

Lord of the Oasis

Chapter 20: The Huge Tribe in the Desert

The early morning sun in the Nahrin Desert remained scorching.

Kant flicked his reins and rode forward.

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The six well-armed and well-equipped Desert Bandits were right behind him, riding their desert horses. Their eyes were alert and cautious without the slightest hint of slacking. They were behaving as if enemies were laying low somewhere and would spring up at any given moment.

They headed for the deeper reaches of the desert.

They were out to look for the Jackalan Tribe that had assaulted the Oasis Lookout the night before.

“Look over there.”

Kant stopped his horse and narrowed his eyes, peering at the dune before them.

There were some holes visible in the sand.

Kant exhaled slowly. He turned around and said, “It looks like we’re on the right course, people.”

“The tracks they left behind are quite obvious.”

The Desert Bandits followed them. In a very obvious scornful tone, one of them said, “So, those dogs really have no idea how to survive in the desert.”

“If these dogs had shown up in the desert of Sarrand, there would be nothing left of them.”

The other Desert Bandits looked on with the same disdain and scorn.

Conflict was everywhere throughout the Continent of Caradia. The incessant wars all over the place forced the Desert Bandits into becoming desert experts.

They looked at the obvious tracks in the desert, which in their eyes might have as well been the Jackalans saying, "Hey, I was here. Did you know? Follow these tracks, and you'll be able to find my lair. Come quickly. We're all very eager to get butchered by you people."

"This is ridiculous."

Kant nodded with a scornful smirk on his face.

He kicked the belly of his horse lightly and flicked his reins before plainly saying, "Let's continue moving. Stay sharp."

"Understood." All of the Desert Bandits replied unanimously.

As cavalry units, their mobility within a short timeframe was far superior to the Jackalans, which were all infantry units.

They tracked the obvious, messy trail in the sand as they moved further into the desert.

They had no worries about routes and direction as long as they did not encounter a sandstorm. Their horses had left tracks behind, which was something unique in the Nahrin Desert.

None of the Jackalans rode horses. They did not even have a concept of taming horses.

Those tamable creatures, which could have served as important assets to cavalry units, were little more than prey in the eyes of the Jackalans.

3

Furthermore, there were hardly any horses found in the desert. They would have just been more creatures dying of thirst.

In a desert, there was nothing but endless sand.

The place was also a symbol of extreme infertility.

From Kant's perspective, the Nahrin Desert was such a barren place that it was far harsher and far more brutal than any deserts he knew of. It could hardly sustain any living beings.

That image was cemented deeper into his mind as they ventured further into the desert.

There were rarely even trees known for their hardiness against draught in that desert.

Except for the few found near the oasis, no green was found in a place without an ounce of water. There were only vast swaths of yellow sand, which seemed to be out to consume everything.

2

The desert was practically like purgatory.

Kant looked grim.

As they ventured deeper into the desert, the barrenness of the place filled his mind.

"Who the heck would live in a place like this?"

He gulped. His mouth was so parched that he felt as if he was able to spit fire.

The six Desert Bandits behind him shared the same sentiment and conditions. One of them was perceptive enough to take one of the water sacks on the back of his horse and thrust it toward Kant. "My Lord, you best have some water."

2

"Right."

Kant nodded and took the water sack.

The water felt cool to the touch. It was spring water gathered from the pond at the Oasis Lookout.

He took a huge gulp. The water tasted sweet and had a cooling effect.

The spring water washed the anxiousness and heat he felt deep down somewhat, but he still felt heavy.

The quest this time was to locate the Jackalan Tribe, as well as search for the alkali soil that was possibly out there. However, they spent one whole morning finding nothing, which frustrated him.

He did not want to return empty-handed.

“Let’s move on and hurry up. It’s almost noon.

Kant gave his command as he continued riding forward, hastening their speed.

The six Desert Bandits behind him nodded. They wiped the water marks off from around the corner of their mouths and placed the water sacks back where they belonged before riding out at the same speed.

All of them were cavalry units.

2

Their current speed was over 10 times faster when compared to the speed that Kant’s entourage had traveled when they first left the Senwaya Range and headed to the Oasis Lookout. Since they had a clear trail to follow, the squad of seven people rode very quickly.

They took a short break at noon.

When the sun was no longer as high and the temperature had lowered somewhat, they continued on their scouting mission.

They rode until the sun was setting and evening came.

Kant and the Desert Bandits finally stopped riding. The messy trail beneath them led to a place with numerous tents, which were just little more than 328 feet away.

4

They had found the Jackalan Tribe.

Kant’s pupils slightly contracted.

