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REGISTERED IN GREAT BRITAIN

WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

"They cocked their heads to watch her."



## The Vengeance of Ti Fong

By BASSETT MORGAN

*A thrilling, fascinating tale of great apes and the weird genius of a Chinese scientist who had mastered too many of Nature's laws*

**W**HEN a native messenger arrived at the camp carrying a letter in the cleft of a notched stick, Jornada opened it and tossed the envelope to Captain Daunt. On the flap was a heraldic device denoting an ancient lineage. Jornada read the letter and passed it also to Daunt.

"Herr Lemft wants us to visit him,

Daunt. It might be worth while. His letter sounds as if he has had about enough of the Sumatra highland country for his own good. Only a religious zealot can play hermit in the tropics without breaking down, and he isn't that type. Even the half-caste girl I saw in his house on my last visit seems to have lost her power to keep up his spirits."

Piet Jornado and Captain Daunt had combined their resources in a partnership for shipping tropic birds and animals to far distant museums and zoological gardens and they were hunting saladang in Sumatra with indifferent success. Three natives had been killed by the ferocious beasts without a single capture.

"Perhaps a change will break our run of hard luck," agreed Daunt, and a few hours later they were navigating tortuous hill roads leading to the comfortable bungalow set deep in a well-kept garden of native flowering shrubs, overlooking a valley where thatched huts of a village surrounded an ornate temple with gaudy ornamentation and roof timbers curved like the horns of a carabao.

"Welcome, my fellow countryman," cried Lemft to Jornado. "Welcome, Captain Daunt. I was overjoyed to see your car coming, and I can promise you cool schnapps dear to a Dutchman's heart."

"I'm Dutch enough," admitted Jornado, "though I've never seen the Netherlands. But there is a solid business block of marble in Antwerp where my relatives rule virtually as small kings. The best I can do is take my trick of command on the schooner, and domineer over natives. But some day I hope to get an island of my own, and preside over it and the natives in the old feudal manner."

"You've got the proper figure for it," said Daunt, smiling, "though the King of the Cannibal Island business never tempted me. Perhaps Herr Lemft could give you some pointers, Jornado. You Netherlanders rule as if to the manor born." Yet he saw in Herr Lemft, who lorded it over a vast expanse of country, the signs of disintegration of a once magnificent physique, the silver in his blond hair, the sagging of face muscles under the sunburn. Beside him Jornado,

equally big and well built, suggested the air of a conqueror, with ruddy hair and the mahogany tint of skin that had made Daunt try tormenting him about his ancestry:

"If some Othello of the Spanish armies that plagued Holland to its own humiliation didn't have a love affair with one of your golden-haired grandmothers, Jornado, I'll eat my shirt," he said.

"Who knows?" was the careless response. "And who cares?"

"I WAS only afraid business would prevent your coming," Herr Lemft repeated again and again as they sat imbibing imported schnapps. "How much longer I can endure the place, I do not know. The loneliness is frightful."

"But you've got a pretty place. And a pretty companion," commented Jornado. "I could be content, situated like this."

"The girl is gone. I miss her." And Lemft's hand brushed his chin. Daunt noticed it shook in the gesture. "Something happened." Lemft seized his glass abruptly and spilled the liquor, nor did he take the trouble to wipe it from his silk shirt.

Daunt covered his glass with his hand to prevent it being filled. In spite of the tropic heat, the flamboyant trees, the comforts of the bungalow, he felt the contagious perturbation of Herr Lemft.

His great bulk swayed into the chair when they were summoned to dinner and he sat staring at a dish of tropic fruits colorful as the jewel-hung trees of an Aladdin's orchard.

"You let the girl go?" asked Jornado, softly, persuasively.

"She is gone." Lemft breathed the admission; then his body jerked from the slumped inertness. "That is, I think, I hope she is gone. I do not know. Strange things happen in this Sumatra. I was too

severe with her. I rule natives and thought I ruled her. She was a pretty creature. But you saw her, Jornado. Half Malay, half Chinese, she was. And when she danced——" For a moment a trace of self-possession gripped him. He kissed his fingers to the walls. Then a procession of house-boys came carrying a huge bowl of steaming rice, bowls of sauces, fish, chicken, the concomitants of the rice table from which the three men helped themselves.

