

Lord of the Oasis

Chapter 22: Enemy in the Dark of Night

The evening sun struggled to stay around. It created enough light for them to see what was ahead of them.

Kant frowned slightly.

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His heart raced along with his emotions.

“This is interesting.”

As he spoke, Kant’s eyes looked rather cold.

There was an obvious curved line left on the flat sands north of the messy Jackalan Tribe. It winded about as it led to a dune. It extended to deeper parts of the desert.

The line was clear for all to see.

The line itself was darker than its surrounding colors, making it obvious that prolonged travel through the same route caused the sands to harden.

“The Jackalans made these with their steps.”

As he commented, the Desert Bandit frowned like Kant

The Jackalans, who were still at a primitive tribal state, had no concepts of roads.

However, they had still been able to blaze a trail in the desert. It was obvious that they had reasons to do so. They had gone to-and-fro on the route throughout long periods of time, making the winding path into the most primitive of roads there were.

“Why are they heading north?” Kant was puzzled.

The Desert Bandits pondered that for a bit. One of them looked up and said with a serious expression, "Perhaps that is their daily quest."

"A daily quest?"

Kant frowned. The term sounded like something assigned by the system.

"It is like going out hunting every day."

The look on the Desert Bandit's face turned increasingly serious as he said, "I think it probably leads to the salt mine that we are looking for, which has been taken over by the Jackalans. Coarse salt is being excavated every day."

"That is speculation." Kant frowned and said, "It sounds rather ridiculous."

1

Jackalans were primitive tribal beings. Digging in a salt mine was not something that would have done them any good.

2

Salt was a type of seasoning.

At the same time, it was a commodity. Furthermore, it was considered a luxury in the dukedom.

Kant did not agree with that Desert Bandit.

To him, even if the Jackalans were to actually dig up coarse salts in the salt mine, no merchant had been purchasing the salt, even though the dukedom was so near them. The fact that there was salt in the Nahrin Desert was unheard of back in the dukedom.

1

Things would have been different if the nobles of the dukedom knew that there was a salt mine there.

They would have given everything they had to amass a truly elite force and kill every Jackalan found in the desert.

Kant knew well of their greed.

As such, Kant frowned and shook his head in disbelief at that Desert Bandit. He said, "There can't be any of those brutal primitive Jackalans capable of digging out huge amounts of coarse salt and selling them as goods. Can there?"

Everyone knew how ferocious Jackalans were. They were devoid of any capacity for reasoning and behaved more like beasts.

That speculation sounded like little more than a joke to Kant.

"My Lord, it is still very possible."

The Desert Bandit's expression did not change. His expression remained serious.

That severe expression made Kant frown even harder. There was no way troop classes from the system could betray him.

Kant took a deep breath and asked, "What are the reasons?"

The Desert Bandit immediately replied, "It's simple, My Lord. Look over there at the urn the Jackalans drink from. If anything, you should be familiar with that urn."

"Yeah." Kant narrowed his eyes and peered. He slightly nodded.

Even though it was quite a distance away, he was still able to tell apart the urn used by the Jackalans for drinking.

The black exterior looked severely worn. It was as if it had been left in the desert for a very long time. The mouth of the urn looked broken. It made it so that it was little more than trash to the Dukedom of Leo, which produced massive amounts of clay. Not even commoners would have bothered picking such a thing up.

"If you look closely at the urn, you'll find that they are many in the tribe."

The Desert Bandit's tone grew increasingly serious as he said, "There are always a lot of urns around the messy tents. I don't think the Jackalans are using the urns to carry water or anything else."

Kant's eyes remained fixed. He stayed silent.

He stared at the large Jackalan Tribe and found himself getting restless.

“So, is this true?” Kant slowly asked.

It was as if he was asking about the truthfulness of the case, despite knowing deep down that what the Desert Bandit said was true.

“It is.” The Desert Bandit nodded.

He told Kant, “The Jackalans at the Oasis Lookout are related to this place somehow!”

His tone was confident.

“Well.” Kant’s face looked rather bitter. He nodded and said, “It does look like that.”

He was able to tell from the ambush that night.

Those Jackalans were reinforcements gathered from that huge tribe.

If the two tribes were unrelated, they would not have been Jackalans from that huge tribe forming an army heading for the Oasis Lookout to begin with.

Kant slightly closed his eyes.

He began to lower his head and think. Thoughts sped in his mind at very high speeds.

