

# Lord of the Oasis

## Chapter 12: Coarse Salt in the Urn

The urn was the color of earth and about the size of a grown man's head. It seemed to have been used for a very long time, which was evident by the severe scuff marks on the edges. Only bits and pieces of the original image were left on the urn, making it hard to distinguish what it was.

"My Lord, I think you'd need to look at this."

...

The Swadian Peasant holding the old, tattered urn looked serious.

"Right, hold on."

Kant frowned at the peasant holding the urn.

Upon seeing the earth-colored tattered urn, his frownd deepened as he said, "If you're talking about this thing here, it's just an old urn that should be disposed of. I don't think you need to bring it here."

1

This world had no technology for making porcelain, but it did have the technology for making high-grade earthenware.

Fine, high-grade earthenware was actually quite expensive.

It was especially so in the eyes of Kant, who was from a noble family. That old, tattered urn had no value to anyone but the poorest of paupers. Even if something like that were left on the streets, few people would pick it up and consider it a treasure. Most people would leave it for the street cleaners to find and dispose of.

The Dukedom of Leo produced huge amounts of clay. As such, high-grade and low-grade earthenware were practically everywhere, making the urn nearly worthless.

“No, it’s not the urn itself.”

The Swadian Peasant shook his head.

“What is it?” Kant looked on with a curious expression.

“This.”

The peasant approached Kant. He gently and carefully held the tattered urn up for him to see. The urn seemed to have something contained within it. As he looked, white bits flickered in the light of the sun.

Kant was slightly stunned.

The sight seemed quite familiar.

1

He looked in the urn and found that those white, scattered bits were some kind of white powdery substance.

1

The identification of the substance instantly popped into his mind.

1

“Salt?” His eyes slightly widened.

The peasant nodded affirmatively and said, “Indeed, My Lord. It is salt.”

Hints of joy could be seen in Kant’s eyes.

In such a backward world, both salt and sugar were considered rare seasonings and condiments. Even as the youngest son of the duke and a baron of the Dukedom of Leo, he had brought less than two baskets full of those seasonings when he came to his fief.

Ten pounds of salt, 10 pounds of sugar and 5 pounds of black pepper were all the seasonings he acquired when he was conferred the title of baron.

2

“Where did you get this urn of salt?” he asked.

Kant unconsciously gulped. He looked at the peasant, who appeared excited.

“We found it in one of the Jackalan’s tents. There was a tent bigger than the others, and we found the urn when we were cleaning up the place,” the peasant said as he pointed to a patch of grass not far away.

“Jackalans?”

Kant licked his lips as his brows furrowed in contemplation.

He glanced at the tent, which had been cobbled together with beast pelts and linen cloth, that remained unpacked. It looked much larger than a usual Jackalan tent. He quickly came to understand something quite important.

This was likely the tent that belonged to the leader of the Jackalans.

2

Although they were considered a primitive race, they still had castes. The leader was often the one who hoarded most of the tribe’s wealth.

4

However, what piqued Kant’s interest even more was how salt was discovered in a Jackalan Tribe. It was worth noting that even lesser lords in the comparatively wealthy Dukedom of Leo would not have so much salt in their households.

“It’s probably from a salt mine in the desert.”

A Desert Bandit spoke in a confident tone. It was apparent he knew of such salt being found in the desert.

It was especially apparent when the eyes of everyone present scanned the white powdery salt in the urn, which had bits of grey in it. It confirmed what the bandit had said. “Furthermore, it’s an open-air salt mine. These coarse salts were collected from alkali soils.”

6

“Coarse salts from alkali soils?” Kant twisted his head a bit. His brow lifted.

The Desert Bandit nodded and said, "Indeed. It's very close to the salt produced by the salt mines in the Sarrand Sultanate."

Another Desert Bandit added to the explanation. "These are probably coarse salts that were just simply collected and cleaned. There are still bits of sands in them, so the texture is awful. Sarrand craftsmen filter the coarse salts for a bit before boiling them and refining them into finer table salts."

"So, that's how it's done." Kant slightly nodded.

Thoughts welled up in Kant's mind as he kept looking at the coarse salt in the urn.

"If that is true, we can be sure that there is alkali soil found in the deeper reaches of Nahrin Desert." Kant tried his best to maintain a calm expression, yet his excitement was heard leaking out through the tone of his voice.

The Desert Bandits nodded affirmatively. "Going by common logic, that is indeed how it should be."

Joy instantly filled Kant's face.

