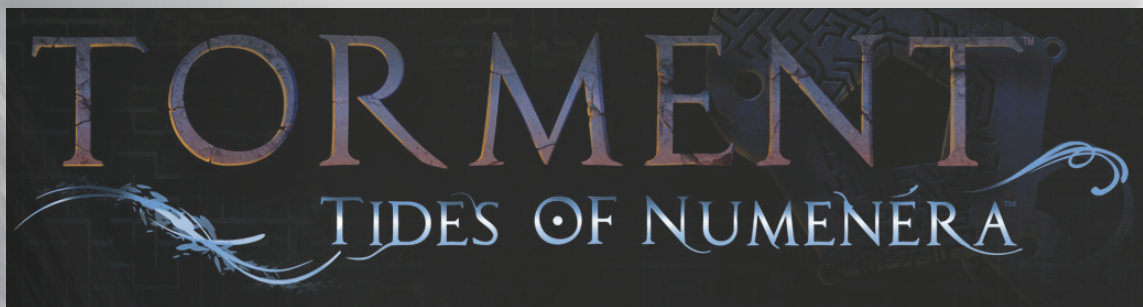


TORMENT

TIDES OF NUMENÉRA

VISION DOCUMENT



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PROLOGUE

"How did you find me?" he gasped. He conjured a wall of energy between himself and the creature. "I hid myself from you!"

The shadow crept toward him like a slow-moving flood. "You drew me with your creations. You drew me with the suffering you create. As you draw me even now." A curling tendril of smoke crept under the defensive ward. The tendril flared into solidity and tore away the screen. "I have come to judge you, mortal."

The man backed away down the high-ceilinged hall. "I am no mortal. I am a god now." His voice, though shaky, rang with confidence. The man held up his hand again, marshaling powers against the inky blackness. Another wall of force blocked the advancing death, and a lambent blue light rose from the man's skin. The light pulsed around him for a moment, his concentration slipping. With a visible effort he drew the light back inside.

"Age grants neither divinity nor wisdom," the shadow hissed. "Your few years spent skittering across the face of life have taught you nothing but fear for your end." The new screen fell, torn into wispy tatters. "And your end comes now."

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INTRODUCTION

Torment: Tides of Numenera™ is a story-driven computer role-playing game set in the Ninth World of Numenera, Monte Cook's new tabletop RPG. With *Torment*™, we're striving to create a rich experience that explores deep, personal themes.

- *Torment* will be a single-player game. You'll play a single, specific character, though you'll encounter NPC companions you can choose to include in your party.
- *Torment* will be irreverent and entertaining, turning classic RPG tropes on their heads when possible.

Further, the game will:

- Have an isometric perspective.
- Have a rich dialogue system and approach that makes dialogue a crucial part of developing the gameplay experience.
- Be developed in the Unity engine for PC (Windows), Mac, and Linux platforms.
- Be available in English, French, German, Italian, Polish, Russian, Spanish.
- Be distributed DRM-free and can be played offline. You'll be able to get it from Steam and GOG.com, and other DRM-free download options will be made available.

SPOILERS?

Don't worry that you'll have the game spoiled if you read this document. That's not what we're about. We want you to be as excited about *Torment* as we are, but we also don't want to reveal too much. So here's the deal: not everything we discuss here will be in the final game. The pillars of our game, the Tides, the themes—these things are planned and well-established aspects of our design. But the details about areas, creatures, characters, and even gameplay elements like the Meres are all subject to change. Game development is highly iterative and only our best ideas will survive.

Much will change as our tale evolves and solidifies in our minds. So please enjoy these examples, knowing that the game you play will have more and better secrets.

APPROACH AND TONE

The paramount task in constructing a *Torment* game lies in establishing the appropriate tone and approach. A coherent, holistic approach, one that navigates the complex and interconnected moralities and modalities of the original while remaining true to our own thematic explorations, is required to—

Wait a second. This isn't a research paper. It's a vision document for a game. And games are supposed to be fun. Even when they're serious, they should be fun. Fortunately, while we'll go into the darkness in this game—deep into the darkness—we won't stay there the whole time. On a broad, symbolic level, our game will be a life-journey, and any life worth discussing is filled with a range of experiences and emotions: joy, laughter, love, sadness, hope, despair, and, inevitably, death. *Torment: Tides of Numenera* will hit all of those and more. We want the game to be a rich and compelling experience, and while it might be dark, we'll contrast that with moments of pure joy and light. Indeed, you might decide to play as someone who refuses to engage in the grim, moralistic stories so often found in game narratives. You'll have that choice.

Did we say choice? We did. In fact, that's one of the game's **Four Pillars**. You'll read about those on the next page.

Torment: Tides of Numenera will take you to a world that is very different from any that you know. At the same time, you'll discover that the world is replete with humanity, and that the story we want to help you tell is a human story. We look forward to taking this journey with you.



Dust and Water. Concept art by Andrée Wallin

TORMENT'S FOUR PILLARS

Four pillars undergird the *Torment* name and, despite all the shaking we'll do of RPG conventions, we'll stay true to these throughout the development of *Torment: Tides of Numenera*.