Things looked increasingly worse for him.

In his perspective, things had just taken a turn for the worse. It was serious enough that development of the Oasis Lookout and establishing a true Drondheim became rather uncertain.

His mind was shaken.

This was a well-developed Jackalan Tribe.

A salt mine had been taken over by a huge Jackalan Tribe.

All of that made Kant lose his way. He was puzzled as to what to do next.

All he had was a small village with a population of little more than 60. There was no way they could resist the Jackalan Tribe.

Trying to do so was like having a death wish.

“Well, what should we do now?”

6

Kant opened his eyes and bitterly smirked.

The Desert Bandits were all silent. They had no answer to that question posed by Kant, their lord.

Their forces were simply too small.

Kant nodded slightly. He looked grim as he said, “We should take this seriously. If we don’t want to die horrible deaths in the Nahrin Desert, we need to absolutely prepare for this.”

He had not come to the Nahrin Desert to die.

Kant clenched his fists a little and reasserted himself.

“Let’s go. We’ll circle around and have a look over there.”

Kant turned around and told the Desert Bandits, “I at least want to know if that place holds a true salt mine.”

“Understood.” The Desert Bandits nodded.

While the Jackalan population was massive, that ambush in the night did not kill Kant’s forces right where they stood. More than 100 bodies were left behind as they left the Oasis Lookout battered and bruised. They had even left enough tracks for his cavalry units to trace them.

As he thought deeper, Kant was able to come to a realization. The Jackalans were not all that powerful in terms of combat capacity.

While they were ferocious and of hardier constitutions than normal humans, they lacked excellent strategies and tactics, as well as effective weapons for killing enemies. They also lacked armor capable of protecting their bodies.

Swadian Peasants, who were all zero-level troop classes, were good enough to take them on.

A band of first- and second-level troop classes would have been able to practically slaughter Jackalans of the same number.

There was no reason for Kant to be afraid.

“Let’s go.”

He gently kicked the stomach of his horse and rode swiftly across the dune.

The six Desert Bandits flicked their reins and followed right behind their lord, riding just as swiftly.

I’ll finish the System quest and get myself troop classes up to higher levels.

Kant reaffirmed his resolve deep down.

He was certain that if he were to have 100 fully armed Swadian Knights, which were known to be the king of troop classes on land from the system, he would be able to ride straight into such a huge Jackalan Tribe.

6

Despite the odds, he was sure that they would come out on top.

They followed the trail left by the Jackalans on the sand. They moved quickly.

The light of the evening was finally gone.

A bright moon and dazzling stars were seen in the sky.

The temperature throughout the arid air began to drop sharply, making Kant and the Desert Bandits, who were riding forward on their horses, feel a chill.

They put on the woolen clothing they had brought with them and continued riding forward.

At times, beginning a journey in the night was the right thing to do, compared to the unforgiving heat of the day and the resulting massive consumption of water. One only needed to keep warm during the night.

Kant and the others had only decided to continue riding in the night due to such reasons in the first place.

Time gradually passed.

The moon was high in the sky. The bright, round celestial entity glowed with an alluring silver radiance.

It grew increasingly cold in the night. It made Kant's face felt rather stiff.

"Everyone."

He opened his mouth and breathed warm air, yet he pulled back the reins of his steed. He raised his right arm at the same time and said, "Stop riding."

The six Desert Bandits behind him immediately got off their desert horses.

"My Lord, what is happening?"

Mist was coming out of their mouths. The heat from their bodies formed a stark contrast with the surrounding temperature.

However, they quickly discovered why Kant told them to stop riding. They extended their stiff arms one after another. They reached for the spears they had strapped onto their backs. All of them looked serious.

The enemy was coming.

Chapter 23: Death Sentence by Exposure to the Sun

There were enemies.

The six Desert Bandits were all prepared. They held their standard spears in their hands.

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At the end of the sandy route before them, where moonlight waned, seven to eight shadows were standing at the dune by the side of the route. They were not moving. It was as if the enemy was staring down at them.

“Get ready for combat.”

Kant’s voice was heard. He reached for the light crossbow behind his back.

He pulled the string and loaded a bolt onto it. He lifted his arm. He aimed at the shadow faraway with his finger resting on the trigger.

The Desert Bandits unraveled the sacks on their backs, exposing the pilum just behind their necks.

The Desert Bandits were more versed at throwing those projectiles while riding horses.

All of them were ready to fight.

“Be careful.”

