

Lord of the Oasis - Chapter 1

Chapter 1: Journey in the Desert

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Kant shook the reins in his hand for a bit as he steered the horse he was riding forward.

1

To the east of the Nahrin Desert, the morning sun was steadily rising. It hung high at the top of the endless dunes, exuding its might to dispel the chill of night. Scorching heatwaves washed over the barren desert.

...

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Except for the Jackalans, who had no concept of civilization, no other races were willing to step foot into that barren place.

2

That, of course, excluded Kant and his team.

2

Twenty knights, who wore mail armor under their robes, were riding warhorses. There were also 30 peasants, who served as servants. Right behind Kant were six horses pulling carriages with goods.

3

Huuhhh...

Kant sighed a heavy breath and frowned as he looked forward at the winding dunes. He flipped the hood on his linen robe over. His blonde hair draped over his shoulders. His young, supple face was plastered with dust.

His amber eyes contracted, making them look harsh as he rode.

They were in the Nahrin Desert, a world filled with sand and dust. It was a wasteland that had yet to be developed.

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Before the place was conquered by the Dukedom of Leo 10 years ago, the desert had no signs of civilization. As for the Jackalan Tribes, they were primitive beings that ate their prey raw along with the blood and fur.

There was no doubt that the Jackalans remained the same even until now.

As the youngest son of the duke, Kant naturally understood that the desert was not considered part of the Dukedom of Leo.

Even though the dukedom had conquered the entire southern area of the Nahrin Desert 10 years ago, in truth, the upper echelons had only claimed to have taken the place with empty talk.

1

Most scholars within the dukedom did not acknowledge that the conquest had even happened.

On the map, the border of the dukedom remained at the Senwaya Range right next to the Nahrin Desert. The endless desert north of there remained unoccupied by civilization.

Those areas had been taken over by the Jackalan Tribes, so the place remained incapable of being used for herding or farming, which practically made it useless.

Even criminals and escaped slaves from the dukedom, who were at their wit's end, would not go to such a place.

“This is pathetic.”

Kant shook his head and humbly smirked as he thought, I actually ended up in a sh*thole like this.

8

If it had not been for the fact that he had run out of options, he would not have stepped into the barren desert in the first place. Furthermore, it was still

summer. The sun in June was like a bakery oven. Even the morning sun was capable of heating the entire desert to 122 degrees Fahrenheit.

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Kant looked up at the sky. The sun above the dunes continued to rise.

During this season in the barren desert, noon temperatures could reach 158 degrees Fahrenheit, which was a temperature no one could withstand.

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It is so hot!

He gulped a mouthful of sticky saliva and adjusted the breathable linen hood. His frown turned even more serious as he moved.

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He hastened the horse before turning around to the team behind him and shouting, "Move it, people! Hurry up. If you don't want to end up being toasted under the sun at noon, we need to set up camp to rest before noon!"

6

"Yes, Sir."

Lethargic responses were heard. The peasants pushed the carriages, making them go faster.

They were all traveling on foot. With three carriages full of supplies, the team's speed was abhorrent.

The wheels of the carriages, which were crafted using hardwood and nails, were better suited to roads on the flatlands of the Dukedom of Leo. The wheels dredged through the soft sands, causing even the stout horses to neigh in exhaustion. Every step they took was difficult because the wheels kept getting stuck in the sand, requiring the peasants to push the wheels to be able to move even slightly faster.

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Kant understood their predicament. He sighed seeing the team behind him move.

This is awful. Kant frowned.

“Your Lordship.”

Rowan, the captain of the knights riding behind him, rode up to Kant’s side.

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That middle-aged man, who was usually steadfast, looked rather anxious as he said, “Pardon my rudeness, but we’d really like to know how long it will take before we reach the Oasis Lookout.”

“How long?”

Kant looked calm and kept his eyes on the winding, endless dunes ahead. He gritted his teeth before saying, “I have no idea.”

“Well...” Rowan looked even more anxious after hearing the answer.

That was apparently not what he had hoped to hear.

The corner of Kant’s mouth rose slightly. However, there was hardly any emotion seen on his calm face as he plainly said, “According to the calculations, we’ve been traveling for six days. If the map and route are correct, we’ll reach our destination soon enough.”