1. **A Deep, Thematically Satisfying Story.** The philosophical underpinnings of *Torment* drive the game, both mechanically and narratively. Your words, choices, and actions will be your primary weapons.
2. **A World Unlike Any Other.** The game has a fantastic, original setting, with awe-inspiring painterly visuals, imaginative locations, truly offbeat items, and massive feats of magic. In Numenera, however, "magic" is something surprisingly different.
3. **A Rich, Personal Narrative.** The story is thoughtful and character-driven—epic in feel but a deeply personal narrative, with nontraditional characters and companions who have their own motivations and desires that drive them throughout the game.
4. **Reactivity, Choice, and Real Consequences.** The game emphasizes replayability and reactivity, and your choices will make a real difference. You can play the game with a different approach and discover entirely new pathways. Most important, we won't tell you how to play. The best ending is the one you choose, flowing naturally from your actions throughout the game.



The Sojourner of Worlds. Concept art by Chang Yuan

A DEEP, THEMATICALLY SATISFYING STORY

What does one life matter? Do our lives matter at all, or are they meaningless? What legacy do we leave behind? These are age-old questions, and they're not easily answered—especially in a setting like Numenera's Ninth World, where the inhabitants wander through the rubble of forgotten ancients who must have felt that their lives mattered, too. This stark perspective faces them every day. And yet they persevere as humanity always has, trying to improve their own lives and the lives of their friends and loved ones. And sometimes, they dream bigger.

That's our primary theme: **legacy**. We ask, "What does one life matter?" We'll help you tell a story, and in the end you'll have explored your answer to this question. You might decide that one life is the most important thing in the world, if it's the right life. You might decide that a life means nothing, though Life itself has meaning. You might decide that Life has no value at all. We won't force you toward a specific answer in your search. But we will force you to think.

Torment's second theme also rises naturally from the setting: **abandonment**. Whether the abandonment of place, of life, of children, or of will, we'll explore what abandonment really means and how it affects the unfortunates in its wake. Will they grow strong, or will they wither? Will they hang on to their hopes for the vanished, or will they leave those hopes behind and build anew? You can help those you encounter (including your companions) make that choice, and you'll also make it for yourself. It will be part of your legacy.

And last, we come to the maelstrom from which all the world's questions are born: **mystery**. You enter the game as you enter the world—newborn and ignorant—and you must find your truths, the answers that fit your journey best. Those around you might help you, hinder you, or hurt you. But why? What drives them? What drives you? Be warned: not all questions have answers, and to seek to answer them all is more dangerous than you know.



The city of Sagus Cliff at dawn. Concept art by Chang Yuan

But we said that we wouldn't be entirely grim, right? The option of light or darkness, happiness or sadness is up to you. In fact, that's a subtheme as you make your way through the game. You have the option to suffer despair, and you're welcome to embrace the darkness—but it might not have to be that way. And whether you choose the darkness or the light for your own journey, you will affect those around you as well. Just as you attract others with your suffering, so too can you try to show them a way out of it.

Or not.

The legacy you leave is up to you. And that's the core message of this game.

A WORLD UNLIKE ANY OTHER

Torment tells a new story in a radically different setting: the Ninth World, which is the heart of the Numenera role-playing game. If you ever wanted to see a setting that turns the usual rules of RPGs on their heads, you've found it.

“Numenera? What the hell is that?”

Numenera is a brand-new game created by tabletop gaming superstar Monte Cook. On its surface, the setting is a medieval world, but it has seen a billion years' worth of civilizations rise and

The numenera

The leftovers of the ancient days are referred to as “the numenera.” Some of these objects are so common they're in the air or in a handful of dirt. Some are incredibly useful devices; some are incredibly dangerous. Certain people study these items, hoping to understand their power.

fall. The learned call it the Ninth World, claiming that eight great ages have come and gone before it. We don't know what happened to those ages of glory or why they fell: some declined, some disappeared under the boots and blades of invaders, and some saw their citizens transcend to new spheres of consciousness. It's enough for us to know that they're gone, but they have left the world a far different

Varieties of numenera

There are three major kinds of numenera, and their names reflect their power.

Artifacts are reusable items, and the term refers to something with obvious use and value.

Cyphers are minor devices, frequently one-shot items. If you carry too many of them at a time, you risk unfortunate side effects. But cyphers are common, so you'll use the ones you have and keep finding more.

Oddities are interesting trinkets that serve no apparent function. Of course, that doesn't mean they *have* no purpose.

place. The mysteries of their presence are as great a riddle as their absence, and it's in the discovery and use of their works that the great deeds of the day are done.

Each prior world has left some trace of its passing, whether small oddities and tools, great machines, vast and floating cities, or moons of living flesh and cunningly worked metals. Once the hub of a vast empire that reached through time and space, once a waypoint for dimensional travelers, the world has become a very, very different place.

Magic, they say, is just science we don't understand yet. So it is in Numenera: the world is filled with mysteries beyond human comprehension, relics of bygone ages. They shaped the world to their liking, carving strange channels across the single continent that now spans the Earth, surrounded by a

vast and nearly trackless ocean. Mountains stand as monuments to long-forgotten rulers, their faces and bodies carved miles-high into the enduring, living stone.

Some who dwell in the Ninth World call it magic, and who are we to say they're wrong?

The civilizations that created those miracles are gone. So too is the knowledge that raised them to such heights. Now a new people lives amid the dust of vanished empires, and the miraculous tools of the forgotten past wait among the ruins for enterprising wanderers to pick them up—or for the unwary to trigger their effects. These devices are known as the numenera.

This is the world in which our story is set. The core of Numenera is discovery. The core of *Torment* is a quest for meaning, the purpose of a single life, and the unintended consequences of our actions.

“Cool! Now tell me what this world is like.”

