ALTHOUGH Miss Quested had known Ronny well in England; she felt well advised to visit him before deciding to be his wife."Oh, it is the duty of each and every citizen to shake superstition off, and though I have little experience of Hindu States, and none of this particular one, namely Mudkul (the Ruler, I fancy, has a salute of but eleven guns) – yet I cannot imagine that they have been as successful as British India, where we see reason and orderliness spreading in every direction, like a most health–giving flood!' Miss Derek said 'Golly!' Undeterred by the expletive, the old man swept on. His tongue had been loosened and his mind had several points to make. He wanted to endorse Miss Quested's remark that big people are not interesting, because he was bigger himself than many independent chiefs; at the same time, he must neither Remember not to inform her that he was big, lest she feel she had committed a discourtesy. This was the groundwork of his oration; worked in with it was his gratitude to Miss Derek for the lift, his willingness to hold a repulsive dog in his arms, and his general regret for the trouble he had caused the human race during the evening. Also, he wanted to be dropped near the city to get hold of his cleaner and to see what mischief his grandson was up to. As he wove all these anxieties into a single rope, he suspected that his audience felt no interest and that the City Magistrate fondled either maiden behind the cover of the harmonium, but good breeding compelled him to continue; it was nothing to him if they were bored, because he did not know what boredom is, and it was nothing to him if they were licentious, because God has created all races to be different The accident was over, and his life, equally useful, distinguished, happy, ran on as before and expressed itself in streams of well–chosen words. When this old geyser left them, Ronny made no comment, but talked lightly about polo; Turton had taught him that it is sounder not to discuss a man at once, and he reserved what he had to say on the Nawab's character until later in the evening. His hand, which he had removed to say goodbye, touched Adela's again; she caressed it, definitely, he responded, and their firm and mutual pressure surely meant something. They looked at each other when they reached the bungalow, for Mrs. Moore was inside it. It was for Miss Quested to speak, and she said nervously, 'Ronny, I should like to take back what I said on the Maidan.' He assented, and they became engaged to be married in consequence Neither had foreseen such a consequence. She had meant to revert to her former state of important and cultivated uncertainty, but it had passed out of her reach at its appropriate hour. Unlike the green bird or the hairy animal, she was labelled now. She felt humiliated again, for she deprecated labels, and she felt too that there should have been another scene between her lover and herself at this point, something dramatic and lengthy. He was pleased instead of distressed, He was surprised, but he really had nothing to say. What indeed is there to say? To be or not to be married, that was the question, and they had decided it in the affirmative. The noise woke the mater up. She had been dreaming of the absent children who were so seldom mentioned, Ralph and Stella, and did not at first grasp what was required of her. She too had become used to thoughtful procrastination and felt alarmed when it came to an end. When the announcement was over, be made a gracious and honest remark. 'Look here, both of you, see India if you like and as you like – I know I made myself rather ridiculous at Fielding's, but it's different now. I wasn't quite sure of myself."In vain did each element in it call out, "Come, come." There was not enough god to go round. The two young people conversed feebly and felt unimportant. When darkness began, it seemed to well out of the meagre vegetation, tirelessly covering the fields each side

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of them before it brimmed over the road. Ronny's face grew diman--an event that always increased her esteem for his character. Her hand touched his, owing to a jolt, and one of the thrills so frequent in the animal kingdom passed between them, and announced that all their difficulties were only a lovers' quarrel. Each was too proud to increase the pressure, but neither withdrew it, and a spurious unity descended upon them, as local and temporary as the gleam that inhabits a firefly. It would vanish in a moment, perhaps to reappear, but the darkness is alone durable. And the night that Encircled them, absolute as it seemed, was itself only a spurious unity, being modified by the gleams of day that leaked up around the edges of the earth, and by the stars They gripped... bump, jump, a swerve, two wheels lifted in the air, brakes on, bump with a tree at the edge of embankment, standstill. An accident. A slight one. Nobody hurt. The Nawab Bahadur awoke. He cried out in Arabic and violently tugged his beard. inquired Ronny, after the moment's pause that he permitted himself before taking charge of a situation. The Eurasian, inclined to be flustered, rallied to the sound of his voice and, every inch an Englishman, replied, "You give me five minutes' time, I'll take you any dam anywhere."When proven wrong, he was particularly exasperating; he always managed to suggest that she neededn't have bothered to prove it. The point she made was never the relevant point, her arguments conclusive but barren; she was reminded that he had expert knowledge and she none, and that experience would not help her because she could not interpret it A public school, London University, a year at a crammer's, a particular sequence of posts in a particular province, a fall from a horse and a touch of fever were presented to her as the only training by which Indians and all who reside in their country can be understood; the only training she could comprehend that is to say, for of course above Ronny there stretched the higher realms of knowledge, inhabited by Callendars and Turtons, who had been not one year in the country but twenty and whose instincts were super-human.I would scarcely call her wrong, broke out the Nawab Bahadur, from his isolation on the front seat, with whom they had relegated him "A Native State, a Hindu State, the wife of a ruler of a Hindu State, may beyond doubt be a most excellent lady, and let it not be for a moment supposed that I suggest anything against the character of Her Highness the Maharani of Mudkul. But I fear she will be uneducated, I fear she will be superstitious. Indeed, how could she be otherwise? What opportunity for education has such a lady had? Oh, superstition is terrible, terrible, oh, it is the great defect in our Indian character!""Krishna the earth, Krishna the stars," replied, until the Englishman was appeased by their echoes, fined the absent peon eight annas, and sat down to his arrears in the next room 'Will you play Patience with your future mother-in-law, dear Adela, or does it seem too tame?'I thought you were discussing the caves "So I am. Aziz was exquisitely dressed, from tie-pin to spats, but he had forgotten his back collar-stud, and there you have the Indian all over: inattention to detail; the fundamental slackness that reveals the race. Similarly, to 'meet' in the caves as if they were the clock at Charing Cross, when they're miles from a station and each other."The Bhil who was holding an officer's polo pony, the Eurasian who drove the Nawab Bahadur's car, the Nawab Bahadur himself, the Nawab Baha-dur's debauched grandson--none would have examined a difficulty so frankly and coolly.The young people did not take it up, being occupied with their own outlooks, and deprived of support; it perished, or was reabsorbed into the part of the mind that seldom speaks "Yes, nothing criminal," Ronny summed up, "but there's the native, and there's one of the reasons why we don't