“We’ll reach soon enough?” Rowan gulped, feeling his throat hurt from being so parched.

They had been marching through the desert for six days. Everyone had reached their physical and psychological limits. They had had enough.

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That was especially so regarding the storage of fresh water. That day, it had hit the red line.

Fifty-one people and 27 horses needed their thirst quenched.

That was one of the reasons why Rowan was so anxious. He and the 20 knights he commanded, who all served as escorts, were allowed to leave as soon as they reached their destination. They did not need to stay with Kant and the 30 peasants.

The sooner they reached the Oasis Lookout, the sooner they would leave the dreaded desert behind and return home.

On the contrary, Kant hardly minded any of it. Even when they reached the Oasis Lookout, the destination at the end of the route was not something to be happy about.

It was where he would likely stay for the rest of his days, surrounded by an endless swath of sand.

1

He recalled the title he gained at his coming-of-age ceremony and sarcastically smirked. A fief was granted alongside the title. Boy, this is hilarious.

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However, his eyes were only filled with coldness.

He was a baron of the dukedom, which was why he had a territory of his own.

It was conferred by his father, Cameron, the duke of the Dukedom of Leo, personally. He gave the Nahrin Desert, which had been conquered 10 years ago, to Kant for him to reign over as its master.

9

That included their destination, the Oasis Lookout, which was the only oasis the could be found in the southern parts of the desert.

Kant was a baron in name but lord of the Nahrin Desert.

However, no one knew that the place was simply a prison where Duke Cameron exiled his least favorite and youngest son.

Then again, desert or not, I have my way of getting by.

The sarcasm seen in Kant's eyes became even more pronounced.

As someone who was transported to his current world from Earth, Kant had his trump card, which served as a cheat in that world.

12

So be it.

Kant narrowed his eyes and looked ahead. A dialog box from the system appeared on his retina.

[Main Quest: Build a village]

3

The Jackalans were the most common humanoid race found in the Nahrin Desert.

They once had a massive population that stretched across the Nahrin Desert to the Senwaya Range. During the many years the dukedom was at war with other dukedoms, the Jackalans had taken advantage of the situation and invaded the dukedom's northern lands. They remained a solid threat to the dukedom for nearly three years.

...

They were considered as a disgusting inflammation that seemed to spread all the way to the central regions.

When the Dukedom of Leo was done warring against the other dukedoms, they immediately sought to purge the Jackalans from their lands.

The massive purge lasted for a year.

The Jackalan Tribes, which behaved as if they had reached paradise when they first invaded the dukedom, were quickly crushed by the retaliation.

The Jackalans had no high-grade weapons or armor, which meant that they were no match for the human forces.

The Jackalans were easily killed by the cavalry units, which were highly regarded by the Dukedom of Leo and a source of great pride.

It was said that the number of chopped Jackalan heads 10 years ago was enough to line both sides of the road.

8

The brutal purge quickly spiraled to become an all-out genocide, stretching from the northern border of the dukedom into the southern parts of the Nahrin Desert. The main Jackalan Tribes, which had greater numbers, almost became extinct from the genocide.

Any surviving Jackalan Tribes moved into the desert north of the dukedom in fear.

1

There were still some scattered pockets of them left.

There were quite a number of Jackalan Tribes within the Senwaya Range, which was evident from how the northern villages of the dukedom were sporadically raided by Jackalans.

As for the southern parts of the Nahrin Desert, the Jackalan numbers likely spiked from having gained a 10-year respite.

5

There's no going back now.

Kant wetted his parched, cracked lips. His expression was filled with resolve.

He was determined to build his village after making the arduous journey through the desert. With the system's Kingdom of Swadia as his cheat, he was determined not to fall into a state of having absolutely nothing.

5

The dunes, which were recently discussed, were right in front of them. That was where they were about to set up camp.

The plan was to set up tents in the shade behind the dune.

"Alright, you people, get busy!"

The knights were still under Rowan's command. He went on to carry out his arrangements for them. "Search the perimeter thoroughly. I don't want any Jackalan or beast chewing up my innards while I'm asleep!"

The 20 knights immediately spread out after receiving his orders.

However, some hardly bothered with the task they had been given. They had been marching for six days and not seen any Jackalans around.