The Ninth World has abhumans who might be lithe and graceful—or might be devolved creatures that hate the light. Aeon Priests help rebuild civilization, trying to understand the nature of the numenera so they can use these powers for the greater good. Sturdy explorers wear shining armor that has not lost its luster for a thousand years, made of material harder than diamonds, though somehow off in its proportions, having been built for creatures not quite human. Strange beasts from legend and nightmare leap across the mountaintops, take to the skies, or haunt the wastes, tormenting travelers and denizens alike. Civilization rebuilds, in some cases mirroring the feudal structures of fantasy as we commonly know it.

But the Ninth World is not a set change with transferred tropes and idioms. The creatures shape themselves to their new surroundings, growing and changing with the millennia of exposure to the raw energies of the dead civilizations. For example:

- The lumbering insectoid known as the Stichus dwells in the warm and moist interiors of a vast, semisentient predator-city.
- The pack hunters called the broken hounds, vulturine scavengers with the bodies of canines and avian skulls, are the bane of travelers.
- A protean thing that seems to be an adorable pet but that responds to your commands and your treatment can shape itself to fit your will. It could be anything from a waxen ball of goo that can communicate with any sentient creature to a hulking beast of tooth and claw. Perhaps it will be one of your companions.

What about the human element?

The fantastic setting will help us emphasize the humanity—and the monstrosity—of its inhabitants. When we approach a world with fresh eyes, it allows us to examine questions of who we are and what we believe without the interference of preconceived ideas and routines. In *Torment*, you'll be surrounded by strangeness, hunted by creatures, and dazzled by discoveries, but the heart of the story will remain purely human.

Not all of the people are necessarily fully human, either—at least, not in the sense that we know it. Some of the Ninth World's citizens have been altered through their long exposure to the energies of the people of the past, the background spillover of countless aeons of tinkering with reality. Some are born with abilities we would call mystical, able to harvest life from the smallest drop of blood and divine secrets of the dead. Others can reach into the minds of others and steer their thoughts, or incinerate their foes with a word. They might have stumbled across a trove best left buried and found themselves wrapped with sentient chains that act as armor and prison alike. They might have enhanced senses or the ability to leap chasms. You'll discover and use abilities and items like these in *Torment*.



The Bloom is a leviathan, a city, and an interdimensional hub.
Concept art by Chang Yuan

And though their level of technological achievement is hardly better than medieval, the residents of the Ninth World make everyday use of the relics of the past, even if they don't understand them. Most people are simply interested in making them work. A farmer tills his fields with the aid of an aged, decrepit construct. Weavers harness clicking spiders to safeguard their looms and create silken garments stronger than steel. A bridge of coherent light completes a trade road in a cliffside city. Fishermen wear removable gills and herd their catch toward nets woven of solid light. Would-be tyrants set themselves above their fellows with squadrons of warriors armed with fire-spitting lances and great axes capable of cleaving through iron doors in a single stroke. Wonders such as these will come into your hands as well.

Because many of the people of the Ninth World live far from one another, and few live in a single hub, no single cant or argot unifies them. What may be common street slang in Sagus Cliff may mean nothing in the cities of the Steadfast. This is not to say that there are no merchants' tongues or specific linguistic tics in *Torment*, however—as is the case with language the world over, its speakers invent terms and usages that fit more closely with their lives than its ordinary structures permit.

“So how does *Torment* fit in?”

Our first step is to create a deeply personal story—not an epic in which you save the world, but one person's struggle to find a place in the world and to answer the age-old question: What does one life matter? And the way we can tell that story in the Ninth World allows us to make some truly fascinating design and story choices.

For example, we can create the living moons we mentioned earlier. We can summon creatures from other dimensions. We can have minds transfer from one body to another. We can have armor that hides itself inside your body, or creatures that respond to your mental commands. And, in fact, we're going to do all those things. In the midst of these wonders (and many more), we have human foibles and fears close at hand, and we have the story of your creator, a man known as the Changing God. In his experiments with life and consciousness, he awoke an ancient guardian and brought its vengeance down on him. You'll play one of the Changing God's creations, desperately trying to find answers before he—and you—are erased from history.

“That's great, but what's this setting like for gameplay?”

The explorers of Numenera define themselves through a descriptor, a class (called a type), and a focus. For instance: “I'm a strong-willed jack who exists out of phase.” You could also say it like this: “I'm a <descriptor> <type> who <focus>.” Let's break that down.

The types are the three character classes: the glaive, the jack, and the nano. The glaive is a warrior, improving himself through intense physical training and through the application of the numenera to his body and mind. The roguelike jack weaves through the shadows, mastering no trades but understanding them all, making use of the abundant numenera to create mysteries of her own. The nano studies the secrets of the lost ages, hoping to harness a fraction of the power of the relics she finds, and channeling inherent abilities to devastating effect.

Descriptors are adjectives like “tough,” “smart,” and “charming.” Your descriptor helps paint what kind of person you are and modifies some of your abilities.

But your focus is where things get most interesting. Your focus is the gift (and the curse) that you have inherited or created, one defined through your relationship with the numenera and your years of training. Your focus helps you manifest your powers to their full extent. You might ride the lightning, electricity dancing at your command. You might master weaponry to become one of the most fearsome warriors of the Ninth World, or even consort with the dead to learn the secrets of forgotten ages. There are many more options, and these abilities could be yours.

The Ninth World is a place of mystery and discovery, where the challenge lies not in uncovering the truths about the past but in surviving the legacies left behind by the people of the forgotten eras.

