

= Legacy of Kain : Soul Reaver =

Legacy of Kain : Soul Reaver is an action @-@ adventure game developed by Crystal Dynamics and published by Eidos Interactive . It was released for the PlayStation and Microsoft Windows in 1999 and for the Dreamcast in 2000 . As the second game in the Legacy of Kain series , Soul Reaver is the sequel to Blood Omen : Legacy of Kain . Soul Reaver was followed by three games , one of which , Soul Reaver 2 , is a direct sequel .

Taking place 1500 years after the events of Blood Omen , Soul Reaver chronicles the journey of the vampire @-@ turned @-@ wraith Raziel , lieutenant to the vampire lord Kain . Raziel is killed by Kain , but is revived by The Elder God to become his " soul reaver " and to exact revenge . Raziel shares this title with Kain 's sword , the Soul Reaver , which he acquires during the game .

Crystal Dynamics began development of the game in 1997 , but a deteriorating relationship with Silicon Knights , who had developed Blood Omen , created legal problems . This and other delays forced material originally planned for Soul Reaver to be instead released with later games of the series . Soul Reaver was generally well received by critics and praised for its intriguing gothic story and high @-@ quality graphics . However , the game was criticized for simple and repetitive gameplay and an unsatisfying climax .

= = Gameplay = =

The player controls Raziel , a disfigured and ghostly vampire . Gameplay relies largely on shifting between the material and spectral planes of existence to progress through areas . Although interaction with objects is limited in the spectral realm , this can be advantageous , because Raziel can phase through otherwise impassable gates there , and water is insubstantial , allowing him to walk on lakebeds ; however , blocks , doors , and switches can be manipulated only in the physical realm . Many puzzles are based on the differences between the two realms ; for example , platforms and environment features in one realm may change form to open new paths in the other . Block puzzles are also common and require the rotation , flipping , and moving of large blocks to progress , often with a time limit and while avoiding enemies .

Combat in Soul Reaver is a hack and slash system , involving the use of combinations of various different attacks before a finishing move . Raziel 's enemies are grouped into humans , spectral creatures , and most commonly , vampires . Human enemies include peasants , vampire hunters and vampire worshippers . In the spectral realm , players fight minor enemies called Sluagh and the souls of dead vampires who have become wraiths . Each brood of vampire enemies has unique powers reminiscent of their clan leader . Human and spectral enemies can be killed with Raziel 's claws or any weapon , but vampires must be bludgeoned into a stunned state and then destroyed by impaling them , lighting them on fire , or tossing them into a hazard such as sunlight or water . When killed , enemies leave behind souls that replenish Raziel 's health , which automatically decreases in the material realm and increases in the spectral . Possession of the Soul Reaver sword stops automatic degeneration of health in the physical realm , but Raziel loses the sword instantly if he sustains damage and can regain it only by restoring his health to full .

At first , Raziel can jump , glide using his torn wings , move blocks , and pick up and throw objects and enemies . Initially unarmed , he fights using his claws , but can alternatively use weapons such as rocks , torches , spears and staffs , and the Soul Reaver . Raziel can freely shift to the spectral realm , but can return to the material realm only through special portals when at full health . Raziel automatically shifts to the spectral realm if he runs out of health . As the game progresses , Raziel gains the powers of his clan brothers after defeating them and becomes able to phase through gates in the spectral realm and climb walls in the material realm . Initially vulnerable to water , he overcomes this weakness and learns to swim . He also gains the ability to constrict objects and enemies with a band of energy , although this feature was one of the few abilities not to feature in future games . Players can find an ancient relic that gives Raziel the power to fire bolts of telekinetic energy , which cause little damage by themselves but can knock enemies into hazards and push objects from a distance . Baptism in holy flame can transform the Soul Reaver into the Fire Reaver ,

which can set enemies aflame and adds fire to Raziel 's telekinetic bolts . Players can also find magical glyphs that allow Raziel to expend magical energy to attack groups of enemies simultaneously . These glyphs typically involve vampire weaknesses such as sunlight , fire , water , or sound , as well as additions such as telekinetic force (available well before the normal telekinesis becomes available) and the causing of earthquakes to temporarily stun enemies . Glyphs are acquired through finding glyph altars , specific locations in Nosgoth where the skills can be learned , and solving a puzzle before being granted the magical ability . However , Raziel begins the game with access to the ' Shift ' glyph , granting the ability to shift between the material and spectral planes , with no glyph altar necessary .

