

Oasis 49

Chapter 49: Firentis' Strategy

[Ding... Main Quest Assigned]

[Main Quest: The First Powerful Enemy]

[Quest Reward: 10,000 Denars, 1,000 Reputation, 10 Honor]

[Introduction: The first powerful enemy encountered in one's life will remain unforgettable. The enemy symbolizes power and invincibility, just like how giants leave a lasting impression in one's heart when one is young. It is but the first obstacle one faces in life. While the impression is a lasting one, it actually symbolizes fear before becoming powerful.]

The dialog box from the system was clear and unmistakable.

Kant's pupils slightly contracted as he scanned the contents in the dialog box. He felt rather stunned by it all.

He forcefully regained his calm as a bitter smile appeared on his face.

It seems like I've gotten myself cornered.

He had only made a simple inquiry to Firentis. He had asked if they had the ability to get rid of the Jackalan Tribe. He knew the chance of doing so was slim. He had asked the question on a whim.

He never expected the system to issue a quest right after he asked the question.

It was impossible to not become restless about it.

He knew that despite the Jackalan Tribe having lost more than 800 Jackalans after suffering a defeat when they last fought, the tribe still had the decisive edge in terms of numbers. Kant's mere 300-strong force was not able to compare even closely.

Worse still, 200 out of the 300 were peasants. They were a zero-level troop class, which was the lowest of all troop classes.

This is really frustrating.

Kant let out a long sigh. He felt totally overwhelmed.

Kant steadied his emotions as he looked at Firentis. He asked, "If we were to have 500 Vaegir Marksmen on our side, what do you think our chances of winning are?"

He was referring to the three volleys of arrows.

"Hmm... That would be no problem then!"

Firentis was slightly stunned but immediately added, "Of course, Lord Kant, if we had 500 Vaegir Marksmen on our side, running over those brutal Jackalans would be a piece of cake."

Firentis, who was of Suno nobility, had no doubt known regarding the capabilities of Vaegir Marksmen. The kingdoms of Swadia and Vaegir were not on good terms.

In truth, both kingdoms had fought several large-scale battles over the ownership of the northern icy plains. If it had not been for the Kingdom of Rhodoks' betrayal, the Nords invading from the sea, and harassment at the plains from the Khergit Khanate, Swadia and Vaegir would have likely continued fighting to this day.

"Vaegir Marksmen are capable of continuously raining arrows throughout the battlefield."

Firentis' expression grew serious as he said, "Coupled with our infantry forces, we could definitely crush that Jackalan Tribe with a frontal assault."

"Hmm." Kant nodded.

He still looked rather awkward. Firentis had misunderstood what he meant.

He paused for a bit and said, "Those marksmen are capable of only firing three volleys."

What Kant said made Firentis frown. "Three volleys? That's all?"

"Indeed." Kant nodded in exasperation.

The Vaegir Marksman was a fifth-level troop class in the original system of the game. They were a top-level troop class. Not even the Kingdom of Vaegir in the game had been able to amass a staggering number of 500 top-notch marksmen without using cheats.

If they were available in massive formations, exceptionally formidable archers of that sort were a force to be reckoned with on the battlefield.

If a rain of arrows were unleashed from 500 Vaegir Marksmen in an orderly formation, infantry forces without shields and armor would instantly know what nightmare in a battlefield was truly like.

As a player, Kant knew just how fearsome those archers were.

However, that was where the problem lied. Regardless of the 500 Vaegir Marksmen or not, he did not have even one Nord Archer, which was widely considered as the trashiest of ranged combatants, in his forces. He only had 70 Swadian Militia members standing in as ranged combatants, armed with their hunting crossbows.

In truth, the power of hunting crossbows was hardly considered lethal to creatures with life force as strong as that of the Jackalans.

"Lord Kant, if we were to launch a front assault then, we would absolutely stand no chance."

Firentis frowned hard. In a severe tone, he said, "We need to rely on effective strategies that are capable of dealing a crushing blow to their morale so those primitive beasts fall into chaos. That will make them lose all courage to fight."

"Please continue," Kant said.

If both men were to be compared regarding fighting strategies, although he knew a thing or two about them, his knowledge paled in comparison to that of Firentis.

Firentis was not known as the Wandering Knight for no reason. He had been wandering the Continent of Caradia for many years on a journey of penance. At the same time, it allowed him to amass ample fighting experience.