Kant reminded them as he rode slowly forward.

They were still at a safe distance, which was why they dared to continue closing in. That was an action backed by the fact that they were cavalry units. If they found the enemy’s fighting capacity was beyond what they were capable of resisting, they would immediately retreat.

Cavalry units were known for their superb mobility. They were able to come and go like a gust of wind.

Despite being vigilant, the shadows on the dune paid no heed to them.

It was as if they were simply standing on the dune watching Kant and his people without bothering to move away. No movements were detected from the enemy, and no sounds were made by them either.

“My Lord, something isn’t right,” a Desert Bandit said.

They eyed the dune. The Desert Bandits, who were all experts at fighting in the desert, did not let the cold freeze their brains over. Their thought processes remained astute.

They looked at the shadows above and instinctively found something was off.

“Let’s go and have a closer look.”

Kant nodded. He noticed something was off as well. In a low voice, he still told his men, "If anything happens, retreat immediately."

"Understood," the Desert Bandits replied.

They slowly moved forward along the desert route.

They gradually closed in. Kant frowned as he continued to eye the shadows far away.

His eyes did not fool him. While his sight was somewhat blurred by the dark of night, Kant was able to tell that those shadows were from Jackalans.

They had beast-like heads and bodies covered in fur.

Those were notable physical traits of Jackalans. There was no way that Kant, someone who fought them over and over, was mistaken.

However, his frown instantly deepened.

"Why do those Jackalans on the dune look so weird?" he asked.

"Indeed."

The Desert Bandits nodded at the same time, looking serious as they did so.

In their minds, the Jackalans they were closing in on looked very unnatural. They look shriveled, and their heads were hanging low. It was as if they were tied to something.

The bright moonlight above made the dune look even clearer.

Kant's pupils slightly contracted.

"What the..." He unconsciously mumbled, feeling his emotions fluctuate like he was riding a roller-coaster.

"My Lord, be careful!"

The Desert Bandits behind him kicked their horses. All six of them moved quickly forward, tightly holding their spears. Their eyes swept vigilantly around them.

There was nothing out of place to be found.

There were no enemies.

All of them breathed a sigh of relief. They refocused their eyes onto the dune. All of them looked shocked.

There were indeed seven Jackalans at the top of the dune. They all sported tusks on their lower jaws and were coated in grey fur all over their bodies. They all had jackal-like heads and human-like bodies.

However, all of the Jackalans were tied to wooden posts.

The Jackalans were securely tied up with thick ropes from their thighs to their torsos.

“What is happening?”

Kant still tightly held his light crossbow, but he slightly kicked the belly of his horse instead.

The warhorse he rode was perceptive enough to sense the magnitude of force being applied. It slowed down even more.

The Desert Bandits behind him all looked on with grim expressions. Their gazes were fixed on the seven Jackalans. One of them said, “All of them are dried corpses. Judging by the temperature of the Nahrin Desert, they have been tied to the posts for at least a week.”

“A week?”

Kant narrowed his eyes on the bodies. “Was it some kind of punishment?”

“I believe it was an execution,” a Desert Bandit replied.

If that was not an execution, these Jackalans would not have ended up turning into dried corpses.

Their death sentence was carried out by tying them to wooden posts and mercilessly exposing them to the scorching sun of the Nahrin Desert. The Jackalans slowly dried up while they were alive. It was one of the cruelest punishments that could have been given.

“Why were they executed in the first place?” Kant frowned even harder.

However, he did not fear anything. He vigilantly scanned the dune before him before telling the Desert Bandits, “Stay sharp. We’ll go out and have a look!”

They were all cavalry units, so there was nothing to be afraid of.

Besides, the legs of Jackalans were no match for the horses.

1

Furthermore, Kant did not believe that the Jackalans would have found all seven of them.

It was even more ridiculous to think that they had been trying to ambush them by setting up such an obvious trap.

If that truly turned out to be the case, the Jackalans would have simply attacked the Oasis Lookout instead. Compared to mobile cavalry units, a village that was unable to go anywhere was a larger, more obvious, and lucrative target.

“Hyah!”

Kant flicked the reins. His feet tightly cradled the horse beneath him.

He aimed his light crossbow ahead. When they arrived at the top of the dune, there was no enemy to be found.

Kant looked at the dried Jackalan bodies. With their fangs bared, they still looked ferocious. He frowned and said, “They really died horrible deaths.”