= = Plot = =

= = = Setting = = =

Soul Reaver takes place within the fictional world of Nosgoth , where the health of the land is tied to the nine Pillars of Nosgoth , and each pillar in turn is represented by a guardian . Before the events of Soul Reaver , the guardians became corrupt , and , after Kain killed eight of them , he discovered he was the final one . Refusing to sacrifice himself to restore the Pillars , he doomed Nosgoth to eternal decay and proceeded to raise his vampire lieutenants , including Raziel , to besiege the land . By the time of Soul Reaver 's introduction , the vampires are now the land 's dominant species and apex predators , the humans have been decimated , and the vampire tribes have each claimed a region of Nosgoth and turned their attention to internal matters . Unknown to the vampires , beneath Nosgoth lurks The Elder God , an ancient and powerful entity . The Elder God controls the Wheel of Fate , a cycle of reincarnation of souls that circle the Wheel in a loop of predestination ; however , because vampires are immortal , their souls do not spin with the Wheel , causing the land to decay as the Wheel stalls . By the time that Raziel is revived centuries after the game 's opening cinematic , Nosgoth is on the brink of collapse , little more than a wasteland wracked with cataclysms and earthquakes .

= = = Characters = = =

The protagonist of Soul Reaver is the vampire @-@ turned @-@ wraith Raziel , whom Kain casts to death at the beginning of the game . Although Kain is the protagonist of the previous game , Blood Omen : Legacy of Kain , he is the primary antagonist and final boss of Soul Reaver . The Elder God resurrects and assists Raziel , explains the game 's controls , and describes previous events in the story . Ariel , who preceded Kain as the guardian of the Pillar of Balance , appears as a spirit and offers Raziel advice on occasion . During his quest , Raziel meets his brothers ? Melchiah , Zephon , Rahab and Dumah ? who serve as the game 's bosses . Each has developed different powers that Raziel partially gains by killing them and devouring their souls . A fifth brother , Turel , was omitted due to time constraints on development .

= = = Story = = =

As the game begins , Raziel approaches Kain 's throne and extends newly grown wings . In an act of seeming jealousy , Kain tears the bones from Raziel 's wings and has him thrown into the Lake of the Dead , a large natural whirlpool ; however , Raziel is resurrected as a wraith by The Elder God to become his " soul reaver " and kill Kain , thus restoring Nosgoth . With The Elder God 's guidance , Raziel adapts to his new form and returns to Nosgoth . Infiltrating a Necropolis inhabited by the Melchahim vampires , Raziel finds his brother Melchiah , who has devolved into a beast unable to sustain his own flesh . After Raziel kills Melchiah and absorbs his soul , he confronts Kain among the ruined Pillars of Nosgoth in the Sanctuary of the Clans . Kain does not appear surprised to see Raziel , apparently having even been expecting him , and implies that he has destroyed Raziel 's

vampire clan , which only enrages Raziel even further . When Raziel begins to criticize him , Kain simply launches a tirade against him before noting what has become of the empire and engaging him in combat . Kain quickly overpowers Raziel and attempts to strike him down with the Soul Reaver , a powerful sword that absorbs its victims ' souls ; however , the Reaver shatters when it strikes Raziel , and Kain escapes , strangely satisfied . Raziel enters the spectral realm to find the blade 's soul @-@ devouring spectral form , which binds itself to him . After this , Raziel meets Ariel , who restores his strength , and learns of Zephon 's location from The Elder God .

Raziel ventures into a large cathedral once inhabited by the humans and finds the Zephonim clan . After ascending into the cathedral 's spires , he finds that Zephon is now a large insect like creature whose body has merged into the cathedral spire in which he dwells . Raziel kills Zephon and uses the gained power to infiltrate an ancient crypt . There , Raziel discovers coffins for members of the Sarafan , a fanatical order of vampire hunters killed centuries before Kain 's rule . To Raziel 's horror , he finds the crypt was designated for him and his brothers ; as cruel irony , Kain revived the Sarafan to serve him as his vampire sons . Raziel ventures through a secret passage under the crypt and finds a flooded abbey inhabited by the Rahabim clan , whose members have mutated into amphibians ; its leader , Rahab , has become a merman . Raziel tells Rahab what he has learned about their human pasts , but Rahab is unmoved , claiming that Kain " saved " them , and attacks . Raziel defeats Rahab and absorbs his soul , then crosses the Lake of the Dead to the abandoned fortress of his brother Dumah . The Elder God explains that the Dumahim vampires were scattered following an invasion of human hunters . Raziel eventually finds Dumah shackled to his throne with his heart pierced . Raziel revives Dumah and leads him into a giant furnace , burning him alive and absorbing his soul .

