

Lord of the Oasis

Chapter 8: Troubles in the Morning

The peasants all stood up, seemingly in high spirits.

“Very well.”

...

Kant nodded, feeling satisfied.

Those 50 Swadian Peasants were the base population of Drondheim from then on out.

They were now the main force driving the village’s future development.

This was not a game. While Kant only needed to fight battles with his newly created troops, he still needed a certain number of peasants to look after the village. They needed to make the village, which currently only had the Council Hall, bigger and stronger.

The 50 Swadian Peasants also solved the safety problem they currently faced.

With the 20 Dukedom of Leo knights gone, Kant and the Oasis Lookout had faced a huge predicament.

The escaped Jackalans would have no intention of simply let things slide. They would have regrouped and tried to take back the oasis that had once been their home, militantly clashing with Kant.

The Oasis Lookout was still at the forefront of danger.

The 10 Swadian Militia and 20 Swadian Recruits were too small of a force to deal with such a threat.

The addition of the new peasants considerably relieved the lingering threat.

At the very least, if they were to be put in a tight formation with their long scythes in hand, it would be impossible for the Jackalans, who did not even have iron weapons, to break through their defenses.

We still need further development. Kant was planning in his mind.

According to the system's page, the only building the village currently had was that simple, shabby Council Hall.

As for the other buildings, such as houses, city walls, mills, watchtowers, and wells, all of those would require funds and time to construct. The process would be as complicated as constructing real buildings.

There was nothing Kant could do about it.

Funds and time were the two things he needed the most.

The Jackalans were not going to give him time.

Furthermore, the only funds available to him were the 1,000 Denars acquired for completing the main quest of building a village.

There was one other thing that made Kant feel exasperated.

That world had several currencies—Small Silver, Great Silver, and Gold, which was of an even higher value.

None of those currencies were exchangeable for the Denars required by the system.

The burden is heavy, and the road is long, he thought.

Kant could not help but shake his head with a bitter smile.

...

The bright, beautiful moonlight enveloped the entire place.

Without any means of temperature regulation, the chill throughout the desert quickly grew apparent.

The night was no longer young.

Yet, the Oasis Lookout was still as busy as it was during the day.

It was impossible for 80 people to just camp outside in a desert.

The Council Hall was the only building in the village. Despite being two-stories, it was not that big of a building. It was only of 5,380 square feet at most, which was equal to the size of a bungalow within the country.

Fitting all 80 people inside was impossible.

Kant quickly made arrangements.

The 30 troops were assigned to rest within the council hall while the 50 peasants were told to set up camp outside around the Council Hall.

Kant had brought a good number of living supplies in the three carriages.

Those supplies included huge tents that could fit plenty of people, as well as wool clothing to keep everyone warm. All of that was enough for the 50 peasants to get through the night.

Kant had his reasons for making such arrangements.

Rather, he had his priorities.

Regardless, the 10 Swadian Militia and 20 Swadian Recruits were all that formed his current main combat force. Losing even one of them would have created quite a heartache for him.

They all had a lot to do with how his future forces would be developed, which meant that he could not afford to treat them as expendables.

As for guard duty that night, it was also taken care of by his 30 troops.

As such, they needed more rest to be able to deal with any potential crisis that might arise.

The 50 peasants, who were all outside the Council Hall, had superior numbers. Even if there was any danger, they could quickly band together when prompted by the troops on duty, forming tight formations to protect themselves and prevent any huge casualties from happening.

Reality was usually cruel.

The so-called protection was, at times, little more than petty compassion and kindness.

Kant was far from pedantic.

He, on the other hand, knew the value of the concept of gaining the highest benefit with the lowest cost.

“Alright, hurry up people!”

Kant hurried his people to get the tents set up as soon as possible to prevent any unforeseen circumstances from happening.

Campfires were lit at the same time. They used tent materials and wood found in the Jackalan Tribe to start them. The fires raged and burned brightly, giving off heat to somewhat ward off the chill of the night.

The Oasis Lookout camp was almost finished being set up.

A peasant briskly walked up to Kant and said, “My Lord, your room is ready.”

“I see.” Kant nodded.

His room was on the second floor of the Council Hall, which was guarded by 10 Swadian Militia. The 20 Swadian Recruits were getting ready on the floor below to ensure that nothing untoward happened to him.

They originated from the system, so they only existed because Kant existed.

As such, he had nothing to worry about when it came to their loyalty.

He looked at the dazzling stars in the sky. The chill around made him shudder.

“Best be careful.”

He said that to the peasants as walked into the Council Hall.

He walked up to the second floor via the stairs at the corner of the hall. Kant’s room was at the very end. The place had been tidied up by the militia.

The room had a window, which coincidentally faced the pond.