A Desert Bandit nodded and said, “Being dried up alive without drinking a single drop of water is brutal.”

Such penalties had been doled out by desert people and races before.

The Sarrand Sultanate had once employed such penalties, but it was only to deal with ferocious, unforgiving enemies or to sentence criminals who had committed horrendous unforgivable crimes.

“This is a pity.”

Kant moved his eyes elsewhere. The dried corpses served to shock and scare enemies.

They died horrible deaths, but they were still used after they were dead.

However, he hardly felt sorry for them since they were all Jackalans, which were his enemies. If possible, he would have been willing to sentence all of them to die by sun exposure. That would have dealt with a serious problem early on.

“That... That is...”

Kant turned his eyes around and looked at the place.

When he looked at the northern horizon of the dune, his pupils dilated considerably. “Alkali soil!”

Kant shouted in surprise.

Under the bright moonlight to the north of the dune, a sea of white was seen spreading all over the place. It was as if the sea of white were about to swallow the entire desert.

That was the very alkali soil that Kant and his men were looking for.

It also verified the Desert Bandits’ speculation that there was indeed a naturally exposed salt mine somewhere in the desert.

“This is real.”

Kant gulped while tightly holding onto his light crossbow.

From the perspective of contemporary humans back on Earth, that place was but a useless piece of alkali soil. All the salt found on the ground was poor-quality and coarse salt. It was so bad that it only served industrial purposes. It would have never made it into the lives of common people.

During the middle ages, all that salt was considered a luxury.

There was an underground salt mine in Poland from his previous life that served as the main source of edible salt. It supplied the needs of Europe for hundreds of years. The salt mine also contributed to about 30 percent of tax

revenue for Poland every year. That alone spoke volumes of how profitable the salt trade had been.

4

“My Lord, those tents over there.”

A Desert Bandit direct Kant’s attention elsewhere. They had found something out of the ordinary.

They saw 40 to 50 ragged tents erected at the edge of the salt mine.

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From the looks of it, it was the Jackalans again.

Chapter 24: Returning to the Oasis Lookout

The bright moonlight shone on the alkali soil. The snow-white colors looked mesmerizing.

It was a special area. It resulted from a lake being surrounded by a desert and exposed to the scorching sun. The surrounding heat accelerated the drying lake’s evaporation until only huge amounts of salt were left behind.

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“It does look pretty.”

Kant softly sighed but remained firmly holding the light crossbow in his hand.

He saw 46 ragged tents erected at the edge of the alkali soil. Looking at the messed up appearance and the ground around them filled with dirt and filth severely impacted his mood.

More importantly, the beautiful piece of alkali soil that represented wealth and power was already taken.

The alkali soil’s current master was the Jackalans.

They were the greatest enemy of Drondheim.

“Things sure look bad.”

A Desert Bandit by Kant’s side frowned. With a serious expression, he turned around and said to Kant, “According to the sizes of the tents, there should be at least 300 or so Jackalans over there. If what we speculated before turns out to be correct, then those Jackalans are definitely connected with those from the large tribe. They were probably sent to excavate the salt mine.”

“It does seem like that.” Kant nodded.

The large-scale Jackalan Tribe had gained full control of the exposed salt mine. Judging from the trail, which had been trampled on so often that the sand had become solid, it was easy to tell that the salt there had been excavated for quite a long time.

In truth, “excavation” was the wrong term to use.

The Jackalans simply collected the salt.

The salt mine was exposed in the desert, so anyone would have been able to collect the raw coarse salt all over the place.

If he so fancied, Kant, who possessed the techniques to refine them, at any time could have simply refined them into fine white salt that would only grace the tables of nobles in the Dukedom of Leo. The salt would have fetched a price of astronomical proportions.

At that moment, a prompt from the system appeared.

[Ding... Your arduous journey seemed to have yielded something.]

[Side Quest: The Origins of Salt is complete]

[Reward Acquired: Standard Swadian House x 5]

[Comment: The desert that seemed barren contained ample resources, including the exposed salt mine before you.]

The prompt from the system rang in his ears.

The dialog box signaling the completion of the quest appeared on his retina as well.

However, there was not a hint of elation or pride found on Kant's face. He knew well enough about the deeper reaches of the desert by then. He had in-depth knowledge of the predicament he currently faced. It was simply too brutal. His heart felt rather heavy.

Well, at least it's still an improvement.

Kant saw the images of the houses in his retina and shook his head.

At the moment, the improvement was not good enough.

