

Losing Money to Become a Tycoon: Starting with Games

Chapter 527: We're Here to Congratulate President Pei on Behalf of Feihuang Studio

When he opened his chat app, it was flooded with congratulatory messages.

Zhu Xiaoce and the others had even sent over some short videos from the ceremony. The footage was shaky and chaotic—basically just a huge crowd of people screaming and cheering.

Pei Qian fell silent for a moment before deciding to answer the most fundamental question first.

What exactly is the Grand Prix?

Although he watched movies from time to time, he knew almost nothing about major film awards. At most, he had heard of the Oscars.

In the end, he turned to Baidu for help.

Two minutes later, he understood.

The Cannes Film Festival presented many different awards, but the most prestigious was the Palme d'Or, considered one of the three highest honors in international cinema alongside the Golden Bear and Golden Lion.

The last—and only—time a Chinese film had won the Palme d'Or was in 1993.

The Grand Prix, meanwhile, was generally regarded as the festival's second-highest honor.

The last Chinese film to receive it had been back in 2000, which was why all the headlines were saying, "China wins the honor again after eleven years."

After reading Baidu's explanation, Pei Qian didn't know whether he should feel relieved or miserable.

Fortunately, it wasn't the Palme d'Or.

It was only second place.

Pei Qian was genuinely afraid that his absurdly lucky streak would strike again. If they had actually won the Palme d'Or, things would have become truly outrageous.

And it wasn't even impossible.

The more professional the critics were, the more they loved reading hidden meanings into films. Who knew what kinds of interpretations those European and American critics might have projected onto *A Better Tomorrow*?

Even so, the current situation was already bad enough.

Second place was still incredibly difficult to win.

For eleven years, Chinese films had been sent to Cannes almost every year, and nearly all of them had gone home empty-handed. Winning even the second-highest prize was extraordinarily rare.

Yet he had made a movie simply intending to poison the audience's mood a little and lose some money.

Instead, it had become a domestic box-office hit—and now it had even won an award at Cannes.

There had to be something fundamentally wrong with this world...

...

Pei Qian quietly got up, washed up, and headed to the office.

On the sixteenth floor of Shenhua Prestige, every employee was hard at work. The atmosphere was calm and peaceful.

Pei Qian let out a long sigh of relief.

Fortunately, he had forced Feihuang Studio into its "hibernation" period. Otherwise, the entire studio would probably have been waiting outside his office to congratulate him today.

At least his own base was secure.

However, the moment he stepped into the office—

POP!

A champagne cork shot into the air.

At the same time, party poppers exploded, ribbons flew everywhere, and the entire office instantly burst into celebration.

"SURPRISE!!"

"Congratulations, President Pei!"

"A Better Tomorrow won an award! Director Zhu Xiaoce even gave you a special thank-you during his speech! President Pei, how do you feel right now?"

Everyone stood up from their desks in unison. Some held confetti cannons, some applauded, and others poured champagne.

Pei Qian looked blankly at Assistant Xin.

"This...?"

Assistant Xin smiled.

"President Pei, everyone thought that since the Feihuang Studio staff are all on vacation and the film's main creative team is still overseas, we'd celebrate on their behalf."

"After all, something this worth celebrating can't just be ignored."

Pei Qian: "..."

You people really thought of everything.

But I absolutely did not need this celebration!

Someone handed him a glass of champagne.

Everyone present had one.

Pei Qian silently raised his glass and drained it in one gulp.

Standing nearby, Hao Yun looked confused.

"Uh... President Pei, shouldn't you say a few words first?"

Pei Qian set his glass on the table.

"That's already in the past. What's there to talk about? Alright, everyone, get back to work."

Celebrate?

Celebrate once now, and then celebrate again when Huang Sibao and the others returned?

You expect me to suffer through this twice?

Not a chance.

After President Pei entered his office and closed the door behind him, Assistant Xin smiled and said to everyone,

"President Pei has always been like this. Alright, everyone, let's get back to work. It'll be plenty soon enough to celebrate properly when Huang Sibao and the others return."

Meanwhile, Wu Bin quietly took out his notebook and began writing.

'Sure enough, even after all this time, President Pei hasn't changed at all.'

'I'd heard before that when Ocean Fortress became a huge success, President Pei acted exactly the same way. He only took a symbolic sip of champagne before immediately throwing himself into the next project.'

'When Bao Xu told me about it, I thought it was just an artistic exaggeration.'

‘After all, even the most successful people, even if they don’t rest on their laurels, would at least allow themselves a brief celebration, wouldn’t they?’

‘But now I’ve seen it with my own eyes. It’s true. There wasn’t the slightest exaggeration. President Pei really is this kind of person.’

‘Hmm... This episode should probably be added to the annotations for the Tengda Group Spirit. I’ll send it to Cui Geng and let him decide how best to incorporate it.’

...

Inside his office, Pei Qian took out his phone and began scrolling through his 99+ unread messages.

Almost all of them were congratulations.

Since every message was basically the same, Pei Qian simply ignored them.

There was no way he could reply to all of them.

And even if he did, what if someone used the opportunity to start chatting and lavish more praise on A Better Tomorrow?

Wouldn’t that just amount to inflicting a second round of emotional damage on him?

So he decided he’d just make a post on his Moments later, thanking everyone collectively and explaining that there were too many messages to reply to individually. Then he’d mute notifications and let the whole thing blow over.

As he continued scrolling, Pei Qian suddenly froze.

His eyes landed on a message from Lin Chang.

President Pei! Congratulations!

When I come to Jingzhou in a while, you've got to treat me to a good drink!

