

## Losing Money to Become a Tycoon: Starting with Games

### Chapter 496: Your True Skill Level Is Impossible for Me to Figure Out

April 22nd, Friday

In a café near Handong University, Pei Qian sat sipping coffee while staring at his phone screen, silently memorizing the information displayed on it.

Yesterday, He An from Mengguo Games had agreed to come to Jingzhou, but whether he would actually agree to teach depended on the results of a test.

As for why they had chosen to meet in this café instead of a Moyu Internet Café, the answer was obvious.

Pei Qian visited Moyu Internet Café far too often. Every employee there knew him.

If he didn't give them advance instructions, someone would almost certainly let something slip. But if he did tell them to help cover for him, then too many people would know about the matter, greatly increasing the chance that word would get out.

Moreover, Halo Studio was right across the street from the internet café, and Ruan Guangjian stopped by regularly to buy coffee. If they happened to run into each other and Ruan Guangjian casually called out, "President Pei," things would become very awkward very quickly.

Taking everything into account, Pei Qian decided that future meetings should avoid Tengda-owned businesses whenever possible. The fewer

people who knew about his private tutoring arrangement with He An, the better.

After all, the goal was simply to spend money and learn something. There was no need to get hung up on minor details.

At present, only Assistant Xin and the driver Xiao Sun knew about the plan, and both were doing their best to help him maintain the disguise.

It was now 2:00 PM.

According to Xiao Sun's report, President He had already landed and would probably arrive in a little over forty minutes.

Meanwhile, from last night until now—apart from sleeping—Pei Qian had spent every spare moment cramming.

The question was:

Without a textbook, what exactly was he studying?

After a great deal of thought, Pei Qian could only try to predict what might be on the test.

Yesterday he had spent considerable time researching every game He An had ever made.

Actually playing all of them was out of the question, so he settled for watching gameplay videos, reading reviews and commentaries, and absorbing as much basic information as possible.

As long as he didn't perform too terribly during the interview, and as long as he demonstrated enough sincerity through the tuition payment, everything should work out.

After looking into He An's portfolio, Pei Qian realized that the man truly was one of the elder giants of China's gaming industry.

Born in 1969 and now forty-two years old, He An had created his first casual game at the age of twenty.

Afterward, he developed a highly acclaimed single-player RPG that achieved tremendous success, eventually founding his own company—Mengguo Games.

His most recent title had been a large-scale multiplayer nation-war RPG for PC. Although it had been developed three years earlier, it was still operating successfully today. Following that achievement, however, He An had essentially reached the pinnacle of success and entered a semi-retired lifestyle.

A veteran like this could be said to have witnessed the entire development of China's gaming industry firsthand. He had succeeded across multiple genres and was unquestionably qualified to teach the vast majority of game designers in the country.

Ordinary people probably couldn't have hired him even if they tried.

But that also created a problem.

There was simply too much material for Pei Qian to cram.

With so many games in He An's career, Pei Qian could only skim through them superficially. If He An asked anything beyond the basics, there was a high probability he wouldn't be able to answer.

Pei Qian felt helpless.

There was only so much time available, and he certainly wasn't a photographic-memory genius.

Many of these games were extremely old. While they had been famous in their day, Pei Qian had never even heard of them before. Trying to memorize facts by brute force produced predictably poor results.

There was no helping it.

All he could do was place his hopes in his seemingly blessed luck and the power of money.

Before he knew it, forty minutes had passed while he was memorizing notes.

"President He, over here."

Xiao Sun pushed open the café door and led a middle-aged man in his forties inside.

Pei Qian immediately recognized He An.

Compared to the photos, he looked somewhat younger in person. Although he appeared slightly unkempt, the confidence of a successful middle-aged man naturally radiated from his every gesture.

Pei Qian stood up to greet him and offered a handshake.

"President He, nice to meet you!"

He An smiled warmly.

"You must be Mr. Ma. A pleasure."

Pei Qian nodded with an equally friendly smile.

"That's right. I'm Ma Yang. Please, have a seat."

The two sat down.

After confirming their coffee orders, Xiao Sun quickly arranged for the drinks and then returned to wait in the car outside.

Pei Qian had already instructed him that, for the duration of He An's stay, Xiao Sun would be responsible for handling all of his transportation and scheduling.

Partly it was a matter of proper hospitality.

And partly it was to prevent the disguise from falling apart.

Pei Qian now had only one goal: spend the 1.6 million yuan as smoothly as possible and avoid creating any strange rumors along the way.

The two of them chatted casually over coffee.

He An appeared relaxed and composed.

"I truly didn't expect Mr. Ma to achieve such success in the investment industry at such a young age. A remarkable talent indeed."

Pei Qian smiled slightly.

"Didn't President He create his first game and become famous across the country when he was only twenty?"

The smile on He An's face grew even brighter. Clearly, no one disliked a little mutual flattery.

"Mr. Ma may be exceptionally gifted in investment, but game design is an entirely different matter. I already mentioned before coming that I'd like to conduct a simple test. I hope you don't mind."

Pei Qian nodded.

"Of course."

He An took a folded document from his bag—about three or four pages long—and handed it over.

"Just answer according to your own thoughts. No need to be nervous. These should be fairly simple questions."

