



## SHIVA SHADOWSONG - DIGITAL ARTIST / SOFTWARE ENGINEER

Could you please say a few words about yourself? How would you describe yourself as a human being, maybe a few words about personality and private life (without many details and sensitive data unless you don't mind).

**Shiva Shadowsong:** Sure! My name is Kristijan, though most people know me as Shiva/Shadowsong. I'm 27 years old. If I had to summarize myself, I'd say I'm a creative and an entertainer at heart. I'm very passionate about things that I find amusing and inspiring, some of which would be fantasy, technology, psychology, heavy music, comedy, character and costume design, and most recently – cooking up dope meals!

I was born in Bosnia & Herzegovina just after the Bosnian war ended, into a wartorn economy and society. I owe much of my personal growth and progress to the challenges and pressure I've been put through growing up there. Thus I've grown to be competitive and forward oriented, which served me well despite the cost at which all of that came. I've just recently tied up all loose ends there and left, and am looking forward to a new era of recalibration and self discovery. Here's to new beginnings. 🍻

What are your skills? What can you do and how do you evaluate the level of individual skills?

**Shiva Shadowsong:** I am primarily a digital artist and a programmer, and those are the things I've spent most of my time doing over the years, therefore those are the things I do best. Although patting your own back always feels a bit weird, I'd say it's best to let my work do the talking and my clients and audience be the judge.

These two skills mix very well, as one lets me express my creativity while the other keeps the mind sharp and the gears of logic turning. Over the years, I've dipped my toes into many other waters. Most of those ventures, if not all of them, stem from my childhood desire to create games and media content. If you put together a list of ingredients needed to make a game, I can probably deliver all of them to varying degrees of quality. For example, I've done level design/mapping, community building and management, amateur video and sound production

and animation, voice acting, you name it.

One of my biggest passions here is writing lore and worldbuilding, and I've done a fair bit of that over the years as well.

Most people probably know you from your artistic side (please correct me if I'm wrong). Could you tell us how your adventure with art began? Do you remember the moment you decided to start doing this? Maybe someone or something influenced / inspired you?

**Shiva Shadowsong:** In this community, it'd be either that, or my previous work as developer on servers like Necronia and Ethraeum.

But alright, well, if it's an origin story you want, strap in.

Growing up, I've been rather awful at art. My grandfather is a professional painter, and was a graphic designer and a web developer at the time. I always wondered how none of that talent got passed onto me, but I was always around him when he was working so I picked up *some* things even before he actively taught me anything. Foreshadowing much? ☺️ He used to do all my paintings for my art classes in elementary school, because I was lazy and not keen on improving just for that one grade.

In our childhood, we had one crappy PC at home and no internet connection, so sometimes instead of fighting my brother over who gets to play on it, I'd draw "games" in Paint and I'd make up some rules for them, and then we'd play around with those drawings.

In some ways, it was like DnD, except I was a terrible DM who made up severe bullshit on the fly to balance the game out in the favor of the bosses. My brother surely must've had a ton of fun...



There were a lot of sound effects made exclusively by mouth. My mom probably thought we were both autistic. Now that I'm recalling these things, I'm thinking it too. It was a theatrical experience™ in an innocent childlike way, but as a result, this opened up my appetite for game development and drawing. In particular, seeing how other people react and play with the material I've created.

We were big fans of Pokemon and YuGiOh and when we first got the internet, I discovered Fakemon and custom YuGiOH card communities and used to draw my own, so those were my first attempts at creating sprites and art.

My grandpa would teach me how to use Photoshop, CorelDraw, Dreamweaver, and some other tools, and I'd go on to create my first Yahoo Geocities website where I posted these Fakemons and curated a list of my top Flash games. Working on that website laid down the foundation for my graphic design and web dev skills.

Moving forward, I'd get a slightly better PC, and I'd get heavily into modding some of the games I played, which is when I realized that in order to execute some of my out-of-the-box ideas, I'd need my own art for them. So it was either, draw it yourself, or pay someone else to do it for you. Was I supposed to give up my last few coins that were meant for internet cafe degeneracy and chocolate milk?... Hell no.



That's where my journey with art started, and at some point in my teenage years, I guess I got decent enough at it that it caught some eyes and I started to get job offers. I really wanted to start earning as soon as possible, so I jumped at that chance and kept improving. And this snowball never stopped rolling to the point it inadvertently became my main career focus for years, out of pure financial utility more than anything else. That's not to say I haven't enjoyed most of it, just that, I never thought in my wildest dreams that I'd be any sort of professional artist. My main objective was still to make (design, program) games, and creating art was one of the branches of game development that happened to be the first one to start earning me that much needed income, so I stuck with it.