He flicked his reins and had his horse descend onto the dune. He turned around to face the six Desert Bandits and said, "Let's go. It's time to head home."

The quest from the system was completed.

He accomplished the goal he had set out to complete.

There was currently no need for Kant to take risks and venture into deeper parts of the Nahrin Desert for investigation. Now, he needed to return to the Oasis Lookout and developing his Drondheim village to sufficient levels. He had to amass a force capable of resisting the threat of the Jackalans.

All seven of them swiftly rode toward home.

Their path home was far more apparent when compared to the route they had taken when they began their journey. They had gained familiarity with the region.

As such, they were able to ride faster and steadier.

After midnight Kant and the six Desert Bandits found a dune to rest at. They dug holes in the sand to stay warm. They lit a campfire and took a rest for the night to conserve their strength.

After gaining considerable strength from the break, they continued their journey home the next morning,

The trail markings from when they came remained obvious.

They were in a desert. Barring sandstorms and strong winds, the tracks left on the sand would take months to flatten and disappear naturally.

“My Lord, the Jackalan Tribe is ahead. Watch out.”

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The Desert Bandit who rode at the very front reduced his speed. He turned around and said, “We should take a detour.”

“OK, we shall take a detour.” Kant nodded.

Their current path would have led to that large-scale Jackalan Tribe.

It was morning, so they could not just appear right before the Jackalans without any precautions. They had to avoid alerting the Jackalans and exposing themselves.

As such, they circled the tribe.

They avoided alerting the Jackalans by circling their tribe before continuing to ride toward the Oasis Lookout.

They gained speed by tracing the tracks left behind when they left the Oasis Lookout.

Besides, following their own tracks when they came was the safest thing to do.

After they took a break at noon, the Oasis Lookout finally appeared before their eyes around the evening.

“My Lord, it’s the Council Hall!”

The Desert Bandit at the forefront looked somewhat tired before. When he saw the Council Hall and their lair, he sighed a breath of relief. He turned around and looked at Kant with a relieved expression, saying, “We’re finally home.”

“Yes, we are.” Kant slowly nodded. He was seemingly exhausted.

Traveling for prolonged periods, even when riding a horse, made them feel as if their bodies had hit their limits.

As for the warhorse and the desert horses, they jogged with their heads hung low. They had no more strength to run. The horses needed rest as much as the men who had ridden them.

The horses had played an absolutely key role in getting their scouting mission done.

When Kant and the Desert Bandits kept riding forward, the Swadian troops, who were tasked with guard duty at the Oasis Lookout, quickly discovered them approaching.

Five Swadian Militia, who carried hunting crossbows, stood on a dune. They were on high alert. When they detected Kant and the Desert Bandits, they quickly walked over and paid their respects. "My Lord."

"Yeah." Kant nodded as he flipped his hood over. He asked, "How have the past two days been?"

"Everything was normal, My Lord."

The Swadian Militia answered respectfully.

During the day or so that Kant was out on his mission, the Oasis Lookout was not met with another attack from the Jackalans. Everything looked rather peaceful and calm. However, all of that was simply like underwater currents beneath the surface of the ocean, so he had arranged for the militia to stand guard.

It was preferable to think that desert sand could be used as flour than simply believing that the Jackalans would not attack.

Kant ordered, "Stay sharp."

He led his horse and continued moving into the oasis. He wore a sleepy smile on his face.

Both the Council Hall and the Desert Bandit Lair were built at the southern side of the pond. About a third of the watchtower had been finished. Many Swadian troops trained at their own volition with their weapons in their hands. It seemed as if the village's defenses were being set on the right path.

The warhorse that he rode had even picked up the pace.

The horses evidently knew that they were home and finally able to rest.

“My Lord, welcome home!”

“O’ revered Lord Kant, it’s a pleasure to see you!”

When Kant returned to the Council Hall, all of the Swadian Recruits and Swadian Militia greeted him respectfully. To them, Kant was everything.

“Very well,” Kant replied.

However, he was very exhausted. He immediately got off his horse. He wanted to go to his room and finally get some good rest.

“Feed the horses and give them a wash.”

Kant looked at the recruits taking the horses and said, “When you’re done with all of that, let the horses rest in the stable of the lair.”

“Will do, My Lord.” The recruits nodded. They led Kant’s warhorse and the Desert Bandits’ desert horses away.