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As such, the knights were not very thorough with their search. After confirming that there was nothing out of the ordinary within the vicinity of the dunes, they all returned to set up tents so they could get some much-needed rest.

"Get the tents up."

Kant arranged for the peasants to get to work as well.

The three carriages included supplies to set up camp. There were more than a dozen tents, as well as sticks and ropes for erecting them.

Some of the peasants were quickly digging into the sand with their sickles. They were removing sand about 11 inches down from the surface, revealing the cooler layers underneath.

6

That was one of the tricks of living in the desert. Lying down inside the sand enabled them to escape the heat.

It was a technique employed by the Jackalans surviving in the desert, which was picked up by the soldiers of the Dukedom of Leo. The technique was, in turn, recorded by scholars in the books they wrote.

Before Kant ventured into the desert, he had looked up all kinds of books on the Nahrin Desert and thoroughly read them.

Twenty tents were set up over the recently dug holes in the sand. The tents were erected with sticks and fixed in place with ropes. All 51 people in the entourage were able to have a good rest within the camp, as well as the 27 horses.

“I’ll leave the rest to you, Rowan.”

Kant stood before his small tent and sighed a breath of relief.

The hardest part of the work needed to set up camp had been completed. Rowan nodded in reply. “Yes, Your Lordship.”

The work after required feeding and watering the horses. People were also assigned to prepare lunch and distribute water throughout the day to everyone present. While the job was relatively easy, it had to be taken seriously. No one was better suited for the job than Rowan, who was careful and steadfast.

The tents blocked the sun, and the shallow holes brought coolness from the earth.

Kant spread out a linen sheet and laid down. He felt as if all the exhaustion from the difficult journey was disappearing.

It might actually be best to have a pint of lager at such a moment, he thought.

Kant closed his eyes and sighed. I wonder when I can start living easily again.

He was, at the moment, at the stage of starting from scratch.

Lager was basically a luxury at such times. There was no way he could have drunk some anyway. No trade caravans traveled to the Oasis Lookout to sell cheap liquor to their fief.

After all, they were in the Nahrin Desert.

It was a barren wasteland where no humans were usually found.

Kant Shook his head and stopped thinking about it.

1

He sniffed for a bit and smelled the fragrance of food from outside the tent.

It was lunchtime. Just as Kant was preparing to take a nap in the hole, the familiar chime of the System Prompt woke him up.

A dialog box appeared on his retina at the same time.

[Ding... Side Quest assigned]

[Side Quest: The Jackalans' Ambush]

1

[Reward: Date Palm Trees x 20 (Ripe)]

4

[Introduction: The smell of cooking attracted a group of Jackalans with a keen sense of smell. You need to annihilate them.]

Kant immediately rose from his hole.

He looked determined since it was a side quest from the system, which was assigned irregularly and at no set time.

However, such a side quest from the system did verify something important.

There was a group of Jackalans with unknown numbers preparing for an ambush around the dunes where they were camping. Furthermore, the Jackalans had found them and were ready to strike at any moment.

We've been careless!

Kant was exasperated by the knights' inability to properly scout. Given how he had no command over them, there was no way he could have given them orders.

He swiftly walked out of his tent. There were more than a dozen peasants still preparing lunch outside.

As for the knights assigned by the dukedom to escort them, they were all burrowed in their tents and holes. There was not so much as a scout found anywhere outside of the tents. They had very much let their guards down.

Kant frowned hard at the situation.

If it had not been for the System Prompt, those Jackalans would have probably gotten right beside the tents and remained unseen.

He did not make a big deal out of it.

Kant came to the side of the carriage and found his box.

Within it were a light crossbow and a quiver with 20 short, thick iron bolts.

He needed to be the one who discovered the Jackalans. Otherwise, there was no way he could explain how he knew the Jackalans were about to attack. Despite being somewhat of a scholar, he was certainly not a mage who possessed mystical powers.

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Along with three Swadian Peasants, he swiftly walked to the top of the dunes above their campsite.

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He cautiously squatted as he scanned his surroundings.

“Over there. I found them.”

A peasant noticed them first. He continued to speak in a subdued voice as he pointed northward, “Look, Jackalans. Many of them.”

“Yeah.” Kant nodded.