This is the world of Numenera, and it's unlike anything you've ever experienced.

“You talked a bit about equipment. Let's talk more.”

Torment features a host of equipment and items that are more than a collection of statistics. Finding a +1 mace is not nearly as cool as finding the invisible cudgel of Talazon the Mad, with which he entered the hall of the Ghost King, where none may come armed, and thus slew the metal tyrant. Every major item (and even many lesser ones) will have some sort of history and function as well as a “personality”—an identifying hook to help give it character and enrich the setting and gameplay.

Torment's items will be interesting, entertaining, different, and useful. You might don a suit of living armor that sinks into your skin and protects you invisibly. Maybe you'll wear a mirrored bracelet that reflects enemy force attacks in random directions. Or perhaps you'll discover the scepter of the Lame Autarch and use it to command a squadron of metal statues against your enemies.

The craftsmanship of the Changing God was not limited to flesh and blood, and you'll find works that seem to have been made for you throughout the game. In a sense, they were. But there's more than his handiwork here—you're literally surrounded by relics of the vanished worlds. You just need to figure out how they work.

A RICH, PERSONAL NARRATIVE

We promise a rich, personal narrative. Here's where it starts:

Raised amid the ruin and dust of unimaginably great empires, one man resolved to create a legacy that would shine through the ages. He spent the rest of his days trying to determine the purpose of a single life and how he might leave a literally unforgettable mark on the world. Finally, using the numenera, relics of the past ages, he found a way to transfer his consciousness to living vessels, using artifacts he called “Meres.” He could find the answer to his question over thousands of years, if need be.

Living from life to life, fleeing these castoff bodies when they had sustained too much damage or when he felt he had experienced their stories for long enough, he gained the appellation “the Changing God.” Over hundreds of centuries, the Changing God has taken shape in any number of forms. He has watched his friends turn to dust, his family die, and the world he knew change around him. Is it any wonder he has distanced himself from humanity's ebb and flow?

But for all his genius, for all his madness, he does not truly understand the numenera he uses. His castoff vessels retain individual sentience, their consciousness beginning where his ends, retaining only the faintest vestiges and flickers of memory from his time in their bodies. They know they have been used and abandoned. Their progenitor made their bodies to last, so they are long-lived, but slow-healing—trapped within shells that decay but do not die.

The Changing God's castoffs bring with them a much greater curse. They feel no pain; it transmits from their bodies into others nearby, causing suffering in those around them. By surviving, the castoffs cause others to die more quickly and painfully. Because of this, many of these near-immortal creatures endure the years in loneliness and isolation, some becoming truly monstrous and others practically saintlike.

But the profusion of suffering has awakened another deadly creation from a vanished world. The Angel of Entropy, an ancient guardian, sees the torment caused by the Changing God and begins to eradicate the castoffs as it hunts their creator for a long-awaited judgment.

This is where your story starts. You are the Last Castoff, the most recent discard of the Changing God. You know that the Angel is coming for you, and you are not powerful enough to stand against it. You know of only one person who is: your creator. With the ever-present threat of oblivion looming over you, you must find your sire before he—and you—are eradicated by the avenging Angel. You will find allies and enemies among the other castoffs. You might inhabit their minds for a time through the Meres, turning their lives to your advantage. You will travel across the face of the Ninth World, and above and below it,

with your companions at your side—or alone, if you wish. Your quest will take you to alternate dimensions and distant worlds under strange suns; particular Meres might afford you even more bizarre experiences, such as folding time itself. And you will build your legacy as you find your answer to the question:

What does one life matter?

“Tell me about these companions you mentioned.”

The nature of your character is such that you attract others: powerful but fundamentally broken people who seek out your presence. They might hold some of your answers, and they might be some of your deepest allies—or they might be among your most dangerous enemies. Some examples of companions might include:

- A fallen priest who pulls his writhing tattoos from his arms to spill horror upon his foes
- A cold, calculating jack with a blade in her pocket and acid in her soul, who carries mind-altering mists around her neck, and who has found a way to control light and shadow

Did we say “Torment”?

Your ability to cast your suffering into others will be both a game mechanic and a role-playing one, especially when your companions realize that they suffer because of your choices. If you choose to take their suffering upon yourself, who can say what sort of loyalty you might engender? And why would anyone stay with you once they discover that you are responsible for their pain?



One of your possible companions:
the cold, calculating jack.
Concept by Nils Hamm

- A sibyl whose visions of the world refract through her madness and who can see your other castoff siblings for what they are
- A crippled beggar who devours magic to feed his addiction to the energies that flow through the numenera—and who can call upon that power to blast his foes with waves of pure force
- An ultradimensional traveler who peers through the veil of flesh to the life forces beneath, and who is capable of snuffing those forces with a thought

These people need your help. You can make them whole, or you can make them strong for your mission—even if it means their ultimate doom.

REACTIVITY, CHOICE, AND REAL CONSEQUENCES

You want your games to treat you like you’ve actually done something in that world. You want to see rewards commensurate with your actions, and you want to see the world’s reaction change based on what you’ve done. An RPG should offer you many ways to reach its many endings, and each should be equally valid and important, honestly reflecting the choices you’ve made.

We’ll do that.

Your choices start right away. Even as you crawl from the rubble at the start of the game, you’ll be offered choices. Whatever you decide, you’ve taken your first steps in the game, and they’ll echo throughout your play. We’ll track your choices without moralizing about them; you can be as good or as evil as you like without a higher judgment awaiting you.