Kant gazed out the window. Light from the night sky shone soft light on the pond. It glittered as the water danced from the gently blowing wind. The beautiful scenery was mesmerizing.

Kant was unable to help but say, "This is indeed beautiful."

This was the first time he had witnessed such a beautiful sight since he entered the Nahrin Desert.

Unlike the harsh and burly desert, the beauty before him was soft and gentle.

However, he quickly pulled his thoughts back and took a good look at his room.

He knew that he would have to stay in that room for a very long time in the future.

The room was approximately 107 square feet. It was furnished with a wooden bed and wardrobe, as well as a crudely made table and chair. All in all, the layout looked primitive and cramped. The accommodations were only slightly better than what commoners would have.

The single bed had a linen sheet on top of it. There was also a blanket made of wool and cotton neatly folded at the end of the bed.

Everything looked to be the standard style of the Kingdom of Swadia.

While the room looked crude, it was well-kept.

At the very least, there was no odor around.

It looks decent.

Kant felt satisfied with the room. Besides, the option to sleep on a wooden bed without worries in a protected room was far better than sleeping in a shallow hole that looked like a grave hastily dug in the desert.

Despite being the youngest son of a duke, he had still experienced harshness in life.

He placed the light crossbow and quiver neatly on the table. He took off the linen robe, which served to shield him against the dust, dusting it for a bit before hanging it on the wardrobe.

However, Kant did not take his clothes off. He also kept his short sword at his side.

Despite being in a room that was close to 10 Swadian Militia, he deemed it best to be on guard. At the very least, if anything unforeseen were to happen, he would not be caught off-guard and end up in a panic.

Kant spread his blanket out and went to bed.

He slept soundly, possibly due to having made a long, arduous journey, as well as having to fight a bloody battle on top of that.

The crisp chirp of birds was heard, which woke him up.

Chirp, chirp, chirp.

Kant slightly opened his eyes, still drowsy from the restful sleep.

Two birds were standing at the window. He did not know what kind they were, but they resembled sparrows except were a dirt-yellow color. The chirped as they hopped about, pecking at the ledge with their beaks.

The light of the morning sun shone through the window. The sun had risen.

“Hmph.”

Kant took off his blanket. The early morning in the Nahrin Desert still felt somewhat cold.

However, he knew it would not take long for the temperature to quickly skyrocket, reaching a level of heat that no man could withstand.

He put on his linen robe and looked outside as he stood at the side of his bed.

A sea of sand was spread out before him. The desert’s yellow dirt seemed to be out to swallow everything. Only the small bit of green nearby gave him a measure of reassurance.

This was how the Oasis Lookout was.

The crystal clear spring water reflected the bit of light. The shallow depth, which was not even a couple of feet, enabled him to easily see the sand and rocks beneath.

Kant unconsciously said, "Beautiful indeed."

He was correct. Compared to the Nahrin Desert as a whole, the oasis was like a paradise.

And, it was a paradise that belonged to him.

He frowned and found that the paradise was still a dirty one.

The Jacklans' messy tents lined the sides of the pond. There was garbage from living nearby for years, as well as excrement, scattered all over the place in messy piles. Those beings had no concept of hygiene.

They were defiling the oasis!

When he saw Swadian Peasants already hard at work cleaning up the garbage, his mind was put at ease.

That area was to soon become the place where they would settle down. The sight of messy garbage littering the place was an eyesore to the peasants, who were inherently people with an affinity for cleanliness and loved the sight of a beautiful field. They promptly went on to clean the place up because it was all too much for them to stomach.

Knock, knock.

There was knocking on the door. A voice from outside said, "My Lord, breakfast is ready. Would you like some now?"

It was the Swadian Peasant from before.

"I'll get it right away," Kant replied.

He closed the window and walked out of his room. A stout peasant was respectfully waiting for him outside.

Kant asked, "What's for breakfast?"

"Bread slices and soup made of dried meat cooked with cabbage," the peasant replied.

"Dried meat cooked with cabbage?"

Kant was rather shocked. He walked down the stairs to the lower floor and said, "I don't remember bringing cabbage with us." He paused and seemed to have recalled something. "Does the Council Hall have cabbage?"

"Yes, My Lord."

The peasant nodded and said, "There were 500 loaves of bread, 250 pieces of dried meat, and 100 cabbages in the storage room."

"That many?" Kant frowned slightly.

The bread, dried meat, and cabbage were all calculated in hundreds, so they were huge numbers.

However, the man hesitated for a bit before adding, "All of that can only last for 10 days."

Kant was baffled. "Ten days?"

The man nodded and said, "Indeed, My Lord. We need to search for more food, or we will run out of food in 10 days. Even if we conserve whatever food we have, we'll only be able to last about 15 days."

They went outside the Council Hall. The greenery around the pond was still as lush as ever.