Approximately half of a mile north of the dunes where they were camping, they were about 50 Jackalans wearing ragged clothing and snooping about. They laid low as if they were out hunting.

Actually, they were hunting. After all, human meat was often found on the menu of some of the more brutal Jackalans.

3

“Fall back. Wake everyone up and prepare for combat.”

Kant slowly backed away while remaining in a squatting position. Although he still looked very serious, his expression had considerably lightened.

From the looks of it, more than 50 Jackalans seemed like a lot. They were almost equal to Kant’s entourage.

In actual fact, they were not all that much of a threat.

All 20 of the dukedom's knights, who were still resting in their tents in the sand, would have been able to quickly take care of the Jackalans. Furthermore, they would have done so without incurring huge losses.

Seasoned knights with ample training could have easily dealt with those primitive humanoid races.

Kant quickly ran down the dune as he held onto his light crossbow. He said, "Captain Rowan, we're in trouble. Please get everyone to prepare for combat. About 50 Jackalans are about to ambush our camp."

"Jackalans?"

Captain Rowan sounded rather surprised.

The 20 knights in their tents quickly grabbed their weapons and emerged with stern expressions. When they scanned the surrounding dunes, they did not find anything out of the ordinary.

Rowan did not doubt Kant and asked, "Your Lordship, where are they?"

1

"Over there, and they'll hit us real soon," Kant said as he pointed north of the dunes.

"Get on your horses and get ready to fight."

Rowan gritted his teeth and glared at the knights behind him. He quickly berated them. "Damn it, you four will spend the night polishing everyone's boots. I told you to scout the area, yet you missed that many Jackalans out there."

The four knights looked glum, but they did not retort.

It had truly been their mistake. The four of them were tasked with scouting to the north.

"Your Lordship, I apologize for the matter, but we will deal with the Jackalans."

Rowan led the knights to mount their horses. They all took their lances and longswords along. He turned to Kant and seriously said, "We will all deploy, so

we probably will not be able to cover for you. Please be careful, Your Lordship.”

“No problem.” Kant nodded.

The knights were never meant for defense. They would head out and hit the Jackalans head-on.

1

Once an ambush was discovered, the element of surprise was gone.

Seeing the 20 knights, led by Rowan, quickly go up the dunes and head north, Kant gave his orders. “Everyone, prepare for combat. Follow my lead.”

“Understood!”

The 30 Swadian Peasants unanimously responded.

While their main job was to work in the fields, they were no strangers to combat.

Their specially modified sickles were mounted on 6-foot-5-inch staffs, making long scythes that resembled halberds. The weapons were capable of stabbing and slashing. Although they seemed unwieldy, they were weapons capable of dealing massive damage.

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Furthermore, the 30 Swadian Peasants held their long scythes and went into two square formations.

3

After this battle, some of them were likely to get an upgrade.

Kant took the Swadian Peasants to the top of the dunes.

Approximately 650 feet away, the 20 dukedom knights were thrusting their lances, which were over 6 feet long, and charging without fear at the ragtag band of Jackalans.

2

“Glory to the Dukedom of Leo!”

The knights shouted their motto as the warhorses beneath them galloped at high speeds.

Although the sand limited their absolute speed, the charge of the knights caught the Jackalans by surprise.

The Jackalans were the dominant beings in the Nahrin Desert. That emboldened them enough to sneak up to the place where they smelled something nice, even though they had no idea who they would be up against.

When they saw the ones charging down the dunes were human knights, all of them began to scatter in fear.

The slaughter from 10 years ago was still fresh in their memories.

The afternoon sun was scorching hot. The breeze felt more like a heatwave.

But this place was the Nahrin Desert.

...

The scorching heat made the stench of blood all around seem even thicker. It was as if a slaughter was being carried out.

The 50 Jackalans, which had long, pointy tusks growing out of their lower jaws and grey fur all over their bodies, held their beast-like heads high and screeched in despair. They swung their spiked clubs at the 20 incoming knights.

8

The Dukedom of Leo knights charged from the top of the dunes just as ferociously with their lances thrust forward.

It was a head-on, no-frills clash between the forces on both sides.

The Jackalan Tribes of the Nahrin Desert had always been sworn enemies of the Dukedom of Leo.

