Introduction

How many times have you been watching a movie and wanted to shout at the main character, "Why did you do that, you idiot?"

Well, here's your chance to prove you can do better.

The *Fantasy Infinity* Role-Playing Game lets you experience epic adventures in the style of your favourite fantasy novels or video games, just by sitting around a table talking with your friends. No computer or other electronic device is needed, though they do come in handy sometimes.

You can create your own characters or use those included in this set. Their adventures can take them across the unique world of Aperion, designed specifically for *Fantasy Infinity*, or you can set them in your favourite fictional setting from a novel or another game. This is *your* game, and what you can do with it is limited chiefly by your imagination. And all you need is pencils, paper, dice, these rules, and some friends. An overactive imagination helps too.

Fantasy Infinity draws much of its inspiration from a certain style of video games; Japanese-style role-playing games, or JRPGs for short. As long as you enjoy heroic fantasy in general, though, you don't need to specifically be a fan of JRPGs to enjoy this game. There are plenty of references and "Easter eggs" for JRPG fans, but they shouldn't detract from anyone else's experience.

JRPGs were inspired by earlier tabletop role-playing games, but also introduced their own innovations. *Fantasy Infinity*, in turn, brings many ideas inspired by JRPGs from the console to the tabletop, combining them with the unique features of tabletop role-playing games. Like the games that inspired it, *Fantasy Infinity* doesn't assume prior knowledge of other role-playing games, won't normally require endless hours of fighting to accomplish anything, and should appeal to nearly any kind of gamer. But as a tabletop game, *Fantasy Infinity* lets you create your own story, with almost no limitations on what can happen. No longer are you restricted to the possibilities some programmer thought of.

This introduction will let you know what to expect from the rest of this set. If you're new to role-playing games, the next section will go over what a tabletop role-playing game (RPG) is and how it differs from other games you might have played. (By the way, from here on "RPG" will specifically mean *tabletop* RPG, as opposed to the computer and console varieties.) Further on, the introduction talks more about the *Origins Set*, what it is, what's in it, and its place in the *Fantasy Infinity* universe.

> ### Sidebars
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> Throughout the *Fantasy Infinity* rulebooks, you'll notice sidebars like this one. These are used for designers' notes, best practises, and similar commentary.
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> The main text of this book, apart from chapter 7, is aimed at everyone who participates in a Fantasy Infinity game, player and GM alike. Many of the sidebars, and all of chapter 7, are aimed primarily at GMs. Of course, players can and in many cases should read the sidebars too; there is no "secret GM-only knowledge" in the *Core Rulebook*.
>
> (If you're not sure how a player differs from a GM, don't worry; that's explained over the next few pages.)

What Am I Getting Myself Into?

RPGs are quite different from other games you may have played. These differences can seem confusing at first, but in practice, most people get used to them very quickly and easily. To make this go even more smoothly, this section will not only explain how an RPG works, but also steer you around a few common difficulties and explain some key terms. Once you finish this section, you should have no trouble understanding the rest of this book, even if you're completely new to RPGs.

The first and most important thing to remember is:

Don't worry. You can't really do it wrong.

There are so many possible approaches to RPG play, from almost pure tactical wargame to almost pure improvisational theatre, that it is almost impossible to do anything unambiguously *wrong*. So there's no point in worrying about whether you're "doing it right". At most, there will be things that work better or worse for your group. The things that work better are "right" even if they're very different from what someone else does.

That said, there are some things nearly all RPGs (including *Fantasy Infinity*) have in common, and most of them are unusual in other games. Three that are especially worth keeping in mind:

▶ Players are not normally in competition

▶ There is no fixed end point or "victory condition"

▶ You can attempt anything you can think of, within reason. (Even if you see a list of predefined moves, you don't need to confine yourself to that list.)