I highly admired some spriters that were active in the in the OT community at the time, and they were my main inspirations for getting into custom spriteing for OTs. People like Anevis, Shikate, Somni, Krisosw. Some of my other inspirations are Kunkka, Cameron Gray, Chengwei Pan, Fool, Atonik, etc. And of course, my grandfather. There are so many incredible artists, I could list them for days, so let's leave it at that. 🧑

**What goals do you set for yourself in your work? What do you do to focus on your work and stay motivated? Which artwork are you most proud of and why and... can we see that artwork?**

**Shiva Shadowsong:** I entered the art space business oriented, so my main priority was always to ensure that I don't disappoint those who chose to commission me. Only at the moment they say they're satisfied, I would know it's time to stop. However, looking back at those times - and I don't know why, many seemed to be satisfied with work that was objectively not really high quality. I was still a beginner. How that was acceptable was beyond me, but I didn't know any better.

I didn't complain though, if it was good for them, that's all that mattered, I wouldn't push further

than I needed to. Sometimes I'd look at myself in the mirror and ask: Would YOU accept this if you had to pay for it? Wouldn't you want more effort to be put into it?

And the reflection, knowing that it had already pocketed the payment, would stare back at me and ask:



**Do I look like someone who would waste my own time?**

On the other hand, when I am making art for myself and my own projects, it can be tricky to handle, because I'm *never* satisfied and there's no one else to pull the brakes. I've had to learn how to accept small victories and keep moving. Which is good, in a sense that it always keeps me improving little by little, but all of this also extracts a tiresome mental toll.

To stay motivated, I engage with a lot of other people's amazing art, so that my drive prevents me from stagnating and sets new goalposts for the future. I observe my surroundings and enjoy nature, and listen to music whenever I can, because I find that doing these things often inspires ideas and set moods that help immerse me into a creative space in my mind.

I can get burned out pretty quickly, but since art is not my only line of work, I still get to do other productive things while I'm on cooldown from an exhausting drawing spree.

As much as that helps though, it also detracts away from my focus and specialization in one thing, and switches it completely to another. Starting to get that whole "jack of all things, master of none" vibe here. But that's a given, when you try to dabble in many things at once.

The way I feel, life is too short to stay focused only on one thing/hobby when there are so many interesting ones out there to explore. So if the price I have to pay for that is slower progress and less expertise, so be it, I accept that. I'm having a blast.

The artwork I'm most proud of? Boy... that's hard to tell. 😊 I do so many types and styles of work, that it would be really difficult to pick just one. I view each piece as a small pin in the path of my progress. On one piece, I maybe made my most satisfying texture for skin yet. On another, I may have drawn a really decent pose or face. On the third one, it may be the most complex animation I've made so far, or the most polished ambience. Etc.

I'll show you a small variety of things that are close to my heart:



**The Forest Queen (2022):** This was made just a few days ago. I'm really happy with how far this new style I'm engaging with is coming along. It's a weird process of pixel art with post process brushing and ambient lighting enhancements. I hope to continue doing more larger art in this style going forward.



**Necronia Splash Art (2020):** I will always have a special connection with this one because it was the first time I committed to a full size digital illustration from scratch without using any photo manipulation techniques. All with a PC mouse too. It may not be my absolute best work, but it's brimming with character and little details that really encapsulate the spirit of the starting area of Necronia.



Here is an ingame representation of a similar scenery. Those who know anything about Necronia will probably find that interesting, if not a bit nostalgic.



**FoF World Map (2016):** I wish I could share the full work with you, but here is a tiny cut from a world map I've hand-painted for the *Frontiers of Fantasy: Elysium* game I'm currently working on.

The version I'm currently developing is one of my largest works with a ton of tiny detail, around 6000x6000 px if you disregard all the water. And all of it is jampacked with unique areas, custom logos for factions and towns, hidden treasures and paths, it's so fun to explore, and I can't wait until it's in the hands of the players!

I suppose I'll leave it at these picks, or we could sit here for a while. 😊



What do you think the world of digital art looks like now, is it possible to make a living out of it? Is it difficult to find a job in this profession? Could you also tell us what the earnings in this field of art look like with some examples (more or less)?

**Shiva Shadowsong:** We live in the golden era of technology and human communication, and with that comes the possibility to share your art for free with potentially millions of onlooking eyes. With that, also comes the possibility to use hundreds of different tools and techniques to accomplish your goals, references galore, I mean, it's absolutely nuts.

But this also means that you often get to witness how many other artists there are competing for attention and work. And they are really good at what they do. The competition can feel quite cutthroat.

It takes some experience and confidence to navigate this space without letting it impact you too negatively mentally.

It will always be possible to make a living from it because everyone needs some sort of graphic work to represent themselves and their ideas both in the virtual and physical space. Logos, print, interfaces and content for apps, concept art, etc.

But the market is so saturated that in order to be able to make above average pay, you'd have to really stand out from the crowd, and offer something that's either of great quality or fills a certain strong demand within a niche. Or, you can do cheaper works but learn how to make a

ton of them in a short span, therefore boosting your income that way. That's why I feel like it's never been easier to land a job in the OT community if you're any decent at what you're doing.