1

Even if he were to do his best to suppress his emotions, the burst of joy deep down still made him struggle to control himself.

2

"This is very good news!"

He gulped and tightly clenched his fists.

1

Salt might have been of little value in modernized Earth, but if one were to look into human history, salty seasonings had once been a symbol of luxury and high status, be it in the east or west. It was something that had once been exclusive to rich people.

3

It worked the same in this mysterious dimension of swords and magic that resembled the middle ages.

Salt was an expensive seasoning. At the same time, it was one of the common materials mages employed when casting magic. As such, having access to a precious supply meant having access to vast wealth.

3

It was quite a surprise that somewhere deep in the barren Nahrin Desert, there was actually alkali soil full of salt.

The newly discovered fact excited Kant tremendously.

1

“This is an opportunity!”

As he gulped, happiness was seen in his eyes. However, he was still extremely cautious about it. As a Transported, he understood what he would gain by having access to a place that produced salt.

Wealth.

Opportunity.

The Desert Bandits served as Kant’s backing.

4

He was very confident about being able to finish that Side Quest assigned by the system.

...

3

It was mostly because the Desert Bandits were from the desert nation of Sarrand Sultanate, so they were more than familiar with the brutal environment of a desert. Their skills were honed in the vast sea of sand, so they could all be considered desert survival experts.

4

The six Desert Bandits had the potential to help get into the deeper reaches of the Nahrin Desert.

As for that alkali soil, which was rich in natural salt, Kant had long made up his mind about it.

1

He would take it by all means.

1

Kant hailed from the Dukedom of Leo and was the youngest son of Duke Cameron, who was the top leader of the entire nation. Although Kant was not a favorite due to his mother dying young, all the mandatory aristocratic education he received from his youth enabled him to be quite knowledgeable.

4

He was also a Transported. Having lived two lives, there was no doubt that his learning ability was extremely formidable. He had indeed learned a great deal.

4

It was just like how things were at the moment.

Kant was able to tell how much of a commotion he would cause back in the dukedom, which was a nation filled with flatlands and hills, just from the fact that he had acquired intelligence regarding table salt resources.

That was because the Dukedom of Leo was not a salt-producing nation.

Furthermore, none of all the other dukedoms, which were human territories, neighboring the Dukedom of Leo, were salt-producing nations either.

If they wanted to have saltiness in their food, they could only satisfy such needs by importing salt.

1

According to the books Kant read in the tower of mages back in the castle, merchants needed to venture into faraway mountains, which were territories that belonged to non-human races. Those were territories belonging to

dwarfs, who were versed in the art of tunneling and smithing. Table salt was bought from those stout, earthy dwarfs, who were usually around 4-feet-5-inches tall, before ferrying them back thousands of miles to be sold in the human nations.

The dwarfs owned a salt mine 984 feet underground. Mining operations were conducted all day long, satisfying the alt needs of many nations. They were the greatest exporter of salt in the entire continent.

As such, the price of salt in human nations had always been high. Also, salt was not the usual type of seasoning available to commoners.

1

One pound of high-grade fine salt was of equal value to a strong, healthy horse.

6

That was the testament to just how pricey such a seasoning could be.

During the years that saw trade routes hindered by war or spice shortages, spices of even higher value, such as top-grade black pepper, were almost worth their weight in gold. They were also luxuries that greater nobles held in high regard and greatly valued.

1

Kant had ample experiences regarding such facts.

He had been in that world for 16 years and attended all manners of feasts and banquets, regardless of size.

4

However, he had never been able to feast on foods that were heavily seasoned with many different spices, not even once.

While this world had swords and magic, as well as numerous mystical items and fantastical races, it was still one that fundamentally resembled Earth during the European middle ages. It vastly lacked material supplies, and things were simple and backward. It was a feudal age that many found to be exasperating.

Huff.

Kant took a deep breath.

He quelled all that excitement deep down, returning to his usual calm self.

He still had to deal with reality.

Without ample strength, there was no way he could initiate contact with the Dukedom of Leo personally.

That place was filled with hyenas.

It was where eternally insatiable monsters thrived.

The concept of vast wealth eventually getting one into major trouble was something that had been abhorrently apparent back in his past life on Earth. If the image of the Nahrin Desert being a destitute, barren place was broken, and the fact that there was a salt mine that represented massive profit presented before the eyes of the nobles of the Dukedom of Leo, there might just be some bandits from somewhere out to make that baron of the Oasis Lookout disappear from the world forever.

Kant never held the safety and security of that world in high regard.