Like most role-playing games, *Fantasy Infinity* is played in a group of around four to seven people. Every participant but one creates and controls a **character**, who will be one of the main protagonists in the group's shared storyline (or **campaign**). The remaining person – called the **Gamemaster (GM)** – serves as a narrator and referee and also plays all the characters except the main protagonists. Usually, the main characters (called the **party**) spend most of their time together, working toward common goals, rather like the main cast of a TV series. They may have tensions or rivalries among themselves, but they are basically a team.

Because RPGs are so open-ended, it really helps if your group can get together regularly, say every week or two on an ongoing basis. That said, you can do one-shot or short-term games too. In fact, this is easier in *Fantasy Infinity* than in most RPGs because the actual gameplay is very fast, though character creation can take some time.

Gameplay usually goes like this: The GM describes a situation, and the players tell the GM how their characters will respond to it. The GM describes the

> ### Story ≠ Railroad
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> This section uses words like "story" a lot. But don't read this as saying the GM should have a plot worked out ahead of time and force the players to stick to it no matter what. RPG players often call this "railroading". And that... isn't a compliment.
>
> True, many of the JRPGs that inspired *Fantasy Infinity* are extremely railroaded. Nonetheless, railroading is generally a bad practise in tabletop play. A good GM is flexible and willing to accommodate unexpected player actions, even if it means having to improvise for entire game sessions at a time. Something isn't any less a story just because you made it up as you went along.

new situation that results, and the players now have to respond to that, and so on. You'll spend much of your time deciding what your character would do about the situation at hand, and describing that to the rest of the group.

RPGs frequently shift back and forth between two types of scenes. In some situations, like battles, there are very structured rules and the dice play a large role. In *Fantasy Infinity*, these are called **challenges**. Other scenes are mostly narration, with a looser structure and little or no dice-rolling. These are sometimes called **role-playing** scenes, though that actually isn't a very good name for them. Any time you're making decisions based on what your character would do (i.e. *playing* the *role* of that character), you are role-playing, even during a challenge.

In either type of scene, your character can do (or at least, attempt) nearly anything. Because of this, no set of rules could hope to cover every possibility. This is one reason there is a human referee – to decide what happens when the players attempt something the rules don't cover. This is a major part of the appeal of tabletop RPGs for many players, and something no computer could hope to match.

While challenges have a lot in common with other games you've probably played, role-playing scenes may not. Sometimes, new players aren't sure how to handle them. These might seem like cutscenes in a video game, but in one very important respect, they are the exact opposite. In a cutscene, you usually have no control over what happens. But in the equivalent scenes in a tabletop RPG, what happens is entirely up to you and the rest of your group. It's sometimes okay to just sit back and watch (well, listen to) these scenes, but it shouldn't be the norm. Think about what your character would do in that situation, or what would make the story most interesting, or just what would seem to be the most fun for everyone, and do it! Don't feel like you need to wait for your turn. Outside combat, there are no turns, though a good GM – and group – will nevertheless make sure to give everyone opportunities to get involved.

Some people compare this to acting, but that can be a bit misleading. One important difference between RPGs and (most) acting is that you are not following a fixed script. Another is that you and your friends are usually sitting around a table *describing* what your characters do. You don't normally get up and act things out, much less dress up as your character or anything like that – although if you really want to, don't let anyone stop you!

Most players prefer to speak in character (i.e. supply their characters'

> ### Sandbox Campaigns
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> Some groups prefer a style where the players set their own goals, and it's the GM who is usually reacting to them. A game in this style is sometimes called a "sandbox". This style makes a lot of demands on the GM and also doesn't work without proactive players, so it's not for everyone. But some groups wouldn't dream of playing any other way.