“Lord Kant, I thank you for your humbleness.”

Firentis sensed how much Kant appreciated having him around. He bowed slightly and said, “It works similar to the battle you told me about. It was the one in which you defeated an invasion from 2,000 Jackalans by working with 50 retainer knights who were all heavy cavalry units.”

“That was due to having allies,” Kant replied.

If it had not been for Sir Hobson and Scholar, Kant would have probably ended up dead in that brutal battle.

As such, that battle left a lasting impression on him.

“Allies huh?” Firentis lowered his head and looked on with a puzzled expression, before saying, “Perhaps.”

“Do you feel it to be otherwise, Firentis?” Kant frowned.

Firentis solemnly continued, clarifying Kant’s doubt, “Lord Kant, your father exiled you to the barren desert. There was no way he could have sent help to rescue you after doing so. From my perspective, your father was probably only trying to retrieve your dead body.”

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Despite being a kind-hearted person, Firentis had wandered the Continent of Caradia long enough to deeply understand the darker side of things with people.

Furthermore, Firentis was of noble birth himself.

That was why he turned against his own younger brother for a seductress and eventually ended up accidentally killing his brother. That led him to choose to leave his family behind, exiling himself to the Continent of Caradia to go on a journey to polish his spirit as a knight and seek penance while doing so.

“It might actually be so.”

Kant did not confirm nor deny Firentis’ judgment in the matter.

He looked up slightly at the winding dunes and said, “At the very least, Sir Hobson and Master Hank, along with the 50 retainer knights, helped me repel the Jackalans. Right?”

Firentis remained silent. He had a rather complicated expression as if he knew what Kant said was true.

Kant let out a long sigh. “They were able to tell that the Jackalans were entirely capable of breaking through to the Oasis Lookout and killing every single one of us, yet they chose to risk their lives and help me.” He paused before saying in a serious tone, “Maybe they did not want to see me dead after all.”

He smiled nonchalantly and did not continue discussing the matter.

If Kant had a strong castle and powerful forces at his disposal, he might have been able to easily crush the Jackalans without help from anyone else.

It was a world where might made right.

“Well, would we still stand a chance of taking down that Jackalan Tribe?”

Kant steered the conversation back to the topic. He looked at Firentis and said, “Would three volleys of arrows from 500 Vaegir Marksmen be enough to cause massive casualties to the Jackalan forces and trigger mass panic?”

“It’s entirely capable of doing so.” Firentis pondered for a bit and nodded affirmatively. “There’s no doubt about that.”

“Tell me your plan,” Kant said.

Firentis gathered his words and replied, “Lord Kant, I remember that you said when you took over the Oasis Lookout, you did so using terrain advantage and the sun. That caused that small Jackalan Tribe to be caught off-guard and get crushed outright, right?”

“That was how it was done. I only had 20 allied knights to serve as shock troops, as well as 30 low-level troops at my disposal.”

As he spoke, Kant felt rather pleased with himself.

The strategy was well-employed back then because he used terrain and the sun to his advantage. It had enabled them to eventually kill all of the Jackalans squatting at the Oasis Lookout and win the battle.

Firentis, who was a veteran in the battlefield, felt rather impressed with it and said, “That would be what I intend to do.”

“Hold on.”

Kant’s grin, which stemmed from self-praise, was somewhat rescinded.

Looking at Firentis’ serious expression, Kant immediately voiced his doubts as he frowned, “But things are different this time. There are just too many of the Jackalans around.”

“Yes, they are many.”

Firentis nodded, but his eyes brightened as he said, “But all of them are useless.”

Kant frowned hard, waiting for Firentis to continue.

Without hesitation, Firentis said, “Those Jackalans are all scattered forces from that defeat. While the weeks since then allowed them to ease the fear and panic from that defeat, if they were to be crushed yet again, they would totally lose the ability to get themselves organized.”

“So, are you saying...” Kant paused for a moment before asking, “Are they now like a burned child dreading the fire?”

He adapted the term using the native language of the place, but the expression was still similar. Firentis nodded and affirmatively said, "Indeed. That is what our strategy would be based on."

Chapter 50: Preparing for a Great Battle

"That is too risky."

Kant mulled over the proposal. He did not want to adopt that strategy.