However, Kant was no longer in the mood to admire it. He frowned and asked, "How could we eat that much?"

The 50 Swadian Peasants were tidying up the oasis. They were cleaning up the Jackalan tribe's toppled tents, as well as the garbage and excrement they left behind.

The 10 Swadian Militia were patrolling with their iron-reinforced heavy spears in hand.

The 20 Swadian Recruits had spread out around the dune, setting up guard posts.

"Alright."

Kant nodded. He looked rather severe. "I guess 80 people would eat quite a lot of food."

The people from the Kingdom of Swadia were far from being frail and aged. All of them were stout, strong men who were in their prime.

There was no way their food consumption would be a small amount.

...

Outright impossible!

If they were to calculate from that day onward, Drondheim's existing food storage would only last for 10 days.

For Kant, that was a very huge headache.

Is this a joke or something?

If we run out of food and water, even at an oasis in the desert, we will definitely end up dead!

1

There was another more important point he had to consider.

There was no telling when the Jackalans would make their retaliation. With Drondheim still in a state of crisis and the storage of food within the fief being insufficient, Kant, as a newly appointed lord who was basically dirt poor, was practically in hell at the moment. The torture did not seem to be stopping any time soon.

This really will be quite a trouble.

Kant lowered his head and pondered the problem for a while. He knew just how serious the problem was. We need to solve the food shortage before anything else.

He had made his decision.

Whichever time or world he was in, any problem with food was the most pressing of problems, be it in reality, a game, or unfamiliar foreign world, which he found himself in at the moment.

The problem was even more apparent to Kant.

More than anything else, the people who were watching over Drondheim needed to see their bellies filled.

In order to be able to withstand a Jackalan attack, they had to keep their stamina up

An empty stomach meant one could end up in a limp, lethargic state. That made even lifting weapons difficult, let alone fighting the Jackalans, who could appear at any time.

Even the Swadian Peasants needed to be strong enough to hold up their scythes to protect their village.

I definitely need to think of something.

4

Kant frowned as he brainstormed.

There was the option to cut down the distribution of food to make it last longer, but doing so would only cripple Drondheim in the long run. He absolutely was not able to make a decision that would put him in a further pinch.

Without stamina, one was not able to fight.

“Let’s have a look at the storage room.” Kant returned to the Council Hall.

The militia followed behind him.

The storage room was in a corner on the first floor of the hall, which was about 322 square feet. Loaves of bread, dried meats, and round cabbages were all laid out on the shelves.

1

The air was filled with the fragrance of food.

“Is this all we’ve got?” Kant frowned and looked rather displeased.

A militia member answered, “Indeed, My Lord, there is just this and nothing else.”

From the looks of things, the food supplies were more or less as reported by the militia—500 loaves of bread, 250 dried portions of meat, and 100 cabbages.

The breakfast they had just eaten —16 loaves of bread, five dried pieces of meat, and five cabbages—needed to be, without a doubt, taken out of the equation.

As such, while it seemed they had a lot of food left, considering it filled the entire storage room, judging from the fact that they had 80 adults to feed three meals a day, as well as additional meals for the guards on night duty, the room full of food would still only last for 10 days.

After all, the Swadians were all healthy, strong men.

3

They needed huge amounts of food for all three daily meals. Worse still, given how his fief was still under development, the cost in stamina would be even greater, which meant an increased need for energy intake.

6

Other than needing to secure ample amounts of food, said food needed to be diversified even further.

“Oh right.”

Kant lifted his head a little and said to the militia, “We do have quite a hefty amount of supplies left in the carriages.”

1

Everything stored in the carriages was supplies he had prepared back in the Dukedom of Leo.

The supplies included large amounts of food.

Although they had consumed some while they were on their way to the Oasis Lookout and some were taken by the knights for their trip home, they should still have had a hefty amount left. He had specifically purchased food that was heat-tolerant and had long shelf lives.

“We checked the carriages the night before,” a militia member replied.

“There are loaves of bread, smoked meats, and sausages, as well as some salt, sugar, and spices.”

Kant nodded and asked, “How much of that do we have left?”

“With everything accounted for, it will be enough to last us three more days,” the militia member answered.

“Wait, what? Just enough for three more days?”

1

Kant was baffled and found what he heard unbelievable. He had purchased one whole carriage full of food.

At the time he purchased the food, he had considered the amount of food that would be consumed throughout their journey in the desert, as well as extra for their time developing the Oasis Lookout when they settled down. It should have lasted the previous 30 Swadian Peasants about half a month.

“We checked everything and found that all of that will only last us three days,” the militia member answered truthfully.

1

Kant’s brow was now locked in a deep frown.

This was something he had not expected.

“So, 13 days in total then.” Kant frowned.

1

The militia member nodded and answered, “Correct.”