> ### LARPs
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> There *are* games where theatrical performance is the normal way of doing things. These are called LARPs (for Live-Action Role-Play). *Fantasy Infinity* is intended to be played in the traditional tabletop style described here. It is not designed to be a LARP and would probably require major modifications to work as one.

actual dialogue), but that's as far as the "acting" element of RPGs normally goes. Strictly speaking, even this is optional. If your character is greeting a stranger on the road, you might say something in character, like "Hail and well met, friend! What brings you to these parts?" But it's equally valid to just announce, "I ask what he's doing here. I try to be polite and friendly about it, though." (You'll often talk about your character in the first person like this.) Both approaches convey the same information – including what they imply about your character's personality and approach to problems. Which approach you want to use is a matter of preference.

So what's the gamemaster doing all this time? First of all, the GM shouldn't be out to kill your characters or thwart their goals. That's not to say these things can't happen. But they're not things the GM should be specifically *trying* to do – many of the creatures she controls are, but those are just characters the GM is playing.

> **Whatmaster?**
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> "Gamemaster" is a fairly standard term for the person in the narrator/referee role, but some RPGs have a different name for this person. A few even do without this role entirely, dividing traditional GM responsibilities some other way.

Instead, the GM is usually trying to do as many of the following as possible, depending on the situation, her own strengths and weaknesses, and the tastes of the group:

▸ Present a compelling story
▸ Keep challenges interesting and fair, and role-playing scenes fun and plot-relevant
▸ Play characters in a believable and entertaining way
▸ Enforce verisimilitude (i.e. make decisions based on what would "really" happen in the situation at hand)
▸ Generally keep the game as entertaining as possible
▸ Work to keep everything more or less in line with the rules

In the (hopefully rare) event that a rule isn't clear or doesn't work, the GM makes the final decision on its interpretation. This could involve changing, adding to, or out-and-out ignoring the rules in this book.

Sometimes these goals complement one another, while occasionally they might conflict. Different GMs will resolve these conflicts in different ways, and that's fine – there isn't one "right" way to balance these goals, though as always, there might be better and worse ways for a particular group.

This may sound like a lot of responsibilities. Let's not kid ourselves – it *is* a lot of responsibilities. But it's also a wonderful, unique creative outlet, and many GMs wouldn't give it up for the world.

RPG Terminology — A Brief Introduction

Below is a list of important terms and abbreviations you should know. This is part of the common language used in nearly all RPGs, including *Fantasy Infinity,* and the rest of this book assumes you are familiar with these terms. As you may have noticed already, other important terms are given in **this text style** where they are introduced and/or defined. A much longer and more detailed glossary of these terms can be found in the back of this book.

Character: A fictional person or creature in the world in which an RPG takes place, especially one capable of language and social interaction.

d6: A six-sided die (the type you're probably familiar with, a cube with numbers from 1 to 6 on it). "2d6" means two of these dice, and so on.

Gamemaster (GM): A real person who participates in a role-playing game as a narrator and referee and plays all the NPCs (defined below). A *Fantasy Infinity* group is assumed to have exactly one GM.

Non-Player Character (NPC): A character controlled by the GM; in other words, any character other than a PC (defined below).

Player Character (PC): A character controlled (and usually created) by a player, as opposed to the GM; one of the main protagonists of the RPG's storyline.

Player: A real person participating in a role-playing game *other than* the GM. Each player normally plays one PC and has few if any other responsibilities. A typical RPG group has four to seven participants – three to six players plus one GM.

> **Also Known as "Dice"**
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> Since *Fantasy Infinity* only uses d6s, they will also simply be called "dice". Other RPGs use multiple types of dice and would, for example, refer to a twenty-sided die as a "d20".
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> One thing you'll notice if you meet a lot of RPG players is that they (we) *love* dice. Any gaming store worth visiting will have them in a bewildering variety of colours and configurations. Even players who don't buy any other RPG-related products usually want their own set of dice sooner or later.
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> In Philosoraptor products, "dice" is plural. The singular is "die". There is no such thing as "a dice."
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> See Chapter 1, **Dice Mechanics**, for more on dice.