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admit him to our clubs, and how a decent girl like Miss Derek can take service under natives puzzles me...What animal?" 'Oh, we had a small accident on the Marabar road. Adela thinks it was a hyena.' An accident? she cried. 'Nothing, no one hurt. Our excellent host awoke much rattled from his dreams, appeared to think it was our fault, and chanted exactly, exactly.' Mrs. Moore shivered, 'A ghost!' But the idea of a ghost scarcely passed her lips. But I must get on with my work. Krishnal."Ronny was by this time rather ashamed of his curtness to Aziz and Godbole, and here was an opportunity of showing that he could treat Indians with consideration when they deserved it. So he said to Adela, with the same sad friendliness that he had employed when discussing the bird, 'Would half an hour's spin entertain you at all?'There had been deputations and consultation committees under the auspices of Turton, and all the normal work of Chandrapore had been hung up. Should the procession take another route, or should the towers be shorter?His self-complacency, his censoriousness, his lack of subtlety, all grew vivid beneath a tropical sky; he seemed more indifferent than of old to what was passing in the minds of his fellows, more certain that he was right about them or that if he was wrong it didn't matter.Instead of weighing Ronny and herself, and coming to a reasoned conclusion about marriage, she had incidentally, in the course of a talk about man-goes, remarked to mixed company that she didn't mean to stop in India Which meant that she wouldn't marry Ronny: but what way to announce it, what way for a civilized girl to behave?They dropped her at the bungalow and drove on together to the polo, feeling it was the least they could do. Their crackling bad humor left them, but the heaviness of their spirit remained; thunderstorms seldom clear the air.By this method, serious and I may say ludicrous accidents, such as the one that befell one of my compatriots during that delightful reception at the English Club, are avoided.He fell asleep Ronny instructed the chauffeur to take the Marabar road rather than the Gangavati, since the latter was under repair, and settled himself down beside the lady he had lost."I consider not to be frightened the height of folly," cried the Nawab Bahadur quite rudely "Well, it's all over now, tears are useless," said Ronny, dismounting.Certainly some external force had impinged, but the road had been used by too many objects for any one track to be legible, and the torch created such high lights and black shadows that they could not interpret what it revealed.The humorous triumphs of a freelancer are of no assistance to an administrator, and he told the young lady that she would outdo Indians at their own game if she went on much longer."Come along and let's tell the mater all this," opening the perforated zinc door that protected the bungalow from the swarms of winged creatures.On seeing the City Magistrate alone with a maiden at twilight, he had borne down on them with hospitable intent.Moreover, Adela, in her excitement, knelt and swept her skirts about, until it was she if anyone who appeared had attacked the car.Ronny murmured, "Not at all, but apologies were his due, and should have started sooner: because English people are so calm at a crisis, it is not to be assumed that they are unimportant. The Nawab Bahadur had not come out very well."The whole of India sees them with Maharanis and Ranis and Begums who clamour for such as me." Really. I had no idea. How could you have any idea, Mr. Heaslop? What should he know about Maharanis, Miss Quested? Nothing. At least one should hope not."Mohurram was approaching, and as usual the Chandrapore Mohammedans were building paper towers of a size too large to pass under the branches of a certain tree.The Mohammedans offered the former, the Hindus insisted on the latter The Collector had favored the

