

Lord of the Oasis

Chapter 5: The Gamble Was About to Begin

The corner of Kant's mouth rose ever so slightly into a smirk. He looked at Rowan, who appeared to be baffled.

He was laughing at Rowan. However, his expression remained calm. His furrowed brow revealed the anxiety he was feeling deep down. "Actually, we don't have much water left after coming this far."

...

"How much do we have left?" Rowan's face became glum.

"Not enough," Kant replied.

The temperature outside had shot up to 158 degrees Fahrenheit, yet the air inside the tent remained rather cool.

4

Both men silently sat across from each other without any other topic to continue the conversation.

Rowan's face was sullen. It was as if he was the manifestation of dark clouds in the night, about to bring a storm. He knew what it meant to not have enough water at such a time. It was more about thirst, but it also meant that they would soon have to fight with all they had.

His senses were perceptive enough to know this after having spent so much time on battlefields.

There were more than 50 Jackalans found at the dunes, which were close to the Oasis Lookout. That meant the Oasis Lookout had long been taken over by the Jackalans.

"That's how it is."

Rowan eventually nodded and looked at Kant with a sour expression. “Bad news indeed, Your Lordship.”

“Yes, bad news indeed.” Kant nodded.

The air remained cool as Rowan clenched his fists and gritted his teeth. “But, Your Lordship, aren’t you afraid?”

“Afraid? Afraid of what?” Kant asked as if he didn’t understand. “Why should I be afraid?”

“Heh.”

Rowan chuckled for a bit at the infuriating irony of it all. He was filled with frustration. It steadily built up in his chest and seemed like it was about to turn into flames of rage.

There was no way he was oblivious to what was happening. However, he dared not, and could not, do anything else.

Kant was an exiled baron, albeit the least favorite youngest son of the duke.

Regardless of if Rowan thought the man was better off dead, a proper excuse was needed for the baron to end up dead. For example, it would have been completely fine to have Kant taken out by the Jackalans on his way to his own fief. However, there was no way he could die by the hands of a knight of the Dukedom of Leo, especially one with no special status.

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Kant was part of Duke Cameron’s bloodline, as well as a baron representing the Dukedom of Leo.

Kant had won the round. Unfortunately, that was how the rules of the world worked.

3

“We could head to the Oasis Lookout.”

Kant continued as if there was nothing out of the ordinary. “According to the records, there is spring water there.” Kant paused and looked at Rowan

before continuing. “Fresh, sweet, high-quality spring water that is so good it could be used for brewing wine.”

5

“That is good to hear.” From Rowan’s perspective, all of that sounded pointless.

Rowan had no intention of humoring the baron any further. With a gloomy look on his face, he asked, “Your Lordship, what should we do from here on out?”

“Head to the Oasis Lookout,” Kant replied with a smile.

“But the Oasis Lookout has been taken over by a bunch of Jackalans. We have absolutely no chance of taking out those beasts with the kind of numbers we have on our side.” Rowan had grown impatient and laid the truth out.

Kant acted surprised. “What?”

“Your Lordship, we both understand what is going on here. Neither of us is a bloody fool.”

Rowan took a deep breath and said, “We need to take out the Jackalan Tribe at the Oasis Lookout one way or another. Otherwise, we will all end up dying of thirst in the Nahrin Desert. None of us will be able to survive.”

“This is serious.” Kant lowered his head as if he had not been getting what Rowan was saying.

Rowan ignored the movement and continued speaking. “My subordinates all have their own families. They have their beloved and their children. None of them want to stay here forever. That would be unfair to them.” He took a good look at Kant and said with a severe tone, “Your Lordship, I hope you can understand.”

“The Jackalans have taken the spring water of the Oasis Lookout for themselves.”

Kant seemed to nod with the same exasperation and said, “We will take out those Jackalans. Afterward, you all will be free to go home.”

“Any plans then?” Rowan asked while gritting his teeth.

Given how things turned out, there was no way he believed that Kant had no other plans in mind. Besides, it was this young baron who had caused all of this in the first place.