What Is the *Origins Set?*

You are reading the *Fantasy Infinity Origins Set*. In its final form, this will be the first of two boxed sets that make up the complete *Fantasy Infinity* rules. The second will be called the *Champions Set*.

The *Origins Set* is the core product you need in order to play the game. All other *Fantasy Infinity* releases for the foreseeable future will assume that you already have this one. It contains the complete rules for character creation, combat and skill use – in short, all of the essential rules needed for any *Fantasy Infinity* campaign.

The *Origins Set* also contains spells, abilities, enemies and other material suitable for characters of levels 1 to 5, with optional rules for going a little further. This will suffice for campaigns a few months long (assuming weekly sessions of around 3–5 hours), comparable in scope to a novel or a television miniseries. With eight classes to choose from and countless possible ways to build characters of each of those classes, you have almost endless re-playability – when one group of characters has gone about as far as they can go with the *Origins Set* alone, you can bring their story to a close and start a new story with new characters.

The *Champions Set* is a future product that will dramatically expand the *Fantasy Infinity* system. In addition to more detailed coverage of some topics that the *Origins Set* only touches on (e.g. vehicles, chases and handling social interactions as challenges), the *Champions Set* will contain additional char-

acter classes and expand the existing ones for levels 6 and up, with no fixed upper limit. With both sets in hand, you'll be able to play campaigns of even greater scope, comparable to an ongoing series of novels, many seasons of a TV series, or an epic (40–hour or longer) console RPG. You don't *need* the *Champions Set* to play *Fantasy Infinity*, but we think you'll agree that it helps take your game to new heights.

How Does the Playtest Edition Differ from the Final Release?

You are reading the *Playtest Edition*, an electronic-only version of the basic rules that Philosoraptor Game Studio is making available for a limited time. This is similar to an open beta of a computer game. Though the *Playtest Edition* is a complete, playable game, there will doubtless be many improvements and additions between now and the official release. In addition, the final release will be a boxed set with the lush production values of European-style board games – a far more impressive-looking product than this rather Spartan PDF.

If you enjoy *Fantasy Infinity* and want to get your hands on the final version before everyone else, or if you just want to support a unique and independent up-and-comer in the gaming scene, please consider supporting our forthcoming Kickstarter campaign for the final release. In the meantime, if you have questions about these rules or suggestions for ways they could be improved, leave a comment at http://www.philosoraptorgames.com. We'd like nothing better than to build an online community around *Fantasy Infinity* and other forthcoming Philosoraptor games.

What's in the Origins Set?

The *Origins Set* has several components:
- The **Core Rulebook** (which you are reading right now). This is the engine that drives everything else. Even after the *Champions Set* and other products as yet unimagined have come out, this is the book you'll refer to over and over for the main rules of the game. This book was written with teaching the game in mind, and it should be an easy read even for players completely new to RPGs; but it is also concise enough that you can use it as a reference in mid-game without having to wade through multiple irrelevant paragraphs to find a rule.
- The **Character Reference**. This book contains all the spells and other abilities that characters you can create using the *Origins Set* can use – over 250 distinct abilities in all, for all eight character classes. It also contains the rules you need to know in order to understand the way these abilities are written. This is the book to refer to when you need to know the finer points of how some ability works. It is essential when you're creating or levelling up a character and want to understand the abilities you're trying to choose between. It should also be concise enough to be useful in the middle of play, for example, when you need some detail that you forgot to write down on your character sheet.
- **The Forest of Dreams and Other Stories**, the third and final book in the final version of the *Origins Set*, will differ significantly between the playtest and final versions. In the playtest version, it consists of two short adventures – the

