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COOLIE: The path across the desert is sure to get even worse. I hope my feet will hold out.

GUIDE: Certainly.

COOLIE: Are there bandits?

GUIDE: We'll have to keep a lookout — especially today, the first day of the trip. The station attracts every sort of rabble.

COOLIE: How about afterward?

GUIDE: Once we have the Myr river behind us, it's a matter of sticking to the water holes.

COOLIE: You know the way?

GUIDE: Yes.

The MERCHANT has heard voices. He comes up behind the door to listen.

COOLIE: Is the Myr river hard to cross?

GUIDE: Not in general — at this time of year. But when it's in flood, the current is very strong, and you take your life in your hands.

MERCHANT: So he's talking to the carrier. He can sit down with him. He's smoking with him!

COOLIE: What do you do then?

GUIDE: You often have to wait a week or so to get safely across.

MERCHANT: Well, well, well! He even advises him to take his time and hold on to his precious life! A dangerous fellow, that one. He'd only back his Coolie up. In any case, not the man to put the job through. No telling what he might do either. In short: as of today, they're two against one. At any rate, it's clear he's afraid to boss his own underlings now we're entering uninhabited territory. I must definitely get rid of the