The Desert Bandits by his side got off of their horses before he said anything. They led their desert horses to hide behind a dune to avoid the Jackalans, which had extremely high numbers, detecting them and causing any unnecessary trouble.

Kant also leaped off of his horse. He handed the reins to a Desert Bandit behind him.

He headed to the top of the dune and carefully lowered himself. He observed the tribe. "This tribe seems to be far larger than the one back at the Oasis Lookout." He paused for a bit and added, "Three times larger at least."

"More than that maybe." The eyes of the two Desert Bandits who followed behind him looked harsh.

The tribe, as they observed, was huge.

Tents cobbled together with all manner of materials were messily sprawled all over the sand. There was only a hint of planning or order. The Jackalans, which had tusks growing out of their lower jaws and grey fur all over their bodies, walked around and about the tents at will, making the place look like a slum.

Garbage and leftover bones littered the place.

There was even excrement that seemed to have covered the sand where the tribe was located.

There were a good number of young Jackalans playing and rolling about in the excrement as if the excrement was just clean clay and none of it was dirty. They had no concept of dirtiness to speak of at all.

6

"This is disgusting."

Kant spat at his side.

He finally understood why there was always a stench to the Jackalans.

He found the reason right there and then.

"My Lord, bad news indeed."

A Desert Bandit said in a serious tone, "From what we can see, there are about 2,000 adult Jackalans and 200 adolescents. If nothing were to go wrong, this would be a very well-developed Jackalan Tribe."

"Well, that really is bad news." Kant nodded. His eyes were shrouded with heaviness.

He slowly lowered his head and took a good look before him. "A Jackalan Tribe with a population of nearly 2,500, located just less than a day's worth of distance away from our Oasis Lookout, is indeed dangerous, no matter how you look at it."

"They seem to have a food source as well."

In a tone that sounded even more serious, a Desert Bandit said, "More bad news."

Kant narrowed his eyes and peered where the Desert Bandit pointed.

He was slightly startled.

However, his expression became even grimmer.

Right next to the Jackalan Tribe's messy tents was a massive number of slain beasts laid out in the sun. A rough estimation suggested that at least 300 sand gazelles were being skinned.

It seemed that they had been put out in the sun for quite a while. It made them look like dried meat.

Those were creatures capable of surviving in the Nahrin Desert with little need for energy.

The sand gazelles were naturally resistant to drought and capable of eating many types of plants. Since they had extremely strong life forces, it made them ideal creatures for living in the desert.

The huge, mighty Senwaya Range, which served as the natural border that separated the Nahrin Desert and the Dukedom of Leo, was where many sand gazelles lived and bred. Kant knew at least that much.

There were even hunters from the southern villages of the dukedom who hunted sand gazelles in the mountains.

Now, Kant was frowning even harder. He knew that there were many sand gazelles near the Senwaya Range, but he had no idea there were sand gazelles that deep in the desert.

Worse still, the population was sizeable enough to serve as prey for one whole Jackalan Tribe.

“My Lord, there may have been one thing you overlooked.”

Another Desert Bandit, whose face looked rather terrified, had spoken.

Kant frowned and asked, “What is it?”

Desert Bandits were psychologically hardened people, so it was rather surprising to Kant to see such a shocked expression on one of them.

Kant’s eyes soon became filled with terror, just like that Desert Bandit’s had been.

Kant suddenly realized what that Desert Bandit had been getting at. He was unable to help but utter, “This can’t be!”

“Aye, but it’s real.”

That Desert Bandit gulped slightly and continued in a slow tone, “My Lord, I have no idea how this could have happened, but the reality is right before us.” He paused for a bit and said, “This Jackalan Tribe has no water source. There is no lake and no soil. This isn’t an oasis at all, yet here they are.”

All of them looked stunned.

The Jackalan Tribe’s tents, which were a little more than 328 feet away, were extremely messy.

There were Jackalans wearing crude, ragged linen clothing everywhere, as well as young Jackalans who had no concept of hygiene.

Excrement and garbage littered the place.

Regardless of how hard Kant searched the place with his eyes, there was no sign that the flat sands where they lived was an oasis.

It was just like how the Desert Bandit said before.

There was no water source.

No lake.

No soil.

No oasis.

Then again, a place without an oasis and water source in the Nahrin Desert should have been a place of death.

He was unable to understand just how that Jackalan Tribe managed to get so well-developed under such conditions.

It was a Jackalan Tribe with a population close to 2,500, which made it a rather massive tribe. Yet, such a tribe existed in an area of the desert without an oasis or water. It was indeed a harrowing fact.

That fact struck terror in their hearts.

Kant muttered to himself, "Something doesn't add up."