

= Planescape : Torment =

Planescape : Torment is a role @-@ playing video game developed by Black Isle Studios and published by Interplay Entertainment for Microsoft Windows . Released on December 12 , 1999 , the game takes place in locations from the multiverse of Planescape , a Dungeons & Dragons ( D & D ) fantasy campaign setting . The game 's engine is a modified version of the Infinity Engine , which was used for BioWare 's Baldur 's Gate , a previous D & D game set in the Forgotten Realms .

Planescape : Torment is primarily story @-@ driven and combat is not prominent . The protagonist , known as The Nameless One , is an immortal who has lived many lives but has forgotten all about them , even forgetting his own name . The game focuses on his journey through the city of Sigil and other planes to reclaim his memories of these previous lives . Several characters in the game may join The Nameless One on his journey , and most of these characters have encountered him in the past or have been influenced by his actions in some way .

The game was not a significant commercial success but received widespread critical praise and has since become a cult classic . It was lauded for its immersive dialogue , for the dark and relatively obscure Planescape setting , and for the protagonist 's unique persona , which shirked many characteristics of traditional role @-@ playing games . It was considered by video game journalists to be the best role @-@ playing game of 1999 , and continues to receive attention long after its release .

= = Gameplay = =

Planescape : Torment is built on BioWare 's Infinity Engine , which presents the player with a two @-@ dimensional world in which player characters are controlled . The game 's rules are based on those of Advanced Dungeons & Dragons 2nd Edition . The player takes the role of " The Nameless One " , an immortal being on a quest to learn why he cannot die . Exploration around the painted scenery is accomplished by clicking on the ground to move , or on objects and characters to interact with them . Items and spells may be employed through hotkeys , " quick slots " , or a radial menu . An alternative to armor is the use of magical tattoos , which can be applied to The Nameless One and certain other characters to enhance their abilities .

The game begins with character creation , where the player assigns attribute points ( such as strength , intelligence , charisma ) to The Nameless One . The Nameless One starts the game as a fighter , but the player may later change his character class to thief or wizard , with the option to also change back to fighter , after finding corresponding tutors . The player may recruit adventuring companions over the course of the game ; there are seven potential party members , but a maximum of five may accompany the player at any one time . Conversation is frequent among party members , occurring both randomly and during conversations with other non @-@ player characters .

Planescape : Torment 's gameplay often focuses on the resolution of quests through dialogue rather than combat , and many of the game 's combat encounters can be resolved or avoided through dialogue or stealth ; a review of the game in incite PC Gaming says that " The game is almost entirely story driven , and by asking the right questions you should only have to get violent a handful of times . " The Nameless One carries a journal , which helps the player keep track of the game 's numerous quests and subplots . Death of the player character usually imposes no penalty beyond respawning in a different location .

Alignment in D & D ? which determines a character 's ethical and moral perspective on the independent axes of " good vs. evil " and " law vs. chaos " ? is a static property , chosen by the player at the start of a game . In Planescape : Torment , the character begins as a " true neutral " character ( that is , neither good nor evil , and neither lawful nor chaotic ) and throughout the game , based on the character 's actions , this property is incrementally changed . Non @-@ player characters respond to The Nameless One differently , depending on his alignment . A review in NextGen reported that " the game caters to both the goody @-@ goody player who wants to be nice and lawful , and the evil bastards who just want to kill everything and take no guff from anyone " .

= = Synopsis = =

= = = Setting = = =

Planescape : Torment is set in the Planescape " multiverse " of D & D , a setting which consists of various planes of existence , the creatures which live in them ( such as devils , modrons , and even deities ) , and the properties of the magic that infuses each plane . In a March 2000 article for Game Studies , Diane Carr called the setting " a freak show , a long story , a zoo , and a cabinet of talkative curiosities " and described the creatures and monsters in the game as " grotesque rather than scary " . Planescape : Torment is the first video game to be set in the Planescape universe .

The first part of Planescape : Torment takes place in Sigil , a city located atop an infinitely tall spire at the center of the multiverse , that connects the planes with each other via a series of portals . The city is overseen by the powerful Lady of Pain , while fifteen factions control different functions of the city related to each group 's world view . Every faction strives for further control of the city . The Nameless One can even join several of these factions during the game . The story eventually moves on to other planes , such as Baator and Carceri , where The Nameless One continues to discover more about his past .