As the supreme commander of his forces and the operation, Kant needed to make responsible decisions.

It was not about being responsible for the Oasis Lookout, Drondheim, or even the Swadians occupying the place.

He had to be responsible for himself.

If he lost that battle, it would cost him everything he had.

That was what caused him the greatest anxiety and hesitation.

People died in wars, but there was a certain number of casualties that were deemed tolerable. If the resulting casualties exceeded what Kant deemed acceptable, he might as well have lost the battle even if he actually won. He was not going to let something like that happen.

As such, he slowly opened his mouth and asked, "Are there better strategies to do this?"

"That is the only strategy that would give us an edge."

Firentis shook his head and. A sense of regret was seen in his eyes. "As they are now, our forces are just too small."

"Is that so?" Kant narrowed his eyes on the man before him. His expression looked rather hazy.

Firentis was right. They force at their disposal was too small.

If that were the case, the 200 Swadian Peasants could not be considered troops.

The only reliable ones he had were the 25 Swadian Footmen and 70 Swadian Militia members.

Those were the ones who served as his main forces.

They were able to withstand charges from the Jackalans while also retaliating with ample force.

It always seemed to come down to one thing. If Kant had 100 Swadian Knights at his disposal, he would have no need to worry about any of that. He grew increasingly frustrated just thinking about the size of his fighting force.

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It seems like I'll need to delay the main quest for now.

Kant breathed a heavy sigh and regained his composure.

He had delayed the first main quest he was given, Build a Village, for 16 years before finally heading to the desert to make it happen.

The current main quest was undoubtedly one of far greater difficulty. His wanting to finish that main quest with the number of troops he currently had was nothing more than a pipe dream.

Even if he had the three volleys from the 500 Vaegir Marksmen, which was the formidable trump card that would have made completing the main quest even remotely possible, the chances of completing the quest remained low. That was entirely due to the abhorrently small fighting force he had at his disposal.

When one was not in one's best state, the best course of action was to bear with it. That was the standard rule that nobles lived by.

However, Kant still narrowed his gaze as he read the introduction from the system. He felt vexed about it all.

He did not want to just give up like that.

In a severe tone, Kant said, "Firentis." His eyes looked gloomy.

"Yes, My Lord," Firentis replied.

"If we had the troops fight to the death in the battle, would we stand a chance of crushing the Jackalans?"

As he spoke, Kant's tone was extremely serious.

Firentis' expression was one of slight shock, but he still nodded affirmatively and said, "We would."

Swadian Footmen were considered true regular troops.

Those units were clad in iron equipment from top to bottom, which consisted of mail armor and iron helmets. They were also armed with heater shields, longswords, and heavy spears.

Even back in the Dukedom of Leo, that equipment was reserved only for elite infantry. All of that, coupled with the footmen's formidable combat prowess, would have enabled them to take down the primitive Jackalans.

He was planning on having the footmen as shock troops. The militia member would have been in the middle while the peasants brought up the rear.

Putting their all into boosting damage potential, trading for a decisive, formidable charge with heavy casualties on Kant's forces was practically a suicide mission without any hope of coming back alive. Yet, doing easily enabled them to kill at least 500 Jackalans. There was no doubt about that.

"Alright."

Kant took a deep breath. He clenched his fists slightly tighter.

He turned around to look at Firentis' severe expression and slowly said, "If I want to attain eventual peace and development, it can only be by us annihilating that Jackalan Tribe. Otherwise, what we have now is but a fleeting mirage."

Eternal peace was about as pretentious as it could have gotten.

Firentis nodded and said in a solemn tone, "I understand, Lord Kant."

"I hope this won't clash with your ideals." Kant extremely valued Firentis and his hard-earned abilities. One of the last things Kant wanted was for Firentis, who was top-notch and formidable general material, to leave because of one battle.

"It won't," Firentis said as he shook his head.

He paused for a bit before saying, "What we would be doing would be for securing our future and peace. We won't be able to attain a good life by having mercy on our enemies. That is even more so given that it's the brutal Jackalans we're talking about here. A knight shouldn't be showing creatures like that any mercy."

"Very well." A slight grin finally appeared on Kant's face.

That was at least a decent piece of news.

Kant's plans included molding Firentis to be the supreme general of his Swadian forces from then on out.