The grass was prepared in the manger. Bits of dried meat and dates were added to the feed. They were the best things available for the horses to regain their strength after the long journey. After they were done eating, the horses were given a good wash.

Handing all of that to the recruits enabled Kant to relax.

He was so tired that he felt as if he was no longer able to keep his eyes open. He quickly went to his room on the second floor.

He needed a good rest.

None of them had slept well the previous night, and they had been riding home the whole day afterward. They were thoroughly exhausted by the journey. The exhaustion was more than what they were able to take.

The six Desert Bandits quickly returned to their lair. Once they all fell onto their beds, they started loudly snoring.

Chapter 25: Refugees of Swadia

After riding long hours day and night, Kant was dead tired when he returned to the Oasis Lookout.

He needed some good sleep. He was not able to truly think about what to do next without regaining his mental and physical strength. His next decisions included constructing the five Swadian standard houses rewarded by the system. It was something that involved city planning, which meant he needed to carefully consider the matter.

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The Oasis Lookout was not a large oasis with huge tracts of land.

He speculated that the area of the entire oasis was actually puny. It was likely less than 1000 square feet.

There was also a pond with fresh spring water that measured approximately 82 x 20 feet.

The Swadian houses, which were to be constructed from stone and wooden materials, need at least 1,600 square feet each. If he were to build all five buildings without proper planning, it meant that he could easily fill the entire southern side of the Oasis Lookout with them.

There was no way Kant wanted that to happen.

It was imperative that he properly planned the layout of the buildings.

Kant did not sleep for long.

He slowly opened his eyes.

Kant looked at the window. He saw bright sunlight shining through.

He rubbed his face and freshened himself up. He put on his clothes and went downstairs. Several Swadian Recruits emerged from the storage room. When they saw him descending the stairs, all of them bowed respectfully to him.

“Good day, My Lord.”

“Right, good day.” Kant nodded.

He glanced at the cabbage and dried meat in their hands. It looked as if they were getting food prepared.

The words from one of them proved his deduction. “My Lord, it will soon be noon, so we’re preparing lunch.”

“It’s noon already, eh?”

Kant rubbed his eyebrow and waved at the hardworking and humble recruits. “Carry on.”

The recruits nodded respectfully and replied, “Yes, My Lord.” They headed to the kitchen with the lunch ingredients in their hands.

Social castes were clearly divided in the Kingdom of Swadia.

The scorching sun hit Kant as soon as he walked out of the Council Hall. The entire place was steeped in unbearable, scorching heat.

“My Lord.”

The Swadian Militia guarding the door bowed respectfully as he addressed Kant.

The builders, who were all wearing long robes and hoods, were carefully transporting construction materials. They even placed handkerchiefs on top of the surfaces they were hitting with a hammer. They were afraid of disturbing the quiet and peaceful Council Hall next to the construction site.

Kant turned around and looked at their progress.

The shape of the watchtower was now taking shape.

Piled stone formed the base and platform. Strong wooden materials were used to build the tower’s walls and ladders. While the watchtower was nowhere near being finished, the silhouette was still visible. The construction workers estimated that the tower would be finished within seven days. There seemed to be no problems in meeting that deadline.

“You’re back, My Lord.”

The building foreman of the builders quickly came over to Kant. His honest-looking face was adorned with a beaming smile.

“Yeah.” Kant simply nodded at the seemingly honest yet actually cunning face of the foreman. He looked very much like a Swadian merchant. He plainly said, “Keep the pace as it is. It’s best if you guys can finish by the deadline. It is imperative that you do so.”

“Rest assured, My Lord. It will definitely be finished as planned.” The foreman flashed a beaming smile.

Kant nodded. “That is good to hear.”

“I’ll head over to hurry them up.”

The foreman was able to tell that Kant could easily see through him.

He wanted to suck up to the lord of the land but had failed. He still feared Lord Kant. He quickly scurried away after saying a few words. He didn’t dare stay around Kant any longer.

What a sly merchant.

Kant shook his head lightly as he looked at the back of that foreman.

It seemed that all characters materialized by the system had their own personalities and will instead of deadpan-looking NPC programs.

However, it was due to those personalities that emotions and behaviors, such as flattery, comparing oneself to others of a higher status, jealousy, and even bullying the weak yet fearing the strong, as well as being brutal and ill-disposed, were included. While none of those had fully been shown in front of Kant, the roots of such things were still clearly there.

He wondered if that was a good or bad thing.

