

Oasis 35

Chapter 35: An Ambiguous Introduction

Kant maintained a serious expression.

As he rode on his warhorse, his hand, which was holding the Intimidation banner, was wet enough to stain it.

It was sweat.

He was sweating because the Desert Bandits he had sent out to scout the place were returning one after another.

One of them was missing.

A missing Desert Bandit was not a good sign.

That meant the missing member was possibly dead.

It was bad news.

The intelligence gathered by the Desert Bandits sounded even more heart-wrenching.

The infantry units gathered and standing in their formations in the street began to murmur among themselves.

They were somewhat shaken.

“Calm down.”

Kant’s voice was suddenly heard.

His eagle-like gaze swept across the forces who had begun to look shaken. He raised his voice and yelled, “Only cowards flee in the middle of a battle. Swadians do not fear!”

The news regarding the 50 retainer knights spread throughout the oasis.

After hearing the news, the troops by Kant’s side started to turn pale.

They were not mere NPC data. They were living people.

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They were capable of fear.

They were capable of excitement.

They were capable of being high-spirited in battle.

They were also capable of cowering in fear.

It was especially so given they had discovered they were about to face 50 fully armed heavy cavalry units.

The shock was so severe that their legs began to give.

They quickly realized just how terrifying facing a heavy cavalry was.

After all, the Kingdom of Swadia's military might lied within their heavy cavalry units.

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A heavy cavalry that crashed left and right, smiting down their enemies on the battlefield, had been the very tool the Kingdom of Swadia relied on to reign supreme. They also served as the key to keeping enemy nations afraid and not daring enough to intrude their borders without careful consideration.

Low-level troop classes like them were like cannon fodder before 50 heavy cavalry units.

That fact remained true even if they were armed with polearms like spears and long scythes.

There was one thing worth noting.

Even the Kingdom of Rhodoks, which had a military force armed with shields and spears and had defeated forces of the Kingdom of Swadia several times in the mountains, dared not step foot on the flatlands to take on fully armed Swadian cavalry units.

The 50 Swadian Knights would have been able to easily skewer a 200-strong infantry force.

If not for the polearms, not even 500 infantry units would have been able to stop the knights in their tracks. The infantry units were likely to end up becoming dead bodies on the flatlands.

Worse still, the 165 infantry units serving Kant were low-level troop classes.

The mere mention of 50 Swadian Knights was more than enough to break through their psyche.

Even if those 50 were the most common of cavalry units, such as a light cavalry unit like the Desert Bandits, they would have been able to easily crush them all if they used the right tactics, let alone 50 Swadian Knights.

Kant knew that as well.

He was frowning when he asked, "Are they from the Dukedom of Leo?"

One of the scouting Desert Bandits replied, "Indeed."

The Nahrin Desert was right beside the Dukedom of Leo.

Kant's expression remained stern as he took a deep breath. His eyes seemed rather murky.

His mind filled with several bad scenarios.

Kant unconsciously gritted his teeth, recalling to his rather awkward status back in the dukedom. I have chosen a place like this to be my fief, yet those people still refuse to let go of me.

Some of the nobles back in the dukedom would have liked it very much to see the youngest son of the duke dead.

“What should we do, My Lord?”

The Swadian troops all looked at Kant. Their eyes were filled with dread.

The knights were different from the Jackalans.

The Jackalans were just a ferocious primitive race with little intelligence to speak of.

The troops were able to clash head-on with them without any problems.

The 50 knights seemed a small number, but they were still a force to be reckoned with.

All of them were fully armed.

They were all well-trained.

They were equipped with the best equipment money could buy.

They consisted of a terrifying force capable of easily crushing Drondheim.

They...

Are unable to even resist!

“Bear in mind, there are no cowards among Swadians.”

Kant’s heavy, severe voice resounded in the ears of all within earshot.

He knew that anyone could easily panic in this type of situation. For him, a lord of the Kingdom of Swadia, a status given to him by that world, panic was not an emotion he could afford to give into.

He had to stabilize the morale of his forces.

“Recruits and peasants, blockade the ends of the street.”

