

Game Development: Starting by Healing the Players

Chapter 3: Scam

Sitting in front of his computer, Chen Xu had finally gained a fairly complete understanding of his current situation.

The gaming industry would be his path forward.

But deciding to make games and actually making them were two very different things.

Although this world's advanced technology eliminated the need to write low-level engine code, there were still many aspects of game development that couldn't be skipped—art, music, 3D modeling, and more.

Chen Xu's own circumstances were also rather awkward.

First of all, he wasn't yet a certified game designer, meaning the amount of computing resources he could access was very limited.

Still, after doing some calculations, he estimated that the resources would be sufficient for recreating some of the classic indie games from his previous life.

The bigger problem was money.

He had only graduated a few months ago, and although he lived on the outskirts of Shanghai rather than in the city center, the cost of living was still high.

After all this time, he had managed to save only a little over 10,000 yuan.

As for the system...

He could ignore it for now.

After all, it only generated points from games that he himself produced.

On top of that, it didn't even have a feature that converted points into cash.

"I need to figure out a way to make some money."

Rubbing his chin, Chen Xu continued searching the internet for information about every aspect of this world's gaming industry while simultaneously brainstorming ideas.

Then, as he closed his browser, a folder on his desktop caught his attention.

His eyes lit up.

Inside were more than a dozen fully colored vertical comic pages.

The story featured several lightly dressed young women playing beach volleyball.

The narrative was wholesome and uplifting, vividly showcasing the youthful energy and determination of these spirited girls.

According to the memories he had inherited, he hadn't drawn these comics himself.

A senior from the same art academy had asked him to color them.

Looking at the motivational artwork before him, Chen Xu suddenly made up his mind.

He knew exactly what his first money-making project would be.

One of the most beloved Chinese indie games from his previous life:

Mirror.

It had been ranked the second highest-rated game of 2018, reached the top of Steam's global daily bestseller chart, and accumulated over 71,000 reviews.

Nearly 69,000 of those were positive.

As for the remaining two thousand?

Most of those negative reviews had simply been posted as jokes and memes.

The reason Chen Xu chose this game was simple.

First, it required very little in the way of 3D modeling.

Second, the majority of its content was well within his own artistic abilities to produce.

Most importantly, given his complete lack of marketing funds, Mirror possessed a unique advantage over almost every other indie title.

It practically sold itself.

If his goal was to accumulate startup capital as quickly as possible, Mirror was arguably the best choice available.

Of course, some of its more explicit content would need to be toned down to fit this world's standards.

"Still, doing everything alone would take too long. I'll need someone to help me."

Having made his decision, Chen Xu already knew who he wanted to recruit.

But before any of that...

He needed to deal with a more immediate problem.

He was starving.

Feeling his stomach growl, Chen Xu grabbed his keys and phone from the desk and headed downstairs to find a nearby restaurant.

. . .

'Never underestimate the meat slicer at a Lanzhou Beef Noodle shop.'

Lifting a slice of beef with his chopsticks, Chen Xu couldn't help sighing in admiration.

'This knife work is truly extraordinary.'

The slice was so thin it was almost translucent.

After dipping it into the broth, it seemed to glisten like crystal.

Six paper-thin slices of beef rested atop the noodles, accompanied by chopped scallions and cilantro.

Whether in his previous life or this parallel world, one thing remained the same:

The beef could always be described with a single word.

Thin.

Although there wasn't nearly enough meat to satisfy anyone, the noodles themselves were excellent.

They were wonderfully chewy, while the broth—slowly simmered from beef bones—was rich and deeply flavorful.

After finishing his meal, Chen Xu paid the bill and left the restaurant.

As he walked home, he dialed a phone number.

The phone rang three times before someone answered.

"Senior," he said, "I've finished coloring the artwork you gave me. I'll send the files over for you to take a look."

"Also... are you free tomorrow, Senior? There's something I'd like to discuss with you."

"No problem. Tomorrow at one in the afternoon. Let's meet at Island Café by the Garden Community intersection."

After hanging up, Chen Xu stretched lazily.

He had already made up his mind.

His first pot of gold would come from Mirror.

But if he had to do everything himself...

After estimating the workload, Chen Xu figured it would take him about two months to finish the game.

And that was assuming he worked himself to exhaustion every day.

So, if possible, finding someone to help would be the ideal solution.

Whether they would agree, however, was another matter entirely.

At one o'clock the following afternoon, Chen Xu arrived at Island Café as scheduled.

Near the window on the first floor sat a young woman, about twenty-four years old, wearing glasses.

Dressed in a white casual outfit, she was quietly listening to music through a pair of headphones.

"Senior Ruan, thanks for making the trip."

Chen Xu walked over and greeted her.

"It's no trouble. I actually live nearby."

Removing her headphones, Ruan Ningxue smiled gently and shook her head.

Before Chen Xu could continue, she looked at him excitedly.

"So, Chen Xu, what did you want to talk about? Have you finally come to your senses and decided to join my studio?"

"Honestly, I keep telling you that stubbornly chasing manga publication isn't the smartest approach."

"You could start by drawing doujinshi to sharpen your skills, then transition into original manga later. Plenty of famous professionals in the industry used to publish under pen names drawing doujin works!"

"Besides, I saw the illustrations you colored. You're really talented!"

She spoke with complete sincerity.

Chen Xu coughed awkwardly.

"Ahem... I appreciate the offer, Senior, but that's not actually why I asked to meet today."

Ruan Ningxue had been a year ahead of him at the academy.

Like the original Chen Xu, she had dreamed of becoming a manga artist.

The difference was the path she had chosen.

While Chen Xu repeatedly submitted original works to publishers only to face rejection after rejection, Ruan Ningxue had built a career creating doujinshi.

The income was stable, and as she often put it:

"Become a bestselling doujin artist first, build your reputation, then transition into a professional manga artist. That's a perfectly valid path to success!"

As for the doujinshi she produced...

They naturally centered around beautiful love stories.

Although, occasionally, "Beautiful" was perhaps a generous description.

Because she genuinely believed Chen Xu had talent, Ruan Ningxue had been trying to recruit him into her studio for quite some time.

Realizing the conversation was already drifting toward that familiar topic, Chen Xu quickly explained the real reason he had invited her out.

"Huh...? You're switching to game development?"

Ruan Ningxue's eyes widened in disbelief, as though she had just heard something completely outrageous.

"Originally, all I wanted was to tell stories for other people to experience. Whether that's through manga or games... they're just different mediums."

Chen Xu calmly gave the explanation he had prepared in advance.

"Besides, there are already plenty of examples in the industry of manga artists and novelists becoming film directors or game designers, aren't there?" he added with a smile.

Unlike his previous world, technological advances here had significantly lowered the entry barriers across the entertainment industry.

As a result, cross-disciplinary careers were actually quite common.

Of course, successfully changing industries was an entirely different matter.

"That's not the point!"

Ruan Ningxue rolled her eyes.

"No meals provided. No accommodation provided. And you're even planning to delay payment for the artwork?"

She stared at him.

"Chen Xu... are you seriously trying to get me to work for free?"

If the person sitting across from her hadn't been her junior—and someone she genuinely wanted to recruit into her studio—she would have stood up and left immediately.

The whole proposal sounded exactly like a scam.