

You Were Told to Lose Money By Making Games, and You Actually Did It?

Chapter 31: Heaven and Hell

What is it like to officially start work and immediately attend the company's annual banquet on your very first day?

If possible, Yamagami Eiji and Aonuma Shinji really wanted to make a forum post describing exactly how they felt at that moment.

They had only finished their onboarding procedures that morning, but by noon, everyone was heading to a hotel in a grand procession to attend the annual company banquet.

Following a budget of 9,999 yuan per table, Chen Xu had booked twelve tables.

It wasn't that he didn't want to spend more.

The system had firmly stopped him.

This was already the upper limit.

Even though he was trying his hardest to spend money, there was still too much left.

Thinking about it, Chen Xu couldn't help but sigh.

How am I supposed to spend all this money?

"Brother Xu, it's your turn to go up and give a speech."

Noticing the time, Xiao Dao came over to remind him.

Looking at the prepared banner and podium at the front, Chen Xu, who was already seated at the head table waiting for the food to arrive, nodded.

After all, it was the annual banquet. Some formalities still had to be observed.

"Ahem... hello, everyone."

Walking onto the stage and picking up the microphone, Chen Xu cleared his throat twice.

The hall immediately fell silent.

Looking at the hundred-plus employees seated below, he felt a little nervous.

After all, he had never spoken in front of so many people before.

"Welcome, everyone, to Morning Star Games' annual banquet. As many of you already know, sixteen new colleagues have joined our company. First of all, let's give them a warm round of applause."

At Chen Xu's words, everyone turned toward Yamagami Eiji and the others and applauded enthusiastically.

Although they still couldn't understand Chinese, they could feel the warmth and sincerity.

Deeply touched, they applauded in return.

"Next, I'll just say three simple things."

After the applause died down, Chen Xu continued.

"First, let's thank the six colleagues who couldn't attend this year's banquet because of work responsibilities."

As soon as he finished speaking, the projector screen behind him displayed a live video call with the six employees who were away on business.

Everyone gave them a warm round of applause.

"Second, the annual banquet benefit you've all been waiting for. We won't be handing out random New Year's gift packages. Instead, everyone will receive a 1,500-yuan RT-Mart shopping card. Buy whatever holiday goods you want yourselves."

The moment Chen Xu said that, the entire hall erupted into excited applause.

It wasn't cash, but it might as well have been.

Compared to random gift packages, a shopping card for a large supermarket chain was far more practical.

Besides, many employees had assumed there wouldn't be any year-end benefits at all.

After all, the company had only been acquired in October, and a huge amount of money had already been invested into developing a new game that hadn't even launched yet.

A 1,500-yuan shopping card for every employee was already better than what many companies offered.

"Lastly, eat well and enjoy yourselves."

With that, Chen Xu put down the microphone and returned to his seat.

"Brother Xu, when you said three sentences, you really meant just three sentences!" Xiu Fu leaned over.

"Annual banquets are for eating and having fun. Nobody comes here to listen to me talk. As long as the benefits are announced, that's enough."

Chen Xu shrugged.

Back when he was just an employee, the thing he hated most was the boss's long speech.

Now that he had become a boss himself—especially one backed by the system—he had no interest in all that nonsense.

"Brother Xu, you're awesome!"

Xiao Dao raised his cola and gave him a thumbs-up.

Chen Xu smiled and raised his own cola in response.

As one exquisite dish after another was served, the hall filled with laughter and cheerful conversation.

At the same time, through the ongoing video call, the two Morning Star Games employees assigned to supervise the business trip looked at the lively banquet scene and the laughing, smiling colleagues.

Then they looked down at the employees still busy testing bugs.

They couldn't help but sigh emotionally.

This was probably what people meant by the difference between heaven and hell.

"There's no way this isn't a stat bug! I refuse to believe it! I refuse!"

Sitting at his workstation, Li Xiang shook his head and muttered incoherently.

His screen was black and white.

His expression was one of complete confusion.

The hands gripping his controller tightened unconsciously.

The veins on the backs of his hands bulged.

Once again, he submitted feedback to the Morning Star Games team, insisting multiple times that there had to be a bug in the game's balancing.

There was simply no other explanation.

And yet every time, he received the same answer:

"These are not bugs."

