

= Black Isle 's Torn =

Black Isle 's Torn was a role @-@ playing video game developed for Windows by Black Isle Studios , announced on March 22 , 2001 and cancelled in July of that year . The game was to use a modified version of the SPECIAL role @-@ playing system , which had been implemented in the Fallout series . Developed on various editions of the Lithtech engine , Torn possessed features unseen in previous Black Isle Studios games , such as 3D graphics and real @-@ time camera movement .

In Torn , the player assumed the role of a wanderer , who was cursed to bring misfortune to people and places around it . Under a king 's orders , the player undertook quests to clarify a series of conflicting prophecies . Unlike several other Black Isle Studios games , the game was to take place in an original world titled " Torn " instead of a traditional Dungeons & Dragons location .

= = Gameplay = =

Torn was to use a modified version of the SPECIAL system ; combat occurred in quasi @-@ real @-@ time , rather than strictly being turn @-@ based . To achieve this , Black Isle Studios created the " recovery system " , in which action points were used to determine the amount a combatant could accomplish in a given amount of time . Action points were spent with each action , and based on what percentage of an acting character 's total action points were used , that character would need to wait a varying amount of time before taking action again . For example , if two characters expend half of their action points , they will attack each other at the same speed , regardless of the point totals for each character . Exceptions to this were to include recovery being hindered by movement , using items , or switching equipment , which was always allowed , though it reset the recovery time .

Like Fallout , the game was not to support character classes ; instead , the designers opted for a system where a player defined their character by the skills and special abilities selected when leveling up . For example , a character with skill choices of stealth and assassination would become the rough equivalent of a " rogue " . The system would have allowed players to choose their characters ' race , which would change the types of abilities selectable .

= = = Companions = = =

Torn was to allow the player direct control over only the protagonist character . However , up to five artificial intelligence @-@ controlled " companions " could be hired at once , and would have replaced a conventional adventuring party . Companions would have interacted with one another , obligating the player to find companions who worked well together .

Torn would have introduced a unique method for the player to communicate with and control allies ; altering their behaviour through conversation , and a command menu and hot key @-@ driven command system which allowed the player to give companions commands at any time . The system was based around the concept of simple behaviors , such as " Attack , " which could be combined into complex strings . Companions could be ordered to attack , support , defend themselves , follow the player character without attacking , and / or remain behind . It was also possible for the player to command them to carry these orders out in " aggressive " or " passive " manners . Lastly , commands and manners could be " leashed " to other party members or the player character ; for example , " support the entire party aggressively , " or " support another companion passively . " Depending on the playable character 's personality , and the orders companions were given , their level of co @-@ operation would vary .

Companions would have followed commands to the best of their ability , but in accordance with their personality ; for example , a berserker @-@ type companion told to attack aggressively would charge into melee combat , while an assassin @-@ type companion would attempt to hide , and then creep about knocking foes unconscious or backstabbing . In contrast , a priestess @-@ type companion might support the player character by casting beneficial spells , while a paladin @-@

type would give support by attacking the player character 's target , and then healing the protagonist after the battle or if he or she came close to dying .

While these features were publicized , Feargus Urquhart later stated that " even at the end of our work on Torn , we were still considering going back to a system that gave players direct , full control over the party members " .

= = = Magic system = = =

Torn was to contain four types of magic : Chaos , Order , Alchemy and Summoning . Order magic primarily consisted of healing , protective , and empowering spells . Conversely , Chaos magic was to have consisted of harmful elemental attacks , detrimental status afflictions , and invisibility spells .

Alchemical magic was used to create or alter potions to achieve more powerful effects , repair or enchant items , identify unknown items or creatures , and combine different Order or Chaos spells to create spells with multiple elements ( such as earth and fire spells creating a molten metal spell ) . Alchemical magic could also imbue a target with elemental attributes ; for example , a warrior imbued with the Water element would deal extra cold @-@ type damage but receive additional heat @-@ type damage .

Lastly , Summoning magic was to consist of " Call " and " Gate " spells , the former summoning entities able to exist for a set duration of time , or until slain . Summoned creatures behaved in different manners ; one type might simply defend the caster , while another worked to heal the caster and his or her allies . Gate spells opened a portal , allowing different things access to the game 's world . Lead designer David Maldonado called the resulting spells " generally amongst the weirdest in the game , " with the effect often being a combination of " normal " spells fired simultaneously .

Unlike Black Isle Studios ' previous games , Torn would have used a " mana point " system . Each spell cast would deplete mana points ; when fully depleted , a spell @-@ caster would have been unable to cast spells until their mana had been restored . Certain races were more adept at casting certain types of magic than others , increasing the importance of racial choice in how the player wished to experience the game .

