

Losing Money to Become a Tycoon: Starting with Games

Chapter 479: Is This Some Kind of Daily Training Exercise?

April 9, Saturday.

Moyu Internet Café, Handong University Branch.

After finishing the preliminary preparations for the two game departments and the gym, Pei Qian planned to enjoy this rare leisurely weekend.

He found a window seat in the internet café, sipped coffee leisurely, watched the street outside, and thought about everything that still needed to be done.

The movie's box-office revenue share should be arriving soon, bringing in a considerable amount of money.

Pei Qian had already decided how to spend it: an apartment project.

Like Managed Fitness, it could both lose money and serve as an employee benefit—a double dose of happiness, killing two birds with one stone.

Of course, the amount involved was fairly large, so it would require careful planning.

Pei Qian considered buying a building, converting it into apartments, and testing the waters. If everything went smoothly, he could then use the remaining money to lease more properties and renovate them.

The system prohibited real-estate speculation. In other words, purchased properties had to be used for productive business operations; they couldn't simply sit idle or be hoarded to drive up prices.

Running a restaurant or a hotel both counted as legitimate business activities.

However, after purchasing the villa that housed Mingyun Private Kitchen, Pei Qian had never seriously considered buying more buildings. The main reason was that the initial system funds in previous settlement cycles had been too low.

Fixed assets were counted toward system funds at one-tenth of their value, which affected settlement calculations.

For example, if he spent 30 to 40 million yuan on a building, it would count as 3 to 4 million in system funds. In the previous cycle, his starting system funds had only been 10 million. A single building would consume 30% to 40% of that amount.

That made losing money much more difficult and increased the risk of accidentally turning a profit.

This cycle, however, his initial system funds had already reached 20 million. Spending 30 to 40 million on a building would have a much smaller impact on settlement results.

Of course, there was still a risk: housing prices might rise.

Even after considering that possibility, Pei Qian still decided to proceed, mainly for three reasons.

First, this world's circumstances had already diverged significantly from those in his memories, so housing prices might not rise as quickly.

Second, even if prices did surge, it probably wouldn't happen within the next couple of years.

Third, even if property values increased, the rate of appreciation would almost certainly be far lower than the growth rate of his initial system funds.

Based on current trends, his starting system funds increased by at least 10 million every six months. That meant spending 30 to 50 million each cycle on fixed assets was actually a very cost-effective strategy.

It could simply become a fixed expense every cycle.

Besides that, Pei Qian still needed to check on Dream Fulfillment Ventures and Zhang Yuan's situation.

Ever since assigning Old Ma a task, the man still hadn't found a new investment project.

Pei Qian was very pleased with that and had no intention of pushing him.

Still, to prevent Ma Yang and He Desheng from locking themselves away for too long and accidentally creating something huge, Pei Qian felt he needed to stay vigilant.

As for Zhang Yuan, although he had proposed establishing an esports club, he didn't seem particularly enthusiastic about it himself. The project was still in the preparation stage.

Pei Qian intended to visit him as well and offer a little "guidance."

There were also a number of miscellaneous issues:

Pei Qian felt that one of the main reasons for his repeated failures was poor access to information. He wanted to devise a way to monitor the activities of every department at all times.

The system's mission of "investing in himself" still had no clear direction.

And all the other businesses that currently appeared harmless also required constant attention. Who knew when one of them might suddenly stab him in the back?

The more Pei Qian thought about it, the more melancholy he became.

Life was as lonely as falling snow.

Just as he was wallowing in his thoughts, he noticed a familiar figure pushing open the door of the Moyu Internet Café.

"Hm? President Pei?"

"An honored guest, an honored guest."

When Ruan Guangjian spotted Pei Qian sitting in a corner, leisurely drinking coffee, he couldn't help but exclaim in surprise.

Pei Qian: "?"

Hold on—what did he mean by "honored guest"?

It was true that he had been busy with work lately and hadn't visited this Moyu Internet Café for a while, but if he remembered correctly, this café was his business, wasn't it?

Ruan Guangjian immediately realized there was something odd about what he'd said and laughed awkwardly.

"Ah, sorry, President Pei. I was thinking about something else and my brain short-circuited for a second."

"This internet café is yours, after all. Hahaha."

"I have to say, though, the coffee is excellent."