The decision was made.

Kant and Firentis immediately returned to the Council Hall to lay out the new strategies.

Even if it were to be a suicide run that ended with all of his forces dead, Kant was determined to chew up that first formidable enemy of his whole. Furthermore, he wanted the victory to be a brilliant, decisive one.

The entire Oasis Lookout seemed to have noticed the warring atmosphere permeating the place. Everyone's expressions turned increasingly serious.

With the exception of the builders making noise from the construction happening from day to night, everyone else in the entire Oasis Lookout seemed to be silent. Everyone was busy with their own tasks or staying vigilant at their posts.

There was no mistaking what was about to happen. A new battle was about to begin.

The sky gradually darkened, and the scorching heat finally began to cool.

Kant was in the Council Hall.

White candles were lit and placed on the table. They emitted bits of light that illuminated the place.

A parchment was laid out on the table. It had messy pencil marks all over it. The lines were crooked, which made the parchment look more like the product of a child doodling.

However, both Kant and Firentis looked at the messy lines on the parchment with increasingly solemn expressions.

They were looking at a map.

It was a map drawn according to Kant's memory from when he and the Desert Bandits went out to scout the Jackalan Tribe weeks ago.

He had completed the basic preparation regarding the upcoming strategy.

It was also imperative that simulations were run using the map before eventually starting a new battle.

Without proper planning, it left them with no contingency plans or back-ups should any unexpected circumstances take place, such as failing to strike hard enough to throw the enemy into disarray. If that happened, it meant throwing his forces into chaos instead of the enemy. As such, it was a crucial job that even the dumbest of commanders would not have skipped doing.

Time gradually passed.

The moon was hanging high in the air. Brilliant stars dotted the skyline.

After meticulous discussions were carried out in the Council Hall, the strategy was finally set.

"It's now settled."

Kant nodded slowly, showing approval of the strategy that had been decided upon.

It was also something that both men had spent the whole day concocting.

It was a strategy that gave them the greatest advantage.

"We'll strike before dawn. At that time, they will be in the most relaxed state."

Firentis nodded as he added about the strategy, "It is a time when even the sentries would have felt drowsy, assuming that the Jackalan Tribe had them in the first place. It would be the best time to ambush them."

"It would indeed." Kant nodded.

Firentis said, "I will lead 17 of the Elite Desert Bandits and charge right into the center of the tribe to locate the huge tent, where the Jackalan shaman will likely be, in the shortest amount of time. We will then take out the shaman. The tribe, which would have just lost its chieftain, will be thrown into complete chaos due to not having any command of any sort. After that, it will be up to you, Lord Kant."

"Rest assured. I will lead the troops to scatter and immediately take care of any resisting Jackalans we encounter."

As his eyes narrowed, Kant's gaze looked rather dangerous. "Even if they are somehow able to organize a resistance, three volleys of arrows will crush them all the same."

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Firentis nodded with a serious expression. "Enemies thrown into disarray are no longer enemies."

The three things that needed to happen included the Jackalans losing command, being thrown into chaos, and scattering. If all three states were imposed upon the Jackalan Tribe, it almost guaranteed victory for Kant's forces.

Then again, it was certain that they would also have casualties. The loss of lives was likely going to be severe.

There was nothing neither men were able to do about that.

People died in wars. In its essence, fighting battles was an act of spilling blood and extinguishing lives.

Be it the enemy or his people, bodies were going to be left strewn all over the place one way or another.

"To finally secure a future for us, I would have no problem seeing my entire force wiped out as long as that Jackalan Tribe is completely crushed."

He let out a long and hard exhale as he muttered to himself.

Kant had never considered himself to be a decent man. Although he was known to be diligent and studious back in the Dukedom of Leo, he, as someone of noble birth who had lived two lives, was bound to be a self-serving person.

"I will recruit some new blood for fighting this battle."

Kant looked at Firentis and slowly said, "Recruits will at least be able to fight better than peasants."

"That should be the way." Firentis nodded.

Kant was allowed to recruit troops every week, which meant converting Swadian Peasants into Swadian Recruits.

The rule that allowed recruiting only one unit per week, like how it was with the Desert Bandit Lair, did not apply in this regard.

There was no limit to the number of Swadian Recruits that could be recruited.

It was a random thing that was completely up to the system.