

## Oasis 33

### Chapter 33: The Sound of the Horn

Lunch was underway.

The individual daily portions included black bread, succulently roasted dried meat torn by hand, a bowl of floured cabbage soup, and two dates as dessert.

1

As a man of noble status and lord of the oasis, Kant, had spices added to his food.

The food tasted and smelled good.

The meal included meat and vegetables. There was also soup, a main dish, and dessert.

To common people, a meal like that was considered quite a feast.

Kant knew that very well.

Back in the Dukedom of Leo, only citizens who worked privileged jobs in cities and towns, or free people who farmed their own lands, had extra funds to eat so lavishly.

The lackluster production capacity of the era meant that not everyone was able to afford good food.

Kant, who possessed the system, was an exception.

“I’m done.”

He put down his knife and fork. He quietly wiped his mouth with a handkerchief.

However, he looked rather exasperated.

He was growing a bit tired of this food.

It was not it tasted bad. Rather, he had become sick of eating the same thing for eight days.

2

Even if his food had been something meticulously cooked with spices added, he had still been eating the same thing three meals a day for days. He felt as if his taste buds were protesting and demanding something different for a change.

5

At the very least, he needed different types of food.

Bread, dried meat, cabbage.

There were also sun-dried dates.

When one chewed on a soft, supple date, its mesmerizing sweetness immediately filled one’s mouth.

Kant slightly shook his head.

Regardless of how good the food actually tasted, if one kept eating the same thing over and over, one eventually felt it turned tasteless.

He put down his handkerchief.

Kant went up to the second floor of the Council Hall. He turned around to address the Swadian Militia members, who were still having lunch. "Stay vigilant during the afternoon break."

All of them unanimously responded, "Yes, My Lord."

Despite it being lunchtime, the militia members were not actually relieved of their guard duty at the Oasis Lookout.

It was especially so given that the construction of the watchtower beside the Council Hall had been completed. Since the tower was 26 feet tall, one was easily able to see what was going on over a 3,280-foot radius. It provided a huge benefit to the members of the militia on guard duty.

1

The Nahrin Desert's terrain was comparatively flat and nowhere near as complex as mountainous regions.

"Right." Kant nodded. He felt at ease as he headed to his room on the second floor.

He trusted his troops' sense of responsibility.

At the very least, his Swadian troops had never given him any troubles. Also, Kant had never found any of them slacking while on duty.

They were all from the Continent of Caradia, which was a land that had been constantly terrorized by war. Anyone who let their guard down would have certainly been buried six feet under. They would become part of the dead who had watched the eras gone by.

After getting onto his bed, Kant slowly closed his eyes.

Despite the day being a relatively easy one for him, the constant need to think took a toll on his mental stamina.

The scorching sun outside window caused the temperature to rise.

The Oasis Lookout, which had reached 122 degrees Fahrenheit by then, was rendered silent after lunch.

Everyone was taking a break.

It was a break that did not come easily. There was still a lot of work waiting for all of them after the break was over.

That included military training.

There was also training for tactical synchronization between the Swadian Militias, Swadian Recruits, and Swadian Peasants.

The threat posed by the Jackalans remained. Kant had never let his guard down. He kept expecting enemies to show up at any given moment, which was why he organized training sessions for everyone since the week they arrived.

Training in the system allowed for experience to accumulate, which leveled up the troop classes.

However, doing so required [Training Ground] or the leader being someone equipped with [Training] skill.

The world they were in was a real one.

Kant possessed no skill to be digitized, so he was unable to have his troop classes level up through the daily training sessions.

Drondheim was a village. That meant that there was no option for constructing a [Training Ground], which was a building capable of allowing troops to accumulate experience during training.

Then again, that did not get in their way of getting the training sessions underway.

It was only that doing so had not been able to allow them to accumulate experience, so not even a zero-level peasant had been able to level up to become a first-level recruit.

Despite so, they were able to train on the use of tactical formations in battles.

In the real world, where clashes were done physically in all senses of the word, the need for tactical formations was even higher. Battles were not like that in a game in which units were able to simply charge in a messy manner and be done with it.

1

Kant already had a 200-strong force:

100 Swadian Peasants

3

30 Swadian Recruits

35 Swadian Militia

17 Desert Bandits (One more added in the week.)

There was also Kant.