At the moment, Ruan Guangjian occupied the number-one spot in President Pei's little blacklist.

Teacher Qiao had once been a strong contender for that position, but Pei Qian had managed to get the better of him on a few occasions, so he had become much more tolerant toward him.

As for everyone else on the blacklist, a package consisting of roller coasters, giant pendulum rides, bungee jumping, and haunted houses was usually enough to make them behave themselves.

Only Ruan Guangjian was a complete anomaly.

The more roller coasters and pendulum rides he experienced, the more excited he became.

He constantly claimed to be afraid of ghosts, and in haunted houses he screamed louder than anyone else. Yet every time he came out, he looked refreshed, energetic, and glowing with vitality.

He was like an ultimate tank with both physical and magical resistance maxed out. Every attack President Pei could launch was completely ineffective against him.

If Pei Qian wanted revenge, he'd probably need true damage.

Unfortunately, he currently had no such means.

So all he could do was watch helplessly as Ruan Guangjian danced on his face and strutted around triumphantly.

Taking a sip of coffee, Pei Qian smiled and asked,

"How have things been since moving to Jingzhou? Any difficulties adjusting? If you're not comfortable here, I think going back to Shanghai might be a better option—"

Before he could finish, Ruan Guangjian immediately interrupted.

"—Don't worry, President Pei. I'm adapting perfectly—*too* perfectly!"

"Everyone in the studio actually regrets not moving sooner!"

"We really should've relocated to Jingzhou the moment the studio was founded!"

The hand holding Pei Qian's coffee froze in midair.

"?"

He had intended the remark as a bit of sarcastic needling, but Ruan Guangjian seemed to have interpreted it as genuine concern and well-wishes.

Just then, a café employee walked over carrying two large paper bags filled with seven or eight cups of coffee.

"Brother Ruan, your coffee is ready."

Ruan Guangjian took the bags.

"Great, thanks."

Apparently he came here often enough that the staff knew him well. The coffees had likely been ordered in advance over the phone, and he had simply come to pick them up.

Pei Qian was surprised.

"The studio boss personally comes to pick up coffee for the employees?"

Ruan Guangjian smiled.

"I wanted to get out and clear my head anyway. Normally we take turns handling coffee runs."

"President Pei, do you have some time? Why not come take a look around our studio?"

Pei Qian's first instinct was to refuse.

Why would I spend my free time visiting a weapons factory dedicated to developing tools for stabbing me in the back?

But then another thought occurred to him.

Know your enemy and know yourself, and you'll never be defeated.

Since the enemy had already advanced deep into Jingzhou territory and danger was practically right beside him, this was actually the perfect opportunity to investigate their situation and prepare in advance.

With that in mind, Pei Qian stood up.

"Sure. Let's take a look."

Carrying the coffee, Ruan Guangjian crossed the street with Pei Qian and entered Halo Studio.

This was Pei Qian's first time visiting the studio.

The building had originally been a two-story bookstore. The business had failed and the property had been put up for lease. Ruan Guangjian had taken a liking to it because it sat diagonally across from Moyu Internet Café and was also very close to Shenhua Prestige, so he happily rented it.

The moment he entered, Pei Qian's first impression was that the place felt vibrant and full of artistic atmosphere.

The indoor temperature was comfortable. Warm sunlight streamed through the floor-to-ceiling windows, creating a cozy and inviting feeling.

The entrance, desks, and corners were filled with all kinds of green plants. There were also numerous decorative art pieces, including sculptures, paintings, and other artworks.

The desks, chairs, and overall layout of the workspace were quite casual and relaxed, yet not at all messy. It was obvious that the arrangement had been carefully planned.

The entire environment gave off a relaxed, leisurely atmosphere—exactly the kind of place that could fully stimulate imagination and creativity.

Some people had already noticed Pei Qian entering with Ruan Guangjian and immediately greeted him.

"Eh? President Pei!"

"Hello, President Pei!"

"Come visit more often, President Pei!"

Every one of them was extremely enthusiastic.

After all, in their eyes, President Pei was Ruan Guangjian's close friend and kindred spirit, Halo Studio's most important business partner, and a golden thigh they could cling to as hard as they liked while living in Jingzhou.

