

## = Neverwinter Nights 2 : Mysteries of Westgate =

Neverwinter Nights 2 : Mysteries of Westgate ( NWN2 : MoW ) is an expansion pack for the role @-@ playing video game Neverwinter Nights 2 . It was developed by Ossian Studios and published by Atari on April 29 , 2009 . The player creates a character and controls it , along with a group of three pre @-@ designed companions , journeying through the game world . The gameplay is very similar to that of the base game . Mysteries of Westgate also includes new monsters , music , and other tools , which can be used by players to create their own Neverwinter Nights 2 levels .

The game takes place in the Forgotten Realms world , a Dungeons & Dragons campaign setting , in the area of Westgate . The player creates a character at the start of the game who finds a cursed mask belonging to the " Night Masks " , a thieves ' guild at war with two other organizations . The player chooses which of these other organizations to side with , and embarks on a quest to lift the mask 's curse .

Mysteries of Westgate was made after Ossian Studios ' successful work on the 2006 expansion pack Darkness over Daggerford . The game 's release was delayed to April 2009 , despite its completion in September 2007 , because of digital rights management issues and coordination difficulties among the three companies involved . Mysteries of Westgate met with mixed reviews ; the game 's plot and small amount of spoken dialogue were criticized by reviewers , while its music and low price for overall content were praised .

## = = Gameplay = =

Mysteries of Westgate is a role @-@ playing video game that is based on the fantasy role @-@ playing game Dungeons & Dragons , and uses the d20 System rules , which are based on determining the results of most tasks , such as attacks , by performing the equivalent of rolling a 20 @-@ sided die . The player begins the game by either importing their character from Neverwinter Nights 2 or creating a new one that starts at character level 8 . Each character has a race ( such as human or elf ) and a class ( such as fighter or wizard ) , which determine the character 's main abilities . Mysteries of Westgate has gameplay similar to the original Neverwinter Nights 2 and uses the same systems for gameplay elements , such as character levels , combat , and magic . The gameplay takes place primarily from an overhead perspective in a three @-@ dimensional environment . The player moves and commands characters with the mouse .

The game 's designers estimate that Mysteries of Westgate contains over 15 hours of gameplay , part of which is provided by pursuing optional side quests unrelated to the main plot . Mysteries of Westgate 's campaign features content that does not appear in Neverwinter Nights 2 or its other expansions , including four new monsters ( such as the wererat and sea serpent @-@ like quelzarn ) , a set of " sewer " terrain tiles , and new music , all of which is available to players for use in the creation of custom levels . The pack includes over one hundred magic items , equipment which the character can use during the adventure .

## = = Plot = =

The storyline of Mysteries of Westgate is unrelated to Neverwinter Nights 2 or its other expansions . It begins with the player character ( PC ) finding a cursed mask in a dungeon , which causes the PC to have nightmares , and which cannot be discarded . The player soon discovers that the mask belongs to a group of thieves known as the Night Masks of Westgate . After traveling to Westgate , a port city along the Dragon Coast , the PC discovers that the Night Masks are involved in a guild war with a rival group of thieves known as the Ebon Claws . The temple of Lathander is also fighting the Night Masks , and the PC is faced with the choice of joining the temple or the Ebon Claws . The PC is joined by three companions near the start of the game : the rogue Rinara , a former Night Mask ; Mantides , a fallen paladin ; and Charissa , a cleric of Tyr . All three travel with the PC for most of the adventure .

The party then undertakes a number of quests , which vary depending on which faction the PC

sides with . As the quests are completed , more is revealed about the cursed mask and how to get rid of it . The party eventually learns that the Night Masks are led by vampires , and additional clues lead them to the vampires ' catacombs . After defeating the vampire Latasha , the PC travels through a portal to reach the chamber of the Night Masks ' leader , Orbakh . Orbakh gives the PC the choice to either become a vampire or keep the cursed mask .

The game 's ending depends on the PC 's choice . If the PC chooses to become a vampire , former allies turn against the PC . Once they are defeated , Orbakh sends the PC to destroy the Ebon Claws . If the PC instead decides to keep the mask , Orbakh attacks ; after his defeat , the leader of the Ebon Claws arrives with a group of followers and attacks the party . After the party is victorious , they kill the last of the Night Masks and free the player character from the cursed mask .

= = Development = =

Soon after the release of Darkness over Daggerford , Ossian Studios ' previous game , discussion began over the possibility of the company creating another expansion for Neverwinter Nights 2 . Ossian officially proposed the game to Atari and Wizards of the Coast , the owners of the Dungeons & Dragons license , in the fall of 2006 , with production beginning in January 2007 . When asked about why the Dungeons & Dragons setting appealed to the company , Ossian Studios CEO Alan Miranda said , " All of our team members are [ Dungeons and Dragons ] fans , so developing a [ Neverwinter Nights 2 ] game seemed like a great opportunity . "

During the game 's early development stages , it was set in the Forgotten Realms nation of Rashemen . The location was changed because Obsidian Studios ' Neverwinter Nights 2 : Mask of the Betrayer was to take place in the same area . At lead designer Luke Scull 's suggestion , Westgate became the new setting for the game . Ossian wanted the game 's setting to differentiate itself from both Neverwinter Nights and the Baldur 's Gate series of games . They found Westgate , situated in another area of the Forgotten Realms setting , to be ideal . Miranda compared Westgate to a city @-@ sized version of Star Wars 's Mos Eisley Cantina ; a " melting pot " of creatures from everywhere in the setting . Ossian said they decided to make Mysteries of Westgate exclusively single @-@ player in order to improve the game experience .