= = = Characters = = =

Planescape : Torment 's protagonist is " The Nameless One , " an immortal being who , if killed , will wake up later , sometimes with complete amnesia . Each time The Nameless One dies , another person in the multiverse dies to fuel his resurrection . These dead turn into ghosts that seek revenge on him . When the game starts , The Nameless One wakes in a mortuary with no memories , as a result of his latest death . He sets out on a quest to regain his lost memories and discover why he is immortal . He slowly learns about the personalities of his previous incarnations , and the influence they have had on the world and people that surround him .

Over the course of the game , The Nameless One meets seven characters who can join him on his quest : Morte , Annah @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Shadows , Dak 'kon , Ignus , Nordom , Fall @-@ From @-@ Grace , and Vhailor . These playable characters can also interact with the Nameless One to further the game 's plot . Morte is a cynical floating skull originally from the Pillar of Skulls in Baator . He is introduced at the game 's beginning in the mortuary . Morte loyally follows The Nameless One , partly out of guilt for having caused the deaths of some of his previous incarnations . The Nameless One meets Annah @-@ of @-@ the @-@ Shadows , a young and brash tiefling ( a human with fiendish ancestry ) rogue , outside the mortuary , but she does not join the group until a later point in the game . Dak 'kon is a githzerai , who once made an oath to follow The Nameless One until the latter died , not knowing of The Nameless One 's immortality ; this bound him to The Nameless One for eternity . Ignus is a pyromaniacal mage who was the apprentice of one of The Nameless One 's past selves . In the Rubikon Dungeon Construct , the Nameless One can find Nordom , a modron disconnected from its species ' hive mind . Fall @-@ From @-@ Grace is a succubus who acts as proprietress of the Brothel of Slaking Intellectual Lusts in Sigil ; unlike other succubi , she is not interested in seducing mortals . Vhailor , found below the city of Curst on the plane of the Outlands , is essentially an animated suit of armor dedicated to serving merciless justice .

= = = Plot = = =

The game 's story begins when The Nameless One wakes up in a mortuary . He is immediately approached by a floating skull , Morte , who offers advice on how to escape . Morte also reads the tattoos written on The Nameless One 's back , which were inked there as reminders to himself , that contain instructions to find a man named Pharod . After a conversation with the ghost of his former

lover , Deionarra , and passing by various undead , The Nameless One leaves the mortuary to explore the slums of Sigil . He finds Pharod , who is the chief of an underground village of scavengers , and retrieves a magical bronze sphere for him . In return , Pharod gives him further hints to piece together his forgotten past . Later on , The Nameless One learns from a powerful sorcerer named Lothar that the night hag Ravel Puzzlewell caused his immortality , but the hag is currently imprisoned in a magical maze by the Lady of Pain . The Nameless One finds a portal to Ravel 's maze , but realizes that it requires a piece of Ravel to activate it ; for this , he locates Ravel 's daughter and takes drops of her blood .

Once in the maze , The Nameless One converses with Ravel , who asks him , " What can change the nature of a man ? " ? a question that plays a prominent role throughout the game . Ravel is pleased with The Nameless One 's answer because he offers his own thoughts ; she claims she has killed many men in the past who , instead of giving their own answers , tried to guess what her answer might be . As the conversation progresses , Ravel explains that , in a past life , The Nameless One had asked her to make him immortal ; however , the ritual she performed was flawed , causing him to lose his memory each time he died . She reveals that the mortality she separated from him was not destroyed , and that as long as he was alive , his mortality must still be intact . She does not know where his mortality is , but suggests that the fallen deva Trias might .

Ravel then attempts to keep The Nameless One there by force . After the Nameless One and his party leave the maze , Ravel gets up , having actually survived the encounter . The Transcendent One appears , and , after a short conversation , kills Ravel . Following this , The Nameless One travels to the city of Curst , a gate town on the border of the Outlands and Carceri , to meet and free Trias . Through a tip from Trias , who claims not to know where The Nameless One 's mortality lies , The Nameless One then visits the Outlands and Baator , where he learns that his mortality lies in the Fortress of Regrets and that only Trias knows how to access this place . Meanwhile , however , the city of Curst has " slid " from the border of the Outlands to the neighboring chaotic plane Carceri due to the chaos unleashed by Trias after The Nameless One freed him . After a fight , Trias tells The Nameless One that the portal to the Fortress of Regrets is located in Sigil 's mortuary , in the very room where the game began .