= = Setting and plot = =

Torn 's background plot established an omnipotent being , dubbed " the Architect , " as the ultimate creator of the game 's universe . The Architect created a number of god @-@ like beings , who in turn created the world " Torn " . The gods eventually divided into three separate factions , each pursuing a different philosophy . One faction worshipped Chaos , believing in constant alteration of the world , while another worshipped Order , believing that all things should remain unchanged ; between these two was a third faction , which promoted balance between chaos and order .

The game 's various races were originally created for combat purposes by the three factions of gods , as the deities struggled to dominate Torn with their respective viewpoints . The name of the game 's world was to have been derived from this conflict , due to the ravaging of the world which took place . In the end , the Architect banished the feuding Chaos and Order factions to the ethereal realms of " nightmare " and " dream " , respectively , and left Torn in the hands of the faction that advocated balance . While isolated , the Order and Chaos factions continued influencing the world 's development , although their segregation forced them to act indirectly through agents still residing in Torn 's world . Resulting from the ability of Torn 's inhabitants to draw energy from the separate realms occupied by the gods of Chaos and Order , magic became available .

Black Isle Studios stated on multiple occasions that their goal was to create a world that was both familiar to role @-@ playing game fans , while simultaneously new . David Maldonado once commented on this in an interview with IGN :

" I feel that a sense of familiarity and association is a powerful thing , and may be used to heighten a player 's emotional experience in the game . If something can be tied into existing imagery ( even if only subtly so ) and be enhanced by or play off of pre @-@ existing feelings and conceptions

within the player , why throw away that extra bit of power at your disposal ? "

Later in the interview , Maldonado explained how the world of Torn came about :

" I was given a set of directives by Feargus Urquhart , Black Isle Studios ' division head . He was clear that he would encourage the sort of mature , gritty setting that we used in Fallout or Planescape : Torment , but didn 't want a world that was simply " covered in darkness " ... there should places of light , darkness , and a whole lot o ' gray in between . He also wanted some sort of clear , over @-@ arching conflict that influenced all things on some level but didn 't simply overpower everything . We decided on Order vs. Chaos as it 's far less black and white than Good vs. Evil ... after all , agents of Order or Chaos could potentially use any means at their disposal to bring about the rise of their cause , meaning that either side has its share of goodies and baddies . "

To this end , the game 's plot was to contain a splinter group of Order followers who would scheme to destroy the entire world , in order to re @-@ create it as a new , unblemished one , so as to achieve " ultimate order . "

Torn 's primary narrative revolved around a wandering protagonist character , cursed to bring pain and misfortune wherever he or she traveled , and to whomever he or she traveled with . A misguided king , later revealed to be the game 's ultimate antagonist , would have acted as the player 's benefactor , assigning them various quests in order to discover the truth about a series of apparently conflicting prophecies . It would eventually have been revealed that all the prophecies , and even the protagonist character 's mysterious curse , could be rationalized , and were in fact related to the protagonist character , effectively granting the player control over which interpretation of the future was realized .

= = Development = =

Announced during GDC 2001 , Torn was subject to much interest by the press , because the team behind the cult classic Planescape : Torment was revealed to be developing it , and the game itself was to use the much @-@ praised SPECIAL system . According to lead designer David Maldonado , the game had been in development for " about fourteen months " before its announcement .

Torn made a playable showing at E3 2001 . Although the preview was an early build of the game with several graphical features disabled , it was generally well received . However , the division director of Black Isle Studios , Feargus Urquhart , later stated that the switch from the LithTech 2 @.@ 3 engine to the upgraded 3 @.@ 0 version shortly before the E3 presentation had " significant ramifications " , and the amount of changing and recoding necessitated by the switch caused the game 's E3 showing to suffer .

In July 2001 , after circulation of rumors , Torn was officially cancelled . Following the incident , fifty @-@ six members of Black Isle Studios ' staff were laid off . The ultimate reason for Torn 's cancellation was eventually revealed by Feargus Urquhart :

" I don 't know if we ever released an official reason on why [ Torn ] was canceled , but in a nutshell , the game was canceled because it was not going to be done in time to get Interplay the revenue the company needed to continue operations . That sounds like it was all Interplay 's fault , but that 's really not the case . The project was not going well and continued to be an ongoing challenge . "

At least a few other members of the development team contested this appraisal off the record , however , and management issues as well as unreasonable expectations for another Baldur 's Gate @-@ style hit have been mentioned .