2

Kant’s frown deepened after thinking about how much they ate during their journey. He was sure that he had not been eating much. When he recalled how the knights behaved when they left, he realized something.

Kant gritted his teeth and said, "Those bastards."

4

This has to be revenge!

Those people were taking their revenge against him for having made them risk their lives to conquer the Oasis Lookout, which had been taken over by the Jackalans.

You people really have won this time. Kant pinched his brow as he deeply sighed.

However, it was pointless to be angry. After all, it had been his fault.

He thought of his current predicament and the fief that was still being developed. He realized just how much of a difference there was between reality and an ideal. The troubles he currently faced made him feel rather helpless. He wondered just how much more trouble was waiting for him.

1

"My Lord."

The militia member said, "It is best to get something to eat. Besides, breakfast is ready."

A Swadian Peasant, who served as the cook, approached them with a tray. On it was a huge wooden bowl that contained soup cooked with minced dried meat and cabbage and sprinkled with a dash of fine salt and pepper.

There were also two slices of white bread as huge as a palm, which had been toasted and smelled very nice.

"Yeah, breakfast does look good."

Kant took the tray.

He temporarily put all those troubles behind him since it was time for breakfast.

The soup was thick, and the cooked dried meat and cabbage went well with the toasted bread.

The fragrance of food permeated the entire oasis.

The Swadian Peasants were having a great time with their bread and soup. All of them were smiling excitedly and chatting away. They even laughed when someone said something funny or to be happy about.

This was his fief.

Kant liked the atmosphere of momentary relaxation amid the tense and busy state of things.

3

This was the joy he had gained after leaving all that political clout back at the Dukedom of Leo behind. It was especially so given how he was in charge of everything. The feeling of having all the power in his hands was intoxicating.

Most people loved power. Few people liked living as hermits.

Ambition.

Whether they embraced it or not, it was something inherent in everyone.

“The food is very good. Thank the cook for me.”

Kant put down his knife and fork. He felt satisfied.

After breakfast, his frown no longer looked all that severe. He was in a better mood. He left the Council Hall for the pond of the oasis to admire his fief and estate. He had divided the areas up beforehand.

Mush!

Kant did not watch his step closely enough. As he approached the pond, he seemed to have stepped onto something.

The stench hit his nose before he had even lowered his head. He looked down. His usually calm face looked rather twisted. “Goddamn it, this is disgusting.”

2

His leather boot had stepped onto a thick, sticky brown substance near the pond.

It was excrement from the Jackalans.

His twisted face became filled with seething hatred. He scanned the area near the pond and saw at least over 30 “mines” of such nature, which practically made the place seem like a minefield.

The Jackalans, who were still in a primitive state, had no concept of hygiene or disease prevention.

Truthfully, however, such primitive beings were usually immune from common illnesses.

1

“Sh*t.”

2

Kant cursed and stepped away, rubbing his feet in the sand in an attempt to scrub off the disgusting pile of excrement sticking to his boot.

A prompt from the system suddenly appeared on his retina.

[Ding... Side Quest assigned]

[Side Quest: Clean up the oasis]

[Reward: Flour x 20]

3

[Introduction: Your fief is located in the oasis, but the place is currently contaminated by the dirty Jackalans. Clean up your oasis. The place holds all of your future hopes.]

6

It was a System Quest.

Kant was slightly startled, but his eyes became filled with joy after seeing the introduction on his retina.

It was enough to lighten his soiled mood from stepping on sh*t for quite some time.

1

This is just what I need!

What the Oasis Lookout lacked most, and had a pressing need for at the moment, was undoubtedly food.

Finishing the current side quest would reward Kant the food he desperately needed. Furthermore, it was 20 bags of flour, which could be used for making bread by just adding water.

2

While 20 bags of flour were not a lot, they would give him a few more days to come up with a lasting solution.

Kant would have better choices by then.

Whether it required returning to the dukedom to purchase food or searching the deeper reaches of the desert for a way out, all of that would only be possible if he had the time to spare without having to worry about the food shortage problem getting in the way of his plans.

Clean up the oasis. That is simple enough. Kant already had plans.

Actually, he would have arranged for the Swadian Peasants to clean the oasis up all the same, with or without that quest from the system.

The Jackalans had made a giant mess of the oasis while they were living there.

Trees?

Kant was just about to arrange for the peasants to clean the place up when he caught sight of the Desert Poplar Trees swaying in the wind at the northern side of the pond. The trees looked beautiful as the morning sun washed over their gently swaying branches.

However, another type of tree appeared in Kant's mind.

Date Palm Trees!

12

They had been the reward acquired from finishing the Side Quest. All 20 Date Palm Trees were ripe.

Kant had finished two quests. He had crushed the team of Jackalans out to ambush them, and he had annihilated the Jackalan Tribe. The 20 Date Palm Trees and a Desert Bandit Lair were acquired as rewards, respectively.