I find it hard to tell what the earnings may look like, as each individual has their own pricing, and in today's unstable economy and raging inflation, those prices can change daily. It also depends on what kind of work exactly you're looking for. Personally I've done projects and sprites ranging from literally 1€, to over a 1000€. If you're dedicated, you can stack up several of those within one month, and then you're making a pretty solid living. So, yeah, it will depend on who you order from and what exactly you order.

For reference, if my memory serves me correctly, a few years ago you could have custom 64x64 monster for more-less 40€, 48x48 monster for 25€, an outfit for 60€ – maybe even both genders, items could vary anywhere between 1€ to 4-5€ a pop, with a full set of items being around 20 to 30€. Now I really have no idea what the prices might be on the open market since most spriters who used to charge these prices including myself are working full time on projects for undisclosed fixed wages, but I hope this gives you some idea if you're curious about ordering custom sprites.

Can you tell us what equipment do you use for your work? Let's say you have 100 milion \$ in your bank account right now - what is your dream equipment that you would like to have?

**Shiva Shadowsong:** If I have 100 mil. in my bank account, I'm investing in other businesses and I'm chilling in the Bahamas, I'm not buying equipment to do more work. 

Honestly I don't even look that much into highest-end equipment, since I know I can't afford it right now, so what's the point, I can only bum myself out. Currently I do all my work on what I consider to be pretty modest desktop PC (AMD Ryzen 5 5600X / HyperX Fury 16 GB DDR4 RAM / NVIDIA GeForce GTX 1660 SUPER GDDR6 6GB / B450M MORTAR Max).

Creating art luckily doesn't require some insane specs, but of course for professional work, there are things that you can tune to ensure better results. I would definitely recommend investing in a monitor/tablet that will suit your specific needs, an ergonomic chair, above all else. But since I also program and play games on the occasion, I have those things to consider as well, so I have to find compromises. I just bought a LG 27GL850 27" monitor that will serve me nicely for all of those purposes, much thanks to Alpha/Erza for finding me a solid bargain for it. 

As surprising as that may sound, I've never used an art tablet, but I'm currently looking into buying the XPPen Artist 24 Pro and starting to really lean into it.

Can you tell us when and how your adventure with Tibia / Open Tibia started? How has your career developed? Do you remember people who in some way positively influenced you or were very helpful in the OT community? Do you have any interesting stories related to them that you can tell?

**Shiva Shadowsong:** This is a very loaded question, but I'll try to unpack it.

I started playing Tibia around the end of 2006, as they were just about to enter the 8.0 era. It was pretty rare to find a kid who had the money to be paying for premium and also the means to pay online at that time, so when I walked into an internet caffe and saw some of them walking around in badass outfits with full addons, hunting Demons, Behemoths, etc. (these creatures used to be a big deal back then!) - I was shocked.

Then they told me it's not cip Tibia and there were these private servers people made...



I knew this was some kind of destiny. I was in love with Tibia at this moment and finding out that I could mod it and create my own server... shit, there was no better thing that could've happened to me. I got into it right away and played every possible server I could get my hands on, to try everything out and scope out the playing field.

Some of the most memorable servers to me from those early years were Yurots, Deathzot / Chaos, Iceshaw, Tera (*fun fact, people still sometimes confuse me for the Shiva that ran that server*), Unline, Goobers... Many of these OTs had very customized content and I found it fun to explore and experience Tibia in that different way.

But I felt things could go a step further. Thus I started my first OT, Omnia World, which was a mostly private and short lived project that taught me the basics. And now my 14 year old dumb ass decided it was time to *all in* like some grand visionary, as if I knew anything about what it meant to program and maintain an MMORPG server, which is probably the most difficult form of game development out there.

And I did. I started developing a new server called Necronia. I committed really hard. At the time, Necronia was an evo-like server with fully custom vocations, spells, and monsters, and maps, all of which I made. This was my way of exploring what I could do with the framework I'd been given, which was early TFS 0.2. I feel like I milked all the customization that I could out of simply editing XML configs and Lua scripts. I even earned a couple of bucks off of all that effort, pretty cool. But I felt like this was merely scraping the surface.

I wanted to find out if there was a way to start adding custom sprites and custom mechanics, new windows and widgets in the client, and so on... This is how I learned about C++, BlackDemon editor, Trooper Pic Editor, DLL Injection, and when I started assembling a team.

Before that, I didn't interact with many people, but I lurked and admired. Since I was into all sorts of OT dev stuff (mapping, scripting, spriting, etc.), I had many people to look up to.