Kant held the Intimidation banner high. The banner, which had a golden lion emblazoned on a red background, billowed in the wind.

His arrangements were quickly relayed. “All militia members are in charge of sniping the enemy from the rooftops with hunting crossbows!”

“Understood!”

After hearing Kant’s orders, the troops instantly responded loudly.

While all of them still looked shaken, their morale was somewhat restored as Kant gave his orders and made arrangements.

When he was building Drondheim, the way the buildings were lined coincidentally formed a street. The cluster of tightly packed buildings formed a fortress-like layout, making it rather easy to defend.

At the very least, they did not need to fight the knights head-on on the flatlands outside.

He was done with his arrangements.

Both ends of the street were packed with infantry units throughout the entire 32-foot-wide street.

The Swadian Recruits were placed at the forefront with their two 3-foot-long spears extended outward. The Swadian Peasants served as reinforcements right behind them with their long scythes. They were assembled in a crude phalanx formation.

The militia members were standing by on the rooftops at the side with their hunting crossbows.

Not only were they capable of shooting, which would have messed up the enemy's offensive formations, but they also were able to leap below to help maintain the line of defense if things went south on the street.

With the Continent of Caradia being constantly at war, infantry units were more than familiar with battles.

Everything was ready.

Even the people from the Reyvadin trade caravan, who were all currently based at the grocery store, showed up.

The leader of the trade caravan, who wore mail armor and was armed with a flanged mace, brought six of the escorts and the 12 sentries with him. He stood right behind Kant. They were all standing by waiting for orders.

They planned to help with the defense.

"Lord Kant, the Reyvadinian trade caravan is willing to participate in this battle. We await your orders."

The leader spoke in a forthcoming manner.

Kant nodded and smiled before saying, "Thank you."

Although the escorts and sentries of the trade caravan consisted only of first- and second-level troop classes, at the very least, they were still a fighting force. It was best if they were able to help out with defense at such dire times.

Given the situation, Kant was not in a position to be picky.

Time passed.

The sun was setting.

The light of dusk was struggling to stay around.

Stars began to appear in the darkening sky.

It is quite a familiar scene.

Kant narrowed his gaze, recalling what happened eight days prior.

That was the hour when he used Rowan and the knights to destroy the Jackalan Tribe that had taken over the Oasis Lookout.

That was an exhilarating battle.

However, the situation was now reversed.

He had become the one defending the Oasis Lookout at such an hour. He was now in the role of those pathetic beings waiting for the other party to strike.

This feels sh*tty.

Kant clenched his fist.

He waited quietly for their last stand to come. Instead, Kant heard the Swadian Militia shouting from the watchtower.

He looked up at the top of the watchtower and asked with a frown, "What did you see?"

"M-My Lord."

The militia member showed his head and pointed southward, saying, "They are here!"

The forces at the ends of the street were slightly shaken. It was apparent that all of them understood that the enemy force was going to soon be at their door.

"The enemy force" referred to those 50 knights.

Yet, all of the troops sported an unbecoming calm on their faces. Even the Swadian Peasants looked calm. Their eyes were filled with resolve to fight until the last man was standing, just to protect their homes.

If they failed, they completely lost the right to live.

A dialog box from the system appeared on Kant's retina.

[Ding... Side Quest assigned]

[Side Quest: Form an alliance]

[Reward: Rain of Arrows (500 Vaegir Marksmen) x 3 waves]

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[Introduction: The darkening sky is bringing danger with it. It is fortunate that an elite force is coming. You could choose to ally with them and make it through this predicament.]

It was a Side Quest.

Kant quickly read the introduction. His expression immediately stiffened.

Form an alliance? He was somewhat puzzled.

At the same time, he was feeling both doubt and shock.

The system's introduction of the quest was rather ambiguous, but he saw a looming danger in it at the same time.

It was a warning from the system.

The darkening sky is bringing danger with it... Kant read the line to himself.

He again read the next line. An elite force is coming...

Choose to ally...

Those were the keywords, and they made Kant's heart race.

He suddenly seemed to have realized something.

At the same time, a noise was heard at one end of the street. It was the sound of a horse hurriedly galloping toward them. There seemed to be someone returning.

