

the Nabob disappeared after dinner, he left behind, somehow, an impression that he was going a trifle dotty. It was probably a touch of sun. That is a common enough thing in India; so it would not have mattered much if it had not been used rather extensively in trying to account for the sudden disappearance of Powell later on.

When he left the table he went to his room, packed his disguise in a hand-bag, slipped quietly down the stairs, passed the *durwan*, walked a block, and engaged a *gharry* (carriage) just by the entrance to Government House. He had done all this in so methodical a manner that the elation of success already began to creep into his marrow. By Jove! if the thing came off he'd get a "C.S.I." or some other tag labelling him as a great man in that land of great men.

The lean, coffee-coloured driver of the *gharry* stretched over in his high-perched seat and looked closely at the Sahib who had ordered him to drive to Sen Mullick's. That was diplomatic; for it was a good four miles to Mullick's place, and some of the Sahibs were painfully indifferent as to their ability to pay for the luxury of a cab. The look satisfied Sunda. The Sahib was round-faced and fat, therefore prosperous; the clothes were such as capitalists wore.

Satisfied as to the prospect of pay, Sunda laboured faithfully with expressive Hindoo adjectives and a long-lashed whip at the skinny *tats* (ponies) that pulled his *gharry*.

Inside, Powell Nabob attached himself to his disguise. It was a laborious undertaking, inducing much profane thought, for the gum arabic, or whatever he had got from the bazaar, clung to everything it touched with an appalling persistency. A porous plaster was like the touch of velvet as compared with the amorous embrace of the wig and beard on Powell's head and face. He felt that whatever else befell, the hirsute part of his disguise would stick to him. Also was he tolerably certain of the lasting qualities of the tan skin-dye he rubbed on face and hands.

He chuckled softly when he thought of the consternation it would spread among the conspirators when they knew that the Police Nabob had been among them.

When Sunda arrived at Mullick's, he jumped down, opened the *gharry* door, and peered into the interior with a broad smile of welcome on his face for the fat, chubby, youthful Sahib who had done him the honour of selecting his *gharry*.

An old man, who could have given many points in disreputable appearance to a hill fakir, emerged from the inner darkness. Sunda drew back with a weird feeling of uncomfortable astonishment. He took another look into the *gharry* for the fat Sahib with the pleasant face. He had gone, vanished. There was only the dishevelled thing in much-tangled hair and native garb.

Then Sunda knew. He had carried the devil. His passenger was *Sheitan*, who sometimes rode with *gharry wallas* before a great evil fell upon them.

The driver's lean, big-jointed knees tipped toward each other in drunken desolation. He clung to the door of the *gharry*, and steadied himself, as a harsh, thick voice muttered from the mastic-matted beard the order, "*Bhito!*" (wait for me).

Eden-Powell passed into Mullick's *compound* (garden), and Sunda climbed wearily up to the battered seat of his ark-like vehicle. There is not much charm in the ungilt life of a *ticca gharry walla*, but at that moment the misery of Sunda's existence was intensified a hundredfold. Why had *Sheitan* selected him as a victim-host? Years before Sunda had sent his child-wife to sleep with a dose of *datura* (poison), but it was so long ago that it could not be because of that. Even Baloo, who drove the big chestnut horse with the white face, and had also brought a fare to Mullick's *nautch*, could offer him no consolation when he told of the satanic passenger. "It will bring you evil, Brother," Baloo said. "It is always that way when he rides—evil, evil, nothing but evil."

Then Baloo thought of something.