Hearing the words "*fairly simple*," Pei Qian relaxed a little. If the test covered basic knowledge, then the material he had crammed over the past day should at least be enough for a passing grade.

Of course, he couldn't let his guard down.

Taking the exam paper, he uncapped the expensive fountain pen he had bought specifically for this crash-preparation effort—a pen that had only seen use a handful of times—and prepared to begin.

Then he looked at the questions and froze.

He skimmed a few at random.

"What aspects of player psychology contributed to the success of Lonely Desert Road? What was the designer's objective?"

"Why was the art style of Ghost General able to stand out among numerous card games? How should a designer balance personal requirements with the creative inspiration of the concept artists?"

"What was the original intention behind pricing the Fire Qilin in Ocean Fortress at 888 yuan? What effects did it objectively achieve?"

"What made the marketing strategy of Game Producer exceptional? What is the game's central theme?"

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"What ideas are reflected by the epitaph in Turn Back Before It's Too Late? What objective effects did it achieve?"

The exam consisted of three full pages.

Every question was a short-answer question, and generous blank spaces had even been provided for responses.

Pei Qian looked up at He An, his expression complicated.

*This is what you're testing me on???*

*I spent all that time desperately memorizing game-design basics and studying YOUR games!*

*And now you're using MY games as the exam questions? What kind of nonsense is this?*

*If I'd known, I wouldn't have bothered researching your portfolio. I could've just rewatched all of Qiao Liang analysis videos and called it a day!*

Seeing the mixture of confusion and bewilderment on "Ma Yang's" face, He An smiled.

"Heh. Mr. Ma, did you think I'd test you on basic theory, or perhaps ask questions about games I've made?"

"Those fundamentals are all over the internet. Anyone can memorize them. There's not much point."

"As for my games..." He shook his head. "Much as I hate to admit it, they're already outdated."

"If you're going to study game design today, you should study the most innovative games available."

"Fortunately, you're interested in games, and you happen to work at an investment company under Tengda Group. Presumably you have some understanding of Tengda's games."

"Learning more about Tengda Group's design philosophy will benefit you the most."

"Well? I told you the test wasn't difficult, didn't I?"

Pei Qian: "..."



He looked at He An.

Then at the exam paper.

His emotions were impossible to describe.

*Well... what else can I do?*

*Just answer it.*

Pei Qian's pen flew across the page as he rapidly filled in his responses.

Meanwhile, He An leisurely sipped his coffee and waited patiently.

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Half an hour later, Pei Qian was finished.

Although he hadn't completely filled all three pages, he had ensured that every question contained at least three to five lines of text, making the answers look reasonably convincing.

As far as short-answer questions were concerned, even if he was making things up, it was important to fill most of the blank space.

That was a good habit he had developed back in high school.

Still smiling, He An accepted the test paper and began reading.

Very quickly, his expression became increasingly unpredictable.

The first answer read:

"The success of Lonely Desert Road stemmed from players' masochistic tendencies and argumentative psychology. The designer's objective was to make players feel bored during gameplay and eventually abandon the game."

"The epic ink-and-oil painting style of Ghost General stood out among the many chibi-style games on the market. Its imaginative character designs were also a major strength. Designers should completely abandon their own preferences and allow the concept artists full creative freedom."

"The original intention behind pricing the Fire Qilin in Ocean Fortress at 888 yuan was to discourage players from buying it. Objectively speaking, however, it seems to have encouraged spending among wealthy players."

"The brilliance of Game Producer's marketing lay in the fact that its awkward promotional materials accidentally inspired content creators to market the game voluntarily. The game's central theme is: 'To be misunderstood is the fate of all who express themselves.'"

...

"The epitaph in Turn Back Before It's Too Late reflects the designer's determination to discourage players by every possible means. Objectively, however, it produced the opposite effect, stimulating players' rebellious instincts."

As He An read through the answers, his brows alternately furrowed and relaxed.

Pei Qian quietly sipped his coffee, his feelings extremely complicated.

He had agonized over one question for a long time:

Should he answer according to his actual thoughts, or should he use the overanalyzed interpretations proposed by Qiao Liang and others?

By all rights, honesty dictated that he should write down what he really thought.

But if he did that, President He would probably book a return flight on the spot and leave immediately.

So, with no other choice, Pei Qian had shamefully relied on the "standard answers" derived from Qiao Liang's overanalysis and the various lessons about game success that his own designers had summarized over the years.

The problem was that Qiao Liang hadn't made videos about every single game President Pei had produced.

Some of the questions covered games he had never analyzed, and others asked directly about the designer's intentions. For those, Pei Qian genuinely had no idea how he was supposed to answer.

So he simply let his imagination run wild.

The resulting answers looked rather absurd, but there was nothing else he could do.

*Hopefully it'll be enough to pass.*

After reading all three pages, He An looked up, confusion visible in his eyes.

"Some of these answers are excellent."

"Some express the right ideas, although in a rather blunt way."

"And then there are others..."

He paused.

"...that are completely outrageous."

"To be honest, I can't quite figure out your actual level of skill."

Pei Qian responded with a polite smile.

*Can't figure out my actual level?*

*Good.*

*Because I can't figure it out either...*