The 183 people in the village were all warriors ready to go all out to defend their homes.

There were also 10 special Swadian Militias among them.

The previous battle had already given those 10 militias enough experience for an upgrade. If Kant was able to pay the required amount of Denars, he could have upgraded them to a third-level troop class.

For instance, he could have leveled them up to become Swadian Footmen.

He was also able to upgrade them to become Swadian Skirmishers.

However, given Kant's current situation, upgrading them without careful consideration was a bad thing. It would have simply resulted in being overkill.

The current Swadian Militias, which were second-level troop classes, were more than capable of dealing with primitive races like the Jackalans. They worked exceptionally well on the battlefield, which made them very cost-effective units.

They were well-equipped with scale armors and helmets.

They were armed with heavy spears, which included metal coverings on the front ends, as well as combat shovels capable of penetrating armor and sturdy heater shields.

They were also armed with hunting crossbows.

Despite that type of bow being used predominantly by hunters, making them less lethal than even the light crossbow that Kant carried, they still had an effective range of only 262 feet. They were a suitable means for ranged attacks and effective enough at what they were supposed to do.

All of those reasons culminated to make the Swadian Militias cost-effective combat units.

They were an all-round troop class and vital to the village.

Even in the regular battlefields in the Kingdom of Swadia, if they were to just hunker down and relied solely on their defensive capacities, the militias formed a temporary line of defense capable of withstanding powerful enemy charges.

Their value shone through extremely brilliantly when dealing with the likes of Jackalans.

Kant had thought about it many times before.

If the Jackalan Tribe attacked them a second time, it was bound to cause a change in terms of fundamental qualities of the Drondheim's forces.

More peasants would have been upgraded to become Swadian Recruits.

At the same time, more Swadian Recruits would have been upgraded to become Swadian Militias.

Then, there were the Swadian Footmen, which were troop class that was even more formidable.

Kant saw war, which was often the thing most people feared, as a means to further his development. The system was something that sustained war by fighting wars. The so-called peaceful development was just something that was said before one claimed success to fool the enemy into a false sense of security.

If Kant had 100 Swadian Knights, he would have declared war on that Jackalan Tribe without a second thought.

1

Cavalry units were known for their high mobility.

Swadian Knights added to that by being a terrifying force on the battlefield.

Those units would have easily skewered entire Jackalan forces by simply riding on that flat desert and putting them down between the dunes.

It was a pity that he did not have 100 Swadian Knights among his forces.

Wuuuuuuuu.

Out of nowhere, the low sound of a horn was heard. Kant was still steeped in thought when he heard the sound.

It was as if the sound shook his soul.

“What’s happening?”

Kant immediately opened his eyes. He was instantly wide awake.

He knew that it was the sound of the horn blown by the sentry on the watchtower. That sound meant something unusual had happened.

That included something like Jackalan forces being detected.

It could have also meant that an unknown force was detected.

One way or another, it was time for Kant’s people to be on the defensive.

He quickly walked out of his room and went outside the Council Hall.

All the recruits and militia members, who were armed with spears, were gathered.

The 100 peasants stood ready with their long scythes in hand at the side of the street.

1

It seemed as if a fight was imminent.

“What happened?”

Kant carried his light crossbow and walked outside of the Council Hall with a cold expression.

The Swadian Militia member at the top of the watchtower quickly came down and said to Kant, “My Lord, I found a group of unfamiliar knights at the south. They are heading for the oasis.”

“Unknown group of knights?”

Kant frowned slightly. His eyes looked severe.

He turned around to look toward the south, but he was unable to see more than just the seemingly unending dune. He asked, “How many?”

The militia member answered, “It was 50 knights and a carriage.”

1

“Yeah.” Kant nodded, but he frowned even harder after hearing that.

There was no way Jackalans had cavalry units among them. Even if they did, they would not have been seen in the south.

1

That was the direction of the Dukedom of Leo.

It was Kant's hometown. It was a dukedom that prized martial prowess more than anything else, and a human nation sporting the strongest knights.

"Everyone."

He waved and ordered, "Prepare for combat!"

"Yes, My Lord!" Every one seemed in high spirits.

Kant was not about to let his guard down simply because the group of knights was from the dukedom. It was worth noting that nobles of the dukedom clashed among themselves due to reasons pertaining to fiefs and wealth.