Both sides allowed their hatred and enmity to go to their heads, removing all forms of logic and reasoning.

However, as blood was being spilled everywhere, one Jackalan after another was sent flying by the charging warhorses as they screeched. Their chests caved in as blood burst from their fang-filled mouths.

The screeches of insanity quickly turned into whelps of struggle.

“The great Edmund, the God of War, is watching us!”

8

Rowan, the captain of the knights, pierced through a Jackalan and nailed the being onto the soft sands, yet he did not stop there. He drew his longsword and began to shout in fierce encouragement, “For the Dukedom of Leo, charge!”

1

“Charge!”

The other knights responded to his call and shouted along with him.

The Dukedom of Leo worshipped Edmund, the God of War, and that was the most common prayer of the Warrior Faith.

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However, that single line drove the knights into a frenzy as they charged into the Jackalans, bringing down their longswords left and right at the bestial beings. The stench of blood permeated the place they trod.

The battle was intense but short.

Dead bodies soon littered the place.

Blood spilled from their wounds. It seeped into the sand, staining the area red.

The Dukedom of Leo knights, which clearly emerged as victors, did not stop slaughtering. They went on to split up and chase down all of the scattered Jackalans trying to escape. They wanted to kill them all and prevent further troubles.

Only four or five Jackalans became panicked enough to run into the middle of the Swadian Peasants, intending to make a breakthrough.

They were quickly struck down by the long scythes wielded by the peasants, preventing them from even getting close to escaping.

While the Swadian Peasants were more versed in farming, they still knew basic fighting concepts.

In the game, the Continent of Caradia had been dominated by war for decades. Bandits and marauders were everywhere, forcing the peasants to learn how to craft makeshift weapons with the tools they depended on to make a living.

1

Furthermore, the long scythe-wielders were gathered in a tight formation, making even knights reluctant to barge into them head-on.

The battle was over.

The sound of the System Prompt appeared in Kant's mind at the same time.

[Ding... All enemies are downed after the slaughter.]

[Side Quest: Ambush the Jackalans is completed.]

[Reward Acquired: Date Palm Trees x 20 (Ripe)]

[Comment: This was a furious and exhilarating battle. Although the battle was fought by your allies, it was your victory, nonetheless.]

Kant smirked exasperatedly and ignored the system's comment.

There was nothing he could have done about it.

If it had not been for the 20 Dukedom of Leo knights, massive casualties would have been incurred if he had only been able to rely on his 30 Swadian Peasants. Half of them would have died without even being close to annihilating the Jackalans.

20 Date Palm Trees?

A dialog box automatically appeared on Kant's retina with images of the trees on it.

The 32-foot-tall trees were straight and had lush green leaves. Clusters of dates were on the trees, which looked huge and sweet. Being packed tight against one another made them look appetizing.

There was no way conventional crops could have been planted in a desert.

The Date Palm Trees, on the other hand, were known for their hardy resistance to both cold and heat, which made them the most reliable food source in the desert. The months between October and February were the time when the dates ripened. The dates served as a staple food of desert-dwelling races, earning them the title of Desert Bread.

As the lord of the Nahrin Desert, Kant needed those trees more than anyone else.

While he was still savoring their ultimate victory, a dialog box suddenly appeared.

[Ding... Your forces have upgradable units.]

Kant's eyes lit up.

Upgradable units? He quickly opened the system interface.

The interface displayed 30 images representing the 30 Swadian Peasants with the symbol "+," signifying that they were ready to level-up.

It was not an elaboration of the System Quest. It was a reward acquired from the battle.

[Upgradable Troop Class: Swadian Peasants x 10]

7

[Spend 10 Denars each to upgrade to Swadian Recruits]

The system showed two dialog boxes after that.

A hundred Denars was still within budget.

Kant muttered without hesitation, "System, level up right away!"

3

This was a vital upgrade that was necessary. Only Swadian Recruits gained after the upgrade would truly be able to serve as combatant units. Despite being the weakest troop class there was, they were still noticeably more capable than the Swadian Peasants.

As Kant confirmed his decision, some mystical being instantly shrouded 10 Swadian Peasants by his side.

1

Many changes were seen on the 10 peasants after that.