*“I found you in the ruins of my shop, covered in slime and surrounded by a bag of dissolving flesh. Only difference between this and a birth is that most of **those** don’t leave a smoking crater in my house. That, and I don’t want to meet the midwife responsible for **you**.”*

- The Clockmaker, talking to the Last Castoff

“Does it matter what I do, then?”

Absolutely! You’ll make choices based on how you want to handle each situation, not on the basis of an external scale of good and evil. And the people around you will judge you based not on your motivations but on the consequences of your actions.

What’s more, the choices you make will determine your legacy, the history you leave behind as an example—or warning. You might choose to spend your life helping others, trying to alleviate their suffering or to create a better life for them with the numenera you find. You might choose to seek reason, discovering truths about yourself and uses for the numenera, as the Aeon Priests do. You might choose to accumulate power and become a force for fear or justice. This isn’t destiny. This isn’t fate. This is your life, and you can coast on its tides toward whatever horizons await, or you can fight its currents to reach another land.

“So what about consequence? How do my choices matter?”

The choices you make will ripple throughout the game and follow you organically. If you close an interdimensional pathway by leveling the village surrounding it, the survivors will become your sworn enemies. But if you close the pathway by sacrificing one of your companions on the other side of the portal, what will the rest of your party think of you? Though they look to you as their leader, they might turn on you or betray you if you are callous with their lives. If you choose to fight a pitched battle in the slums of the Bloom instead of bowing to a monstrous crime lord, the blood of innocents will be on your hands, and what you make of your reputation after that will define you.

The enemies you make are persistent. Some, like you, seem to exist independent of mortality. The decisions you make will affect their behavior, too, and some of them may become your allies in time. Your companions also look to your example. If you become dark and cruel, many of them (though not all!) will follow your lead; if you're an optimist, you may guide them from the depths of their suffering. You can shape them and heal them—or, as mentioned above, you can make them tools of your desire,

crippled beings who wield awesome power at your command. They might, eventually, place their trust in you, but they might become disgusted with your actions and flee from you—or attempt to destroy you themselves.

You'll learn more about how we intend to handle choice and consequence in the “Gameplay” section, where we discuss our Legacy system and the Tides of Numenera.



What's behind the mask?
Concept art by David Pursley

GAMEPLAY

WHO YOU ARE

You play the game as the Last Castoff, a shell created by the Changing God in which to house his consciousness. This means that you will play a predefined character. Because the Changing God. . . well, changes. . . you'll choose between a male and female body, locked down at the start of the game. This is an expansive choice, rather than a limiting one. It will have an impact on the reactivity of the game, and it will open new stories for you. It won't affect your statistics, your abilities, your core gameplay, or other factors.

Your other choices—your type, descriptor, and focus—will settle into place over the course of the game as you take your steps down the path you wish to follow.

That is: You'll customize your character through gameplay, inhabiting the choices you make.

Further reading!

The novella compilation features novellas by Colin McComb and Monte Cook, as well as *From the Depths*, five interlinked novellas by Tony Evans, Adam Heine, Mur Lafferty, Nathan Long, and Ray Vallese. Colin's novella will be tied more directly to the story of our game, with backstory on some of the characters or companions (no major spoilers, of course). Monte's novella will be a more proper introduction to the Ninth World and the Steadfast.

THE TIDES OF NUMENERA

Certain scholars of the Ninth World have studied the pull of forces they call "the Tides"—unseen powers that have profound and lasting effects for those attuned to their motions. Like gravity or magnetism, the Tides are invisible, powerful, and, with the right tools, perhaps controllable. Those who manipulate them can have a strong influence on society, the numenera, and the mysterious creatures of the world. Does everyone know of the Tides? Not at all. In fact, knowledge of the Tides is generally limited to a select few.

The understanding of these forces is incomplete and difficult to grasp; the Tides represent concepts that are not entirely definable by language. Those who acknowledge them have given them symbolic colors based on how they appear to correspond with emotional and psychological reactions.

We'll be exploring the Tides further in the novella compilation.

Each Tide represents an array of concepts that defies a basic definition, and thus is described by a color. The colors are important because a word like “justice” (for example) is too simplistic. The Indigo Tide not only represents justice and fairness, it might also mean a desire for the greater good or an “end justifies the means” mentality. The Gold Tide can represent false philanthropy as well as martyrdom. It’s the actions that matter, not the motivations.

In the game, the Tides serve as a kind of alignment system—but a more nuanced system, and one that does not judge actions based on whether they’re good or evil. You’ll learn more about the Tides as you explore *Torment*. And the Tides will gradually change based on your actions and decisions, ultimately determining your Legacy.



The Tides reflect your choices, the subtle currents of motivation that ripple through your life.

THE LEGACY SYSTEM

There’s your legacy, the stories others tell about you and the inspirations they find in your life, and your Legacy, which we’re systematizing here. Your Legacy is determined by which Tides you manipulate the most. Do you use your wisdom to help others? Do you seek power for the greater good? Maybe you’re an avenger, taking whatever action is necessary to aid those around you. Perhaps you’re just in it for the prestige. (Or the money. People are always in it for the money.) As your choices move the Tides, your Legacy will be revealed.

Your Legacy influences the world around you. Weapons and relics may have different bonuses for characters with certain Legacies. Perceptive NPCs and ancient creatures will respond based on what kind of person the Tides show you to be. Some of them might react positively if you reveal yourself to be a thinker or an artist, while others might help you only if you are moved by passion and power.