David John , who had also worked on expansion packs for the original Neverwinter Nights , composed the score for Mysteries of Westgate , which took several months . In an interview soon after the game 's release , Scull said " Some of [ the game 's ] tracks are so good , I actually listen to them alongside my usual eclectic mix . " Mysteries of Westgate 's voice acting was recorded in Edmonton , Canada , with over 12 @,@ 000 words of new voice @-@ over material . The cast included some of the same people who previously acted in Neverwinter Nights : Hordes of the Underdark and other BioWare games . Brian Dunn and Brian Watson , both of whom had also worked on Darkness over Daggerford , created the game 's artwork and graphics .

Development of Mysteries of Westgate ended in September 2007 , but Atari delayed the pack 's release , because the digital rights management they wanted to use was not ready . The delay was also caused by coordination problems between Ossian , Obsidian , and Atari . The game was officially announced on October 22 , 2007 , with an estimated release date of " fall 2007 " . In May 2008 , IGN reported that the game was scheduled for release that June , but it was further delayed , finally being released on April 29 , 2009 . Development of Mysteries of Westgate continued during the delays , to ensure the game 's compatibility with the expansions and patches for Neverwinter Nights 2 that were released after the game 's completion . Scull said , " Kevin Smith , our Lead Technical Designer ... had to bug fix and create new builds of the game with each [ patch and expansion ] . "

When IGN 's Steve Butts asked Miranda why the game was made available only through download , he replied , " From a financial perspective , digital distribution makes a lot of sense . It allows us to sell the Adventure Pack at a lower price point while still providing players with the same high quality gameplay and content that they 've come to expect from NWN2 products . " . Some of the game 's voice @-@ overs , monsters , music , and objects were released to the Neverwinter Nights 2 community for free , for use in building custom adventures , without needing to purchase the game

itself .

= = Reception = =

Reviews of Mysteries of Westgate were mixed . 1UP.com 's Jason Wilson said that the game 's plot is " an intriguing tale , and even after finishing the game , a number of encounters and plot points ring in my head ... but the story 's poor stitching distracts from its arc ? I felt like a great hand ... was pushing me through the plot , and the tale felt a bit muddled toward the end . " Brett Todd of GameSpot called the plot " rough around the edges " , while GameZone reviewer Michael Lafferty said , " The game may have a disjointed storyline , but there are moments where humor shines through , and the game does take a few interesting plot twists . And the exploration of the city zones , the underground areas where the trolls abound , hold that sense of joyful discovery that make an RPG worth playing . " Numerous reviewers mentioned that the impact of the mask which drives the story is minimal , having little effect on the actual gameplay . Lafferty said the side quests were not necessarily optional , as they were often a source of additional gold , and a certain point in the game 's plot required a substantial sum of it to proceed . GamesRadar 's Rich McCormick praised the game 's storyline and main quest as some of its best points . In a review for GameStar , Christian Schmidt thought that the game 's appearance and humor were poor , but recommended it because of its strong storyline .

Todd found the pack 's difficulty to be " wildly careening " and stated , " Some battles are amazingly easy . You can soar through many scraps in moments , with your party carving up the opposition before you can tell if you 're fighting a mummy or a zombie . However , others are absolutely brutal ... There are more than a couple of moments in the game in which your party is ambushed by enemy spellcasters that rip you to pieces before you can even think about a proper response . " He praised the game 's music as blending in seamlessly with that of the original game , but criticized it for having a minimal amount of voice acting , with sequences of dialogue that begin with audio and transition into text . Steve Butts commented on this , saying , " the dialogue here really needs some work ... you 'll even be treated to some truly tortured sentences . ' Wait till you see how deep into the backside of evil I insert my boot in the name of justice ! ' is probably my favorite . It 's too bad there 's not more voice acting in the game , because hearing someone speak lines like that out loud may have given the developers an opportunity to edit some of the worst offenders . "

As a result of Mysteries of Westgate 's 2007 completion and 2009 release , it did not feature the improvements present in the two previous Neverwinter Nights 2 expansion packs , and received criticism because of this . Todd stated that the game lacks the artistic improvements of Mask of the Betrayer and Storm of Zehir , a sentiment echoed by Lafferty 's review . However , Butts stated that " Westgate delivers enough engaging content that the absence of all the latest improvements isn 't " too agonizing . " Several reviews noted that the fifteen hours of story and the new objects in the adventure pack make the expansion worth its US \$ 9 @. @ 99 cost .