Kant, of course, had further plans to deal with the situation.

Struggling to hold back all his anger as he looked at Rowan, Kant said, “We will ambush the Jackalans while they are unaware of what is going on. The Jackalan Tribe doesn’t know that we’re here. So, we will lay in the dark. After all, we’re the ones with the element of surprise.”

4

“Ambush?”

Rowan’s voice slightly raised as he said, “The knights will suffer heavy casualties.”

Rowan took a deep breath before saying, “Please note that we only have 20 knights at our disposal, Your Lordship!”

“My people will be a part of this,” Kant said with a calm expression. “If our ambush is a success, the Jackalans will be thrown into chaos. We’ll take them all out before they can regroup and organize an effective retaliation.”

1

“Do you mean those peasants of yours, Your Lordship?”

Rowan’s face was filled with unconcealed sarcasm and ridicule. “I have to admit, they are good at working in the fields.”

“They can fight as well,” Kant replied.

“Your Lordship, you’re playing with fire here.” Rowan glared at Kant with anger in his eyes. “That is being irresponsible to my subordinates.”

Kant looked at the man in the eye calmly and replied, “It’s either that, or we all die of thirst in the desert.”

“This is a gamble with our lives on the line.” Rowan’s voice was somewhat raised.

“That is how war works,” Kant replied without shirking away. He remained looking at the middle-aged man while he rummaged through his pocket for a purse. “Will this be enough?”

The purse was woven with sturdy linen threads. Clanging metals could be heard as Kant threw the purse.

“Well...” Rowan caught it and felt the obvious weight of the metals in his hand.

Kant said, “This is a reward for the hard work of you and your men. It is 20 Great Silvers.”

“20 Great Silvers?” Rowan’s breath became somewhat rushed since that was not a small number.

Their monthly pay was only 20 Small Silvers each. The exchange rate between the two types of silver currencies was 100 Small Silvers for one Great Silvers.

7

That money meant that every one of the knights would receive five months’ worth of extra pay.

“I know you all could leave after escorting us to the Oasis Lookout, so this would be my pay for hiring you.”

Kant looked at Rowan and solemnly said, “You should be able to understand that if our ambush is a success, we may all come out alive.”

The term “ambush” meant a surprise attack out of nowhere. It was as simple and straightforward as it could have been.

One could have called it “sneaking up on one’s enemy” as well.

It was a tactic to deal an effective blow on one’s enemy when one’s forces were vastly outnumbered by said enemy.

The effect of an ambush was even more apparent when cavalry units were concerned since they had the advantage of high mobility. The effects of employing such a tactic would have been like no other. That was why Kant went all the way to pull what he pulled. It was to force Rowan and the knights to stay behind.

An ambush from only 10 Swadian Recruits and 20 Swadian Peasants would have been pathetic.

3

“When will we be doing this?”

Rowan’s expression softened after taking the Great Silvers.

He looked at Kant and said, “We need to wait for the right time when the Jackalans are the most relaxed. Perhaps dawn would be a good choice for doing so.”

“No.” Kant immediately shot down the suggestion.

While the Jackalans were at their most relaxed moments before dawn, Kant’s entourage did not have too much time to wait.

“Why?” Rowan frowned. He was very confident about his experience on the battlefield.

Kant explained, “The slaughtered Jackalans at the side of the dunes will have alerted those at the Oasis Lookout. If none of them return during sunset, the Jackalan Tribe will be able to guess that there are enemies nearby.”

Rowan’s breathing became ragged as he asked, “When should we do it?”

“Sundown.”

After thinking for a while, Kant seriously said, “We shall launch the ambush when the sun is about to set.”

“The evening glow,” Rowan added.

“That’s right. The sun will be our ally. The light shall conceal our presence.”

Kant took a deep breath and said, “There is no way they can detect us quickly enough. At that time, all your people need to do is charge as quickly as you can, throwing the entire tribe of Jackalans into chaos.”