Skirmishes were often seen being fought between the nobles.

As such, he shouted to the street, telling the 17 Desert Bandits who were riding the desert horses, "You all, head out and scout what is going on out there. Do not engage! Return at once when you're done!"

"Yes, My Lord." The Desert Bandits all nodded.

Scouting was what they were most proficient in. The Desert Bandits kicked at the bellies of their horses. All 17 of them rode out, dispersing throughout the sea of sand.

### **Chapter 34: Hobson's Awkward Situation**

The stout warhorses galloped on the southern side of the Nahrin Desert.

The expeditionary team from the Dukedom of Leo rode across the dune at high speeds.

"The oasis should be in front of us."

Rowan rode on his horse at the front. His gaze stayed on the horizon before him. He breathed a sigh of relief deep down. "If things go well, we should be able to reach the Oasis Lookout in half an hour."

He had finished the early stage of his mission as a guide.

Rowan sighed and wiped the sweat from his forehead. His eyes were filled with exasperation.

Is the job done as soon as we reach the Oasis Lookout?

Pfft, please!

Getting to the Oasis Lookout was but the first stage of the expedition.

There was a second stage.

After that, there was a third and probably more to come.

All of that included venturing deep into the desert to seek out unknown, strange regions. It meant that they would likely have to venture deep into parts that had never been explored by the forces sent out by the dukedom 10 years ago.

Sh\*t, this is just great!

Rowan rolled his eyes as he thought about how unlucky he was.

When he turned around and saw those elite-looking retainer knights sporting deadpan faces, Rowan knew enough to hide all the negative signs from showing on his face.

He was not able to afford to get on the bad side of any of those people.

Rowan was just the captain of a small platoon of knights. Those retainer knights, on the other hand, were members of the Knights Corps.

The difference in status between him and them was too great.

That was especially so in the case of Sir Hobson, who rode right in front of the carriage. That man was a knight through and through, as well as a noble. There were less than 300 knights like him in the entire dukedom.

Such a knight was riding not far away from Rowan, which made him feel extra pressure to do things right.

Then again, all of that had little to do with him.

As the guide, Rowan only needed to pay attention to his job and lead the way.

A retainer knight approached him while he was still having those chaotic thoughts running in his head. The knight said in a dull voice, "Sir Hobson wants to have a word with you to discuss the route."

That retainer knight behaved without any sense of decorum, but Rowan was used to it.

Rowan cursed deep down, Damn you! However, he wore a smile on his face and nodded as he replied, "Understood."

He turned his head to look behind him. Sir Hobson was looking at him. Sir Hobson nodded, so Rowan pulled his reins. He turned his horse around and respectfully asked, "How can I be of service, Sir?"

"How long will it take to reach the Oasis Lookout from here?"

Hobson spoke in a plain tone instead of a haughty one.

Besides, the man was a knight.

One of the basics of being from among the nobles was to have a sense of decorum.

"That, umm, will probably take about half an hour."

Rowan quickly added, "We'll be there soon."

“Half an hour?”

Hobson nodded as he gazed forward. He looked somewhat relieved.

The journey through the Nahrin Desert had been very tiring, even for a man like him.

“Relax, Sir Hobson. If we can find anything on this expedition, we’ll be getting an extremely great reward when we return.”

A rather croaky and old voice was heard from the carriage.

Scholar Hank lifted the blinds on the carriage. His eyes were gleaming as he said, “Trust me.”

“Of course, Scholar Hank. Your knowledge shines like a pearl in the Dukedom of Leo.”

Sir Hobson nodded since that was the reason he had been willing to follow the scholar all the way out there.

The lost city.

The name itself symbolized untold amounts of treasure.

In fact, he was also there due to his status in the dukedom.

He was a member of the nobility.

“Hold on.”

Hobson’s expression looked somewhat severe. He raised his right arm and said, “Something is out there!”

Shiingg!

The sound of longswords being drawn was heard throughout their caravan.

Rowan drew his sword before he even realized it. He quietly gulped. The glimmer of shining metal was seen everywhere. The retainer knights had drawn their swords and stopped their horses to vigilantly look around.

They all knew that the Nahrin Desert was filled with many dangers.

Hobson gazed around the land before him with a rather severe expression. He slowly said, “Squad One, Squad Two, fan out and scout the flanks!”

“Understood!”