It was a world in which might made right. If a child were to carry gold pieces while getting near thugs, one could easily imagine what awaited that child.

I still need to become powerful myself.

Kant shook his head somewhat, but he still wore a joyful smile.

He was able to feel that joy because he was confident.

He was born with the essence of the Kingdom of Swadia, which was inherent within the system.

It was a cheat that belonged only to Kant.

“Go back and get busy.”



Kant gave orders to the Swadian Peasant who was waiting by his side.

“Yes, My Lord.” The peasant nodded respectfully.

As the peasant was about to leave, he seemed to have recalled something. While still cradling that tattered urn, he asked, “My Lord, what should I do about the coarse salt in the urn?”

That salt was raw and coarse and had yet to be filtered. Not only was there sand mixed in it, but there were also a number of potentially harmful substances.

The coarse salt had been scraped directly from the alkali soil. The Jackalans had no problem eating it like that. For human digestive systems, which were more delicate, eating things like that was a challenge. After eating this kind of coarse salt, a human would have quickly displayed signs of food poisoning, such as vomiting and diarrhea. In the worst-case scenario, it had the potential to be life-threatening.

“Well...” Kant was rather baffled. He turned his eyes toward the six Desert Bandits.

“My Lord, we know how to cook the salt to run coarse salt into table salt.”

The six Desert Bandits were living up to their expectations. They nodded affirmatively and said, “Doing so is actually quite simple.”

“Very well.” Kant nodded with satisfaction.

The desert where the Sarrand Sultanate was located also had alkali soils. Sarrandans, who lived in the desert, knew how to make the inedible raw coarse salt into edible seasoning through some ancient methods passed down through the generations.

A furnace, two large pots, and a huge amount of charcoal were all that was required to refine salt.

All of that was easily found inside the Council Hall.

4

Kant looked at the Desert Bandits with curious eyes. He paid close attention to how they turned harmful raw coarse salt into edible table salt.

“So, do you people filter the salt using charcoal?”

Kant had a general concept of how the process worked. All the mandatory education he received in his past life did not go to waste.

The furnace was lit.

The water in the huge pot quickly came to a boil. The Desert Bandits poured all the coarse salt from the old, tattered urn into the pot.

As the steam rose, the white coarse salt began to dissolve in the boiling water.

However, that huge pot of clear spring water seemed to have grey impurities seen in it. There were so many that bits of granules could almost be seen in all that boiling water with the naked eye.

It was all dirt.

“Keep the fire low. We shall lower the heat afterward,” a Desert Bandit said.

Another Desert Bandit, who was waiting at the side, immediately turned the fire in the furnace to low.

2

The boiling saltwater gradually settled. A layer of fine sand could be seen at the bottom of the pot.

While the salt was water-soluble, any other solids fell to the bottom.

“This is interesting.” Kant nodded. This was a piece of useful knowledge that could be applicable to daily life.

After a while, the saltwater became clear while the sediment at the bottom was packed together. One would have found it hard to imagine just how dirty the seemingly clean, white coarse salt had actually just been.

“Get ready.”

The Desert Bandit in charge of the operation had spoken.

Another Desert Bandit quickly fetched a second big pot, which was packed with charcoal on the inside.

It served as the key to filtering out the impurities.

That Desert Bandit took a large wooden spatula and began to dump saltwater into the pot filled with charcoal. His moves were fast and adept. There was only a thin layer of saltwater and a layer of dirt left at the bottom of the pot.

“We’re basically done.”

The Desert Bandit told the others, “Dump the garbage away and scrub the pot clean.”

He hastily wiped the sweat off of his face and turned around to face Kant with a smile. He said, “My Lord, we shall let it sit for an hour before repeating the process with a new pot and fresh charcoal four times. After we’re done with the filtering, we will boil the water until it dries up. We will then be able to sift good, edible fine salt from the finished product.”

“Very well.” Kant nodded.

He looked at the steaming iron pot with salt water being mixed within the charcoal. These natural filters easily filtered out most of the impurities. The only steps left were to repeat the process several times, leaving only pure saltwater behind.

After that, they would have to continue to heat the iron pot with fire and sift the salt from the end product. Eventually, the process resulted in edible table salt.

“My Lord.”

The Desert Bandit said with full surety, “This will become high-grade white salt.”

“Splendid. Splendid indeed.”

Kant nodded as he wore a brimming smile on his face. This was definitely something to be happy about.

He fully understood what white salt really meant.

He knew the value of such things better than most.