"I remember how she danced," said Jornado of the girl, and in his voice was a persuasive tone that had drawn many a story from Daunt's memories as they sat around a campfire. "One has to be severe sometimes," he urged.

"I blame the boy who punished her. She had treated him like dirt under her dancing feet, of course, and he used the whip too hard. I mourned her, truly I did. But I was enraged when it happened. I'd been drinking. She drove me to it. But Ti Fong—damn his soul—is taking vengeance that drives me mad. *Mad!*" he shouted, half starting from his chair. Then, remembering his guests, Lemft subsided and sat staring again at the colorful fruit.

"Look! Those remind me of her. She loved colors and I got everything for her she could ask, silks, jewels."

He rose and darted to the bedroom, returning with both hands clutching necklaces, armlcts, rings and silken scarves, and threw them on the table. The gold bands rolled like little hoops and the gems tinted the white cloth in drops of green and blue and red. Daunt felt his skin prickling as Lemft stood trying to disentangle the silks from fingernails that neglect had broken.

"All I have left of her . . . those and the nightmare haunting me," he half whispered, then turned to yell: "Lights,

boy! It's getting dark here. . . . She comes at dark," he said in a lowered cautious tone that made Daunt grateful for the lamps that were brought in. Even Jornado was neglecting his rice, and at the sound of something shuffling on the gravel path outside he pushed back his chair.

Lemft began to retreat from his place beside the table, backing toward the room corner with a cat-like vigilance as the shuffling sound approached and the swift dying light at the outer screen was blotted by the huge dark figure of a great ape. Daunt's eyes glanced toward Lemft and saw in his face a look of terrified pleading as the ape's fingers unfastened the screen door hasp and it advanced.

The bang of the screen door as it entered brought Daunt from his chair in a jerk. Jornado rose quietly, but he too backed away.

"Lord! A tame 'rang-tang," he said.

"Then you——" Lemft choked and went on, "You see her, too! I couldn't believe the servants. They clear out every night when she comes. They say she is *berhantu* . . . a ghost. But if you see her, why I——" the sound from his lips was not laughter but the hysterical chortle of mad mirth. "You'll think me silly. I have not believed she was alive, real. Her name is Maylo."

"She's real enough," Jornado said quietly. "Aren't you, Maylo?"

From the dark lips of the creature that walked upright and seemed perturbed by strangers in the room, came a sound that Daunt could have sworn was a reply to Jornado's words.

"Maylo was my girl's name." Lemft was speaking rapidly, desperately. "I got her from Ti Fong, and she was one of the temple dancers. He wouldn't sell her outright. It was better business to

charge me exorbitantly, and send for her when he put on a feast to entertain his friends. I forbade her to go to him. But she was afraid, as all men are afraid of Ti Fong, and she went. I ordered her punished, and the boy was too severe. When I woke from a drunken sleep she was gone. Ti Fong had her. . . . After a few months, this—this creature came to me, saying my name, dancing for me as Maylo used to do. You should see her. . . . Dance for them, Maylo. There are your pretties. . . . Dance."

THE ape's eyes held a piteous, dog-like affection as the long hairy arm shot out and took a scarf, winding it around her body. She was draping another length of silk around her head as Daunt saw a scar puckering the skin of the skull, encircling the entire cranium. A soft chattering came from the lips as the ape tried in vain to slip bracelets over her paws and rings on her fingers. But with a sound crooning from her lips the *danse macabre* began, steps familiar to men who know Malaysia, the lithe weaving movement of arms that seem boneless as snakes, the gliding, swaying and posturing of temple dancers like those celestial Asparsas carved on the walls of Angkor Wat. In the crooning Daunt discerned the strange monotonous tune of Malay music and a distinct tempo regulating the dance. He moved toward the corner where Jornado stood watching, but Lemft had slumped on a wall couch, staring until the whites of his eyes showed around the iris. His lips were blue, his nostrils twitching oddly.

