

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

Chapter 45: Destiny Is on My Side!

April 4

Four days had passed.

Although Chen Xu had announced a three-day Tomb-Sweeping Day holiday on the second day after launch, he himself stayed holed up in his rented apartment, closely monitoring the performance of Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice.

Even though the game had opened on Steam with a "Mixed" rating, Chen Xu knew this was only a small victory on the road ahead.

There was still a long way to go before he could claim ultimate success.

After all, in his previous life, Elden Ring had also launched with a Mixed rating.

Yet it eventually became a tremendous success and turned its reviews into "Very Positive."

Chen Xu had complete confidence in Sekiro's quality.

Even if players in this parallel world had a much lower tolerance for difficult games, he believed that, given enough time, Sekiro would eventually shine with its own brilliance.

The only thing Chen Xu was worried about was that he hoped that brilliance would appear a little later.

"For now... I just hope things can stay like this a bit longer."

Chen Xu clenched his fist.

The game's official social media pages and forums were still flooded with sarcastic and mocking comments from players.

At the same time, the game experienced a wave of refunds during its first and second days after release.

According to the backend statistics, around 40% of players had requested refunds.

That was an incredibly high refund rate.

Meanwhile, sales had also begun slowing down by the third day.

Only a little over 3,000 copies were sold that day.

However, judging from the player reviews posted in the store on the third day, Sekiro's positive reviews had actually begun to outnumber the negative ones.

That made perfect sense.

After three days, most players who had been paying attention already knew exactly what kind of game this was.

Those who were still willing to buy it were, for the most part, people who already had the right expectations.

Once they entered the game, they discovered that although it was brutally difficult, the graphics, optimization, and combat feel were all outstanding.

Naturally, they tended to leave favorable reviews.

It was a perfectly normal development.

Unfortunately, it was also a very bad sign.

As for media reviews, none had been published yet.

The main reason was simple—the game was just too difficult.

Game reviewers weren't necessarily skilled players.

In fact, even the reporters from the famous gaming outlet NGI were widely regarded by players as the worst gamers in all of game journalism.

Whenever players watched gameplay footage recorded by NGI reporters for news articles, many couldn't help but feel they could do a better job themselves.

As players often joked:

"It's hard to believe there's actually a human being controlling the character in NGI's gameplay footage."

At this point, all Chen Xu could do was hope the reviews would take a little longer to come out.

Players might be furious, but professional game media depended on their credibility.

While they might occasionally give inflated scores after accepting sponsorships, they still had to justify their ratings.

Aside from its difficulty, Sekiro excelled in virtually every other aspect.

Moreover, media reviews wouldn't focus solely on difficulty like ordinary players.

Instead, they would evaluate the game as a whole—graphics, optimization, storytelling, gameplay systems, and so on.

So in Chen Xu's opinion, Sekiro's review scores were bound to be high.

He also kept an eye on streaming platforms and video-sharing websites.

Quite a few Sekiro videos had already appeared online.

There weren't any complete walkthroughs or detailed guides yet.

Some players had uploaded footage of themselves fighting enemies and bosses.

Most of those videos, however, were little more than people treating the platform like their personal social media feed.

They attracted very little attention.

Ironically, the videos getting the most views were those jumping on the current bandwagon—people mocking the game, sometimes without even finishing it.

Watching this unfold left Chen Xu feeling somewhat annoyed.

After all, even if he was merely the one "transporting" the game from another world, he had still put considerable effort into adapting and polishing it.

More importantly, it was a game he genuinely loved.

Seeing something he cared about being mindlessly trashed naturally irritated him.

But then he remembered the brand-new car he'd seen at the dealership two days earlier.

Compared to that, he decided it was better to simply ignore the negativity.

The situation on livestreaming platforms was much quieter.

After all, Chen Xu hadn't spent a single cent promoting the game there.

Combined with Sekiro's poor reputation, most streamers weren't interested.

A few had tried playing it.

But before long, they were driven away by the game's brutal difficulty.

Save the Divine Heir?

Most of them couldn't even get past the Chained Ogre, who promptly smashed them into human pancakes.

Besides, this parallel world had never seen a game that was so deliberately and unapologetically punishing.

So when it came to streaming entertainment, the now-familiar spectacle of streamers having emotional breakdowns and descending into utter confusion for the audience's amusement hadn't become a thing yet.

Naturally, most streamers had no idea whether Sekiro had good streaming potential.

After getting beaten up for a while, they simply quit the game.

If this parallel world's streamers had already been through a few games like Getting Over It with Bennett Foddy, however, the outcome might have been very different.

"I was too shortsighted back then. I only considered the players, but I never thought about the broader gaming ecosystem."

Realizing this, Chen Xu pulled out his notebook again and wrote down another keyword.

It might have been a stroke of sheer luck.

But right now, destiny is on his side!

Meanwhile...

At Chenmei Studio, Liu Yishou leaned back in his chair and slowly closed his eyes.

Regret.

Pain.

Disbelief.