The eventual fine, snow-white salt was capable of fetching very high prices back in the Dukedom of Leo, especially since such an item was only available to great nobles and very wealthy merchants. It was possible that every pound could be sold for at least 50 Great Silvers.

It was a luxury that only nobles had access to.

This salt was definitely different from the coarser salt, which was obtained through wells, usually eaten by wealthier commoners and lesser lords.

This fine, high-grade salt was not only expensive, but it also came with a symbol of status.

“I really can’t wait.”

Kant was already smiling from ear to ear.

Within just half a day, inedible coarse salt from alkali soil was turned into fine white salt that could fetch exorbitant prices.

As long as Kant was able to seize that natural salt mine in the form of alkali soil, he could easily earn massive profits from the monopoly.

As such, he was very eager to see the finished product.

While he was currently incapable of organizing trade caravans in broad daylight and selling the salt in huge batches in the dukedom, he could still sell small amounts of the fine, white salt on the black market. He believed that many would likely kill to get their hands on the salt.

1

This salt was much more than just a seasoning.

It was an essential material for the mages in the towers to cast spells, as well as a symbol of status flaunted by the nobles.

One way or another, Kant would have no problem selling the precious salt.

Time quickly passed.

The sun could be seen in the western dunes, scattering evening light throughout the oasis.

...

The night was about to arrive.

The dazzling stars began to subtly appear in the sky. A crescent moon soon brightly shone white light on the desert.

This was the Oasis Lookout of the Nahrin Desert.

It was where Drondheim was located.

The peasants, who hailed from the Kingdom of Swadia, stayed busy.

With tools in hand, they carefully plowed the land on the northern side of the oasis. They cleared out useless weed and made the place look like a field. Waterways were dug, forming effective irrigation channels for the would-be farm.

The lands that were being worked on would become Drondheim's agricultural area.

While the place was still barren and no crops were currently being planted, it was still a good idea to work the dirt beforehand.

Most importantly, the irrigation channels were dug long enough to reach the Date Palm Trees.

The 20 grown Date Palm Trees served as the only crop-producing plants Drondheim had at the moment. While they were trees and only able to produce dates, said crops were able to fill the bellies of the people, which slightly eased their food shortage predicament.

At the same time, those Date Palm Trees served as a solid line of defense against the desert's encroachment.

As long as the roots of the trees remained strong and sturdy, capable of reaching huge areas, the sand underneath would remain in place.

By doing so, the oasis was able to maintain its shape, avoiding getting increasingly smaller from the encroachment of the desert. Furthermore, as the fallen leaves piled up, a new layer of soil would begin to form. When coupled with ample water, it set into motion the gradual expansion of the oasis.

Then again, the beneficial cycles that led to the growth of the oasis would take hundreds of years to occur naturally.

“Get dinner ready. We might just be making larger portions tonight.”

Kant looked at the exhausted peasants. He wore a smile on his lips as he said, “Put more dried meat into the meals. We all need better nourishment after a day of hard work.”

The three peasants who served as cooks nodded and began to get the kitchen utensils ready.

Those three were given their orders by Kant beforehand, so they did not participate in the digging of channels or cleanup of the oasis. They needed to prepare dinner at noon since Lord Kant asked for the dinner to be prepared in bigger, loftier portions.

Although they were not all that proficient in cooking, as long as there was meat, the dinner would become an excellent feast regardless.

Furthermore, more than 40 baskets full of dates had been collected in the morning.

Even if everyone were to only eat bread and dates, drinking only spring water from the oasis, that would have lasted them for 15 days. With the addition of the 20 new bags of flour in the storage room, the total amount of food was expected to last for 30 days.

While they still lacked a sustainable food source, they no longer had to immediately worry about food.

The kitchen furnaces in the Council Hall were ignited.

In mere moments, the fragrance of food wafted throughout the oasis along with the wind.

The peasants, who only had some bread and dates at noon, were famished. All of them gulped as they smelled the enticing fragrance. Their eyes were fixed on the kitchen.

The wait before the meal was excruciating for those famished peasants.

However, the Swadian Recruits on guard duty were having an even harder time as they held their spears.

They had not had much to eat at lunchtime.

However, for the sake of the village's safety, they needed to make sacrifices.

The 20 units were divided into two platoons. They stood guard at the eastern and western dunes, respectively. As dusk came, the dazzling stars and bright moonlight enabled them to barely see what was out there over 300 feet away.

They had been on-guard and watching for the Jackalans.

The 10 Swadian Militia in Drondheim were just as careful and alert.

