

Losing Money to Become a Tycoon: Starting with Games

Chapter 538: He'd Found a Way to "Backstab" Ruan Guangjian

Saturday, June 4

It was time for the regular Management Trainee meeting.

By now, the management trainees had completely adapted to the work Pei Qian had assigned them. Whether it was gathering intelligence or reporting to President Pei, they handled everything with ease and confidence.

"Regarding Sloth Apartments, the main focus is currently the design work for the three buildings. Mr. Liang Qingfan appears to have shut himself away to concentrate on preparing the architectural plans."

Pei Qian nodded.

He was already aware of all this, so he didn't pay much attention to it.

The main purpose of the management trainee system was to help Pei Qian keep track of the small day-to-day developments in each department that might unexpectedly lead to profitability.

Of course, the system wasn't perfect.

For example, if a project had only just begun and Pei Qian was personally overseeing it, the management trainees wouldn't necessarily know anything more than he did.

Likewise, management trainees could only learn about matters during working hours. If department heads did things privately outside of work, there was no way the trainees could know.

There wasn't much Pei Qian could do about that.

He couldn't exactly have the trainees become undercover operatives, monitoring department heads twenty-four hours a day.

So while the system wasn't flawless, as long as it was an improvement over the previous situation, that was good enough.

"Moyu Delivery continues investing heavily in the development of new Fitness Meals and has introduced several new flavors. At the same time, Moyu Delivery has begun planning its next batch of stores, further expanding its service coverage."

Overall, this was good news from Pei Qian's perspective, though it did contain a few potential concerns.

He had to admit that Rui Yuchen was remarkably bold when it came to spending money, and Pei Qian greatly appreciated that.

Opening stores on a large scale and pouring money into the Food Laboratory both delighted him. If anything, he wished Rui Yuchen would spend even more aggressively.

After all, for Moyu Delivery, every new store meant a little more money lost.

Where else could you find such a wonderful business?

As for developing several new varieties of Fitness Meals...

That seemed like a potential risk.

However, Pei Qian considered two points.

First, Managed Fitness was still losing money hand over fist. Offering a few more varieties of Fitness Meals would, at most, make it easier for existing members to stick with their meal plans. As long as the gyms themselves showed no signs of becoming profitable, this could be observed for a while longer.

Second, the Food Laboratory had already been established. After investing so much money into research, it had to produce *something*. If Rui Yuchen stopped researching Fitness Meals, he might instead begin developing new menu items to improve the taste of Moyu Delivery's regular offerings—which seemed like an even greater threat.

Between two undesirable outcomes, continuing to develop Fitness Meals was clearly the lesser evil.

"The Nameless Restaurant is conducting employee training. Staff members have been sent to Managed Fitness for exercise, working hours have been adjusted so employees can study foreign languages, and graduates from Handong University who speak multiple languages have been recruited at high salaries to work as servers."

"In addition, a series of new requirements has been introduced. Servers must now be able to accurately explain every dish's ingredients, cooking methods, cooking temperatures, and preparation techniques."

Hmm?

This report caught Pei Qian's attention.

He hadn't been paying much attention to Mingyun Private Kitchen lately.

From the looks of it, Manager Lin had finally figured things out.

Pei Qian thought it over.

Compared with opening new branches, spending money on waitstaff was already one of the least cost-effective ways to spend the budget.

On top of that, they were training the staff in multiple foreign languages.

How many international visitors would ever even hear about Mingyun Private Kitchen?

Jingzhou wasn't exactly an international metropolis. There were very few foreigners living there, and Mingyun Private Kitchen itself was located in a rather remote area.

Besides, even if the occasional foreign visitor happened to dine there and enjoyed the fact that the waitstaff spoke their language, how much of an impact could that possibly have?

No matter how he looked at it, the return on investment was extremely low.

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Wait.

Manager Lin was doing something this inefficient...

Could it be...

Was he acting out of spite?