All of that could be brought immediately to reality, just like how the Council Hall had materialized right before him the night before.

2

Yeah, the Date Palm Trees.

Kant smiled. That was quite a pleasant surprise.

...

In usual fertile flatlands suitable for human habitation, where plants of all types could grow and flourish, Date Palm Trees were of little use. They usually only served as decorative plants in gardens or rare fruit trees that added a touch of exoticness to the menu of non-essential foods.

In other words, Date Palm Trees were basically non-essential and dispensable.

However, to desert people, who survived in such a harsh, unforgiving environment, the tall, stout palm trees were indispensable plants they relied on to survive. Date Palm Trees were holy things born in the desert.

4

Such was the status of the Date Palm Trees.

1

Kant knew that fruits borne by such trees—the tasty, juicy dates—were where their essence lied.

Dates were usually lauded as the most nutritious of dried fruits, which enabled them to earn the title of “Desert Bread.” Two-thirds of the date fruit consisted of sugars. Ancient Egyptians saw the dates as signs of a good harvest while Romans and Greeks used dates in victory celebrations to welcome their winning soldiers home.

2

One Date Palm Tree was capable of bearing 300 dates, and every date weighed about 20 grams each.

These fruits were packed with extremely high nutritional value. They contained various vitamins and natural sugars. Furthermore, dates were sweet, juicy, and nutritious, making them useful either as a staple food or fruit. They could be used as ingredients for making sugars and liquor, as well as all manner of sweets, high-quality jams, biscuits, and dishes. They could also be used to make vinegar and pure alcohol.

1

Their sugars and nutritional value were so high that an adult could maintain basic survival needs just by eating six dates per meal.

9

It was a fruit that lived up to its title of “Desert Bread.”

As such, for a very long time, the dates served as a staple food of desert people. They were an indispensable crop desert dwellers relied on for survival. Even in the system, it was a specialty of the Sarrand Sultanate and a tactical supply that maintained the desert kingdom’s prosperity.

6

That was because there was more than just fruit to the Date Palm Trees. The plant itself was filled with treasures. Human civilizations had a use for every part.

The trunks of the Date Palm Trees were viable as construction materials and water tanks. The trees were aesthetic enough for use as decorative plants. Their twigs and vines were useful for crafting chairs and beds, as well as baskets for carrying fruits, vegetables, poultry, and fish. Their leaves were ideal for making mats, brooms, trays, and other such items. Those parts also served as fuel. The trunks were useful for crafting sheds and bridges while the seeds could be used as feed. Low-quality dates were used as fertilizer or to feed for livestock.

4

The trees were just as useful for making weapons.

For instance, polearms and siege engine parts were crafted using the trunks of Date Palm Trees. In fact, common weapons used by desert people had parts that came from Date Palm Trees.

2

I need to be careful about this.

Kant nodded silently as he scanned the Oasis Lookout.

1

The 50 Swadian Peasants were hard at work around the pond that formed from the geyser of spring water. They were clearing up all manner of garbage and excrement left by the Jackalan Tribe, gradually restoring the oasis to its original clean and tidy appearance.

It was carried out by his orders so that he could acquire the reward of the Side Quest assigned by the system.

Besides, 20 bags of flour were very important.

The Swadian Peasants were down-to-earth and hardworking, which put Kant at ease.

At the moment, he needed to seriously consider how to divide the limited pieces of land at the Oasis Lookout to ensure the steady development of his village, Drondheim, which, at the moment, only had the single Council Hall.

The Oasis Lookout was his most important estate, so he could not afford to be careless with it.

Residential, commercial, agricultural, and crafts areas—all of which were regions available only to huge towns or cities—were something that he deemed necessary to be planned in the early stages. Otherwise, once the village was developed into something more, the messy city planning and construction would be an eyesore.

1

He had the system to serve as his cheat, so he never thought he would have to stay trapped in the desert forever.

“The desert is not the end. The oasis shall serve as my foundation toward success.”

Kant muttered to himself.

After looking around, he had thought of quite a few ideas.

The spring water emerged from cracks underground, forming a pond. Kant estimated that the length between the eastern and western end was about 82 feet while the width between the northern and southern end was about 19 feet. The geyser beneath was about three feet deep. It turned increasingly shallow as it reached the edge.

It was a rare water source found in the desert, which formed the foundation of the Oasis Lookout’s existence.

There were about 164 feet of land at the southern and northern sides of the pond that remained free from the desert’s encroachment. A good number of tightly packed small green plants grew there. Several lush trees were scattered between all that greenery.

On the north side of the pond, there were six thick and twisted Desert Poplar Trees. They were located at the intersection between the oasis and the desert. The faint yellow leaves filled the branches and swayed in the wind, which looked as pleasant as finely dressed women dancing.