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Hindus, until he suspected that they had artificially bent the tree closer to the ground.You've had to do with three sets of Indians today, the Bhattacharyas, Aziz, and this chap, and it really isn't a coincidence that they've all let you down.Ronny stormed, shouted, howled, and only the experienced observer could tell that he was not angry, did not much want the files, and only made a row because it was the custom.Experiences, not character, divided them; they were not dissimilar, as humans go; indeed, when compared with the people who stood nearest to them in point of space, they became practically identical.The car made a burring noise and rushed along a chaussee that ran upon an embankment above melancholy fields.Trees of poor quality bordered the road; indeed, the whole scene was inferior, and suggested that the countryside was too vast to admit of excellence.Hyenas prowl in nullahs and headlights dazzle them.Harris, well donel "A smash, Sahib, that would not have taken place had he obeyed and taken us Gangavati side, instead of Marabar."The number of such unions would certainly increase as education spread and ideals grew loftier, and characters firmer.Mr. Fielding had walked too fast and far, the young people had annoyed her in the tum–tum, and given her to suppose they were breaking with each other, and though it was all right now she could not speak as enthusiastically of wedlock or of anything as she should have done.One knew what happened next; the tower got stuck, a Mohammedan climbed up the tree and cut the branch off, the Hindus protested, there was a religious riot, and Heaven knew what, with perhaps the troops sent for.Presently Adela said: 'You heard me tell Aziz and Godbole I wasn't stopping in their country.It was the qualified bray of the callow offi– cial, the 'I am not perfect,' but that got on her nerves.As he drove them away in the tum–tum, her irritation became unbearable, and she did not realize that much of it was directed against herself.If you want to go to the Marabar Caves, you'll go under British auspices.'"I've never heard of these caves, I don't know what where they are," said Mrs. Moore, "but I really can't have––" she tapped the cushion beside her.The 'thorough talk,' so dear to her principles and temperament, had been postponed until too late.As soon as they had exchanged this admission, a wave of relief passed through them both, and then transformed itself into a wave of tenderness, and passed back.They traced back the warping of the tires to the source of their disturbance.Steady and smooth, they ran the marks of the car, ribbons neatly nicked with lozenges, then all went mad.He did not approve of English people taking service under the Native States, where they obtain a certain amount of influence, but at the expense of the general prestige.'My duties here are evidently finished, I don't want to see India now; now for my passage back,' was Mrs. Moore's thought.'When the animal runs into us, the Nawab loses his head, deserts his unfortunate chauffeur, intrudes upon Miss Derek––no great crimes, no great crimes, but no white man would have done it.'Servants, quite understanding, ran slowly in circles, carrying hurricane lamps.How gross he had been at Mr. Fielding's – spoiling the talk and walking off in the middle of the haunting song!'Mother is pledged to nothing,' said Mrs. Moore, rather unexpectedly.'Simpler to drop the polo,' said Ronny.Miss Quested was thinking over her own be haviour, and didn't like it at all.There seemed no point in being disagreeable to him and formulating her complaints against his character at this hour of the day, which was evening...The polo took place on the Maidan near the entrance to Chandrapore city.The mere fact of examination caused it to diminish.But nothing in India is identifiable; the mere questioning of it causes it to disappear or merge into something else.'McBryde has an illustrated bird book,' he said

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dejectedly.shouted Nawab Bahadur at the top of his voice, causing both of them to start.The old gentleman judged from so wanton a gesture that she was new to his country, but he paid little heed.He had a new little car, and wished to place it at their disposal; the City Magistrate would decide whether the offer was acceptable.Nawab Bahadur got up in front, for he had no intention of neighboring an English girl.And foreseeing a further difficulty, he added, 'I do not do the actual steering.Our good Panna Lall, I hope, Sahib, that great damage was not done to your flowers."We didn't skid," said Adela, who had seen the cause of the accident, and thought everyone must have seen it too.'By jove, she's right,' Ronny exclaimed.'By jove, sir, your lady is right,' echoed the Eurasian.Just by the hinges of the door was a dent, and the door opened with difficulty.They forgot their abortive personal relationship and felt adventurous as they mud– She dled about in the dust.Ronny approved this last conjecture.Seeming to pull himself together, he apologized slowly and elaborately for the accident.I understand those big people are not particularly interested, said Adela, quietly, disliking the young woman's tone.She reminded herself of all that a happy marriage means, and of her own happy marriages, one of which had produced Ronny.Later on, they spoke of passing events, and Ronny reviewed and recounted the day from his own point.But Ronny had not disliked his day, for it proved that the British were necessary in India; there would certainly have been bloodshed without them.Aziz is my real friend, Mrs. Moore interposed.Mrs. Moore, if one isn't absolutely honest, what is the use of existing?'The words were obscure, but she understood the uneasiness that produced them.She had experienced it twice herself, during her own engagements––this vague contrition and doubt.They had scarcely left the College grounds before she heard him say to his mother, who was with him on the front seat, 'What was that about caves?"Are you too pledged to this expedition, mother?'Tired and disappointed, he quite lost self–control, and added in a loud lee–turing voice, 'I won't have you messing about with Indians anymore!"So much quarrelling and tiresomeness!"They were softened by their own honesty, and began to feel lonely and unwise.'Parrot,' he hazarded.The bird in question dived into the dome of the tree.'Hello, Nawab Bahadur!said Ronny tepidly.'Sahib says hyena.'

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