He saw that Moyu Delivery wasn't making much money, yet it kept opening more branches and expanding, while every single request from Mingyun Private Kitchen had been rejected. So was he sulking and deliberately spending all the restaurant's profits on things with very little practical value?

If that was really the case, then there was only one thing to say:

Well done. Keep it up!

"Over at Fright Hostel, the plan for the shopping area has been finalized. It has been named The Golden Maze, and construction is now proceeding at full speed. The project appears to be extremely expensive. President Li had to spend a great deal of effort persuading the other investors to contribute funding."

Oh?

They actually fell for it?

Pei Qian was delighted.

Chen Kangtuo was quite obedient after all.

He deliberately proposed building a luxurious maze just to fleece President Li and the other investors, making them pay a fortune in renovation costs.

And he really built one.

It's even called The Golden Maze?

Just hearing the name sounds expensive.

No wonder President Li had to persuade the other investors.

They probably never expected him to be this shameless—to take a mile after being given an inch and demand such an outrageously expensive project.

Excellent.

It looked like cracks were finally beginning to appear among the investors.

A couple more incidents like this, and they'd all be driven away for good.

"Managed Fitness has not experienced any significant changes in membership. Growth in new customers remains extremely slow, while customer retention among existing members appears to have improved, with fewer people dropping out midway."

"I analyzed the gym's current data and found two primary reasons."

"First, the improvements to the Fitness Meals have made it easier for many members to stick with their programs."

"But the more important reason is survivorship bias."

"The customers who have managed to stay have already become accustomed to this style of fitness training, so naturally the longer they remain, the more loyal they become."

"However, this does not mean the gym's situation has improved."

"As long as it cannot solve the problem of attracting new customers, no matter how loyal the existing members become, the gyms still won't be profitable."

Excellent.

As expected of the management trainee assigned to Managed Fitness.

Since they worked as a planner there, they had access to all of the gym's operational data and had analyzed the situation very thoroughly.

After every management trainee had finished reporting, Pei Qian nodded in satisfaction.

"Everyone has done an excellent job."

"I especially want to commend the management trainee from Managed Fitness."

"They analyzed the situation objectively using actual data. Every conclusion they reported was based on facts and statistics rather than idealistic assumptions."

"I hope everyone else will learn to observe operations through data as well."

"After all, numbers don't lie."

"That's all for today's meeting. Thank you for your hard work. Meeting adjourned."

...

After the meeting, Pei Qian left the office and headed to Moyu Internet Café to relax for a while.

As usual, he ordered a cup of coffee, took out the laptop he kept there, and continued organizing the mind maps he'd made for each department.

Half an hour later, he decided to take a short break and casually browsed the internet.

Suddenly, he came across an exciting piece of news.

GOG's New Hero Released: Windborne Ink Scholar · Ruan!

The announcement came from a gaming news site.

The hero had officially gone live today, almost at the same time as the Traveler Bao Xu event.

The development speed was genuinely impressive.

When it came to update frequency, GOG was fully keeping pace with the overworked designers of IOI.

Pei Qian continued reading.

The article not only introduced Windborne Ink Scholar · Ruan's splash art, character model, backstory, and abilities, but also previewed the hero's gameplay and commented on the ongoing "arms race" between GOG and IOI.

Windborne Ink Scholar · Ruan is a master calligrapher and painter, as well as a romantic swordsman.

For an artist, pouring one's very life into every painting while constantly striving for breakthroughs is his lifelong destiny.

As a solitary genius, his unconventional personality and artistic talent far ahead of his time earned him the resentment and exclusion of other painters.

Rather than drift along with mediocrity, he chose to wander the world, leaving his masterpieces among famous mountains and great rivers.

Fortunately, during his travels he met his closest friend, the western angel-like figure Zadkiel.

They both possessed the virtues of pride, integrity, courage, and humility. Their mutual trust was so complete that, in battle, they could confidently entrust each other with their backs and fight side by side.