Kant paused for a bit and slowly added, “After that, my men and I will charge as well.”

It was silent in the tent. It took quite a while before Rowan looked up and said, "Alright."

"We won't fail," Kant said, smiling as he looked at Rowan. "Trust me. The battle today will be one of your proudest stories when your people are out having a good time drinking in the tavern."

Rowan chuckled and glanced at Kant. "I sure hope so."

He walked outside the tent and said to Kant, "We'll get prepared."

"Sure." Kant nodded.

He was all alone in the tent again, but his expression had become incredibly severe.

A brutal battle was about to begin.

There were probably some among the knights escorting them that would end up dead. As for Kant's current Swadian members, who were in charge of the construction of his estate from then on out, some would be lost as well.

You can't go through life without making huge gambles once or twice.

Kant took a deep breath.

He chose to come to the Oasis Lookout. That in itself was tantamount to gambling on its own.

He had next to nothing, yet he wanted to live. The only way to secure a good life was to give it his all.

1

Kant touched the light crossbow by his side and chuckled in a self-deprecating manner. Well, it's not like we're going to lose for sure.

He had come all this way to win.

It was a victory he had to secure at all costs.

It was 5 p.m. Sundown was near.

2

The setting sun went below the dunes. As it shone, the light made the sand look like gold.

...

Kant stood at the top of the dunes. From behind, the sun's brilliant beams looked as if they were about to engulf his entire being.

The Oasis Lookout was less than a mile away from where he stood.

He was able to see something in the sand before him. It brilliantly glittered in the dusk's light.

It was the Oasis Lookout's water source, which was a lake formed by a geyser. Judging from the area alone, it was approximately 82 feet by 19 feet. Considering the minimal mass, it was more accurate to call it a pond.

4

Kant couldn't help but say, "This is beautiful."

Several lush shrubs surrounded the pond, as well as six huge Desert Poplar Trees.

Those green plants proudly stretched out their branches and leaves in the evening sun. It was as if they were indicating that regardless of how unforgiving the sand was, they remained steadfast in their resistance.

Rowan, the captain of the knights, stood by his side and nodded with a cold expression. "Yes, beautiful, indeed."

Kant calmly said, "All the more reason not to let the Jackalans take the place."

"Of course." Rowan coldly nodded.

He scanned the Oasis Lookout and discovered that tents had been erected around the pond.

The tents looked ragged and cobbled up from all manners of materials, including linen, tree bark, and pelts from hunted beasts. The whole setup

looked completely different from the tents that Kant's men and the knights had erected not long ago.

Regardless of the state they were in, the tents indicated where the Jackalan Tribe was.

Rowan took a deep breath and asked in a severe tone, "Your Lordship, when should we begin?"

"There's no need to rush."

Kant turned around and looked at the sun, which was still mustering the last bit of its power before setting.

The beams of the setting sun shone past the two men and engulfed the Oasis Lookout below. The beams shone onto the Jackalan Tribes as well.

If someone below were to look out, the sun would have looked to be at the same line as the dunes, which would have appeared very blinding.

Kant nodded and said, "Now."

"Very well." Rowan nodded coldly and took the lance in his hand. He quickly retreated down the dunes.

At the bottom of the dunes, 20 well-armed Dukedom of Leo knights were leading their horses and standing by. They were prepared to fight. The only thing that was needed now was an order from Rowan.

They were about to begin a battle from which they could not afford to back down. All of them sported cold expressions. Deep in their eyes, anger and hatred were visible.

All of them understood what had caused all of this.

It was Kant.

He was a baron of the Dukedom of Leo.

They escorted the noble to the Nahrin Desert so he could claim his fief. They had been traveling for six days, yet they were told at noon that there was no water left for their return trip.

4

They were then told to fight for their lives.

1

As such, they were angry and resentful.

“Edmund, the great God of War is watching us.”

Rowan took the reins of his warhorse and made his way in front of his men. With a severe expression, he said, “We shall let these lowly, filthy Jackalans, who know nothing but eating sand in the desert, know the bravery of the Dukedom of Leo!”

