

Game Development: Starting by Healing the Players

Chapter 8: Philosophical Mode, Activated

"Hmm, this UI actually looks pretty good!"

The moment he entered the game, Jiang Ping's eyes lit up at the interface.

Although, as a not-so-experienced connoisseur of adult games, he hadn't actually played that many eroge, he still had a bit of experience with the genre.

Even though most of them were made using the same official game engine, many of the ones he'd played before had completely messy user interfaces.

But Mirror, at least when it came to the UI, was genuinely well-made.

"So I can only choose one character?"

After entering the game, Jiang Ping looked at the diamond-shaped selection screen in the center.

There were several different characters displayed, but only the dark elf was available to select.

The rest were all locked.

"So many playable characters? That's... surprisingly diverse."

A look of surprise appeared on Jiang Ping's face.

At the same time, he felt a little excited.

Instinctively, he glanced toward the dorm room door.

It was still closed. His roommates all had plans today and were out.

He walked over, shut the door properly, and locked it.

Returning to his computer, he looked at the game screen and took a deep breath, his expression turning solemn and almost reverent.

Of course, his real thoughts were something entirely different.

A dark elf right from the start?

This is pretty exciting!

With just a tiny, tiny bit of excitement, Jiang Ping followed the tutorial and clicked on what looked like the battle icon.

On this deep, quiet night, the isolated Blackwater Castle unexpectedly welcomed an uninvited guest.

A shadow, almost impossible to see, slowly emerged from the darkness.

Watching the game's cutscene and the dialogue choices that followed, Jiang Ping froze.

Wait... isn't this supposed to be an adult game?

Why does it look like a visual novel?

There's actually a story?

He scratched his head but didn't dwell on it, casually clicking through the dialogue.

Then the battle began.

Once again, he was stunned.

This game really is a match-three puzzle game?

He had seen people on forums saying it was "the best match-three game ever," but he'd assumed they were joking.

Yet here it was.

The gameplay really was match-three.

"Okay... orange orbs increase physical attack. The sword icon is physical damage, the stars are magic, and potions restore HP."

"Matching four creates an enhanced orb, and matching five produces a magic diamond that deals massive damage."

"There are also items and special abilities, though I only have a healing skill for now."

Following the tutorial, Jiang Ping quickly figured out how the combat worked.

And then he was genuinely impressed.

Am I playing an adult game... or an actual puzzle game?

Why is there so much depth?

His face filled with surprise.

The adult games he'd played before usually consisted of little more than clicking through dialogue before a CG appeared.

Some of the lower-quality ones were especially lazy.

But Mirror was different.

Its combat system was unexpectedly elaborate—at least, by the standards of an adult game.

On top of that, it even had a proper story.

And the fanservice...

There was definitely something there.

In fact, there was a lot of it.

Jiang Ping pursed his lips and narrowed his eyes slightly.

He leaned forward a little, turned off the small speakers on his desk, pulled a pair of earbuds out of his drawer, plugged them into the computer, and put one earbud in.

Whenever he successfully matched tiles and attacked, the dark elf actually had voice reactions when she was hit.

And when her HP dropped below a certain point...

Her clothes...

Ah, that's right!

According to the story, this was supposed to be the medieval era.

No wonder the quality of the clothing was so poor!

Life back then must have been incredibly harsh.

Just look at how tattered her clothes had become.

And look how dark her skin was from being out in the sun.

He connected five identical tiles.

A magic diamond appeared—and it dealt an incredible amount of damage.

He could even use unique skills and buy items to assist in battle.

There's even a turn limit? Only 13 turns left, and this elf still has so much HP?

After only a short time playing, Jiang Ping's attention shifted away from the dark elf's tattered clothing and onto the match-three gameplay itself.

He had to admit, this puzzle game was actually really fun.

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"This game's quality is absolutely insane!"

After two consecutive battles, he entered PLAY Mode.

Jiang Ping felt as though every adult game he'd ever played before had been a complete waste of time.

So this is what an adult game is supposed to be?

This is a real adult game!

What were all those other games, then?

They had nothing but erotic content, with barely any gameplay.

Of course, if that were all, he could still accept it. After all, for this kind of game, gameplay wasn't always the main attraction.

But many of them were also poorly made.

Did those developers really think the money spent by adult-game fans wasn't real money?

Just look at Mirror.

Not only was it highly... practical, but its gameplay was so rich and polished.

This was the level of quality an adult game should have.

This was what a true adult game was supposed to be.

And it even had visual novel elements?

There were actually two endings?

After finishing his first playthrough and getting the "true love" ending, Jiang Ping recalled the different dialogue choices he had made.

Looking at the dark elf's character screen, which still showed only 50% completion, he became incredibly excited.

Who would have thought?

Instead of finding the adult doujinshi he had been looking for, he had stumbled upon an absolute masterpiece of a game.

"Hmm... I'll hold off on playing a new character for now. I'll check out the other ending first."

"Following normal game logic, the second ending is probably the one where the dark elf falls into darkness."

Filled with curiosity—and just a tiny bit of excitement and nervousness—Jiang Ping clicked through once more.

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Ten minutes later—

"Why... did it turn out like this?"

Sitting before his computer, Jiang Ping felt both excited and emotionally conflicted.

She had been born into nobility, yet always cared deeply for the impoverished.

She had even resorted to stealing herself in order to help them.

Yet the very people she had once aided turned out to be ugly, shameless, and utterly ungrateful.

When the dark elf was captured by a demon, those same commoners thought only of satisfying the wicked desires in their own hearts.

The illustrations were still just as provocative as ever.

And compared with other adult games, the voice acting in this one was phenomenal.

Yet Jiang Ping found himself overwhelmed by mixed emotions.

Especially later, when a young guard entered.

He still possessed a trace of kindness in his heart.

Yet in the end, he failed to uphold his moral principles.

He, too, reached out with sinful intent.

It was like the final straw that broke the camel's back.

Combined with the final scene of the demon quietly laughing from beyond the wall, it left Jiang Ping deeply affected.

Perhaps he finally understood why the well-known connoisseurs on the forums spoke so differently about this game.

This wasn't merely an ordinary adult game.

It also questioned human nature.

It explored the conflict between good and evil.

In that instant, Jiang Ping found himself contemplating philosophical questions.

Was human nature inherently good, as Confucius taught?

Or was it inherently evil, as Xunzi argued?

Why could people repay kindness with hatred toward the elf who had helped them?

Why, in the end, did the small spark of goodness fail, allowing evil to prevail?

Lost in deep philosophical contemplation, Jiang Ping pondered these questions with complete seriousness.

Yet, this was only the beginning.