Then again, as long as they remained loyal to Kant, he had no intention of interfering too much.

At the moment, the most important thing was to have all five Swadian standard houses constructed.

Kant walked around the southern side of the pond.

He had not walked for long before turning around.

This place is too small.

He frowned slightly and quietly sighed.

The Oasis Lookout was too small. It was so small that even his current plan required extreme caution.

He needed to consider the future.

He thought for a short while.

Kant's eyes focused on the sand beyond the oasis. A thought came to mind. He connected to the system in his mind, asking in silence, "System, could I construct my buildings on the sand?"

He had no doubt made an empiricist error.

Due to help from the system, Kant's buildings would have been just as sturdy even if he built them on the sand.

The system replied quickly, "It is permissible."

Kant smiled.

It was something could be done after all.

Kant walked a straight line toward the south for 32 feet. He passed the Council Hall, Watchtower, and the Desert Bandit Lair.

By the time he stopped walking, it was only sand beneath his feet

"Alright." Kant subtly nodded. "This should be the spot."

As he confirmed it with the system, the five standard Swadian houses immediately materialized into the world. Huge streams of data began to coil and wrap around each other. It took mere seconds for the buildings to fully materialize.

The foundations and walls, which were about 11 inches thick, were constructed neatly using stone. It gave them a sense of sturdiness and heft.

The buildings also looked safe.

The top of each building was slanted. The roofs were constructed using uniformly dried wooden materials to prevent overflow from rainwater. A layer of tiles was piled on top of the roof. Then again, they were in the desert, so there was no need to worry about rain.

There was no rain to be found in the desert.

It was not something he needed to worry about.

The five houses were lined against one another, forming a straight row.

The houses were situated in the south and faced north. The doors opened toward the pond, which was located across from the Council Hall and Desert Bandit Lair.

The 32 feet that Kant had walked became the street.

There were no cracks between the houses. The walls were built against one another, making it seem as if all five of them were a single building. If a ladder were placed against the wall leading to the roof, one could have easily walked through all five houses.

It was constructed in that manner for safety reasons.

Kant had thought it all out.

If a massive amount of enemies approached, the forces garrisoning the buildings were now easily able to make it outside to the 32-foot street. It enabled them to use the buildings on both sides to form formations and securely guard the street.

His forces had the ability to block off both ends of the street.

A small force of Swadian infantry units, armed with polearms, was enough to defend the place steadily and efficiently.

As for the others, they had the option to stand on top of the roofs and use the 9-foot-tall wall to serve as vantage points. That enabled them to accurately aim and shoot at enemies coming in from both sides and support the comrades painstakingly blocking off both ends of the street.

Even if the enemy was able to get up to the roofs to fight them up close and personal, the Swadian forces had the terrain advantage, which further enabled their ability to easily repel the enemy.

The layout formed the early structure of a fortress.

In truth, that was how Kant thought things out.

The threat posed by the Jackalans was huge and nearby. It was possible for them to easily overwhelm the Oasis Lookout.

Peaceful development was a luxury that Drondheim was unable to afford.

Kant needed to build his village like a fortress, but he also needed to do more. The ultimate goal he had for Drondheim was for it to attain the castles available in the system. They were tall, sturdy constructs capable of making one side of the place utterly impregnable.

They were at the southernmost part of the Nahrin Desert, which was the location of the only oasis with a water source.

It was to become a main transport hub.

Be it to venture deep into the Nahrin Desert from the Senwaya Range or to cross into the range from the desert and enter human civilization, that small oasis was destined to become a place travelers had to pass through.

Kant's Drondheim was expected to serve as the heart of the desert.

At present, Kant also had to deal with the most direct threat to his place—the Jackalans.

With those simple defenses put in place, it enabled him to rely only on 30 Swadian Recruits and 35 Swadian Militia to resist a nightly ambush from over 500 Jackalans.

As long as the Jackalans did not bring anything out of the ordinary, they would have the capacity to resist those attacks.

I'll at least have the capacity to defend myself.

Kant nodded to himself.

While the threat from the Jackalan Tribe was still out there, Kant's development was carried out quickly.

Things were changing.

At that moment, a dialog box instantly appeared on Kant's retina.

[Ding... Refugees of Swadia incident triggered]

[A group of Swadians, who were robbed of their homes due to war, are coming. They see the empty houses in your village. It makes these people, who have suffered from drifting about, see hope. They request to join your village.]

[Swadians x 50. Do you accept?]