Desert Poplar Trees were desert trees. They were of a status comparable to the Date Palm Trees and known as the “Protector God of the Desert.”

1

These trees played a vital role in stabilizing the ecosystem balance around the river areas of barren deserts. They prevented erosion and regulated desert climate and the formation of fertile soil for forestation. They served as natural barriers for agricultural development in desert regions.

It seems like the northern side of the pond could serve as agricultural areas.

2

Kant made up his mind.

He circled the pond and walked toward the five Desert Poplar Trees, where the intersection between the soil of the oasis and the desert lied.

There seemed to be a very clear line drawn between the two areas.

The northern side was filled with yellow sand while the southern side had sandy areas of slightly darker colors, which were filled with weeds of unknown types. That meant the soil beneath was wet and capable of being used for farming.

As for the six Desert Poplar Trees, they were growing outside in the loose sand.

Kant walked up close and found those trees to be tens of years old. Their 20-foot-tall trunks seemed twisted, but the tops of the trees were incredibly lush. They blocked out sunlight from above, making the place beneath seem cool.

So, that's how it works.

Kant took out his short sword and dug a bit at the base of the trees. He made a mental note. The roots are absorbing water deep within the sand. The place is still close enough to the oasis and the pond, which means that this place is not extremely arid yet.

The roots of Desert Poplar Trees were capable of absorbing water as deep as 32 feet below ground.

As such, when such a tree was found in the desert, one could determine that within 32 feet beneath the said tree there were rare water resources.

However, the place they were at was the Oasis Lookout, which had a sweet, refreshing spring water source practically right at their sides.

He thought, the 20 Desert Palm Trees could be arranged like a jungle.

Kant nodded as his eyes scanned the intersections between the desert and the oasis.

He decided to plant all of the Date Palm Trees there, just like how the Desert Poplar Trees were planted. That made them a natural barrier against the winds, preventing the sands of the desert from spreading into the oasis, as well as solidifying the sands and soil beneath to serve as preparation for further farming efforts.

Be it in reality or the system, whether it was the desert people or the Sarrand Sultanate, they all planted their flora in such a manner.

Date Palm Trees were planted outside, and crops were planted inside.

Under the protection of Date Palm Trees, the crops planted would grow well in the oasis as long as there was ample irrigation. When the Date Palm Trees and other trees formed forests of larger areas, sweet, fruitful vegetables and fruits could even be planted.

1

There was currently no lack of fresh-water resources in the Oasis Lookout.

As such, even if the trees were planted at the edge of the desert, their roots could easily burrow several feet deep underground, absorbing water from the oasis.

“System, can the Date Palm Trees be planted here?”

With the plans in place, Kant connected his mind to the system.

The system instantaneously replied, “You may.”

At the same time, card-like Date Palm Trees appeared in Kant’s mind. Data streams started to spread in reality, appearing on the spots that Kant had wanted the trees planted.

The data streams continued to spread.

At the edge of the Oasis Lookout, 20 Date Palm Trees were done being lined up in less than two minutes.

Those Date Palm Trees were all over 22 feet tall and looked like coconut trees growing on beaches. However, the fruits found on top of their tall, stout trunk were not huge coconuts. Instead, they were clusters of purplish-red dates, which were individually the size of an egg. They would turn red after being dried in the wind and could be stored for more than a dozen months at a time.

3

“This is beautiful.” Kant couldn’t help but express his admiration.

1

The Date Palm Trees were tall and straight, and they formed a straight line along the intersection between the desert and the oasis.

A breeze carrying heat blew across them, causing the palm trees, which had flat yet thin, long leaves, to sway in the wind. They seemed to have possessed a special charm, making them look like alluring women in the desert.

3

Green plants all looked mesmerizing in a sea of sand because they symbolized survival.

The appearance of the Date Palm Trees attracted the attention of the peasants, as well as the soldiers on guard duty. They all joyfully gazed in his direction.

Many peasants eyed the clusters of dates on those trees in a mesmerized manner.

Their purplish-red skin meant that the dates were ripe for harvest. They would be very sweet and precious fruits. Even though the Kingdom of Swadia was right beside the Sarrand Sultanate, those tasty dates would fetch a high price due to war and the existence of bandits.

“I need 10 men to help me out,” Kant called out.

“We’re of your service, My Lord.”

There were 10 Swadian Peasants packing up the broken tents. They quickly put down what they were doing and went over to where Kant was, awaiting orders.

1

“I need all of you to pluck the dates,” Kant said.

“As you wish, My Lord.”

The peasants looked up. The clusters of dates below the 22-foot-tall trunks were enticing. However, due to the height, it was impossible to effectively get them without appropriate tools.

However, that was of no trouble to them.