first third of our official introductory adventure, *The Forest of Dreams*, and a second scenario exclusive to the playtest version, *The Tale of Cornelia*. In the final release, this book will instead consist of the full version of *The Forest of Dreams* and some additional material giving GMs advice on creating their own adventures.
- In the final version, there will be an **Enemy Deck**, a set of cards illustrating and giving stats for nearly one hundred creatures your characters can do battle with. In the playtest edition, there is instead a printable **Enemies List** giving these monster stats in a tabular format. While only a few of them are illustrated in the playtest edition, each one will have its own card in the final release, with stats on one side and an illustration on the other.
- There are a number of **handouts**, which in the playtest version should install into their own folder. They will be loose in the final version, with a collected PDF available as a free download from philosoraptorgames.com.
- The **Battle Board** will be a physical, game board–like component in the final version. In the playtest version, we instead provide a PDF that can be used to print out a very basic version.
- The playtest version also includes a printable sheet you can use to make **tokens** for use on the battle board and for randomization (see below). These will be board game–quality cardboard punch-outs in the final version.
- The final version will contain **dice** as well as a **bag** to put tokens in. For the playtest version, you will need to provide the bag and dice yourself. Note that *Fantasy Infinity* uses only standard, six-sided dice – the same kind of dice found in many other games. You will need several in, ideally, at least three different colours (or with other distinguishing physical characteristics).

What's In the Core Rulebook?

In addition to this introduction, the Core Rulebook has the following sections:
- **Chapter 1 — Dice Mechanics**: This short chapter explains the "standard roll," a simple dice pool mechanic. Most dice rolls in *Fantasy Infinity* use these rules. The end of the chapter goes over some other ways dice are used in this game.
- **Chapter 2 — Characters**: This chapter explains how to create a character and how gaining a level – becoming more powerful as a result of accumulated experience – works. This chapter also has short sections introducing the eight character classes you can choose from and the six heroic traits that every character has, and a detailed "guided tour" of the unique *Fantasy Infinity* character sheet.
- **Chapter 3 — The Battle System**: This chapter has the rules for the most common challenge your characters will face in the typical *Fantasy Infinity* adventure – combat. This includes the basics of laying out the Battle Board and using the initiative track as well as rules for the most common status ailments your character can suffer, from being poisoned or temporarily blinded to being turned into a frog.
- **Chapter 4 — Time, Movement, and Exploration**: Many adventures consist largely of getting from one place to another or exploring an area to uncover its

secrets. This chapter covers these topics and a few related ones, like how resting to recover from fatigue or injury works.

▸ **Chapter 5 — Skills**: Skills are relatively mundane abilities anyone can learn, such as climbing, airship piloting, persuasion and lock picking. There are nine main skills in *Fantasy Infinity,* each consisting of three specialties, for a total of twenty-seven specialties. This covers most of the activities outside of combat and spellcasting that come up in a typical adventure. This chapter also includes the basic rules for making or customizing equipment, though many of the ways to apply these rules will only be covered in future supplements.

▸ **Chapter 6 — Gear**: This gives rules for the weapons, armour, alchemical items, and accessories (miscellaneous magical items) that your characters can buy and/or find on their adventures.

▸ **Chapter 7 — For the GM**: This chapter explains some rules that GMs need to know but players generally don't, covering subjects like reading the enemy stats in the Enemies List and awarding experience points. In the final release, it will also include advice on running games, including some elements of the intended style of adventures for *Fantasy Infinity* and suggestions for managing groups with diverse tastes.

▸ **Chapter 8 — The World of Aperion**: This gives an overview of the "default setting" in which published *Fantasy Infinity* adventures will take place, the Möbius-strip world of Aperion. It also includes brief glimpses of Aperion's two equally bizarre moons, Drakhen and The Eye of Agni.

One topic that isn't covered in the Core Rulebook is the specific abilities you choose from your class's Destiny Wheel and Defence Web – the things that set your class, and your character, apart from other adventurers. These are found in the *Character Reference*, along with the rules needed to fully understand their descriptions. Organizing things this way means you can look up abilities in the *Character Reference* without losing your place in the *Core Rulebook*, which is very useful, especially the first few times you create a character.