The 20 retainer knights at the flanks immediately responded.

They soon fanned out with their horses, whooshing away at the dunes to their flanks. They spread out further in pairs, forming scouting parties of greater effectiveness.

They were efficient because they were a standard Knights Corps.

“Sir Hobson.”



With a rather serious expression, Scholar Hank asked, "Have you found something?"

Rowan gulped and listened.

"I heard the sounds of horses galloping. There were not many of them, but they were nimble."

Hobson nodded. His eyes looked serious as he scanned around the dunes. He quickly frowned and said, "They are moving about in the dunes. They are likely light cavalry units."

"Light cavalry?"

Scholar Hank frowned and looked around in disbelief. "How could there be light cavalry around these parts?"

Hobson frowned slightly and replied, "That is what intrigues me as well."

After all, the Nahrin Desert was a barren place.

Cavalry?

That was absurd!

It was worth noting that it was even difficult for people to survive in the desert, let alone warhorses, which were expensive and required great care. They would not have been able to survive in such a place.

Besides, not every horse out there was worthy of becoming a warhorse.

Gallop, gallop, gallop...

While they were steeped in thought, hasty galloping sounds were heard at the dune before them.

The 10 retainer knights behind Hobson headed forward with their swords drawn. All of them looked fierce. However, given that they had been trained as formal knights at a young age, there was no fear seen on their faces.

A light cavalry unit emerged from behind the dune on a horse.

Six retainer knights were seen closely following behind that light cavalry unit.

It seemed that due to being chased by the retainer knights, the light cavalry unit had run in desperation right into them.

Hobson subtly frowned.

He found the light cavalry unit to be rather ill-equipped, both in terms of armor and weapons. However, the lightly armed man was able to travel at remarkably high speeds, even causing the retainer knights to have trouble following him. It seemed that the distance between both sides was actually being widened.

If it had not been for them being around, the light cavalry unit would have probably escaped somewhere in the dunes.

"Look out, Sir!"

The retainer knights had their swords drawn as they kicked their horses' bellies to hasten them. All of them sported cold expressions. They were prepared for battle.

Hobson raised his arm and frowned, saying, "Halt." He said to the rider in front of him, "Strange rider, we are from the Dukedom of Leo, and we mean no harm."

He seemed to have suddenly recalled something and quickly added, "We know Baron Kant."

That line seemed to have broken the ice between both parties.

The retainer knights, who had been pursuing that light cavalry unit, also slowed down.

Yet, all of them maintained a barricade formation. They securely surrounded the nimble light cavalry unit in the middle.

They made it extremely difficult for the rider to run.

That rider apparently knew that as well.

He slightly pulled the reins of his warhorse. He frowned as he gazed at Sir Hobson, who was apparently someone of high status, before asking, "What is the relation between you all and Lord Kant?"

"Baron Kant is the son of Duke Cameron, and I'm a knight who was personally knighted by the duke of the dukedom."

Sir Hobson calmly replied, taking the initiative to introduce himself.

However, his revered status of a noble knight back in the dukedom hardly had any effect on the rider. The other man did not even immediately lower his head.

The rider from the Sultanate of Sarrand was loyal only to Kant.

He was none other than a Desert Bandit.

"Why are you all here?"

The Desert Bandit questioned them in an interrogative tone. "This is the fief of Lord Kant, and your presence is now trampling on the sovereign rights of Lord Kant. I hope you will be able to give a reasonable explanation."

"Umm..."

Hobson was slightly startled. He had not expected the rider to talk to him in such a manner.

When he turned around and saw the sea of sand around him, he instead came to wear a bitter smile.

The rider was right.

The Dukedom of Leo had conferred the southern parts of the Nahrin Desert to Kant when he was made a baron. He had brought a huge entourage to the Nahrin Desert and never told to Kant about their situation. That action was enough to start a war back in the dukedom.

It was a matter of reputation.

No noble would have tolerated forces of unknown origins trampling their fief.

Then again, that just made the situation more awkward for Hobson.

Where are we now?

The Nahrin Desert.

A place without civilization.

A barren place.

If there were to be no need for it, no one would have even thought of coming here.

Seeing how serious and proper the rider behaved, he shook his head in exasperation and did not give any further explanations. "Take us to the Oasis Lookout. The old scholar in the carriage and I are acquaintances of Baron Kant."