A peasant said, “There is a 20-foot wooden ladder in the council.”

3

“Yeah, and baskets on the roof,” another peasant added.

“Very well.”

Kant nodded in satisfaction and said, “I shall leave the task to you all.”

Then again, noting the current food shortage faced by Drondheim, he still cautioned them, “Be careful though. Don’t scratch up the bark of these beloved fruits while you are at it. Otherwise, they won’t last after being dried.”

2

The peasants shrugged and nodded affirmatively. “Rest assured, My Lord.”

While they were not all that proficient at combat, they were very good at agricultural and all manners of menial labor.

The 10 Swadian Peasants had their work cut out for them.

One went to the Council Hall to fetch the wooden ladder. Another peasant steadily climbed up to the roof to fetch the baskets, as well as shears for cutting the clusters of dates hanging on the branches of the trees, to make plucking and drying the dates easier.

...

The dates were ripe and fresh, so they required careful handling.

There was no doubt that the peasants knew that well.

They were all experienced farmhands who had long been working in the fields. None of this posed much of a problem for them as long as they were careful and attentive.

12

Kant felt at ease handing off these duties to the peasants.

At present, he had other matters that required his attention.

Among the said matters, there was the Desert Bandit Lair.

1

That quest reward had come the previous evening. It was acquired when Kant and the Dukedom of Leo knights put their lives on the line to annihilate the Jackalans who had taken over the Oasis Lookout.

According to the system's judgment, quests that came with the risk of having entire forces wiped out came with high-level rewards.

This is rather curious.

Kant's mind was immediately connected to the system.

When the data card of that item appeared on his retina, he was able to see that it was a house constructed using sand and stone. Horses were tied at the door. Soldiers carrying spears and wearing leather armor walked by.

There was no doubt that they were units per the name of the reward—Desert Bandits.

1

However, Kant was still somewhat stunned.

Desert Bandits?

He was unable to help but frown as if he had recalled something.

In the system from his past life, there were monster units in the territories of the Sarrand Sultanate that went by that name. They appeared in groups in the sea of sand, plundering trade caravans and villagers. As such, they were considered robbers who were out to do no good.

These units were so notorious that sensible players in the early stages of the game learned to steer away from the deserts that were known to be filled with Desert Bandits.

1

Are they really who I think they are? Kant gulped.

His eyes were filled with joy.

If they were the criminals who roamed the desert like a storm, as recorded in the system, they would be an absolute boon to the present Oasis Lookout. To him, they were considered more precious than the 20 Date Palm Trees that provided extra food to the village.

4

His mind was filled with excitement, yet his expression remained calm, as usual.

1

His life as a young noble enabled him to learn how to conceal his true emotions with calmness.

1

He walked briskly to the southern side of the Oasis Lookout.

He circled the pond of spring water, which was where the council hall was located. He decided to make that area the residential and crafts section of Drondheim from then on out. That was the region he had thoughtfully divided. If different trades were to grow and prosper in the future, there could be a commercial area developed there.

The northern side, which was where the six Desert Poplar Trees and 20 Date Palm Trees were found, would serve purely as an agricultural area.

Although the Oasis Lookout did not currently have half a hectare of farmable lands, he still had to take the development of his fief from then on out into consideration. If his place were to be one incapable of producing food, it would be tantamount to being choked by others.

There was no way Kant could give up agriculture altogether, even though the production of crops might be minimal.

He even had thoughts of sending people to the Dukedom of Leo on the other side of the Senwaya Range to dig up huge amounts of soil. Such a crude, foolish-looking method would have allowed him to enhance the number of farmable lands at the Oasis Lookout.

The journey from the Oasis Lookout to the Senwaya Range took the knights about three days to cover. It would take carriages and infantry units seven days at most.

The distance, which required a week to cover, was still what Kant, who was desperate to have the oasis developed, considered to be within tolerable limits.

1

“My Lord.”

The 10 Swadian Militia members were on standby near the Council Hall.

They lowered their heads and greeted him respectfully to show respect for their lord.

“Yeah.”

Kant nodded. He did not arrange for them to do anything else. He simply replied, “Stay sharp.”

The threat of the Jackalans was still lurking out there somewhere. These 10 militia members were not the only ones who were on standby. The 20 Swadian Recruits were patrolling the dunes nearby. They could quickly retreat

and report to the council if they found something, while would allow them time to prepare to deal with enemy threats with the 50 Swadian Peasants.

While there were only 80 of them, given how all of them would defend their homes courageously, not even a force of 200 Jackalans would be able to defeat them if they were to form tight formations with their polearms outstretched.

Furthermore, Kant was about to add a new troop class to his roster.

It was the Desert Bandits.

He went to the side of the Council Hall and began to seriously look at the surrounding terrain.