Besides the artists I mentioned in question 3, some of the most influential or memorable people for me in those early days were (in no particular order) Neon, Peroxide, Magnetico, Mackan, StiX, Colandus, Cykotitan, Scarlet Ayleid, Bogart, and some others. In my world, these are OGs, mostly from OTFans, but over the years, I've met and worked together with so many amazing people from this community, including several of those from that list, and I guess it sounds super silly right now, but back then, it made me really happy that some of these "big leaguers" would talk to me and work with me. Big respect and shout out to all of them, especially all the acquaintances and former teammates from the days of Necronia development.

If I were to start praising and thanking everyone who's on that list, this answer would quadruple in size. So let's not do that now. To any of them reading this, you know who you are and what you did. Love you all and I hope life is treating you well nowadays. ❤️❤️

**Do you remember all your projects or those you were a part of? Those that were successful and those that failed or were put on hold. Could you tell us a bit about them?**

**Shiva Shadowsong:** Sure! Unless you want to count the hundreds of sprites, UIs and web layouts people have commissioned from me for their projects, my main project for most of my teenage years and beyond has been Necronia.

There were many occasions during which I had to sideline it in order to focus on something else, be it school or another project that was going to earn me a much needed buck, so I was all over the place.

For a while, I worked on a fun side project called Ethraeum, which was a wacky teleport server that used time travel as a story driver, and historic locations, events, and myths as the center points for its plot. Here, I really finetuned my scripting skills, systems development and "developer humor". Eventually, me, and the person who worked on it together with me (Dante),

grew busy and apart, and we kinda just retired the project as the activity dropped down to 0. Pity, I really liked that premise a lot.

At the time, I hosted a website called Pixel Realm, with the aim of promoting artists within the OT community and giving the OT developers a place to look for free-to-use sprites. I believe it helped out a bunch of people, but my intention was for it to be a community page where the community would also contribute to its development by providing content. However, it seemed difficult to get anyone interested in contributing. So the whole idea ended up on life support until I decided to completely abandon it. Amidst all that, I was hired by Tibianic (now known as Medivia) to create sprites, and eventually maps and other content for them. If I recall correctly, I did that for at least 2 years. Tibianic was one of the most popular old school 7.X servers at that time, but its owner 3lite/Iryont was set on making big changes and eventually revamping the entire game. This was not yet fully obvious, not to me, and definitely not to the players at the time, so when my contributions towards this big shift were revealed, it seemed to me like the players were quite upset and unwelcoming to the changes, and now had someone to point the finger at too. It was a pity, since I really had a blast reimagining some things in the context of Tibia's original worldmap and lore. I felt like I finally had a use for all the stuff I knew about Tibia's lore from the days when I actively played. I did try to bring some totally fresh changes and push for some basic system upgrades to be added (e.g. food that grants various buffs, farming system for the food, improved fishing, crafting, etc.), but in the end those suggestions were shafted due to seeming too radical for an old-school server, only to be reimplemented way later when I was gone from the team. Strange how that worked out, but it did.

At that time in the project, there was a demand for the sprites to be in the "oldschool" spirit, which means, intentionally lower quality to mimic the look of other 7.X sprites. This rowdiness of the playerbase combined with the requests to intentionally create lower quality sprites signaled to me that this wasn't going to work out in the long run and would prevent me from growing and exploring ideas, and when an opportunity arose for me to do something with less constraints, I took it.

That turned out to be two projects, Project Immortal and Frontiers of Fantasy, the former of which eventually shifted focus and pivoted away, and the latter of which kept continuously investing into my efforts and turned into a company that I'm currently employed at.

It has been an amazing journey for me so far, and all of these teams and project leaders offered me a lot to learn and earn from, and a place to feel welcome for a while. They all have my sincerest gratitude for the important part they played in my career.

**Are you currently working on any project(s)? If so, please tell us as many details as possible about it, what your work looks like there - what are your duties, what are you responsible for, what is the project about, what we can or will be able to find interesting in it, is there something that distinguishes this project among others? Can you show a few or at least one picture from this project where we can see your work?**

**Shiva Shadowsong:** Well, as I said, I currently work for Frontiers of Fantasy.

There, the idea was to create a completely new game focused around single player content, that would operate on some of most fun aspects of the Tibia-esque gameplay and improve on its UltimaVII-like visual aesthetics, with more advanced tooling, and with looser constraints on the gameworld physics and visual representation ruleset.

We started building the game from scratch, and it has been a wild ride of trial, error, iteration and constant change. It really is a great challenge to try and execute ambitious things in this visual perspective that we use, whilst also being committed to keeping the hand-drawn aesthetic. It would be much more efficient to try and emulate this with 3D models, but we also tried that and it felt like it lost all charm and character that made us fall in love with this idea in the first place.