Now, subtle changes were beginning to appear in his emotional state.

He revived at the Sculptor's Idol and headed toward the boss once again.

His body unconsciously leaned toward the screen.

At this moment, he wasn't just playing the game anymore.

He was Sekiro.

What he held in his hands wasn't a controller, but Kusabimaru.

A few minutes later, Li Xiang's face turned ashen, and the arm gripping the controller suddenly stiffened.

The two Morning Star Games employees secretly observing from a corner both shuddered at the sight.

Then they immediately covered their mouths.

They had been personally assigned by President Chen—they were professionals!

Suppressing their emotions, they looked on with sympathy, pity, reluctance, and just a tiny bit of amusement.

Even though their expressions were already quite colorful, they were still nothing compared to Li Xiang's current performance.

If the Beijing Film Academy or the Central Academy of Drama were ever looking for a textbook example of changing facial expressions, Li Xiang's performance right now would surely qualify.

His face shifted from pale green to rage-red.

Then it transformed into the despair of someone falling into an endless abyss.

The despair became confusion.

The confusion became numbness.

At this moment, he taught everyone an important lesson:

A person's facial expressions could, in fact, become this rich and varied within such a short period of time.

Leaning back in his chair, Li Xiang stared blankly at the testing manual in front of him.

According to the manual, this game, Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice, had four different endings.

Based on the provided route guide and the size of the map, he had initially estimated that completing a full playthrough would take only three or four hours.

After all, judging from the map guide, the game didn't seem particularly large.

But reality?

Up until now, he hadn't even tested one-tenth of the game's content.

In Ashina, there were Samurai Generals, the Chained Ogre, the Headless, Gyoubu Oniwa, and the Blazing Bull.

In the Hirata Estate flashback, there were Shinobi Hunters, Purple-Robed Ninjas, and Juzou the Drunkard.

On average, every boss and elite enemy had taken him nearly ten attempts to defeat.

Not because he was repeatedly killing them to search for bugs.

But because, without cheat codes, it simply took him that many tries to win.

He had to admit, the game he was testing was absolutely top-tier.

The graphics were excellent.

The character models were beautiful.

The voice acting was solid.

The animations were smooth.

The feeling of swords clashing against each other was incredibly satisfying.

And the deathblow animations were unbelievably cool.

But!

But what the hell was this difficulty!?

Bosses being hard was one thing, but the regular enemies during exploration were just as brutal.

No—

In some cases, they were even worse.

You think you're facing a single enemy?

Turns out he can call for reinforcements!

You're busy fighting foot soldiers?

A rifleman on a rooftop snipes you from afar.

An artilleryman on the wall starts bombarding you.

Sometimes when fighting a boss, you also have to deal with shield soldiers and giant axe-wielding grunts.

Sure, the game provided various Shinobi Prosthetic tools designed to counter different enemy types.

But difficult was still difficult.

Was this really a game meant for players?

Just how dark-hearted were the people who made this game!?

Countless times, he wanted to open the developer console.

He wanted to enter cheat codes.

He felt that even the repetitive, mechanical work of traditional testing would be better than having his mentality shattered by endless in-game deaths.

But in the end, his professional ethics—and a tiny bit of pride—stopped him.

Taking a deep breath, he forced himself to calm down.

He reminded himself:

Work should be done with a smile.

Face it in the best possible state of mind.

After steadying his emotions, Li Xiang revived once more at the Sculptor's Idol.

Once again, he picked up the controller.

Once again, he marched toward that familiar yet somehow unfamiliar boss.

And once again, he began his game-testing duties.

But five minutes later—

The same chair.

The same black-and-white death screen.

Looking at the Blazing Bull, which had only a sliver of health remaining and was still bellowing loudly—Li Xiang now resembled a broken doll whose spirit had been completely crushed.

In a tiny voice, he muttered:

"I was wrong. I was really wrong."

"From the very beginning, I never should have become a game tester."

"If I hadn't become a game tester, I wouldn't have encountered a game like this."

"If I hadn't encountered a game like this, my mentality wouldn't have completely collapsed."

"..."

"..."

"..."

And so, accompanied by the Blazing Bull's triumphant mooing, another game tester's soul quietly drifted toward destruction.