Written by Doug Norris
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THE SACRIFICE, Valve Software's long awaited DLC for the LEFT 4 DEAD franchise (which released October 5th for XBOX 360 and Windows PC gamers) follows THE PASSING (see FANGORIA's review) as the second piece of story addendum bridging the gap between the two groups of survivors. SACRIFICE tells the story of our original 4-man troop from the first game as they trek further south in search of a boat destined for the Keys (we all have to have dreams to help us through the apocalypse, right?).

This time around, gamers get to play as the original survivors through either LEFT 4 DEAD or LEFT 4 DEAD 2 discs. The journey, now more arduous with extra complaining from Francis, follows the group to the point where the previous installment, THE PASSING, begins.

In similar fashion, SACRIFICE comes with a 3-stage campaign that's packed with a couple crescendo events and a final stand that will truly test the strength and stamina of any L4D fan.

In preparation for the release, Valve published an online comic telling the events that lead to SACRIFICE's finale, so any fan will know that it involves multiple Tanks— the baddest, beastly mutants in the game.

That alone should prep players for the battle that will ensue.

Unlike the previous installment, Valve released SACRIFICE as an add-on for both the LEFT 4 DEAD and LEFT 4 DEAD 2 games. Those purchasing the game for the original LEFT 4 DEAD will receive the campaign "The Sacrifice," five new Achievements, the "explosive barrel" (an environmental add-in that explodes and enflames zombies), and some new dialogue bits for the game banter. Purchasing the DLC for L42 will net you all of the previously mentioned features, plus
a port of the "No Mercy" campaign from the original game, new multi-player mutations (including "TAAAAAANNNKK," which pits survivors against an onslaught of nothing but Tanks), and most importantly, the ability to melee attack and have effective AI support, both upgrades featured in the sequel. While creating the DLC to play on both systems, Valve really gives the original LEFT 4 DEAD community (already angry over the rushed release of the game's sequel) a nice swift kick in the teeth.

It's like waking up Christmas morning and finding a bicycle with your name on it, and a

motorcycle for your little brother. Valve is a bad parent.

As harsh as that is, let's look at what LEFT 4 DEAD 2 owners get. While the story is enjoyable, SACRIFICE falls a bit short for bearing the L4D name. The campaign, though surprising in difficulty, breezes by for experienced players until the final battle. At a point in the second stage, the survivors converge on a giant gravel pit and face a crescendo event that forms a fantastic king-of-the-mountain style battle. Here's the first point where Valve really missed the boat– this stage is NOT available as a playable stage for the "Survival" mode of gameplay. Upon first reaching this point in the game, all I could think of was strategically stacking gas cans and propane tanks up the mountain, loading the squad up with Molotovs and incendiary ammo, and taunting the horde to dare step through our ring of fire. Nope, not available.

Secondly, the third stage of the campaign was completely ripped (save for some obvious environmental changes necessary to facilitate the story) from THE PASSING, Valve's previous DLC exclusive to L4D2. Basically, you get to play the final stage of THE PASSING with the characters from the original game. Wow Valve, thanks! And you didn't include any NEW weapons? No new mutants? Not even the golf club addition to the melee arsenal that was a part of that stage in the first place? And I have to pay $5 for this?

What did I say about being a bad parent before? Oh yeah…thanks for selling me your inoperable car at more than the Blue Book value, Dad…that's f*cking awesome.

As much praise as I've given Valve for the LEFT 4 DEAD franchise, with large downloadable content and the weekly mutations (which have wained since I last wrote about them), I feel like they've just gotten lazy. THE SACRIFICE not only exemplifies that, it brags about it, like a proud illiterate.

THE SACRIFICE is available now for LEFT 4 DEAD and LEFT 4 DEAD 2 owners on XBOX 360 and Windows PC.

{jcomments on}