

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

Chapter 42: Am I Really That Bad?

On April 1st, Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice officially launched on Steam.

Looking at the date, Chen Xu was very satisfied.

April Fool's Day.

That meant the game's launch sales might very well become a complete joke.

And just a few days later came the Tomb-Sweeping Day.

The symbolism couldn't have been better.

The game was priced at 268 RMB in China, \$59.99 USD overseas, and 8,660 yen in Japan.

There were no cheap regional prices for places like Turkey or Argentina.

China had the lowest price.

After all, if those low-price regions existed, players could take advantage of Steam's regional pricing and key trading, effectively getting the game at another 20% discount or more.

If the price became too low, it might unexpectedly increase sales and ruin his plan.

How could he allow that?

So Chen Xu simply raised the prices in all of those traditionally low-priced regions.

Considering Vencent Games' sudden withdrawal had unexpectedly boosted Sekiro's popularity, Chen Xu could only hope that the game's initial reviews would discourage players from buying it.

Leaning back in his chair, he opened the system panel.

【Loss Conversion System】

【System Funds: 211,000 yuan】

【Project Revenue: 0 yuan】

【Settlement Period: April 1 – May 5】

【Current Profit/Loss: –99.879 million yuan】

【Personal Funds: ¥29.50 yuan】

Compared to before, there were a few changes.

The settlement period was now displayed—a total of 35 days.

Not particularly long, but not short either.

Chen Xu calculated it in his head.

After deducting Steam's commission, Unreal Engine's royalty, and taxes...

Sekiro would need to sell at least 800,000 copies just to break even.

That wasn't an impossibly high number, but it certainly wasn't low either.

As for whether the game would fail to reach 800,000 copies, Chen Xu felt there shouldn't be much of a problem.

Although there had been a few unexpected developments, overall the situation was still under his control.

Another addition to the panel was Project Revenue, along with a real-time profit display.

"But why is the project revenue still zero?"

"It can't be that not a single copy has been sold after launch, right?"

As Steam unlocked the game for purchase, Sekiro officially became available.

Chen Xu kept staring at the profit counter on the system panel, puzzled.

He realized that the profit figure didn't seem to update in real time.

After all, it was impossible that not a single copy had sold.

Before this, Vencent's unexpected withdrawal had generated a huge wave of publicity for Sekiro.

And even in the absolute worst case...

Chen Xu trusted his own employees.

Privately, every one of them had probably bought a copy.

So why hadn't the number changed at all?

Chen Xu frowned in confusion.

Sitting in his chair, he stared at Sekiro's Steam store page, temporarily putting aside his worries about whether he could remain in the red by the end of the settlement period.

"Maybe these sales don't count as revenue yet?"

After thinking for quite a while, he came up with a guess.

On Steam, players can request an unconditional refund within two hours of playtime.

That meant the money technically didn't belong to Morning Star Games yet.

But once those two hours passed, even if Steam hadn't transferred the money to them yet, it was effectively guaranteed to be theirs.

Forget it.

No point thinking about it.

I'll just call it a day and head home.

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Steel City

In the office of his factory, Yang Chen had just signed another contract and finally breathed a sigh of relief.

Things still hadn't completely recovered, but thanks to Morning Star Games' massive 10 million yuan order from before, he'd finally managed to stay afloat.

It wasn't because that order had generated a huge profit.

More importantly, it had proven to outsiders that his factory still had strong capabilities.

The bank stopped pressing him over his loans.

Material suppliers, seeing such a large order, also became willing to extend payment deadlines.

Those were the two biggest threats to his business.

Now that both had eased up, he finally had room to pursue new clients.

Calling Morning Star Games his savior wouldn't be an exaggeration.

Thinking about it, Yang Chen felt nothing but gratitude.

"Oh, right."

"President Chen's company is releasing their game today, isn't it?"

"Maybe I should give it a try."

The thought suddenly occurred to him.

The factory didn't require much of his attention for the moment.

Besides, after traveling all over the country chasing business these past few months, he was exhausted.

Relaxing with a game sounded like a pretty good idea.

As the company that had saved his factory from disaster, Morning Star Games naturally had his attention.

He had followed them from time to time recently.

Their game seemed to be generating quite a bit of buzz.

With that in mind, he decided to download it and see what it was like.

"Twenty-five gigabytes?"

"That's not bad, it's not too large."

Compared to the original Sekiro: Shadows Die Twice, this version featured significantly higher-quality art assets, along with improved lighting and visual effects.