Confirming the construction of the Desert Bandit Lair would add a second building to the Oasis Lookout. At the same time, the building was crucial for allowing Kant to gain another class of combatants.

“System, construct the building at the eastern side of the council hall.”

Kant made his final decision.

A large number of data streams appeared on his retina as he gave the order.

A simple building, which was constructed with stone and wooden materials, was quickly erected right beside the council hall. The process took about two seconds. The building, which previously only existed in data-card form, was instantly brought into the world.

1

A Desert Bandit Lair was given by the system.

Kant eyed the place, finding it to be a simple single-story house that was constructed using stone and wooden materials as the foundation.

The lair seemed to have an area of 1,080 square feet and was about 9 feet high, which was noticeably lower than the 19-foot-tall Council Hall next to it. However, there was a stable made of wood next to the house, which was about 215 square feet.

Sniff.

Light snorting sounds were heard, which startled Kant.

Is someone in there?

Kant eyed the place. He knew that his ears were not playing tricks on him.

Those were obvious snorting sounds, which sounded just like those commonly heard from horses. That meant there were horses in the stable. It also meant that there were people in the building.

1

The narrow wooden door was pushed open from the inside.

Five stout men wearing linen robes walked outside. They were holding spears. Their faces, which had a dark complexion from prolonged exposure to the sun, looked fierce and unyielding, yet they appeared incredibly respectful.

1

“We bow to you, Lord, as your humble servants,” the five greeted him respectfully.

“Right, very well.”

Kant nodded slightly. There was a smile on his face.

8

The joy in his eyes was unmistakable. It was just as he guessed. These five stout men were Desert Bandits of the Sarrand Sultanate who roamed in groups and took on the desert like a sandstorm.

1

Underneath their simple, crude linen robes was fine leather armor.

While they all held 6-foot-long spears, they still carried round shields and flanged maces for close-quarter combat right behind their backs. Four javelins were arranged neatly on the sacks on their backs as well.

Along with the desert horses in the stables, the equipment became the combination of tools that made them fearsome entities in the desert.

The Desert Bandits were equally as good at initiating cavalry charges with their horses or surrounding their enemies and throwing their heavy, lethal javelins.

In close-quarters combat, their round shields effectively blocked enemy attacks. Their flanged maces, which were blunt trauma weapons that excelled in armor penetration, served as a lethal threat to even the most well-armed enemies.

“Splendid, splendid indeed.”

The smile on Kant’s face was unmistakable. He asked, “Are there only five of you in the lair?”

“Indeed, My Lord.” The five Desert Bandits nodded.

One of them quickly said, “If you are willing to pay 30 Denars per member, there will be one Desert Bandit who will willingly join your ranks every week. From then on out, weekly maintenance for each member will be 12 Denars per week.”

3

“Seems nice.” Kant nodded.

While the 30 Denars to recruit seemed steep, and 12 Denars per week for maintenance seemed hefty, Kant saw all of that to be acceptable. The value of these ferocious bandits was soon to be laid bare for all to see.

5

They were excellent units among second-level troop classes.

For instance, the second-level troop class that Kant currently possessed, the 10 Swadian Militia, paled in comparison to the Desert Bandits.

It could be said that with sound tactics employed, the five Desert Bandits could easily take out all of the Swadian Militia without losing a single member, even if all of those Swadian Militia were armed with heavy spears.

Their ferocious skills had been developed and honed by the harsh, unforgiving desert.

Kant asked, "Can I begin recruitment right now?"

2

The Desert Bandits did not answer. They became quiet after giving their previous explanation. The system immediately answered him in their stead.

"You may begin recruitment."

A prompt from the system was heard in his ear. "Do you want to recruit now?"

"Recruit." Kant nodded.

[Recruitment: Desert Bandit x 1]

[30 Denars spent]

A dialog box popped up. The wooden door of the lair, which was constructed using stone and wooden materials, opened again.

Another Desert Bandit in near-identical attire appeared. He briskly walked and stood with the other five, looking fierce and unyielding. While he looked respectfully at Kant's face, his eyes remained fixed on other areas, which was typical of a bandit.

It was as if he was out to rob the place at any given moment.

4

This place is now a lot safer with six Desert Bandits around.

5

As he looked at them, Kant felt pleased with the situation.

The six Desert Bandits were not regular infantry units. They were cavalry units. Armed with spears, they could easily be used as fierce shock troops. They were capable of tearing through enemy formations and easily crushing enemy forces.

1

Dealing with primitive Jackalans would be considered a piece of cake to them.

“My Lord, My Lord!”

Just as Kant was still feeling pleased with himself, a desperate call could be heard from behind.

Kant turned around and saw a Swadian Peasant. He was carrying a tattered urn in his hand and walking quickly toward his lord. He shouted, “We seem to have found something!”