Afterward , Raziel discovers the Oracle 's Cave , where Moebius the Time Streamer once hid the Chronoplast , a magical time machine . Raziel traverses the caves and finds Kain in the Chronoplast 's control room . Raziel is angered over what he has learned , and Kain says his actions are justified due to his being subject to destiny , before proceeding to inform Raziel that the Sarafan were far from the noble crusaders that Raziel believes them to be when the latter demands to know why he created him , which Raziel refuses to listen to . Raziel attacks Kain while the latter continues to adjust the Chronoplast 's controls . Although Raziel eventually gains an advantage , the Chronoplast activates , and Kain escapes through a time portal , beckoning Raziel to follow . Raziel complies , ignoring warnings from The Elder God . As the game ends , Raziel emerges from the timeslip and is greeted by Moebius , leading into the events of Soul Reaver 2 .

= = Development = =

Soul Reaver entered development alongside Blood Omen 2 in 1997 and focused on puzzle solving instead of Blood Omen 2 's action . During design , the development team created larger areas that could be explored more thoroughly as Raziel acquired new powers , avoiding the " shallow [ness] " of Blood Omen 's layout . Crystal Dynamics based Soul Reaver on Silicon Knights ' research of vampire mythology for Blood Omen . Other aspects of the game , such as the idea of a fallen vampire who devoured souls , were inspired by the epic poem " Paradise Lost " . The staff aimed to develop gameplay similar to Tomb Raider and used an upgraded version of Gex 3 's game engine to generate the three @-@ dimensional game world . Before Soul Reaver 's release , the relationship between Silicon Knights and Crystal Dynamics dissolved . Because their research was used , Silicon Knights filed an injunction to stop further promotion of the game . Other delays pushed the release date from October 1998 to August 1999 .

These delays forced Crystal Dynamics to cut significant game material , including additional powers for Raziel , a third battle with Kain , and an expanded Glyph system which would have given elemental powers to the Soul Reaver . In an interview , series director Amy Hennig stated that the development team split the original , much larger plans in two after realizing that they had " over @-@ designed the game " , given the constraints on time and data . This decision explains Soul Reaver 's cliffhanger ending and the appearance of originally planned material in later games . Despite the split , Hennig explained that the team left unused components ? such as extra power

@-@ ups and enemies ? in Soul Reaver 's game engine to avoid unforeseen glitches that might have arisen from their removal .

== = Audio = = =

Kurt Harland composed most of the music for Soul Reaver ; Jim Hedges handled the remaining audio . Harland remarked that , under Amy Hennig 's direction , he programmed music to change based on the current gameplay situation ? for example , combat or swimming . This variation was accomplished through a custom Musical Instrument Digital Interface (MIDI) driver , which altered music based on signals from the game engine . Each vampire tribe had corresponding music ; one tribe of vampires was associated with a slow , thumping theme to convey a sense of working machinery . To further fit the music to the environment , the sound team consulted level designers regarding layout and appearance . Music from both Soul Reaver and Soul Reaver 2 was released on a promotional soundtrack in 2001 .

For the game 's voice acting , Raziel was voiced by Michael Bell , and Tony Jay , who had provided the voice of Mortanius in Blood Omen , voiced The Elder God . Anna Gunn , Simon Templeman and Richard Doyle reprised their roles from Blood Omen as Ariel , Kain and Moebius . Bell , Templeman and Jay also provided the voices of Melchiah , Dumah and Zephon , respectively , and Neil Ross voiced Rahab .

= = Release = =

= = = Marketing = = =

Soul Reaver was showcased at the 1998 E3 , where attendees were given free demo discs . Over time , further demo disks were released , including one bundled with Official PlayStation Magazine . Soul Reaver was released for the PC and Sony PlayStation in 1999 and for the Dreamcast version in 2000 . The PC and Dreamcast versions used a much higher frame rate than did the PlayStation version , and the Dreamcast port had further graphical enhancements . A Japanese release for the game was planned , but canceled . In 2000 , Soul Reaver was added to Sony 's " Greatest Hits " list , and more than 1 @. @ 5 million copies were sold by 2001 . Sony later re @-@ released the game for digital download on the PlayStation Network in November 2009 .