Although compression technology in this parallel world was more advanced, the installation package was still around 25 GB, expanding to nearly 40 GB after installation.

Fortunately, the factory's internet connection was fairly fast.

In less than half an hour, the game had finished downloading and installing automatically through Steam.

"I wonder if the computers at the factory can even run this," Yang Chen muttered as he double-clicked the game's icon.

Even though he hadn't checked the recommended system requirements, he was fairly confident in the factory's PCs.

Since they had to handle various professional design software, their CPUs and graphics cards were quite capable.

At least, as far as he could remember, only a handful of games had ever failed to run on them.

Besides, his monitor was only 1080p at 60 Hz, so it wasn't particularly demanding.

Unlike most players, he didn't go into the graphics settings first to tweak the visuals or see what quality presets were available.

The very first thing Yang Chen looked for was the difficulty setting.

But after clicking New Game, the game immediately began.

There was no opportunity to choose a difficulty at all.

"Huh? There's no difficulty option?"

"So the first playthrough defaults to the easiest difficulty?"

Yang Chen wondered to himself.

Some games indeed lock higher difficulties during the first playthrough, only unlocking them after players complete the game once.

He figured Sekiro was probably designed the same way.

"Then the first run should be pretty easy."

"I'm in for a relaxing time!"

Thinking that, Yang Chen smiled happily as he enjoyed the opening cinematic.

"This cutscene has so much style... and the fight choreography is awesome."

Watching Isshin Ashina slay General Tamura during the rebellion, and seeing Owl adopt the orphan on the battlefield, naming him the Hungry Wolf and raising him as a shinobi, Yang Chen couldn't help but watch with fascination.

Whenever he played games—especially action games—his favorite part had always been the cinematic cutscenes.

After the cinematic ended...

The screen faded to black.

Then the game began.

Emma dropped a letter into the abandoned well, and Wolf's journey to rescue his young master officially started.

Using the mouse to control the camera, Yang Chen quickly learned the basics:

Wall jumps.

Wall hugging.

Crouching and sneaking.

Eavesdropping.

Ledge climbing.

The tutorial was straightforward enough.

Before long, he found his objective—the Divine Heir.

But only then did he notice something important.

"The game doesn't have a difficulty option... fine."

"But where's the minimap?"

"And where's the quest log?"

Although he was already in his thirties, Yang Chen still played games occasionally.

Immediately, he realized Sekiro was different from most games.

It felt a little strange.

Still, it wasn't a big problem.

After all, even in this parallel world, Sekiro wasn't the first game to remove maps and quest markers.

Many games that emphasized immersion were designed the same way.

Whatever.

As long as the combat was satisfying.

He drank from his Healing Gourd, restoring about half of his health.

Then he swallowed the healing pellet he'd found upstairs, recovering even more.

Finally, his nearly empty health bar was completely full.

Pushing open the door and following the game's guidance...

He performed a stealth deathblow from behind.

Filled an enemy's posture gauge.

Then executed them head-on.

"Damn!"

"That is SO COOL!"

"This feels amazing!"

Yang Chen became visibly excited watching the execution animation.

The blade pierced straight through an enemy's chest or their throat.

Then Wolf finished them off with a clean, stylish motion.

Combined with the brilliant spray of crimson blood, it perfectly captured the thrill of combat.

But what impressed Yang Chen even more was something else.

In many games, blood effects like this would also come with realistic dismemberment.

Arms severed.

Heads chopped off.

That certainly made them feel more realistic.

But to him, that also felt unnecessarily violent.

Sekiro, however, was different.

There was blood.

Lots of blood.

But no dismemberment.

Combined with Wolf's swift, elegant execution animations and the game's striking art direction, Yang Chen completely stopped caring about "realism."

He didn't even notice whether the corpses on the ground had any physical interaction or reaction afterward.

Instead, the fountains of blood created a unique kind of stylized, brutal beauty.

"This is pure dopamine."

"I've barely played any games that feel this satisfying."

"The controls, the visuals, the executions..."

"They're absolutely incredible."

Normally, because he had clumsy hands and slower-than-average reactions, Yang Chen rarely enjoyed action games.

You could even say he was terrible at them.

But at this moment, he felt that if it was this game, maybe he actually could do it.

Of course, that feeling lasted less than ten seconds.

Ten seconds later, as he stared at a group of lowly soldiers casually waving their weapons while standing over his dead body...

Yang Chen fell silent.

"...Am I really this bad at games?"