1

The knights unanimously responded, “Victory!”

The Dukedom of Leo was established through martial prowess. The faith of the nation surrounded Edmund, the God of War, who, per his namesake, was a god presiding over war.

As such, none of them were afraid. All of them turned the anger in their minds into strength.

“It’s beginning.”

Kant saw the 20 knights get onto their horses, scale the dunes, and charge straight down to the Oasis Lookout.

The hard horseshoes pounded heavily on the sands, kicking up a lot of dust and sand, which swooped about like a gale. The lances were thrust forward without mercy before the Jackalans at the Oasis Lookout knew what was going on.

The tips of the lances pierced one baffled Jackalan after another.

Blood was spilled, yet none of the 20 dukedom knights had any intentions of putting down their lances.

They gritted their teeth as they held their lances up, continuing to skewer the Jackalans like kebabs as they charged deeper into the tribe.

They knew what they had to do. They had to cause chaos of great magnitude.

“Our turn now!”

Kant shouted excitedly and raised the light crossbow in his hand. He headed out with great strides.

The 10 Swadian Recruits held spears and followed right behind him.

The 20 Swadian Peasants followed at the flank with their long scythes in hand.

They were moving fairly quickly. It was almost as if they were sprinting. The murderous intent in their eyes was unmistakable. They were all determined to take the Oasis Lookout, which would be their lord’s fief and their home from then on out.

“For the Dukedom of Leo!”

Rowan and the 20 knights gritted their teeth as they charged deeper into the tribe.

2

By then, their lances were broken, but they quickly switched to the longswords at their sides and swung hard at the Jackalans, which seemed to have emerged out of nowhere.

2

The ambush was surprisingly successful.

The Jackalans had no idea whatsoever that they would soon be attacked. The chaos quickly spread to the outer fringes of the Jackalan Tribe’s camp. With their green eyes open wide, most of the Jackalans simply stood there, staring in confusion.

It would have been difficult for them to even get a good look at the invading enemy.

Whenever they heard shrieks from the west, they turned around and quickly found the evening sun above them shining straight into their eyes. It prevented them from opening their eyes.

1

Gallop, gallop, gallop, gallop...

The galloping noises of the horses grew increasingly closer. When the Jackalans finally saw their enemy, they found one human knight after another looming over them.

By then, it was too late.

Rowan led his knights, who were swinging their swords, into the Jackalans.

Blood was seen splattering everywhere.

The Jackalans, who had long, pointy tusks and were covered in grey fur, finally began to crumble. Fear was seen all over their wolf-like faces.

“Maintain formation. Come with me!”

Swooping noises were heard from Kant’s light crossbow. A nearby Jackalan was seen tumbling to the ground.

The bolt in its back pierced through its spine, stabbing into its heart.

Kant hardly cared. His face remained cold as he deeply set his gaze onto the Jackalan Tribe. Rowan and 19 knights of the dukedom were still swinging their swords in a frenzy. They continued to cause panic among the Jackalans and spread the stench of blood and death.

1

“Keep charging!”

Kant drew his short sword and led the charge forward with 30 men behind him.

The Jackalan Tribe, which by then was thrown into complete chaos, was utterly unable to retaliate effectively. That enabled Kant and his men to move even quicker.

Shrieks from countless downed Jackalans were heard everywhere.

The Jackalans scattered all over the place.

The old, the young, and those in their prime were all running and cowering in fear.

45

They were up against knights that had appeared out of nowhere.

They also faced Swadian Recruits holding spears.

The Jacklans' minds were quickly flooded with all those memories from 10 years ago.

That had been a complete slaughter carried out by the Dukedom of Leo.

Those memories were horrifying night terrors that continued to haunt the Jackalans until the present day.

The memories were so horrifying that, even at present, the Jackalans who had survived the slaughter dared not continue to resist.

“Leave none of them alive. We do not need prisoners.”