"Stop it, Maylo," cried Daunt. "Lemft is sick. Look. . . . Better call the servants."

The dance ended abruptly, and the ape bent over the couch before Jornado or Daunt could reach Lemft.

"Dose boy go when I come," it said plainly, and Daunt's hair seemed to be rising as if lifted by a cold wind. "Dose boy do not like Maylo. But Mynherr lofes Maylo." And before they could interfere, Lemft was lifted in the ape's arms.

"Put him down, you ——" Jornado supplied a word insulting to a Malay. The schnapps, the blood of old Moors and the ghastly and incredible horror-dance had combined with dire results in him.

As if she sensed his rage and her own peril, the ape dropped Lemft like a sack and stood with eyes glaring, mouthing her rage at Jornado. A moment later the gun at his belt, for use in close quarters with big game, blazed death. Yet with bullets in her heart the powerful creature had leaped at Jornado and her claws scarred his face and breast; blood was trickling from the wounds. Daunt leaped past her body that slumped in death and bent over Lemft. They carried him to the bed and worked over him all night and at dawn prepared to take him to a hospital on the coast.

By daylight Daunt saw the trail of blood from where the ape fell on the steps and path, but her body was gone, abducted silently in the night. His mind flew to the facts he knew about Ti Fong, whose magic had terrified the natives and made them compliant to his will. Tales of his cleverness were among the stories when two or three white men gathered together. He was to hear more startling stories a few weeks later when he and Jornado visited the hospital where Lemft was recuperating after the results of over-indulgence in schnapps, tropic heat and loneliness, and shock. His gratitude to Jornado was sincere enough to prompt a gift, which he offered between babblings of witchcraft concerning the ape.

"You saw that it was the girl, didn't you?—the soul of her, her brain and memory in the ape's body. How else could she have known the endearments that passed between Maylo and me? But you saw only her dance. For weeks I endured her visits, her attempts to love me, and I was helpless in her power. Ti Fong did it. He transplanted the soul of Maylo to the ape's body to destroy my mind. He is an arch-fiend. Beware of Ti Fong, my friends!"

"It is one bit of advice I shall act upon," said Daunt.

"You must take no risk," Lemft continued to Jornado. "You have saved me from a madhouse and I am grateful. There is an island I have leased for your use during your lifetime, where you can escape Ti Fong and set up that kingdom you craved, my friend. Don't thank me. It is yours to rule as you like while you live."

Before they left, the transfer of the island to Jornado was made.

"Gratitude!" cried Daunt as they came away with Jornado expressing his delight at the news. "It's hush-money. He admitted the girl was beaten to death. You're getting your precious island to keep your mouth shut about the crime."

"The whole affair is one tale that is not told lest those concerned end up in an asylum," said Jornado. "But I know those islands abandoned a century or two ago by the Dutch. We could stock it with black panthers, and try Birds of Paradise. If they thrived we'd have stock for a steady income, easy to trap and ship, Daunt. Those pay the best anyway, and on an island they'd be easily caught. Let's chuck the saladang order and try for a few pairs of panthers, provision the schooner and land the animals when we go to look over my kingdom."

Daunt was looking at the chart where

the island was marked in red ink, a speck on the map far from the lanes of travel.

"Not too far away for safety from Ti Fong," he commented.

"I'm not worrying about Ti Fong," snapped Jornado. "I'll admit he's master of trickery, in league with the cleverest rogues in Asia, but he's only human. That ape was trained to plague Lemft, who was half licked anyway by loneliness. As a matter of fact I'm going to call on Ti Fong and see those Celestial Singers he has bred and made such a mystery about. Ever hear of them?"

"Yes, and I've heard of mythical Chinese dragons and blue moons and sea serpents," said Captain Daunt. "But I'm willing to be convinced. Let's hope Ti Fong doesn't know you shot his ape."