Sure, the movie won because its quality was outstanding, but I did help get it submitted to Cannes. I deserve at least a little credit, don't you think?

Pei Qian: "???"

He hurriedly typed back:

"You were the one who submitted the film?"

Not long afterward, Lin Chang replied.

"President Pei, why are you only replying now? Did you celebrate too hard last night and get drunk?"

"Of course I was the one who arranged the submission. Cannes has always preferred films that premiere at its own festival. Without the right connections, the jury wouldn't even accept your film."

"But don't get me wrong—I'm not trying to take credit. Honestly, I never expected A Better Tomorrow to actually win anything. I just saw how badly it was performing overseas and decided to do you a small favor."

"Winning the award is mainly because you made such a great film, President Pei. It completely won over the jury. No matter how good your connections are, they can't help if the movie itself isn't good."

Pei Qian: "..."

I've found the culprit!

So you're the one who's been pulling strings behind my back!

Pei Qian seriously began wondering whether he could somehow assign one of the Management Trainees to work inside the Shenhua Group.

Perhaps... in the president's office at Shenhua Pictures?

He had managed to get a clear picture of what was happening inside Tengda.

But outside the company?

He was practically blind.

Suppressing his frustration, he typed:

"Then your good intentions have truly been wasted. As far as I know, A Better Tomorrow has performed terribly at the overseas box office. It should be pulled from theaters very soon, shouldn't it?"

At the moment, Pei Qian was worried about two things.

First, there was the revenue-sharing agreement with Aili Island. Now that the film had won an award, a whole new wave of viewers would surely go online to watch it, generating yet more income.

Second, there was a good chance that overseas streaming platforms would now pay a fortune for the film's international streaming rights.

As for the overseas box office, A Better Tomorrow had opened at the beginning of the month. Its screenings had been limited, ticket sales were weak, and it was probably just about ready to leave theaters.

Lin Chang quickly replied:

"Pulled from theaters? Latest news: after A Better Tomorrow won the award, it's been all over overseas media!"

"Major theater chains have already extended its run by another month, and they're increasing the number of screenings."

"A film that wins the Grand Prix and also has solid commercial appeal? How could they possibly pull it? The theaters want to cash in on the buzz too!"

Pei Qian: "..."

Why did I have to ask that question?

Misfortunes never come singly.

Originally, Pei Qian had thought A Better Tomorrow's overseas release would amount to nothing more than a false alarm.

Instead, after a single film festival, everything had changed.

Pei Qian felt utterly dejected.

The pressure for this settlement cycle had suddenly skyrocketed.

Wasn't the whole point to make a terrible movie and burn money?

This film had already made money domestically, was now making money overseas, was earning through theatrical screenings, and would soon make money online as well...

Was it ever going to stop?

Pei Qian felt that this was easily the worst investment he had ever made.

...Well, no.

Maybe the second worst.

The title of the greatest investment failure would forever belong to Lonely Desert Road and those fifty thousand yuan.

Lin Chang sent another message:

"Oh, and President Pei, in another couple of days, the second wave of interpretations about your movie should begin. Are you ready to be showered with compliments?"

Pei Qian: "?"

Lin Chang continued:

"Sometimes, you know, people judge something one way before it leaves the country, and a completely different way after it gains international recognition."

"I'm really curious. Before this, a lot of people thought A Better Tomorrow was neither here nor there—Chinese audiences didn't like it, and foreigners wouldn't either."

"But now that it's won an award at Cannes... I wonder what those people are going to say."

"Alright, President Pei, enjoy yourself. And don't forget—you owe me a drink when I get to Jingzhou!"

Looking at his chat history with Lin Chang, Pei Qian fell into silence.

What a headache...

...

Meanwhile, at the Moyu Internet Café branch near Handong University...

"Hello, I'm Xiao Peng, the person in charge of Moyu Internet Café. And you are?"

Xiao Peng shook hands with the visitor.

"My name is Liang Qingfan," the man replied. "I'm the designer responsible for President Pei's Sloth Apartments project."

"Oh! Please, have a seat."

The two men sat by the window in the café area while a waiter brought them each a cup of coffee.

After exchanging a few pleasantries, Liang Qingfan explained why he had come.

"Manager Xiao, would you be interested in giving Moyu Internet Café an entirely new interior design?"

After completing the Sloth Apartments project, Liang Qingfan had spent his time sightseeing around Jingzhou, gathering inspiration while waiting for President Pei's next assignment.

But after waiting for quite some time without hearing anything, he had begun to feel bored.

So he decided to scout out future opportunities.

President Pei owned so many different businesses—Moyu Internet Café, Moyu Delivery, Managed Fitness Gym, Sloth Apartments, and many others.

All of them would eventually need interior design work.

If he could take on those projects and create several widely acclaimed showcase designs, it would greatly enhance his reputation.

Besides, he knew perfectly well that none of Tengda Group's departments were short on money.

He certainly wasn't worried about getting underpaid for his design work.

That was why he had wandered into the Moyu Internet Café today—to get acquainted with Xiao Peng in advance and make future cooperation easier.

Xiao Peng thought for a moment.

"Not at the moment."

"The Moyu Internet Café 1.0 and 2.0 designs have been very well received by customers. Changing the style abruptly might actually do more harm than good."

"As for Moyu Internet Café 3.0, it's already under construction, so it's too late to make any major changes."

"Of course, if we eventually launch a Moyu Internet Café 4.0, I'll definitely contact you first."

"That said, I do know somewhere that could use your help."

"Why don't you take a look at the Fright Hostel?"

"I'll give you the phone number of the person in charge over there. His surname is Chen—just contact him directly."