In the Fortress of Regrets , The Nameless One encounters three of his past incarnations : one practical , one good , and one paranoid . The Nameless One learns that the " good " incarnation is the original , who was made immortal by Ravel . The Nameless One had committed immeasurably terrible deeds in his lifetime , and when he realized there would be retribution on his soul when he died , he sought to postpone death as long as possible in order to atone . After meeting his past incarnations , The Nameless One confronts his mortality , which is embodied as a powerful being called The Transcendent One . The Transcendent One reveals that since being separated from The Nameless One , he has enjoyed his freedom and has been attempting to erase clues that might lead The Nameless One to discover the truth . Depending on the player 's choice , The Nameless One either slays his mortality or convinces it to rejoin with him ; either option finally ends his immortality and allows him to die . In the game 's final scene , The Nameless One awakens near a battleground of the eternal Blood War between demons and devils ; he picks up a mace and walks toward the conflict .

= = Development = =

In 1997 , the game 's designers produced a 47 @-@ page document that outlined the game 's premise and vision statement , and was used to pitch the idea to management at Interplay . Initially , the game was to be called Last Rites , and they described the game as " avant @-@ garde " fantasy to distinguish it from high fantasy . The document also contained concept artwork for characters and areas of the game .

From the outset , Planescape : Torment 's designers intended to challenge traditional role @-@ playing game conventions : the game features no dragons , elves , goblins , or other common fantasy races ; there are only three swords ; the rats faced in the game can be quite challenging to defeat ; and the undead sometimes prove more sympathetic than humans . The designers

explained that most RPGs tend to have a "correct" approach to solving problems, which is almost always the morally good approach. They called this "predictable and stupid" and wished to make a game with greater moral flexibility, where a particular problem might have "two wrongs or two rights". The main quest is not about saving the world, but about understanding The Nameless One and his immortality. Death (of the protagonist or his companions) is often just a minor hindrance, and even necessary at times.

According to lead designer Chris Avellone, Planescape: Torment was inspired by books, comics, and games, including Archie Comics, The Chronicles of Amber, The Elementals and Shadowrun. The game's 1997 outline also makes references to The Lord of the Rings to describe some characters. While working on Planescape: Torment, Avellone was simultaneously working on Fallout 2. In an interview from 2007, he says that Fallout 2 helped him rethink the possibilities of dialogue in Planescape: Torment (and in later games he was involved with, including Neverwinter Nights 2). Avellone remarked that many of the ideas in the game "could only have been communicated through text, simply because no one would have the budget or resources to fully realise many of these fantasy works through TV or movies". Ultimately, Avellone has expressed some regret about the game's heavy focus on dialogue, as he feels this interfered with the overall game mechanics, particularly the combat system. The game's script contains around 800,000 words, after early previews had indicated that the game would be only about 20 hours long.

In several interviews the producer of the game, Guido Henkel, stated that he was increasingly frustrated by the pressure the management of Interplay put on the development team after Interplay's initial public offering. Although only a few additional subplots and characters had to be discarded to meet the planned release date, he accused the Interplay management of disregarding the development team regarding things like package design and marketing. Henkel said that it was his main goal to prevent the game from being "crippled" before leaving Interplay when the game reached beta status. He also made the claim that his overall influence on the game was greater than that of Chris Avellone, Eric Campanella, or Dave Maldonado, but since a producer often has to make unpopular decisions his role was later downplayed.

The game used the Infinity Engine, a game engine initially developed by BioWare for Baldur's Gate. However, Planescape: Torment was being developed using the Infinity Engine before Baldur's Gate had been released, leaving the engine's acceptance in the market still unknown. Black Isle made modifications to the engine to suit the game. For example, playable characters were able to run, and both the character sprites and backgrounds were larger and more detailed. The greater size and detail was achieved by bringing the perspective closer to the ground. Magic was also an important part of the game's design, and a team of four designers worked solely on the visuals and mechanics of spells.

In addition to official localizations, for example the one by CD Projekt for the Polish market, fan communities developed Spanish, Hungarian, and Italian fan translations of the game. When Interplay dropped support for Planescape: Torment after the official 1.0.1 patch, several not yet fixed bugs were corrected by fan created unofficial patches. Other mods add back items and quests omitted from the final version of the game or new features such as widescreen support.

