

was stirring, except by the low thatched stable, where a silent syce, with his head and shoulders muffled in a white cloth, stood ghost-like, tightening the girths of my chestnut. The hushed quiet and the dimness gave me heart. The gloom would hide my going mercifully; if, indeed, anything so paltry and inappreciable as myself needed hiding!

I skulked like a prowling jackal across the sandy stretch where the dewy grass grew in patches. My pony whinnied at my approach, looking for sugar cane or a lump of jaggery, and I lifted a reproving riding switch to silence him. The syce held my stirrup and salaamed wordlessly as I made for the gate. The moist earth was noiseless under the unshod hoofs.

At the top of a rise fifty yards from the bungalow, I slewed round and turned for a final look back, before breaking into a trot, half wondering, in an absurd inconsequence, whether I might not perhaps get a fleeting glance of a figure in a lilac dressing-gown in the verandah where once I had sat and breakfasted with a vision all in white on crimson cushions, with hair mysteriously bunched. But of course the verandah was empty. The rest house lay black and silent in the hush of the dawn, the plain stretched ashen beyond it, and there, above rest house and plain, great Mindaung stood up for the last time, stark and grey, against a primrose edge of morning.

I turned again in my saddle and set my face to the river and to whatever it might be that lay, on the knees of the gods, beyond it.