

Lord of the Oasis

Chapter 4: Psychological Warfare

The knights, who were drenched in sweat from the recent fighting, slowly walked down the dunes.

The Swadian Peasants and Recruits headed for the temporary camp set up below. There was still lunch waiting to be made and complicated labor that needed to be finished.

...

Kant continued to stand on the dunes under the scorching sun.

He gazed at the Oasis Lookout on the horizon, which was his supposed fief. There was a fresh water spring in it.

I think this is going to be troublesome.

Kant heavily sighed. His eyes looked worried.

He scanned his surroundings and the lowly dead beings below. Their bodies were left strewn about. He felt pressure deep down instead of relief.

Jackalans had been found somewhere close to the Oasis Lookout.

The implications of that were undeniably severe.

Kant was unable to help but wear a bitter smirk. Just think about it a little, man. There is no way the Oasis Lookout could always stay deserted.

The purge carried out by the Dukedom of Leo 10 years ago had only been temporary. The Jackalans had returned and retaken the oasis.

He made some calculations based on the 50 Jackalans that had just been slain.

He concluded that there were likely no less than 300 in the tribe of Jackalans that had taken over the Oasis Lookout. The numbers could even be higher if the entire tribe was accounted for.

What do I do now?

At that thought, Kant felt a headache forming.

[Ding... Side Quest assigned]

[Side Quest: Annihilate the Jackalan Tribe]

[Reward: Desert Bandit Lair x 1]

6

[Introduction: The Oasis Lookout is the pearl of the south of the desert, yet it is now being taken over by a tribe of Jackalans. The ferocious race of beings has sullied the beauty of the oasis. As the lord of the Nahrin Desert from here on out, it is imperative that you annihilate them.]

8

A System Prompt appeared just when he was wondering what to do from then on out.

The system's dialog box was displayed on his retina, showing the Side Quest assigned by the system.

Annihilate the Jackalan Tribe?

Kant repeated the mission perimeters. The bitter smirk remained on his face.

1

Even without the System Quest assigned, he would have had to annihilate the tribe that had taken over the Oasis Lookout all the same.

The Oasis Lookout was the only oasis that had been found in the south of the Nahrin Desert. More importantly, it was the only location with a water source. If he were unable to take the area for himself, Kant would be setting himself up to fail.

According to their current storage of fresh water, which had begun to dip below the red line, even returning alive to the Dukedom of Leo would be a problem.

In truth, even if he were able to return, as the youngest son of the duke with an awkward status, there was no guarantee that Kant would be able to live without troubles.

There were many people who did not wish to see him return. To them, it was best if he just simply died in the desert.

Kant unconsciously clenched his teeth and walked down the dunes without saying a word.

5

A Jackalan Tribe with a population of at least 300 posed a serious threat to them.

If they made one mistake, it could easily cause all of them to perish.

The annihilation of 50 Jackalans in the previous battle had only happened because the system reminded Kant of the danger. He used their ambush against them and caught them completely off-guard.

Furthermore, the 20 of the dukedom knights, who had taken the Jackalans out, were elites.

If they gave their all and earnestly fought, they would still suffer massive casualties as they tried to take out a tribe of 300 Jackalans.

We could still try.

Kant looked at the shadows moving about in the tents.

His gaze unavoidably narrowed.

In truth, if he were to conquer the Oasis Lookout, the outcome would have little to do with the rookie Swadian Recruits who had leveled up moments ago.

The key still lied with the 20 dukedom knights.

I know you people will definitely not agree with this, but I'm sorry. I've got no other choice.

1

Kant's expression was calm. He had his own hidden plans.

The knights were loyal to Cameron, the Duke of Leo. They only respected Kant due to his bloodline. When it came to actual command in combat, they were still the ones calling the shots.

Kant understood that since he was unable to command the knights to fight for him, he would have to make them do so by putting the pressure of reality on them.

They were in the Nahrin Desert. There was only one thing that could move them.

Water.

1

It was something that they would have to fight over whether they liked it or not.

Don't blame me for this. Kant was calm, yet a shimmer of coldness was seen deep in his eyes.

After all, there was no such thing as trust between people.

Kant was initially walking toward the tents, but he turned around and headed for the carriages.

2

All the Swadian Peasants were busy working.

The dukedom knights were in their tents laughing heartily as if they were joking about something.

No one paid him any attention.

At the very least, no outsiders noticed him.

“My Lord.”

Two Swadian Peasants had been tasked with guarding the goods on the carriages.

“Be quiet.” Kant raised his hand and signaled for them to stop talking.

He immediately unplugged the plugs at the bottom of the water storage barrels on the carriage.

Glug, glug, glug...

The crystal clear fresh water spilled onto the sand through the small openings. It took mere minutes for the barrels to store water on the carriage to be left with just a fraction of what they had once contained. The barren sand around them became drenched.