At least for the moment, it was fortunate that things were still safe,

However, their luck was not an excuse to let their guards down. No one knew when those ferocious, brutal Jackalans would retaliate for the earlier slaughter.

"Dinner is ready."

Three peasants brought pots out of the kitchen.

There were bread slices toasted to golden perfection, as well as thick, hearty vegetable soup made using dried meat, cabbage, and flour.

There was also the freshly plucked dates.

"We thank our Lord for giving us food." Whispers of gratitude were heard from the mouths of the peasants at dinner.

Kant nodded and raised his hand, saying, "You've earned it."

It was a simple ritual. Kant was their lord and owner of the system, which made him someone equivalent to a king of the Swadians given where they were. As such, it was only a matter of fact that they respected such a figure from the bottom of their hearts.

Kant's dinner was prepared as well.

His portion had black pepper and sugar, as well as fine, white salt, cooked and filtered by the Desert Bandits, added.

“Not bad at all.”

Kant nodded in satisfaction.

The dried meat had been roasted and given a dash of crushed black pepper, making it exude a mesmerizing fragrance.

When the dried meat was eaten with the clean, white, fine salt on the wooden plate, Kant felt as if he was back at a feast thrown by Cameron, the Duke of the Dukedom of Leo, enjoying tasty roast meat available only to nobles.

He gulped them down and narrowed his gaze. He quipped with a smile, “This is really good.”

The dinner had been a very good one.

Kant was not the only one who enjoyed the meal. The peasants, who had been working hard throughout the day, shared the same thoughts.

Even the soldiers who took turns eating dinner expressed heartfelt gratitude for the food that night.

In a barren desert like that, there was no guarantee that every meal could be so hearty. That was even more so given the fact that they were able to enjoy sweet dates and clean water after the meal. Everything truly felt heavenly.

The peasants even thought that they would really be blessed if they were able to sleep on beds instead of holes in the sand.

It was truly a pity.

Dronnheim currently only had two buildings—the Council Hall and Desert Bandit Lair.

Before they could acquire better residences, new Side Quests needed to be completed. Also, the location of the salt needed to be discovered before the system provided a reward of five standard Kingdom of Swadia-styled stone and wood houses,

At present, most of them had to sleep in tents and sand holes.



“Stay sharp in the night.”

Kant gave a final order before going to bed.

The soldiers answered affirmatively, “Rest assured, My Lord.”

Everyone had experienced a long day, so it was a good idea for them to go to bed early.

As for the soldiers, they took turns resting. After all, they were the ones who had taken up guard duty in the night to keep everyone safe.

Before long, everyone had gone to bed.

When the Swadian Peasants returned to their holes and lied down, loud snoring was quickly heard throughout the oasis, which sounded rather irritating.

The night was no longer young. Midnight soon arrived.

Only the snores of the peasants continued to be heard throughout the Oasis Lookout.

There were five Swadian Militia standing guard and staying alert for everyone else.

“Gosh, the snoring is awful.”

One of the militia members shook his head exasperatingly and sighed. “I can’t even sleep even if I want to now.”

“Just bear with it. This is nothing.” The other militia member held onto his heavy spear. He spoke in an unfazed manner. “You have no idea just how awful your snoring was when I was sleeping by your side.”

“What? For real?” That militia member rolled his eyes exasperatedly and asked, “How come I know nothing of it?”

“You were fast asleep just like a dead pig,” the other militia member jested.

The militia member who complained first was just about to retort when he caught sight of something not far away from the dunes. There seemed to be some dark shadows at the dunes, which alerted him.

“Hey, what’s that over there?”

He did not let his guard down. He instead jabbed at the other militia member with his arm.

“Huh?” That other militia member peered toward that direction as he frowned.

The dunes east of the Oasis Lookout had starlight and moonlight shining over them. The sand seemed like it was being blown in the wind in the dark sky, which looked out of place.

That militia member’s expression became serious as he said, “Something is not right.”

“Yeah, I saw shadows just a moment ago,” the other militia member added with a gulp.

He had a bad feeling and was unable to help but mumble, “Are those damned Jackalans really going to sneak up on us in the night?”

“Go and wake the others.”

The other militia member did not respond to him. Instead, he said in a serious tone, “Be quick about it!”

“Will do.” That militia member behaved just as seriously as he ran toward the roof.

Shadows were lurking on top of the dunes at the end of the two militia members’ line of sight. They did not look human under the moonlight. They resembled beasts walking upright. There was no way the militia would not be able to tell that the scattered Jackalans were sneaking up on them in the dark of night.