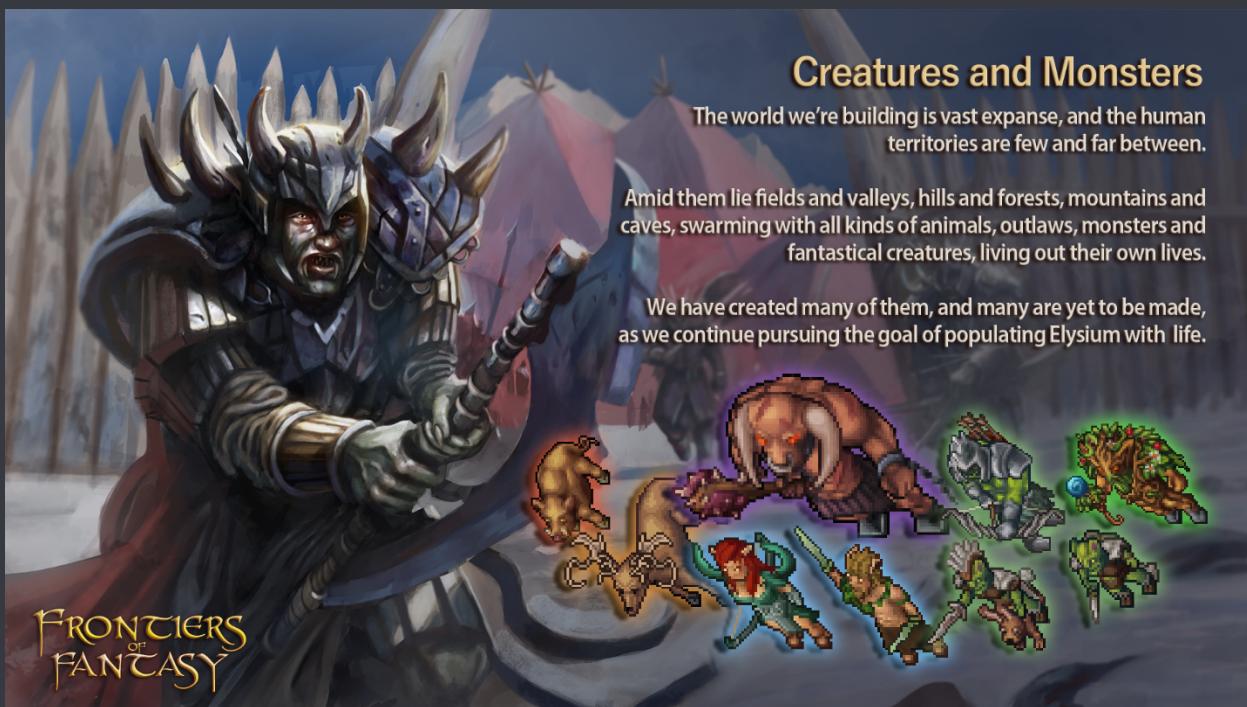
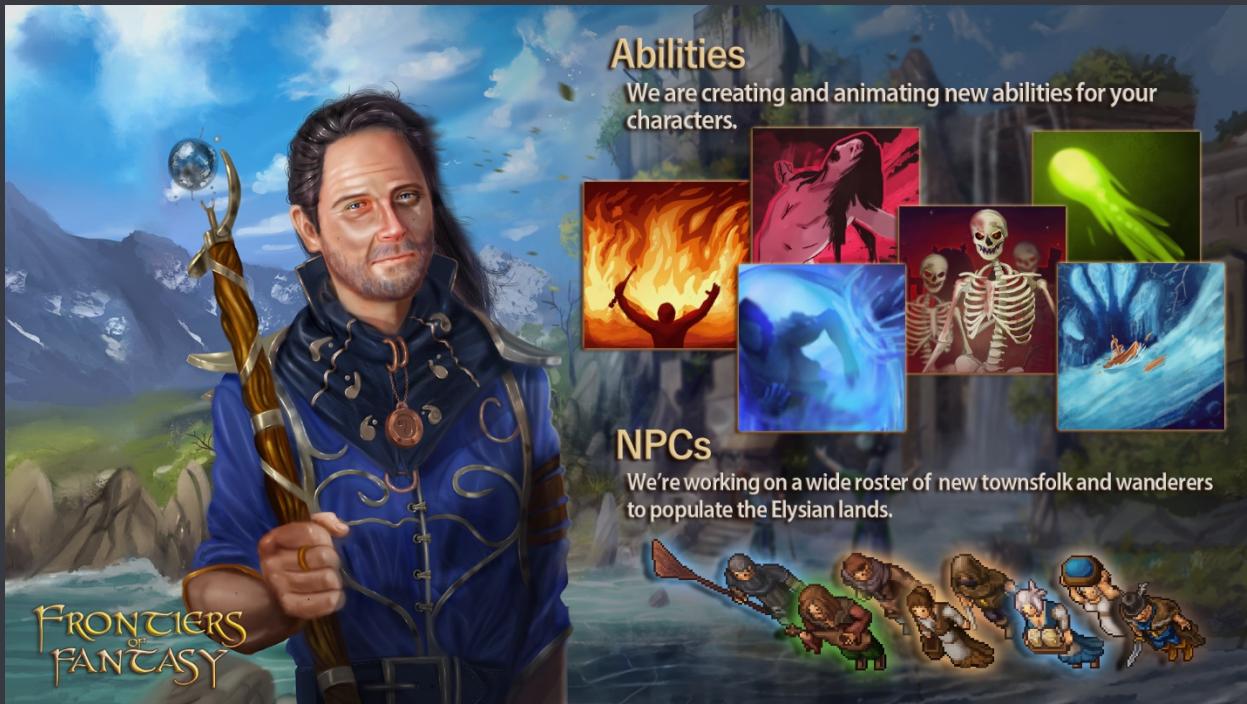
Most recently we scored some investments and started fully throwing ourselves at the project, hiring new members and reevaluating our goals. We currently aim to produce a bunch of simple multiplayer modes for the game while we work on the engine and single player content in the background. Despite being in development for so many years, only recently I feel like we've emerged from that cocoon of amateurish aspirations and started to take this very seriously, with a much renewed and improved set of skills and outlooks on things.