Pei Qian: "..."

Why does this character biography feel so... sarcastic?

"Mutual trust with Zadkiel, entrusting each other with their backs?"

Seems more like I'm the one exposing my back to him, and he's the one unloading attacks into it.

When will I ever get to stab him in the back for once?

Pei Qian was full of resentment.

Ever since meeting Ruan Guangjian, he had meticulously planned several acts of "revenge"—the Giant Pendulum Meal, the Fright Hostel Package, the Impossible Client Package, and so on.

Yet every single time, Ruan Guangjian had neutralized them as effortlessly as a Tai Chi master redirecting force, leaving Pei Qian with all his effort wasted.

Continuing to read, Pei Qian reached the section previewing the hero's gameplay and discussing the current state of GOG and IOI.

"Based on the currently revealed mechanics, Ruan is a sustained-damage fighter with high mobility and strong versatility. Although his early-game damage is relatively low, the longer he survives in combat, the more damage he deals."

"At the same time, this appears to be a hero with an extremely high skill ceiling but also an extremely low skill floor. While none of his abilities seem particularly complicated individually, mastering him requires considerable skill."

This old-school style of hero analysis... how nostalgic.

The terminology wasn't yet standardized or particularly refined, but overall the description was accurate.

Pei Qian knew perfectly well that this really was a champion with an incredibly high ceiling and an incredibly low floor.

And most players only ever reached the floor.

The article continued:

"Over the past month, the 'arms race' between GOG and IOI has continued to intensify, with no signs of slowing down. The competition began with IOI, whose simultaneous Chinese and global server updates, along with a schedule of two new heroes per month, astonished players."

"However, GOG quickly responded by introducing the unprecedented concept of 'crowdfunded heroes.' Initially, this approach was met with skepticism, but judging from the current results, it has clearly been an enormous success."

"The event fully mobilized the enthusiasm of GOG's player base, keeping players engaged even during periods when no new heroes were being released and preventing IOI from stealing the spotlight."

"Furthermore, the crowdfunded heroes feature excellent mechanics and diverse gameplay. Both Traveler Bao Xu and Windborne Ink Scholar · Ruan have received widespread praise."

"Does this suggest that players understand games better than professional designers?"

"Judging by the current situation, GOG has responded perfectly, preserving—and even expanding—its lead. Where will IOI launch its next counterattack? Let's wait and see."

The phrase "preserving—and even expanding—its lead" stung Pei Qian a little.

He had to admit that Min Jingchao really was a genius.

Who would have thought that crowdfunding hero designs would actually work?

But Pei Qian wasn't particularly concerned about that anymore.

What he cared about was...

When would the revenue from the new heroes' skins arrive?

At present, both Traveler Bao Xu and Windborne Ink Scholar · Ruan only had their default skins.

Additional skins were still under development.

The reason was simple: development time had been extremely tight.

Creating the heroes themselves—their models, animations, and everything else—had already kept the development team overwhelmingly busy.

To compete with IOI for player attention, each new hero had to go live almost immediately after testing.

Cosmetic skins and subsequent balance adjustments could wait.

In another month or so, the skins would probably be released.

Two months after that, the revenue should finally start coming in.

Although skins for crowdfunded heroes would be heavily discounted, they would probably make up for it through sheer sales volume.

Pei Qian wasn't desperate for money right now.

Still, he was looking forward to that income.

He reread the hero's backstory.

Suddenly, an idea occurred to him.

It seemed he had finally found a way to get back at Ruan Guangjian.

Invite him to play a game of GOG together.

Each of them would use the hero based on themselves.

Ruan Guangjian had never actually played this hero before, so he probably wouldn't be very good with him.

Besides, Yasuo already had an extremely low skill floor and was easy to punish.

When the time came, Ruan Guangjian could experience firsthand what "happiness" really meant.

That would finally count as getting a little revenge.