly glaring because another Exotic mission a few seasons ago initially had the same bug.

My last issue with *Starcrossed* is the lack of checkpoints. In fairness, this is how all Exotic missions function, unlike other endgame activities like Dungeons and Raids, and *Starcrossed* is easy enough that this isn't a big problem, even on higher difficulties. However, for harder Exotic missions, being able to take breaks or to make multiple attempts at difficult encounters between weekly resets without having to complete the entire mission each time would increase player engagement, improve player sentiment towards those missions, and make them more accessible to time-poor players.

## Conclusion

Overall, *Starcrossed* is a very enjoyable mission. Its mechanics are fun, its setting is gorgeous, and its story is satisfyingly sad but wholesome. It is only let down by lacklustre musical intensity, a couple of level design choices I didn't enjoy, and a bug that trivialises the final boss.

## Glossary

### Activities

**Dungeon:** 3-player endgame activities with difficult mechanics and powerful enemies and rewards.

**Exotic Mission:** a mission that, upon its completion, awards a specific Exotic Weapon that is only available through that mission.

**Raids:** 6-player endgame activities with difficult mechanics and powerful enemies and rewards.

### Locations

**The Black Garden:** a primordial garden located outside of space and time, inhabited only by a Vex cult.

### Species

**Taken:** supernaturally corrupted entities from each of *Destiny 2's* enemy factions, forcibly altered to enact only the will of the one who Took them.

**Vex:** cyber-organic microbes that pilot robots and seek to convert the universe to their design.

**Wish Dragons:** a species of shapeshifting, wish granting creatures that like to take a dragon-like shape.

### Subclasses / Damage Types

**Kinetic:** a weapon-only non-elemental damage type, i.e. normal weapons with physical ammunition.

**Stasis:** an elemental damage type focused on cold and ice-based attacks.

**Strand:** an elemental damage type focused on manipulating a universal web of psychic energy.

**Void:** an elemental damage type that involves manipulating gravity and distorting space-time.

## Weapons

**Anti-Barrier:** a weapon and ability perk for shooting through otherwise impenetrable enemy shields.

**Exotic Weapons / Armour:** the highest-rarity equipment in *Destiny 2*, with unique perks and bonuses. Players can only equip one Exotic weapon and one Exotic armour piece at one time.

**Wish-ENDER:** an anti-barrier Kinetic bow that deals especially high damage.

**Wish-Keeper:** the Strand bow acquired from *Starcrossed*. It can create traps that paralyse enemies.

## Other

**Build:** a combination of weapons, armour, mods, and subclasses abilities that, when combined, enable a specific playstyle or gameplay loop, achieve a specific goal, or fulfil a specific role.

**Duskfield Grenade:** a Stasis grenade ability that slows and freezes enemies within its area over time.

**Hunter:** the player class focused on stealth and agility.

## References

Bungie, *Destiny 2*. Washington, Bungie (2017).