I started out here purely as a spriter, then started doing other graphic related things, then web development, aid in content design, and even some mapping from time to time. Nowadays I lead a small graphics department in the company, and they continue to impress me with their output, especially considering none of them worked in this perspective before FoF.

Coming from the framework of Tibia, there are many things one might find interesting here, as it's a fresher take on them. For comparison, FoF implements a minimal UI and RPG complexity at the moment (we're still figuring out how simple we can keep it, given the endgoal), large interactive objects, multi floor combat, fully animated omnidirectional combat, the use of abilities at arbitrary angles and positions – removing the need for grid locked awkward targeting; a fully operational paperdoll system for appearances (albeit not nearly as much used as it could be, because development of paperdoll components is very expensive as it is), an original soundtrack and artwork collection, cross platform compatibility (yes, we are developing a mobile version in parallel!), etc.

You can find and talk to us at Gamescom this year where we'll be demoing and testing some modules of the game, but I anticipate that the true scope and intention behind the game won't be testable until Q1-Q2 2023. You can see a video and some more pictures at <https://frontiersoffantasy.com/>, and on our discord.

There is even a downloadable PC build on the website from our last public test phase which was a while ago, although I'm not sure if that build is compatible with the current version of the server.



I'm also working on a fully homebrewed shop system where I intend to sell my art and sprites for affordable prices so that OT/game developers have a place where they can equip themselves with polished and revamped essentials, or enrich their library of sprites for the creation of new content for their games. But in typical „me“ fashion, it's taking longer than expected because I am heavily customizing it and tailoring it towards a specific vision. It was supposed to be out this April but I ended up knee deep in stuff, way deeper than I anticipated,

and sadly I won't be able to return to work on that project until... November? Here is small sneak peek:

The screenshot shows the 'SHOP' section of the ShadowSong website. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links for 'Browse Shop', 'Inventory', 'Cart' (containing 0 items), 'Get More Credits', and user information for 'ShivaShadowSong'. Below the navigation is a search bar and a 'Choose Tags' section. On the left, there are several filter options: 'OPTIONS' (checkboxes for 'Show Original Prices', 'Items Per Page' set to 50, and 'Show Only Owned'), 'TITLE QUALITIES' (checkboxes for 'Regular', 'Remarkable', 'Excellent', 'Masterful', and 'Vintage'), and a 'Search by tag' dropdown menu containing items like 'Animal Companions', 'Barred, Death Incarnate', 'Demonic Brutalizer Set', 'Earth Cave', 'Fireball', 'Icicles', 'Orc Raiders Bundle', and 'Stone Mountain Set'. Below these filters is a large grid of item cards. In the bottom right corner of the main content area, the text 'WIP' is displayed.

This screenshot shows a detailed view of an offer card for the 'Demonic Brutalizer Set'. The card has a header with the offer name, quality (Excellent), and total price (480). It includes a description: 'Do your players need some inspiration to rend flesh and crush bones? Proceed with caution, this set will awaken carnal brutality!'. Below the description are sections for 'Tags' (Head, Body, Legs, Feet, Chestplate, Axe, Sword, Gloves, Projectile, Weapon, Lance, Weapon, Club, Mace) and 'This offer contains the following items:' (listing Demonic Brutalizer items like Helmets, Bodies, Legs, Beaks, Backpacks, Generators, and various weapons like Sudden Death, Banewhipper, Bitsplitter, Demonic Behemoth, Heartbreaker, Skulkrusher, and Bonecrusher). At the bottom are 'Add to Cart' and 'Edit This Offer' buttons.

What are your plans for the near and far future? Are you planning to continue being a member of the OT community and further develop your skills?