Eidos Interactive , the game 's publisher , spent US \$ 4 @, @ 000 @, @ 000 on a pre @-@ release advertising campaign , which included magazine articles , television ads , and a tie @-@ in comic book published by Top Cow Productions . Because such films like Stir of Echoes , The Sixth Sense , The Blair Witch Project and The Mummy had premiered earlier in 1999 , Soul Reaver 's release was considered " ideally timed " for a horror @-@ oriented game . The lack of load times was a key marketing point praised by several reviewers . After release , Eidos and BBI partnered to release action figures of Raziel and Kain .

= = = Reception = = =

Soul Reaver 's dark and gothic atmosphere was generally well @-@ received , and several publications praised the game 's cut scenes . IGN 's reviewer called it " such an ambitious game - and one that achieves nearly everything it sets out to do - that few games come close to it " , and praised the soundtrack for blending with the atmosphere unobtrusively . The Dreamcast port was cited as " perhaps one of the best looking console games ever made " . Next Generation Magazine echoed this , stating that , " even if you own the PlayStation version , you may want to rent this anyway " , but expressed disappointment that no new features were added to the Dreamcast port . AllGame 's reviewer called the cut scenes " seamless " , and their frequency neither too high nor too low . The game 's storyline was praised by Game Informer as being " grim and interesting " . Soul Reaver 's voice acting was also highly praised ; GameSpot ranked this aspect of the game in its list

of top ten " Best Voice Acting in Games " . GameSpot also considered the atmosphere as rich as that of Blood Omen , yet less dramatically overstated , and considered the graphics " among the best that have ever been on the PlayStation . " GamePro praised the aspect of shifting between realms , particularly the visual effects involved .

IGN stated that acquiring and learning the powers of Raziel 's brothers constituted part of the fun , and that Raziel 's moves were well animated and articulated . Finding minimal difficulty in using camera controls , GameSpot likened them to those of Banjo @-@ Kazooie and stated that players would want to adjust the camera deliberately to watch Raziel 's movements . RPGamer called the gameplay smooth and seamless , and , although the reviewer was initially worried that the interface would resemble that of the Tomb Raider series , stated that these concerns disappeared after playing . Presenting differences between the two , AllGame echoed RPGamer 's sentiment and stated that the game 's puzzles would challenge " all but the most experienced gamers " , while Game Informer considered the puzzles " difficult @-@ to @-@ the @-@ point @-@ of @-@ insanity " . Computer Gaming World enjoyed the devouring of souls , a gameplay element that caused Alexander Smith of the Star Tribune to compare Soul Reaver to the television series Outlander .

Website reviewers deemed Soul Reaver 's gameplay too non @-@ linear and its objectives too unclear . GameSpot criticized the warp system for using confusing symbols that did little or nothing to indicate the warp 's destination , and weighed the fun of impaling vampires with the Soul Reaver against the lack of challenge presented by bosses and most enemies . Next Generation Magazine considered the game challenging due to " difficult puzzles and lack of a map " , requiring the player to backtrack . RPGamer 's reviewer said that the music was " more suited to putting babies asleep " and that enemies sounded like barnyard animals . The Tampa Tribune also criticized the camera controls , though noted that the " auto @-@ facing " feature made the difficulties negligible . PC Zone criticized the PC port of the game for " chunky " graphics and bad camera controls , stating " it feels too much like a PlayStation release ported hurriedly on to the PC " . Computer Gaming World similarly felt that the limitations of the PlayStation carried over in the PC port , rendering the latter 's visuals " mind @-@ numbingly boring " . The publication praised the Lucifer @-@ based story for engaging players , but was disappointed that " it peters out in an unsatisfying climax " . Game Informer stated , " Even after years in development , Soul Reaver doesn 't feel finished . It feels rushed . " 1UP ranked Soul Reaver second on its " Top 5 Games That Ended Halfway Through " , stating " it 's pretty clear that the plot would have been a lot different if the money hadn 't inconveniently run out . " GamesRadar placed Soul Reaver at # 4 on a 2007 list of the top seven video game apocalypses , regarding the post @-@ apocalyptic Nosgoth as " one of the most fascinating wastelands we 've ever explored " .