

to any of us. They would not believe it, but thought I had made a mistake. But I told them that I should never have noticed the travellers myself if Nevengk had not begun to bark furiously, following them a little way southwards. They could not believe in apparitions and shadows and returned spirits of engulfed victims. "Yes, certainly," they replied, "here is the Rig-i-jin, here evil spirits play their pranks." And they affirmed that there was something strange in this desert; men are bewitched in it; they walk and walk, and never get out. If they did not get the help of night, *kevir taman ne misheved* ("the desert would never come to an end"). It is in the long and dreary hours of night that men get over the ground, and in the daytime they, moreover, lose time through the necessary rests.

This night the darkness seems to enfold us more closely than usual, and the veil of clouds drops its dark fingers over the desert. Even at a quarter to six o'clock a pale reflexion lingers on the edge of the western horizon shut in above by deep black clouds. The pace is quicker than ever, the ground is splendid, and it is a rest to ride. The caravan moves in four columns side by side—thus are produced the numerous parallel tracks, black on a light yellow ground. Now the desert is as level as a sheet of ice on a lake—at least to the eye.

Patiently and silently the camels continue on their restless course, longing for land like the men, and knowing that their pasturages await them at the foot of the hills in the north. I am in one of the middle columns. The row of camels on my right is very slightly lighter than the dense darkness behind them to the east. The two columns to the left show their profiles against the fading light after sunset, and have a curious appearance like black ghosts. They go on and on like a squirrel in its cage, and the desert never comes to an end, and we are in for another night.

Soon the last gleam of light dies away in the west, the curtain falls, night builds up its thick walls around us, perspective and distance vanish, the far-distant horizon which lately presented the illusion of a sea has been