Kant turned to look in that direction.

It was the Desert Bandit who had been missing.

Chapter 36: Misunderstanding

The Desert Bandit who had been missing was right in front of him.

However, the soldiers guarding the end of the street did not make way.

Instead, all of them held onto their weapons tightly, pointing all the spears and scythes outside and glaring at the Desert Bandit with angry eyes. The rage in their eyes was so intense that it seemed as if their eyes were about to shoot fire.

The 16 Desert Bandits inside the street behaved the same way.

They were all quite angry.

That was because the 50 retainer knights, who were wearing mail armor covered with linen robes, appeared on the dune not far away.

They were all waiting at the dune.

It was apparent that they had a guide bringing them to the oasis.

That guide was none other than one of their own.

It was that Desert Bandit.

He was now a traitor.

"Hold on, let me explain."

The Desert Bandit anxiously explained, "I'm not a traitor!"

He had instantly noticed the wrath on the faces of those soldiers and knew what had made them all so angry.

"Shut up! That's not a reason for you to bring the enemy here!"

Someone responded angrily at the end of the street.

That caused all of the other soldiers to respond, agreeing with what that soldier said. Even the militia members on the rooftops aimed their hunting crossbows at him.

They only needed to pull the triggers to send bolts flying at that Desert Bandit.

The hunting crossbows had an effective range of 98 feet. The short, thick bolts were able to easily penetrate leather armor.

“I need to see Lord Kant.”

That Desert Bandit broke out into a cold sweat.

He realized just how careless he had been.

It had been a wrong move to bring all those strangers, who were knights with an extremely high combat capacity, to the Oasis Lookout. He did not even actually know if those strangers were actually acquaintances of Kant.

However, there was nothing else he could have done but report the matter to Kant.

“No way!”

The soldiers before him shouted unanimously and angrily.

All of them glared with intense wrath at the Desert Bandit, who they perceived to be a traitor and nothing else.

“Let him through.”

However, Kant’s voice was heard behind them.

His voice sounded steady.

His voice sounded strong.

With the immutable might of those of high status, he said, “I believe in my men.”

Troop classes provided by the system would never betray him.

“Lord Kant.”

The soldiers turned their heads around in shock.

Kant, who was holding on the banner emblazoned with a golden lion on a red background, was standing behind them.

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The 16 Desert Bandits standing behind him glared at their former comrade with deadpan, cold expressions.

They held on tightly to the javelins in their hands.

If they so fancied, they would have been able to throw that deadly weapon at him within a second.

“Lord Kant, I’m absolutely not a traitor.”

The Desert Bandit gulped, but his eyes suggested that he was touched by Kant’s willingness to trust him. He quickly reported, “The forces from the Dukedom of Leo was led by a man named Hobson, who was responsible for escorting a scholar named Hank. They are here to look for the legendary lost city. Oh right, there was also a knight named Rowan. They all claimed that they knew of you.”

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The Desert Bandit told him everything he knew just to clear his name.

“Hmm?”

Kant was slightly startled.

He immediately looked up and frowned at the dune. Those well-armed knights were wearing standard garb from the Dukedom of Leo.

He focused and peered, feeling even more surprised.

“Sir Hobson, Scholar Hank, and Rowan, the captain of the knights who came with us.”

Kant nodded. He looked somewhat relieved.

It was all a misunderstanding.

Despite having recognized those three acquaintances, he did not immediately tell his troops to let their guard down.

The warning from the system remained in his mind.

The darkening sky is bringing dangers with it.

He was entirely quite sure if the danger mentioned by the system referred to those retainer knights before him.

Then again, it was something easy to confirm.

At least, it was not all that difficult for Kant.

“Make way.”

Kant gave his order and brought all 16 Desert Bandits with him as he walked out of the street.

“Be careful, My Lord.”

Despite the soldiers before them having made way, they all still cast a doubtful gaze at that Desert Bandit.

They were still distrustful of that man who had brought all those people to their village.

That was true even though the man had once been one of their own.

That Desert Bandit had behaved in a rather awkward manner.

He was the one who brought all those men there, yet he was utterly unsure of their relationship with Lord Kant.

