

“Well now what do we do?”

“Much as I do like a good trot through the countryside, even I have to admit we can't do this forever.”

“Really? I thought that was what all you from Li-Ming liked to do; avoid doing anything?”

“Believe it or not, there are *some* things that tend to make even us Li-Ming-shi focus. Take being attacked by a gang of mass murderers for example.”

“Jun's right. Whether or not we're still pursued, we need a destination to head to.”

“We should head back. See if we can ambush any pursuers and make them talk. Or infiltrate our way back into Kunlun. Gather information on the enemy.”

“Or we could do something that *won't* get us immediately killed.”

“Well I don't hear you coming up with any good ideas!”

“We need to seek help.”

“Good idea Kai. See? I knew I liked this one.”

“*Seek help*? From where? We don't even know where we are. Besides which, they've had the entire night we've been running to finish killing everyone in the village.”

“Wow. You people from Qiang-Wu really don't have any notion of tact or sensitivity do you?”

“Face it, most of the people in Kunlun were simple commoners. The only ones capable of fighting were the ones battling overwhelming numbers in a futile effort to guard the ones that couldn't.”

“And you would have just let them die I take it?”

“Losses in battle are inevitable. You learn to accept it and judge a conflict dispassionately. Otherwise sound tactical thinking can be clouded by sentiment, which could doom a successful outcome.”

“Amazing. I'd heard that Qiang-Wu folk were cold, but I figured that was just people talking about the climate.”

“Well another thing they say about us is that we never walk away from a fight.”

“I think you'll find we galloped our way out of this one.”

“You know what I mean!”

“They're *not* all dead! *Someone* had to have survived.”

“I hate to burst your bubble Kai, but the chances of anyone being alive...”

“No! I refuse to believe it. An attack like that on a small village the likes of Kunlun would *have* to have a purpose behind it. It would make no sense to kill everyone. So someone must still be alive. They want something from someone there. It's the only thing that makes logical sense.”

“He makes a fair point.”

“Fine. Hold to your delusion. It still doesn't answer the question of where we head next.”

“Well... Jun said we'd been riding for the better part of the night. You followed the course of the river, which places us south of Kunlun. So if we continue we should come upon the north-western provinces of Xiang-Lan. We can ask *them* for help.”

“Xiang-Lan eh? I've always wanted to visit there.”

“*Xiang-Lan*? How are a collection of merchants and so-called artists going to lend any worthwhile aid?”

“Since Kai's idea makes it less likely that we'll die compared to yours, I say we go with it.”

“We shouldn't be more than a few days before we happen upon a village by my reckoning.”

“Excellent. So how about it “Lady” Ying? Do you want to join us, or are you committed to taking back Kunlun all by yourself?”

“Fine. But I reckon we'll find getting those coin-pushers to actually commit to action more arduous than having to suffer Jun's company for the next few days.”

“A bet I'll happily take.”