GUIDE: What grounds?

MERCHANT: You'd like to know, wouldn't you? Very well: you're dismissed!

GUIDE: But you can't dismiss me when we're halfway there.

MERCHANT: Think yourself lucky if I don't report you at the agency in Urga. Here are your wages, up to this point of course. (Shouts to the innkeeper who enters.) You are my witness: I paid him his wages. (To the Guide:) And let me tell you something: you'd better not show your face in Urga any more! (Looks him over from top to toe.) You'll never get anywhere. (He goes into the other room with the innkeeper.) I set out at once. If anything happens to me, you are my witness that today I set out alone with that man (pointing to the coolie). (The innkeeper indicates with gestures that he understands nothing. The merchant is taken aback. To the audience:) He doesn't understand. In that case there'll be no one to say where I went. And the worst of it is these fellows know there'll be no one. He sits down and writes a letter.)

GUIDE (to the coolie): I made a mistake sitting down with you. Take care: he's bad, that man. (He gives him his water flask.) Keep this flask in reserve. Hide it. If you get lost — and you will — he's sure to take yours. I'll explain the road to you.

COOLIE: I don't think you should. He mustn't hear you talking to me. If he throws me out, I'm done for. He doesn't even have to pay me. I'm not in a union like you, I must put up with everything.

MERCHANT (to the innkeeper): Give this letter to the people who'll be arriving here tomorrow on their