If both parties were friends, or, at least, mere acquaintances who met several times in the past, there was not a problem. However, if they were to an enemy of Lord Kant back in the dukedom and made such excuses just to crush the weak and small Drondheim, he was completely a traitor.

“M-My Lord...”

He opened his mouth trying to explain, but he chose to hang his head low.

There was nothing else to explain.

“Relax, those are my friends.”

Kant smiled. His expression was a calm one.

He and the other Desert Bandits got onto their horses. Kant said to that Desert Bandit, “Get back in line. There is no need to think about it anymore.”

That line made the meaning of Kant’s words very clear.

“Thank you, merciful Lord Kant.”

That Desert Bandit was overjoyed. He immediately nodded and got back in line on his horse.

The soldiers on the street no longer glared at him with vengeful eyes. Their expressions returned to being calm.

A Desert Bandit, who was older than most of the others, shot a look at that Desert Bandit, who had just gotten back in line. He gruffly said, “Use your brain a little from here on out. If the ones you brought had been the enemy, you would have been a traitor.”

“I shall be careful from here on out.” That Desert Bandit nodded. He looked rather ashamed.

Kant smiled and did not say anything else.

He rode forward with the Desert Bandits.

Three knights from the top of the dune rode in their direction as well.

“Revered Baron Kant, it is quite a pleasure to see you so far away from the castle of the dukedom.”

The leader was Sir Hobson.

He was a knight who had been knighted personally by Duke Cameron of the Dukedom of Leo. His estate and fief were not far away from the castle.

The two of them knew of each other.

“Sir Hobson.”

Kant smiled. His tone was polite yet charismatic.

He glanced at Rowan, who dared not speak much at the moment, and nodded. "Captain Rowan, we meet again. The aid you provided last time was very useful. You have my thanks."

The aid referred to was when Kant used the knights to attack the Jackalan Tribe at the Oasis Lookout.

There was no way Rowan would have forgotten that.

However, he also remembered that he had given the baron a look and rode off with his knights immediately after they were done.

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"O-Oh..."

Rowan gulped. In a submissive and respectful manner, he said, "It was an honor to be able to serve you, Baron Kant."

He had lost all the arrogance he had before.

There was still a knowledgeable scholar of high status, as well as a knight who was also a noble, right beside him.

Kant simply smiled.

He held no grudge against Rowan. His actions had been considered normal.

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When Kant turned to look at the old man by their side, his expression became rather complex. He sighed and lowered his head. He greeted the old man respectfully, "Master Hank, it's quite a surprise to meet you in the Nahrin Desert."

He was being as polite as possible.

His tone was very respectful.

Scholar Hank sighed lightly and replied, "Baron Kant, life is full of surprises."

"It is." Kant nodded.

Both men were feeling rather overwhelmed.

Just a month ago, the two of them had been studying the many books in the academy.

Hank was a scholar.

Kant had been one of his students.

Furthermore, he had been one of Han's favorites for being the most hardworking one among the students.

"It is quite a surprise."

Scholar Hank sighed as he looked around the place. "This is really quite a bad place to be."

“Yeah.” Kant nodded.

Kant said to Scholar Hank, “Actually, I’m quite intrigued that you came all the way out here. The harsh environment of the Nahrin Desert might quite a toll on your body.”

“The lost city.”

Scholar Hank said in a rather excited tone, “I’ve come searching for it.”

“The lost city?” Kant slightly frowned.

As the most hardworking of the students in the academy, Kant had read many books regarding that topic. However, the conclusion he arrived at was that the lost city was but a ridiculous myth. It was a legend that never existed.

He shook his head and shrugged. “This man has nothing but sand.”

“There will be something.”

Scholar Hank was not discouraged. His old face looked determined. “I’m 67 years old. If I don’t find ways to prove what I believe in now, I won’t be able to come all the way out here when I get really, really old.”

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“Your spirit is quite admirable.” Kant slightly lowered his head.

That was a measure of respect a junior showed to a senior.

However, Kant disapproved of such a course of action. He deemed the legend to be a farce. He did not believe they would discover anything.