Some type of data chain, which only Kant was able to see, circled them. Their 5-foot-9-inch statures did not change, yet they looked considerably more buff.

The equipment they carried was the most pronounced among the changes.

Their linen robes became leather armor, which sported better defenses, while their hoods became leather hats.

The long scythes they held became standardized spears. All of them were 7.5 feet long, which made them comparable to lances wielded by the Dukedom of Leo knights.

4

Shields made of simple wooden materials appeared on their backs. Hand-axes could now be seen on their waists.

The 10 Swadian Recruits finally cast off their peasant-like appearances and became true soldiers.

3

I finally got my fighting force.

Kant sighed a breath of relief.

The 10 Swadian Recruits were only the beginning. Troop classes of higher levels awaited.

At present, he no longer needed to depend entirely on the dukedom knights. They would leave right after escorting them to the Oasis Lookout without the slightest thought of staying behind.

“Your Lordship, they are all taken care of.”

Rowan returned with his knights after Kant was done leveling up his troops.

He was rather surprised to find the 10 Swadian Recruits armed with spears. Rowan glanced at their shields and leather armors and asked, “Where did these people come from?”

“The desert is a dangerous place. It’s just sensible to have more weapons just in case.” Kant did not elaborate.

Rowan nodded, showing that he understood. He did not ask any further questions.

11

He was able to tell that the soldiers had been the peasants before. Now, they were equipped with leather armors, spears, and shields. They did not actually look all that different from the peasants wielding long scythes.

The other knights only glanced at them in slight surprise before getting off of their horses to rest.

They didn’t seem to think any of it was out of place.

The baron assigned to the Nahrin Desert would never have only brought 30 lowly peasants with him. Providing the peasants some weapons and armor to be able to even somewhat fight seemed a normal thing to do.

The knights secretly despised him.

In the forces of the dukedom, the Swadian Recruits would have been little more than conscripted cannon fodders.

“Let’s head back to camp.”

Kant hardly paid any attention to the sarcastic looks in the eyes of the knights and simply continued to give orders.

The sun was scorching as they stood on the dunes. All of them felt rather dizzy and short of breath after that intense battle. If they delayed resting any further, they would all soon be battling heatstroke.

Even the warhorses began to have foam in their noses and mouths as they restlessly sighed.

“Pack up and give the horses some water,” Rowan said to his subordinate knights.

To the knights, their warhorses were their companions.

Everyone headed to the makeshift camp below the dunes. They urgently needed a good rest after the battle.

The knight at the very rear, who was still holding onto his warhorse at the top of the dunes, pointed to the north and shouted in surprise, “Lord Edmund the God of War, look, isn’t that the Oasis Lookout?”

“What?”

Everyone looked up with a surprised expression. All their gazes were on the shouting knight, who seemed to have turned into a statue at the top of the dunes.

Kant gulped. He was one of the first to regain his composure.

He quickly climbed up the dunes and traced where the knight pointed. At the end of the horizon, a patch of green could vaguely be seen among all the yellow.

It was a clear sign.

If there was green in the desert, that said green could only be an oasis.

“We’re here.”

Kant was unable to help but mutter to himself. He clenched his teeth and uttered, “The Oasis Lookout.”

2

Everyone climbed to the top of the dunes and gazed at the green far away.

All of them were stunned, yet it was excitement like no other seen in their eyes.

They had toiled for six days on their journey and finally reached their destination. The southern side of the Nahrin Desert was the fief and estate belonging to Baron Kant—the Oasis Lookout.

“Hurray!”

The knights excitedly cheered.

The discovery meant that they would finally be able to go home.

They no longer needed to slow down to wait for the carriages and peasants. They could ride home as quickly as possible.

It would only take them three days to get to the territory of the Dukedom of Leo and the comfortable lives they had once taken for granted.

“Alright, alright.”

Kant’s voice pulled all those people back from their excitement.

He rested his light crossbow on his shoulders and looked at the dukedom knights. He said, “We should probably settle down in the tents and have a good lunch at such a moment.”

“You’re right, Your Lordship.” Rowan smiled and nodded.

The other knights agreed and took their horses slowly down the dunes.

The Oasis Lookout was not far away, so everyone was in a good mood.

The only exception was Kant.