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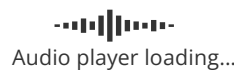
## After spending 20 years simulating reality, the Dwarf Fortress devs have to get used to a new one: being millionaires

By [Wes Fenlon](#) published about 22 hours ago

With 300,000 sales and counting, Dwarf Fortress's creators no longer have to rely on Patreon donations.



(Image credit: Annie Forsman-Adams)



Acclaimed indie colony/existence sim Dwarf Fortress launched [on Steam](#) on December 6, and it's since been having a bit of a moment.

Other game developers [gushed](#) about Dwarf Fortress and its influence on launch day. Someone on the Steam forums asked if all the people reviewing the game on Steam moments after launch had been "playing free DF for 25 years and just waiting for an opportunity to pay \$30?" So far, the 237 page thread is

"Tanya [Short of Kitfox Games] posted that it sold 160,000 the first day, and we're about double that now," Adams said.

Adams and his brother, Zach, who've been developing Dwarf Fortress together since the early 2000s, were remarkably calm about the game's success on Steam so far—even almost a week after launch, the degree of success might not have quite sunk in.

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Based on some extremely basic math, 300,000 copies of Dwarf Fortress sold equals \$9 million in sales. Subtract Valve's 30% cut and you have \$6 million to be split between the Adams brothers and Kitfox and new contributors, like the artists and composer who worked on the Steam release. Regional pricing makes that figure fuzzier, of course, and the Adams' didn't talk about their publishing split. But with Dwarf Fortress still among Steam's top sellers, the two must have millions coming their way.

"It's just a ton of money, but it's also for 20 years," Tarn Adams said. "So when you divide that by 20, you're kind of back down into normal tech salary range. Which is still pretty high, obviously."

"We found a foolproof way of saving our money, which was to not sell anything for 20 years and then drop it all," Zach deadpanned.

they become millionaires.

"That is an inevitability, it seems," Tarn said. "I'll have to rework... my, uh, whole life, figure out what the heck's going on there. I don't really have any ideas or plans right now. I've just been thinking about dwarf stuff."

"My wife has plans," Zach said. "We live in a tiny little house, so buying a new house, that's a major goal."

Next year's first big problem, then, in between working on Dwarf Fortress updates, will be finding an accountant. But Tarn said that the money the Steam version brings in will also need to last.

"We don't have plans to sell Dwarf Fortress 2 or whatever in five years, right? It's just the same game. So this tail off this game, for however long it goes, that's it. We have to be responsible with what we've got, now, for the rest of our lives really."

If there's any game that exemplifies a long tail, though, it's Dwarf Fortress. Six days after launch, it's cracked [a million wishlists](#), and the Adams brothers have years—decades—of features to add that will, I think, keep the game relevant and fascinating for the rest of their lives. There's a monumentally complex magic and myth system in Dwarf Fortress's future, improvements to armies and sieges, rebuilding Dwarf Fortress's entire conception of civilizations, and overhauling its economic systems.

And then, at long last, after that decade (at least) of work is over: [Boats](#).

"Boats are the prize for the economy," Tarn said. "Finally."

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**Wes Fenlon**

Senior Editor



Wes has been covering games and hardware for more than 10 years, first at tech sites like [The Wirecutter](#) and [Tested](#) before joining the PC Gamer team in 2014. Wes plays a little bit of everything, but he'll always jump at the chance to cover emulation and Japanese games.

When he's not obsessively optimizing and re-optimizing a tangle of conveyor belts in Satisfactory (it's really becoming a problem), he's probably playing a 20-year-old Final Fantasy or some opaque ASCII roguelike. With a focus on writing and editing features, he seeks out personal stories and in-depth histories from the corners of PC gaming and its niche communities. 50% pizza by volume (deep dish, to be specific).

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