From Pei Qian's perspective, however, if Ruan Guangjian was the assassin who would ultimately plunge the dagger into his back, then these people were the ones standing behind him, pushing him forward so the blade could sink even deeper.

To be fair, every single one of them deserved a place in his little blacklist.

Still, President Pei was a civilized and courteous man. Faced with everyone's warm welcome, he smiled and waved in response.

Ruan Guangjian handed the coffee to a nearby employee.

"Old Huang, help distribute these, will you? I'll show President Pei around."

Pei Qian followed Ruan Guangjian upstairs and toured the entire studio.

As they walked, Ruan Guangjian introduced various details about the workplace while speaking with emotion.

"Moving to Jingzhou was absolutely the right decision!"

"The cost of living here is already much lower than in Shanghai."

"Whether it's rent or daily expenses, we save a lot of money."

"The studio space is larger, the work environment is better, everyone's productivity has improved noticeably, and both their mental and physical condition have gotten better."

"And life here is incredibly convenient!"

"All of our work meals are ordered from Moyu Delivery now. They're nutritious, healthy, delicious, and reasonably priced."

"Moyu Internet Café and Against the Wind Logistics have also greatly improved our quality of life."

"Most importantly, as long as Tengda Group is here, life in Jingzhou will only become more convenient, and the city's overall economy will continue to improve."

"That kind of future outlook is something ordinary second-tier cities simply don't have."

Listening to Ruan Guangjian's enthusiastic introduction, Pei Qian felt only one thing:

Heartbreak.

Look at him—he was completely enchanted.

The moment he arrived in Jingzhou, he had abandoned Shanghai without the slightest hesitation.

What a heartless traitor!

Still, Pei Qian could genuinely see from Ruan Guangjian's excited expression how much he loved Jingzhou.

Sigh...

It seemed there was no chance of driving Halo Studio away anymore.

What a depressing thought.

After completing the tour, Ruan Guangjian brought Pei Qian back to his workstation.

There was no private office. On one hand, artistic work requires people to learn from one another, grow together, and find inspiration through communication. On the other hand, Ruan Guangjian needed to review and approve all projects personally to ensure a consistent artistic style.

Pei Qian noticed that an extremely detailed portrait was displayed on Ruan Guangjian's computer screen.

In the lower-left corner of the screen, occupying roughly a quarter of the display area, was a real photograph.

It showed a white man who appeared to be in his forties. He was handsome, wore a gentle expression, and otherwise had no particularly memorable features.

What surprised Pei Qian even more was that the portrait wasn't simply a direct copy of the photograph.

Not only had many additional details been added, but certain aspects of the man's appearance had also been deliberately altered and enhanced.

For example, the model's face had been given a few extra wrinkles, yet instead of making him look older or more weathered, they actually enhanced his charm.

His beard and hairstyle had been meticulously groomed. The beard in particular looked like the kind maintained only by someone with both considerable wealth and plenty of free time.

His expression had also changed. In the original photograph, he looked very kind and approachable; in the portrait, however, he appeared ambitious, with a powerful confidence shining through his eyes.

Even his slightly receding hairline had been completely corrected. His thick, full head of hair seemed to radiate vitality and vigor.

If the photograph depicted "a middle-aged white man in fairly good condition," then the portrait depicted "a member of the elite class at the absolute peak of every aspect of his life."

Comparing the photo and the portrait side by side, Pei Qian gained a profound understanding of what people meant by "artistic exaggeration and reinterpretation."

He couldn't help but sigh in admiration.

"This is incredibly well done! If the original person was a 70 out of 100, this portrait takes him straight to a 95."

"It not only preserves his original facial features, but also emphasizes his strengths and elevates his overall presence and charisma."

"Is this some kind of daily exercise for artists?"

"You just pick a random photo and then create a vivid, lifelike character based on it?"

"The pursuit of art truly never ends."

Pei Qian stared at the portrait with great interest, clicking his tongue in appreciation.

Ruan Guangjian's expression turned slightly strange.

"Uh... President Pei."

"Our schedule is actually pretty tight. Generally speaking, we don't have the time to do painting exercises this detailed."

"This *is* our current work assignment... didn't you recognize it?"

"It's the latest art request from Tengda Games."

"The wealthy protagonist from Struggle."

Pei Qian: "..."

Disasters always arrived when he least expected them.