Your Legacy will open new potential abilities. A strong Blue Tide might unlock the skill to identify the numenera more easily or use spell-like abilities more effectively. A strong Silver Tide might unlock the talent to create illusions or produce fear in your enemy. Some Legacies can change the very structure of your body, giving you superhuman powers: the ability to read the past in the minds of the dead, for instance, or a nearly supernatural affinity with weapons.

This is the power of the Tides—the power your sire does not fully understand. The power you will wield.

COMBAT

Torment is a game driven by the story and by the choices you make. At times, combat will be one of your options, and it will be as interesting as any other decision you make.

So what elements will drive *Torment's* combat system?

Integration of Narrative Elements

You'll have the unique ability to manipulate pain in those around you. In gameplay terms, you might divert damage to your companions or protect them by taking it yourself, but this decision isn't strictly a mechanical one. Your companions will react to how you treat them. The fallen priest might serve you more loyally for taking his pain on yourself. The bitter jack might resent you for it, but spit at you and leave when you cast your pain onto her.

Other characters will have unique narrative abilities as well. A beggar might feed on the esoterics of others, or a creature might evolve different abilities based on your interactions with it. Their stories, then, become an essential part of how you approach your battles.

And like every choice, combat has consequences—for your reputation, for your Tides, and for your companions. Your connection to the Tides means that your choice of whether or not to enter battle will affect your world and how you interact with it.

Esoterics?

That's what we call the strange powers wielded by nanos, jacks, and others. You might think of them as spells (most people in the Ninth World do) but they're just as likely to spring from inherited aberrations or artifacts fused into the body as from supposed arcane knowledge.

Meaningful Player Decisions Before Combat

You'll make strategic decisions that impact combat, from how you've defined your character to the equipment you use to which companions you take along (if any). Whether you spent points upgrading strength instead of speed—or used those points to add a new ability to your repertoire—will affect how you approach combat, or whether you approach it at all. And, of course, your Legacy, as determined by the Tides, will influence what other powers you have at your disposal.

But the course of a battle will also depend on how you plan. Help a street orphan, and she might give you the piece of junk she was playing with—an orb that has a debilitating effect on the powerful Sticha (singular: Stichus) that live in tunnels under the streets. Try communicating with the Sticha—which will



A Stichus. Friendly-looking fella, eh?
Concept art by Nils Hamm

be more of a challenge than just “talking”—and you might learn the patrol routes of the thieves stalking their tunnels or discover an ancient trap that can cut the thieves’ forces in half (or the Sticha’s forces, if that’s your style). Your words might be your best weapons, helping you to avoid combat before it even starts.

Meaningful Player Decisions Within Combat

Each character will have a myriad of abilities to choose from, many of them customized by you as you progress through the game.



Don't get on her bad side.
Concept by Nils Hamm

Do you use up your strength to unleash a powerful spin attack against the toothed horrors that surround you? Or will you expend your intellect on a mental onslaught against the acid spitters behind them? Will mental attacks even affect your foes? Not all creatures in the Ninth World are equally vulnerable, so you’ll have to watch the results of your actions carefully to build an effective offense.

In addition, the world has an immense variation of limited-use items for combat—the cyphers mentioned on page 8. Toss your enemies through the air. Create barriers of pure force. Summon allies from another realm, drawing them through a dimension-warping cube. You can carry only so many cyphers at one time, but you’ll find them in abundance, so you won’t need to hoard them. . . or want to. With a different array of items in your inventory each time, every battle will be unique.

Quality Encounters

We plan to make each encounter interesting and unique, and to avoid so-called dungeon crawls and trash mobs.

That doesn’t mean we’ll necessarily handcraft each potential battle, but we’ll design the major fights with tactics in mind. *Torment* will have opportunities for those who wish to explore the combat system more thoroughly, but battles (whether fought or evaded through words or actions) will typically be significant events.

That means varying enemies’ strengths, weaknesses, and immunities. It means paying attention to the number and placement of ranged attackers and the tactics they use in combat.

On Combat Systems

The Infinity Engine games used a “Real-Time with Pause” (RTwP) combat system. *Wasteland 2* uses a classic Turn-Based (TB) system. Opinions vary on which is better.

Well, we have our opinions, too. The system we believe is best for *Torment* is . . . the one that does all the stuff we just finished talking about. Seriously, all of it—integration of narrative, meaningful player decisions in and out of combat, quality encounters over quantity—is independent of whether the combat system is real-time with pause, turn-based, or a hybrid phase-based thing.

We want a system that won’t get in your way. We want a system that’s fun. Most important, we want the system that you want. Our plan is to come up with two or three high level designs, describe how we’d implement them to achieve the above goals, explain what we see as the advantages of each, and then let you, the backers, offer your input and insight. Whatever we decide, we’ll make it great, ensuring that the system delivers on the above promises.

It’s your game, after all.

DIALOGUE AND COMPANIONS

Compelling dialogue and intriguing companions are at the core of the *Torment* experience, and we intend to maintain that tradition. We'll use dialogue trees for conversation because they work well for our goals. You'll choose the line you speak or the action you take from a list of options, defining your character by what you say and do. We'll improve on tried-and-true systems to make conversations even more interesting, but we'll target the same type of experience.

You'll be able to talk to your companions, delving into their personalities and histories, even shaping them (or driving them away) with your responses. They, too, might have their own things to say about a given situation and will interject whenever they feel like it. You may be able to explore pathways in your companions' minds, leading to a fuller understanding of their potential, and helping them to unlock powers that they had thought were hidden away or even impossible to access.