**Shiva ShadowSong:** Sure! I feel as long as the OT community exists in some form, I will also be there in some form. I am still involved in projects and with the people in the community, and

while I post less on OTLand (which used to be my main hang out for OT related stuff), now I more often check OTAcademy and chill on discord. I am not averse to the idea of playing some OTs from time to time as well, even though my desire for that has drastically fallen. Last year I was playing Therran a bunch until it shut down, but now I see news about it spinning up again so... who knows. ☺

Besides doing everything I've said, I'm also flirting with the Godot game engine and have made several prototypes for some of my ideas already. And while it's too early to reveal anything, I know two things:

I will be pushing myself hard with Frontiers of Fantasy to see Elysium through. Full steam ahead and work hard so that we can get the opportunity to make even more stuff than just Elysium.

And, I would prefer not to let all that knowledge and worldbuilding I did around Necronia go to waste. Whether it makes a comeback in form of an OT, or manifests itself in an entirely different game, or even as a public release of files, is yet for me to decide, but some of those gears are definitely still turning in my head.

Exciting times ahead. I feel like that anime protagonist who has been training for 5 filler seasons, and now we're finally about to see what the big bad boss and his cronies look like!

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What do you think about the current situation in the OT community? From a developer and player perspective. Can you tell us what are your predictions about the future of this community and OT servers?

**Shiva Shadowsong:** I think Tibia in general seems to be in decline. And with that happening, OTs also suffer. However, some custom projects have a chance of revitalizing interest in games similar to Tibia, so that might also by extension, refuel the OT community.

I am not sure if this will be enough though. The further we go ahead, the more amazing games and tools for game dev are being published, making it less likely that people will have a reason to interact with this specific community. And the community itself is becoming increasingly divided.

I see more elitism, hypocrisy, needless animosity, gatekeeping, scams, toxicity and disrespect, entry point difficulty level creep – now, more than ever. To a standard onlooker, I bet this does not seem very inviting. And without new blood and reinvigorated passion from older devs, this charade can't last much longer. We need to do better, and in that light, I want to remark that OTAcademy, for all its little faults, is one of the most pleasant and active OT communities I've been a part of so far. Good job, and keep going!

Yet despite everything negative I just said, there is still a noticeable presence of current developers and people experimenting with novel content. Except, nowadays, they have even more tools and resources at their disposal than we ever did before.

I think these are still fine tools to start learning about game development and server/client architecture, if one is willing to push through the initial barrier to entry, which is reasonably higher nowadays than it used to be in the prime years of OT activity.

No matter what happens though, I think important fragments of this community will live on and continue to manifest in positive things, because its members create conversations and connections that will outlive and outlast this initial context within which they were formed.

As a player, I've only ever really been interested in custom content, as I had no desire to play "RL Tibia but worse". I did play Iceshaw at the very early days but that's about it. Quality custom servers are few and far in between. Even when the content is amazing, I find them riddled with other issues like instability, improper management, irregular patches, etc. that makes it hard to get excited about it.

Some people have patience for that, and I congratulate them, but I'm past that point in my life. It's not just excitement, you know. If I sit down to spend a few hours playing something, it better be stable and fun. But RPGs really ask you to invest a lot in them, and if I'm gonna invest that much of my valuable time into a game, then I definitely need to be sure that I can trust that my progress will remain existing and valuable, that the devs won't just start adding unreasonable shit into the game, or extorting players once money turns drier, etc.

That's a big ask from amateur, hobby, or small entrepreneur game devs which constitute most of the custom server developer population, so yeah... I've been burned on that fire before, so I'm very cautious.

But, given my past specifically, I am the one who probably did that to someone, and for that I'm very sorry, that's one of the reasons I've definitively shut down my project Necronia. I knew I wouldn't be able, in my current state, to deliver my audience the experience that I would be expecting if I were in their place.

I am very familiar with why those issues come to pass and how hard it can be to deal with some of them, how tempting it can be to turn to quick but destructive solutions... Especially with a small team and limited knowledge or resources.

So, I'm giving it time, and I'm lurking, keeping my eye on a few projects and always scouting for new promising ones.

Have you tried to create other projects besides OT projects? For example 2D / 3D games? If so, please tell us a bit about it.

**Shiva Shadowsong:** Haven't done anything 3D yet, but I'm exploring some ideas in the 2D roguelike, strategy, card and 4X genres. All of it is still very prototype-y, but I am hopeful about what the results of these experiments will be. I have a lot of ideas!

Are you active in social media? Where can we look to be up to date with your work?  
Can you provide all the links to these sites?

**Shiva Shadowsong:** I had a very long hiatus from social media in favor of my privacy and mental health. I feel like my career as an artist suffered because of this, but I don't regret doing it, it really worked wonders. Now that I feel a bit different about these things, I've been getting back into it, so it's still all fresh and new for me. You can be one of my first followers! I'm happy to post content when I know there will be engagement.