The game was re-released on DVD in 2009, and for purchase on GOG.com in September 2010.

Interplay initially hired dark ambient musician Lustmord to create the musical score for Planescape: Torment, although this score was ultimately not used. His music was pulled from the game by the producer so that the game's music could be taken in a different direction, and Mark Morgan created the game's final music. The game's cast of voice actors included Michael T. Weiss, Sheena Easton, Rob Paulsen, Mitch Pileggi, Dan Castellaneta, and Tony Jay.

After the game's release, a reviewer for Game Revolution praised its sound, saying that "When you're in a crowded city, it sounds like a crowded city. Walk past a bar, and you'll hear the noise of the drunken patrons inside. Wander near a slave auction, and you'll hear the auctioneer calling. Go to a party in the festival hall, and it sounds just like a party". The same reviewer also stated "Planescape has just about the best sound I've ever heard in a game." IGN gave the sound 8.5 out of 10 and noted that "The game has fantastic speech and sound effects, but what's more

impressive is the way they fade in and out depending on how close you 're standing to them . "

= = Adaptations = =

A book by the same name was written by Ray and Valerie Vallese and released by Wizards of the Coast in 1999 . The book 's plot follows the game 's only loosely ; for example , in the game , the main character 's lack of a name is a sign of his incomplete state and a source of protection in being anonymous . In the book , the protagonist chooses a proper name . For the game 's re @-@ release on GOG.com a second , more accurate , novelization produced by Rhyss Hess was bundled with the game , based on the game script by Chris Avellone and Colin McComb .

= = Reception = =

= = Critical reception = = =

Planescape : Torment received widespread critical acclaim upon its release , but only made a small profit . GameSpot 's reviewer stated " It 's clearly the best traditional computer role @-@ playing game of the year " , a comment which the website would later expand to " one of the greatest ever " . Allen Rausch , writing for GameSpy 's 2004 retrospective " A History of D & D Video Games " , commented that Black Isle Studios " went way over the top for this one , crafting an utterly unique experience that has yet to be equaled by any RPG since " . The gameplay was often compared to Baldur 's Gate , another Interplay game that used the same engine as Planescape : Torment .

The game 's premise and writing were warmly received ; a review in the New York Times noted " The game 's level of detail and its emotional impact have prompted some players to cast about for literary peers . " Reviewers were pleased with the ability to shape their character 's journey as they wished . In 2005 , GameSpot stated " Planescape : Torment has quite possibly the best implementation of role @-@ playing an evil character ever to appear in a computer or video game to date " . The heavily tattooed , egocentric and potentially selfish Nameless One was welcomed as a change of pace from the conventional RPG hero , who was considered a predictable do @-@ gooder . Reviewers also approved of the protagonist 's ability to gain new powers by " remembering " past lives . The dark and diversified representation of the D & D setting of Planescape was lauded as a fresh departure from the traditional high fantasy of computer role @-@ playing games . A review in NextGen praised the game , saying that " Torment offers the best RPG gameplay anyone can find on store shelves , hands down . " Uros Jojic of Actiontrip commented that " Planescape : Torment proves that it is possible to make an inventive , fun and refreshing game in this " sea of clones " . Creating a computer edition of Planescape system is another triumph for Black Isle Studios . "

[ Planescape Torment 's ] limits are elusive . [ ... ] Even small choices have multiple and unpredictable results , leading players to incidents , to confrontations or to nothing much . The game resists resolution or even comprehension . A rambling text like Planescape Torment bounces when you try and nail it down , it resists totalisation . It has its moments of " rush " and of confrontation , but it wants to be savoured , wandered through , in the company of armed companions .

The technical aspects of the game were also praised . Although by the time of its release in late 1999 , Planescape : Torment 's default 640x480 resolution was not considered particularly advanced , reviewers were pleased with the art design and color of the environments . The game 's sound and music were described as " well above the norm " and " superb " , and one reviewer stated that his only complaint about the music was that " there wasn 't enough of it " . Another reviewer stated that Planescape : Torment had " just about the best sound " they had heard in a video game . GamePro stated , " ... the characters talk with the talent of real professional voice actors during crucial bits of dialog " . The game 's graphics were moderately well received , with incite PC Gaming saying that " [ the graphics ] can be a little lackluster , although some of the spell effects certainly look very good " , a statement echoed in NextGen which stated that " mind @-@

blowing spell effects ... will remind you of a two @-@ dimensional Final Fantasy game . "

The game 's interface received positive remarks . The US edition of PC Gamer commented on the automap , which automatically marked important locations and allowed the user to add custom notes , and on the journal , which separated completed quests from unfinished quests . PC Gamer also praised the fine @-@ tuning of the Infinity Engine , such as the use of a radial menu , which allowed the player to stay focused on the game instead of managing multiple screens and " messing with windows and buttons " .