That said, you'll have full control over your party. Some companions might choose to leave you over an extreme situation, but as long as they're in your party, they'll go where you direct them and do what you tell them.

We're going to craft nontraditional, complex, and believable characters. We're going to develop the companions with enough depth that we understand their motivations and personality. And then we'll write them to respond appropriately to the situations they encounter.

We've had some questions from the community about romances and relationships in the game. Our position is this: Love, which comes in many forms, is certainly relevant when exploring themes of legacy, abandonment, and mystery—and we expect to explore this emotion in ways that fit the story and characters. Meaningful friendships, even feelings of affection, will be possible, but we don't expect physical relationships to be consistent with our narrative.



In-engine work-in-progress on the Bloom, by inXile artists.

CHOOSING SIDES

The factions of the Ninth World aren't simple gangs that hate each other. They each have their own goals, sometimes overlapping, sometimes antagonistic toward each other. In *Torment*, you'll be able to join at least one faction, maybe more, depending on how you play and whether your goals overlap with theirs.

We haven't nailed down all our factions yet because we want you, the backers, to have a say in them, too. Some factions will be aligned with the Tides, but perhaps not explicitly. The Ninth World is not so simplistic.

Further, the factions won't be as single-minded as their philosophy might suggest. A scholar's guild could have sects within it: one that believes in knowledge for all, and another that believes knowledge is too dangerous for any but the elite. Acolytes of a devout order that helps the poor might disagree on whether doling out welfare or teaching life skills is the more effective course of charity. Thus, even within a faction, you might be pressured to support one particular sect or another.

On the other hand, you can stay out of it entirely. Like the other gameplay elements, factions don't force you down a path. They give you choices that matter, and will affect other parts of the game.

Other groups exist too, with aims that will generally be inconsistent with yours. Unlike factions, cults are primarily antagonistic, roving enemies who pick up and move as they will, as the winds blow them, or as rumors of powers, enemies, or wealth summon them. They may work together as the agents of an unseen force, or they may work against each other, pitted in a fierce battle for ownership of an obscure philosophical argument. It is unlikely that you'll be able to join one of these groups for any length of time, for should a cult discover who you really are, they'll try to find a way to use your strengths for their own ends. . . and cast you aside when they're done.

But perhaps if you're clever enough, you can discover how to manipulate them to your advantage—and you might need to, if they all descend upon you at once. Each will use you as a pawn against the others, and your goals may occasionally align with theirs, with interactions leading to potential quests and opportunities. Examples of possible cults include:

The Children of the Endless Gate: *Death worshippers, some call them. They prefer to think of themselves as spirits trapped in flesh, and the horror of their cage pushes them to atrocity. They call themselves liberators and agents of freedom, and when they hunt the slums of the cities, they leave no evidence of their passing but a tracery in blood, an ever-wet gate to a realm of pure spirit—and horror.*

The Order of Flagellants and Austerities: *Once a hermetic and monkish offshoot of the Order of Truth, the so-called Scourges became a mendicant order and set out into the world with the appointment of a new leader a century ago. They are a missionary sect, devoted to cleansing the world of its many sins—among which are a reliance on the numenera, of using powers not rightfully granted with birth, and of pollution of the flesh with extravagances and constructs. A single Scourge is no threat, for they act only in communion with their brethren. But a group of them? They feed on the rage of their kin, borrowing strength of will and thew, and run berserk if they are not stopped, laying bare the bones of those who oppose them.*

DEATH AND THE CASTOFF'S LABYRINTH

"They say death is the end, but that's not entirely true, is it? When death crashes over you like a wave, you don't die. Your body knits up fast and your eyes stare off. You move and twitch. But what is it you're seeing? Where do you go when you die?"

- Journal of the Fallen Priest

Death in *Torment: Tides of Numenera* is not the same as "game over," and there's more to it than waking up in a mortuary.

Your body is mostly immortal. Your consciousness, on the other hand, is a twisted place. When you die, your consciousness travels somewhere else, to a labyrinth of the mind.

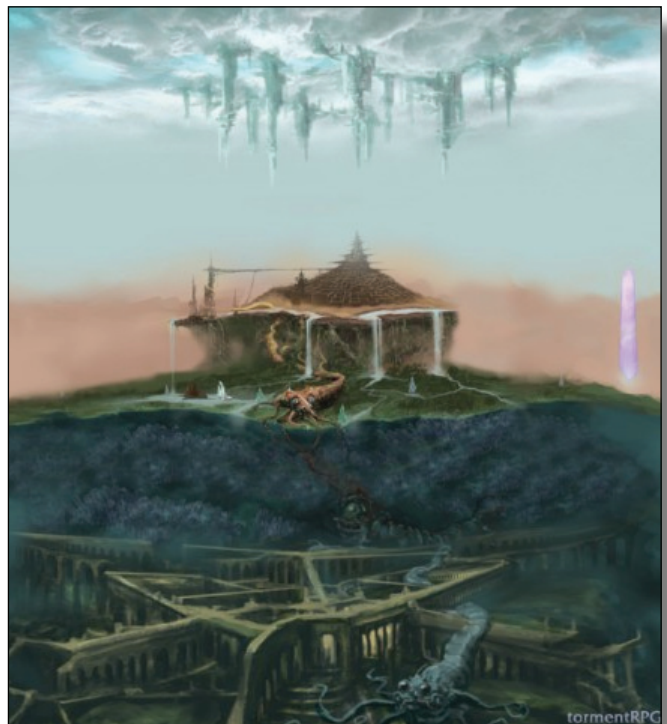
The Castoff's Labyrinth is a strange realm, a dreamlike maze of jungles, stairways, tunnels, and ruined cities. It's your mind, but you wouldn't know it from all that's in here.