32

Kant's voice was heard throughout the Oasis Lookout, which, at the same time, sealed the horrible fates of the Jackalans.

The knights continued to pursue the Jackalans who had scattered and escaped.

The Swadian Peasants and Swadian Recruits circled the Oasis Lookout's pond and began cleaning up any Jackalans found within the tents of the tribe. Since they had won, they were relegated to cleaning up the battlefield.

The Jackalans, who had all lost the will to resist, became sheep awaiting slaughter.

Furthermore, those ferocious primitive beings were unable to compete with humans when it came to war, be it in terms of tactics or weapons and equipment.

14

The evening sun finally set beyond the dunes.

The fighting was over.

The remaining glow of the sun struggled to light the darkened sky, giving off final bits of light before eventually setting.

Before long, the moon was vaguely seen rising into the sky.

A night sky filled with stars quickly took over. The high temperatures of the day seemed to have instantly subsided. The strong wind blowing from the depths of the desert brought with it a chilling cold. A few hours later, the temperature in the Nahrin Desert dipped to a freezing minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit.

2

Of course, such bone-chilling cold had yet to hit them.

The knights, who had been killing all over the place just a short while ago, gathered around on their horses. The cooling winds felt very comfortable.

“Your Lordship, your fief is now finally yours.”

2

Rowan, the captain of the knights, got off his horse. His expression remained cold.

The linen robes, which Rowan and the knights behind him wore over their mail armor, were all stained with huge patches of blood. It was as if their garb had been dyed. They looked very out of place.

Four or five unlucky ones ended up injured. Either their arms were hanging limply, or they were walking with a limp.

It was obvious that the battle had not been an easy one.

1

Some Jackalans burst forth under the threat of death, yet they still managed to deal light damage to the knights at the front.

“You should probably wash your wounds.”

Kant looked at the injured ones and nodded to Rowan, saying, “If you don’t mind, I can bandage your men’s wounds. I learned first-aid knowledge on the battlefield from veterans quite a while ago.”

“That won’t be necessary.” Rowan immediately declined.

They were military veterans. Dressing and bandaging wounds were things that their men could easily do.

Captain Rowan coldly said to Kant, “We will leave at once, right now.”

The knights behind him all looked at Kant coldly. Even if he were to lower his status, none of the knights would behave or look any friendlier toward him.

Everyone knew who had started all the fighting.

“Are you leaving now?”

Kant frowned slightly and said in an exasperated manner, “This is rather unexpected. Perhaps you all should stay and rest for a couple of days.”

Furthermore, the Nahrin Desert at night was not a good time to do such a thing.

Without ample heat-retention equipment, temperatures of minus 4 degrees Fahrenheit were easily life-threatening.

“We don’t need rest. We will leave immediately after replenishing our stores of fresh water.”

4

As he spoke, Rowan wiped the blood off of his face. His tone confirmed that he would not be negotiating. He was simply making a firm statement.

2

He turned around to face the knights and yelled, “What are you people still standing there for? Get the water sacks and clothes from the carriages. Get ready to go home after you get the water filled. Hurry up!”

“Yes, Sir!” the knights responded and left to immediately get their tasks completed.

Their assignments were clear. They quickly took their tents and wool clothing for warmth from the carriages. At the same time, each of them carried five extra water sacks. They filled the sacks at the pond.

“Alright, I wish you all a quick and safe journey home. Enjoy your lagers at the tavern when you return.”

Kant shrugged exasperatedly and continued, “By then, I figure you people will be bragging about your time with me as you talk about the battle today.”

Rowan narrowed his gaze while the knights behind him all looked cold and uncaring.

None of them cared about the cold joke that Kant had just uttered. They were busy with their own tasks. When everything was done, they mounted their horses and left without the slightest intention of even saying farewell to Kant.

In their eyes, Kant was little more than a stranger to them.

“Farewell.”

Kant waved them goodbye, nonetheless, looking calm as he did so.

As a noble and a revered baron, he had long learned how to be shameless when the time called for it.

2

That was how nobles survived around each other.