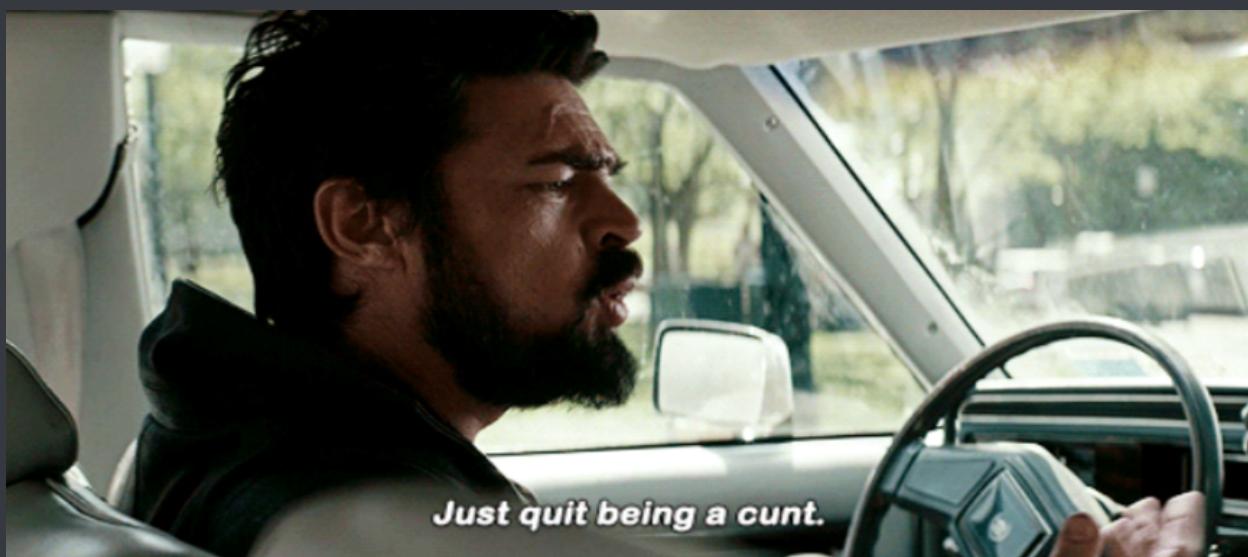
I post on:

<https://www.instagram.com/shivashadowsong/> - Instagram, which I am becoming more active on.

<https://shivashadowsong.com/> - For a more complete look at my projects and portfolio.

<https://www.youtube.com/c/ShivaShadowsong> - And videos! Yes, I'm definitely looking to make more shitposty, fun but educational content there. I don't take myself too seriously there, but I'd like to believe there is still a lot of worth that can be extracted from those videos. This is a topic we haven't even touched yet. Maybe some other time!

We all know that the situation in the world has been very tense for many years, most of us face "many obstacles on our way" to make our dreams come true and to live a normal life. Considering all of this, and assuming you get the opportunity to say something positive to the whole world - what would it be?



**Shiva Shadowsong:** You can't affect the whole world, but act on what you can. Build yourself up, and build up those around you. Make a positive contribution every day, even a small one. That way you gain respect, mastery, companionship, love and positivity. And those are the instruments to your immortality in the face of this gloom and nihilism that permeates the air.



Also, holy \*\*\*\*, anyone who got this far is a god damn legend. I've written seminary works shorter than this. God bless you.

**Community question (Eiffel#7404):**

Necronia was one of, if not the biggest, hyped custom project on Otland. However, I feel like the community got something that they did not expect. Necronia felt like it started off as a custom OT but eventually morphed into being its own game. With what you know now, would you have handled its development any differently?

**Shiva Shadowsong:** Most certainly. With what I know now, I wouldn't have even started cooking up such a project before I was sure that I would have the knowhow or the resources to ensure engine stability and scalability. Because in the end, that was the most important part, and that's where all hell broke loose. Other than that, sure, we wouldn't have spent 2 years making a map that ended up unused because the project never got to that point. We would have searched for investment and scaled down the ambitions in favor of a slow but steady stream of content. We would have invested more into marketing and advertisement. And the list goes on and on. That just proves how much you learn every step of the way. But the funniest part is – I don't think Necronia would've ever been so hyped or beloved if we took that safe and slow approach. I think people somehow loved existing in that chaotic state where every patch could announce that some systems will be totally turned on their head, completely removed or replaced, something bonkers would be added, etc. And I think this was only because they trusted us, since we had set a precedent that we are capable of reworking things our way and having it still be fun. And most importantly, we made sure that even if those experiments failed, they knew that we would listen to their feedback and address every issue.

**Interviewed by Cniras.**

Thank you Shiva Shadowsong on behalf of the entire community for your time and comprehensive answers. We wish you much success and make your biggest dreams come true and we hope that you will stay with us as long as possible.