When you die in the game, you could always just reload, or maybe find the easy way out of the maze and back to your body, but you'd be missing out. The Castoff's Labyrinth is a bizarre and interesting gameplay area, one of haunting exploration and discovery. As it grows, its secrets become deeper, more complex.

Its depths are called Fathoms, and each brings new secrets and—for the determined—new rewards.

Here are some of the things you might be able to do if you search out the mysteries of your own mind in death:

- Meet Reflections of your companions and other characters. Learn secrets from these figments that you wouldn't learn in the world of the living. But are these secrets really about them? Or are they about you? The more Fathoms within the Labyrinth, the more Reflections there will be, and the deeper their dialogues become.
- Uncover Lacunae. Lacunae are figments of your mind that represent parts of yourself (or do they?). Through conversing with a Lacuna, you'll discover puzzles and quests, and might even enhance your own abilities.
- Become more powerful. Gain special items and abilities. (How do they transfer back to your real body? Who knows? The numenera are weird like that.)
- Gain access to hidden areas in the real world through secret information, portals, or other strange interactions with the numenera.
- Find Meres unavailable to you in the living world.



The Castoff's Labyrinth, Fathom 7.
Concept art by Dana Knutson

CUSTOMIZABLE USER INTERFACE

The power of player choice doesn't stop with the story. We'll be leveraging the versatile user interface (UI) framework we're already developing for *Wasteland 2*, modifying it to suit *Torment* specifically.

Torment's interface will do what you want and then get out of your way. And if you don't like where it goes, you can move it. You'll be able to resize and relocate each component of the interface. An auto-hide function will bring nonessential UI elements on the screen only when they're needed, or you can get rid of them entirely. Customizable pop-up menus and keyboard shortcuts will get more unnecessary elements off the screen and keep you immersed in the game. A variety of text sizes will be available.

We'll have subtitles where appropriate, and, despite the Tides being color-coded, will make the game accessible to the colorblind.

Round that out with options to see all the under-the-hood rolls and checks (or none, if you like) and import custom character portraits, and you've got a game that plays the way you want it to.



The Ascension of Kex-Lianish.
Concept by Andrée Wallin

AESTHETICS

ART

We've been very particular in the concept pieces you've seen thus far and those you'll see in the weeks to come. They set the tone and style we want to replicate in the game world. They invoke the feelings we want you to experience as you traverse our corner of the Ninth World and beyond.

Our setting is a place of strange and twisted creatures, structures of breathtaking and heart-rending beauty, and outlandish vistas and weird dimensions unfolding around you. You'll explore a realm of crystal and encounter the inhuman creatures who live there. You'll journey through your mind, a labyrinth of potential madness. You'll do all this and much more, and our team of talented artists and environmental designers will show you what it looks like.

Here's an example of our work in progress.



The Bridge of Sagus Cliff.

In-engine work-in-progress by inXile's environmental artists

SOUND, MUSIC, AND VOICE

Sound and music design plays a crucial role in developing the gaming experience. We want a slim blade to whisper through the air and a heavy axe to whoosh with might and power. Electricity and flame should crackle. The energies of the devices of the forgotten eras should hum and vibrate with magical intensity.

We understand how important sound design is in establishing a game's aesthetics, and we'll craft *Torment's* sound to complement its unforgettable experience. We want our sound to add weight and heft to the world, to creak and moan and echo in the right places.

We have enlisted the talents of veteran composer Mark Morgan to create the soundtrack for *Torment:Tides of Numenera*. He has already created the theme, the haunting beauty of the Bloom, and the cosmopolitan sounds of Sagus Cliffs. We look to him to paint an evocative portrait that will reinforce the game's message. Through stretch goals, we have expanded his involvement in the project significantly.

We plan to have partial voice-over for certain major characters and possibly barkstrings for the Last Castoff. Exactly how much of the game is voiced is still to be determined, but due to cost and the impact on the production schedule, we are not planning to pursue full V/O for the game.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Although we're making a game that we ourselves want to play, we aren't making it in a vacuum. Throughout the development of *Torment*, we'll seek and act on the input of our backers. A primary reason that inXile has embraced crowdfunding is so that we have the luxury of asking you, our players, exactly what you'd like to see from our games.

We'll establish the core design sensibilities, such as the pillars outlined in this vision document. We'll leverage our game development expertise to define the decisions most critical to the overall design and experience. But many aspects of the game are open to discussion. We see multiple valid paths that could deliver a satisfying and richly immersive play experience. On these topics, we'll actively engage you for input into *Torment's* direction.

Perhaps this goes without saying, but we'll say it anyway to be clear: we're keeping many details of the story and characters secret so as not to undermine the game's mystery. For example, even the beta testers won't have access to certain content that we want to keep as surprises. But we'll be listening to what you want from the game's story, subplots, and characters, and we will take your desires into account. Those who are interested in contributing to the game beyond their pledge will have the opportunity to do so.

We want *Torment: Tides of Numenera* to be not only a game that you'll savor but a classic that you can point to with pride because you helped bring it into existence. We want to make this game with you—and to tell this story, these stories, together.