... we were swept away by Planescape : Torment . It wasn 't the effective engine , demented characters , or lavish lands that won us . It was the rich storyline . This tale is more a reflection of your true self than any game ever made .

Criticism of the game was minimal and problems were generally described as minor , but included complaints about long load times on computers of the day , or the game slowing down during combat . Bugs were responsible for slowing down the game when a high level of graphical assets were on @-@ screen at the same time , but it was reported that a fix was released that solved the problem . Allgame 's Derek Williams considered the game 's combat simplistic ( with a comparison to Diablo ) , which made the game too easy . The most negative major review came from Eurogamer , who gave the game seven out of ten ( and later increased it to eight when the game was patched ) . Their reviewer expressed distaste at the immortality of the player character , saying that it made the lives of characters " cheap and meaningless " , although other reviews welcomed this aspect , saying it was " implemented perfectly " and did not make the game easier . Eurogamer also disapproved of the amount of experience that was awarded for certain dialogues later in the game . However , other reviews cited this as one of the main things that elevated Planescape : Torment above the standard RPG format . Some reviewers also criticized the game 's pathfinding AI as being " less than impressive " .

= = = Awards = = =

Planescape : Torment was given several Editor 's Choice awards , was named RPG of the Year for 1999 by both GameSpot and Computer Gaming World , and won the Vault Network 's Game of the Year for 1999 . PC Gamer US named Planescape : Torment " Game of the Month " in their March 2000 issue ( the issue in which the game 's review appeared ) . It has since attracted a cult following , and continues to garner respect long after its release ? in 2004 , GameSpy added it to their Hall of Fame , and in 2005 GameSpot declared it one of its greatest games of all time . In 2007 , IGN named it 71st on their list of the Top 100 Games of All Time , stating that many have " had their ideas of what an RPG is completely revamped after playing this one " . In 2008 , the UK edition of PC Gamer rated it ninth on its own Top 100 list .

In 2006 , The A.V. Club included Planescape : Torment in their list of " 11 of Video Gaming 's Strangest Moments " , due to the game 's use of death as a means to advance the plot . In 2006 , Gamasutra polled video game industry professionals with the question : " Which role playing game over the entire history of the genre do you think has made the biggest ' quantum leap ' , and why ? " . Planescape : Torment was ranked second overall after Fallout , earning it a " Quantum Leap Award " . The game also received an honorable mention for the same awards in the " Storytelling " category . In December 2008 , IGN listed it as 8th out of 10 in a list of " Franchises We Want Resurrected " and praised the game as having " some of the best writing and characterization seen in gaming " .

In 2009 , Bit @-@ tech included Planescape : Torment on their list of " 30 PC Games to Play Before You Die " . Chris Avellone was awarded Eurogamer 's " Gaming Globe " award for Best Designer in 2000 for his work on Planescape : Torment , and The Nameless One was considered to be the Best Male Lead Character . In 2009 , Game Informer put the game 188th on their list of " The Top 200 Games of All Time " , saying that it " allowed players to ... influence the plot to an unheard @-@ of degree for 1999 " . In 2010 , UGO ranked it as # 5 on the list of games needing a sequel . A 2011 update of PC Gamer magazine 's top 100 PC games of all @-@ time ranked Planescape : Torment as the 19th greatest PC game .

= = Legacy = =

Following the announcement of Baldur 's Gate : Enhanced Edition , Overhaul Games announced their intention to make overhauls of more games set in the Dungeons & Dragons universes , at first naming only Planescape : Torment . They said that such a release would depend on the success of Baldur 's Gate : Enhanced Edition .

In November 2012 , Penny Arcade Report wrote that Brian Fargo , the head of inXile Entertainment , had acquired the rights to Torment . In January 2013 , Brian Fargo announced that the spiritual successor to Planescape : Torment , titled Torment : Tides of Numenera , was in production and would be set in the Numenera RPG universe created by Monte Cook .