Every one of those emotions was written across his face.

When he had learned that Sekiro would be launching around the same time as his own studio's new game, Liu Yishou had relied on his years of industry experience and cautious personality to make the decision to back off.

Judging from Sekiro's production quality, he had been quite pleased with that decision.

Whether it was the visuals, optimization, or combat feel, Sekiro might not have been the absolute best in the industry, but it was undeniably top-tier.

At least within China, very few games could match it.

In terms of overall quality, Tribulation of God and Demon was clearly inferior.

But what Liu Yishou had never expected was just how unbelievably stubborn Morning Star Games would be.

The moment Sekiro launched, he had immediately bought a copy.

His reasoning was simple:

*"Know your enemy, and you need not fear a hundred battles."*

Then he spent an entire afternoon...

...still dancing around with the Chained Ogre.

The game's difficulty was so outrageous that he could hardly believe it.

But what shocked him even more was the official announcement Morning Star Games released afterward.

In his opinion, that announcement deserved to be included in every future textbook as the ultimate example of what *not* to do in game marketing.

He had no idea which genius inside Morning Star Games had made that decision.

But if he ever found out, he would make sure to remember that person's name.

Then he'd pull every connection he had to see if he could get that person hired by their competitor, Leihuojian Studio.

If Tribulation of God and Demon had launched right after Sekiro, they could have ridden that wave of controversy alone to make a fortune.

Looking at the flood of negative reviews online, Liu Yishou felt as though he had just missed out on earning a hundred million yuan.

"Boss... should we move our release date forward after all?"

One of his trusted employees cautiously asked after seeing his miserable expression.

Liu Yishou immediately shot him a glare.

First, they had thought Morning Star Games was too formidable and had voluntarily stepped aside.

Now, after realizing they might not be so unbeatable after all, they wanted to move their release forward and kick them while they were down.

Liu Yishou might not care much about saving face, but that didn't mean he had no shame at all.

"It's easy to delay a game, but much harder to move a release date forward. We simply don't have the extra resources for that. Besides, we're a studio under Vencent."

Liu Yishou sighed.

"We could come up with an excuse for delaying the game before. But if we suddenly move the release date forward now, it'd look far too opportunistic. It would damage the Vencent brand and give my rivals inside the company something to use against me."

Leaning back in his chair for a moment, he thought things over before issuing another order.

"In that case, hire some online influencers and paid commenters."

"Have them subtly steer public opinion. See if they can keep this controversy alive."

"And remember, don't mention the name of our game."

"If players realize we're trying to capitalize on this, it'll only backfire."

"As for the gaming media, do whatever you can to persuade them to delay publishing their reviews."

Liu Yishou understood the situation perfectly.

Players were currently flooding Sekiro with negative reviews.

But that wasn't because the game's quality was poor.

It was because they were furious about Morning Star Games' announcement and the game's brutal difficulty.

Professional reviewers were different.

When game journalists scored a title, they evaluated it comprehensively.

Given Sekiro's overall quality, it was almost guaranteed to receive excellent review scores.

The reason Liu Yishou had deliberately moved Tribulation of God and Demon away from Sekiro's release window was because he had expected Sekiro to explode in popularity from day one.

What he had never anticipated was Morning Star Games pulling such an outrageous stunt.

As a result, Sekiro's launch sales now had a real chance of underperforming.

After all, public opinion among players appeared to have collapsed.

But as time passed, if the gaming media stepped in and awarded it high scores, then based on Liu Yishou's many years in the industry, Sekiro's sales would almost certainly surge later.

Because the players' anger wasn't directed at the game's quality.

It was directed at Morning Star Games' attitude and what they perceived as unreasonable difficulty.

If players' hidden masochistic tendencies eventually kicked in and they gradually adapted to the difficulty, then what had once seemed "unreasonable" would simply become "fair."

Likewise, Morning Star Games' seemingly arrogant attitude would no longer be seen as arrogance.

Instead, players would praise the studio for staying true to its vision.

If there were no business interests involved, Liu Yishou would happily sit back with some popcorn and watch the drama unfold.

But there were business interests.

He had deliberately backed down once already.

If events unfolded exactly as he feared, wouldn't he end up looking like the clown?

That was why he had to take action now.

He needed to keep the wave of negative publicity alive for as long as possible—ideally until Tribulation of God and Demon launched.

That way, his game might still benefit from the situation.

As for retreating yet again?

He was cautious.

He wasn't an actual turtle.

Backing off once wasn't a big deal.

There had been a perfectly reasonable excuse.

Backing off twice would affect more than just his own reputation—it would damage Vencent's image as well.

If he retreated a second time, he'd almost rather accept a disastrous launch.

Given his experience and seniority, even a commercial failure would still leave him another chance in the future.

But if he backed down again, and then his game's sales still failed to explode afterward, he would lose both his career prospects and his dignity.

As for whether their new game was capable of becoming a blockbuster?

What a joke.

If he had truly believed it could become a smash hit, would he have hidden in his shell in the first place?