3

“Our water is about to get depleted.”

Kant looked at the two baffled Swadian Peasants and reasserted himself. “Understand?”

“Yes, My Lord,” they answered.

“Good.”

There was not a single bit of expression seen on Kant’s face as he walked to his tent as if nothing had happened.

Only the peasants and recruits had been close to the carriage. None of the knights had bothered to go anywhere near since they had no reason to.

None of the knights would have expected that not a single drop of water was left, especially since the amount of water in the barrels should have lasted three days.

The lack of water would kill them.

If they wanted to live, they would have to fight the Jackalans.

This was how Kant planned to trick and force the dukedom knights to listen to his plans and fight the Jackalans to the bitter end.

A man had to do what he had to do.

7

After he came to this backward and mysterious world, Kant, as the youngest son of the duke, learned how to make use of others to the greatest extent. All of that was completely normal considering how he was a noble.

If Kant did not make use of the knights, he knew they would not stay back and fight just because of his status.

No one would have toiled and put their lives on the line for others without anything to gain, especially given how he was an exiled baron.

“My Lord.”

When Kant was still steeped in thought, a peasant in charge of cooking, who was holding a wooden plate, lifted the blinds on the tent and said, “Lunch is ready.”

“Alright.” Kant nodded and took a look.

There were three pieces of white bread, half a smoked chicken, and three spoonfuls of juicy dried meat cooked in black pepper.

1

That was the kind of gourmet meal that only his status as a baron could have afforded.

White bread and black pepper were both luxuries. Squires and knights notwithstanding, even lesser nobles with comparatively small fiefs and less wealth in the dukedom were unable to afford such spices and high-quality, soft white bread.

They could have only afforded black bread with wheat bran mixed within the flour, as well as simple cooked dried meat.

“Dried meat cooked in black pepper, eh.”

Kant took the plate and said, "If I'm not mistaken, our supply of fresh water is running out."

"Indeed, but we're not far away from the Oasis Lookout, and there will be ample fresh water to be had," the peasant replied.

"Is that so?"

Kant nodded and told the peasant, "Tell Captain Rowan to come to my tent after he is done with lunch."

"Yes, My Lord," the peasant respectfully said before leaving the tent.

Kant heartily ate his lunch with a wooden spoon.

The white bread was soft and tasty, as well as of high quality. It had been prepared for him with butter before he left the castle in the Dukedom of Leo. The same went for black pepper. Kant was a noble. Even if he had been exiled, he still represented the bloodline and glory of Duke Cameron.

He was a baron and needed to be treated as one.

3

At the very least, Kant no longer had to worry about food being nasty. Compared to the knights and peasants, he was actually having quite a good meal.

Too bad that I won't be able to eat like this any longer.

He dipped the bread into the last bit of soup and put it in his mouth before chewing and gulping the last piece down.

He spent 10 minutes eating lunch, no more and no less.

He soon heard footsteps outside his tent. The leather boots stepped onto the slightly hard sand, making a cracking sound and leaving a footprint behind.

It seemed that Rowan was outside.

"Your Lordship, I heard that you were looking for me."

Captain Rowan could be heard from outside the tent. He sounded respectful and somewhat impatient at the same time.

“Please come in.” Kant’s voice was calm as if he did not notice any of that.

The blinds on the tent were lifted. Rowan stooped down for a bit before entering. He smiled faintly as he looked at Kant. “Your Lordship, we’ll soon be at the Oasis Lookout. How can I be of service?”

Without waiting for Kant to reply, he quickly added, “If there is nothing else, we will be leaving soon.”

“Leave?”

Kant looked doubtful as he looked at Rowan and asked, “Shouldn’t we be heading to the Oasis Lookout?”

Their destination was within sight, which made Rowan impatient. He had no intention of continuing the journey through the dreaded desert any longer. He was also impatient from being at the side of the exiled baron.

Furthermore, as a veteran who had seen a lot of fighting, there was no way Rowan, the captain of the knights, was not able to see what the baron was up to.

“Your Lordship, the knights can’t wait any longer.”

He took a good look at Kant. In a flat tone, he said, “I’ll make a request on their behalf. If possible, we’d like to have part of the drinking water supply. We shall begin our journey home right away.”

That was a firm, unyielding demand, not a request with room for negotiation.

It was close to being rude.

It meant that Rowan and the knights were on the brink of losing control.

“Of course, if that is what you desire.”

Rowan was surprised that Kant was so quick about it. The baron nodded and thanked the captain, saying, “It is thanks to the protection of your knights that we were able to make the journey. You have my gratitude.”

“This is just part of our job.” Rowan smiled and nodded.

What Kant said next changed Rowan’s expression drastically. “Unfortunately, we’re running low of water now.”