STORIES about Ti Fong said that he had been a mandarin high in favor with the old Empress Tsu Hi. He had foreseen the downfall of the Manchu dynasty in China and had shipped from his Manchurian estate the hoarded ingots of gold and silver and wealth of jewels to a South Sea refuge. He had been ambassador for the Empress in Paris and St. Petersburg, and after the war had taken for his latest wife a Russian grand duchess, a refugee from the Red Terror. Ti Fong was old in years, according to the records, but young enough and vigorous owing to some formula of drugs or diet that preserved his body and faculties to accomplish control of a commerce in mysterious merchandise that stretched like the tentacles of an octopus over the seas. One of his homes in a Sumatran valley embodied all the beauties in miniature of the Forbidden City and Summer Palace, and among its attractions were his Celestial Singers.

"They are said to have the song of the nightingale, the plumage of peacocks and

the long-tailed cock of Ku," said Jornado to Daunt. "Ti Fong says his family has been evolving the birds for six centuries. They rate higher than his gods, on a par with his ancestors, one reason he lit out with his wealth to go on breeding them when the loyal mandarins went down with the Old Buddha. But his disloyalty made him a hunted man. His only safety was to outwit pursuit and hunt down his enemies, and he spared no means of perfecting protective measures in Black Art as well as guards and weapons. It isn't hard to scare natives into fits, and apparently Ti Fong tried some magic on Herr Lemft. Anyway, the description of the birds is tempting. They might do well on my island, Daunt."

"Come on, I'm game. You shot the ape, not I," said Daunt.

JORNADO'S request to see the birds was answered by an invitation to call, with minute instructions for their arrival before dawn to hear the bird's marvelous song. Leaving the car at some distance, they were conducted by a servant on foot to a corner of a courtyard wall draped in massed profusion by scented blossoms. There were gleams of lotus pools and stone griffins, and as darkness lifted Daunt saw that shrubs and small trees were enclosed in an immense expanse of fine wire screen.

While the stars paled, the two visitors guarded the sound of their breathing and watched the moon grow dim. The servant who admitted them dropped silently to his knees as Ti Fong appeared in a doorway, the sinister mask-like face slashed by the lines of thin lips and eyebrows, his forehead shortened by a black cap with the coral button of his rank. Silently he bent his head in greeting, and a finger touched his lips, warning them against sound or movement. He pointed to tall

perches on which sat two birds with heads tucked under their wings.

At the first rosy flush of dawn a girl came through a moon-gate of the garden and stood against the massed iris surrounding the pool, colorful as another flower in a jade dress with its full skirt banded in blue, green and crimson embroidery. The white oval of her face was framed in dusky hair and to Daunt's gaze betrayed the mixed blood of white Slav and Mongolian parentage in startling loveliness. Unaware of strangers in the shadow, her lips puckered to whistle a soft call that wakened the birds. They stretched wings and claws, preened with their beaks and cocked their heads to watch her glide to the foot of the perches.

In the growing light their bodies seemed fashioned of jewels, brilliant glowing colors, iridescent "eyes" spotted thickly and elongated toward tails which fell like metallic fringes of gleaming radiance to white matting that covered a cement courtyard floor. Eighteen feet of pulsating color, airy as unspun silk, swayed in those tails like a fan of tinted thistledown in the hand of a woman who dances to muted music, as the girl's whistled call excited them with morning hunger.

Kneeling, she placed rice from a bowl between her lips as the cock bird swooped down, strutted toward her and took the grains from the crimson flower of her mouth again and again. Satisfied, the bird soared to his perch, his throat swelled and shot brilliance, as a song of songs poured into the morning stillness.

Daunt was staring, listening to liquid music, disturbed only by the clinking of the fine chain attached to the hen's foot as she alighted on the mat to eat rice from the girl's lips. At Daunt's ear the voice of Ti Fong quietly said:

"The song is not so fine as it was. Moulting time is near. In a month or less the tail feathers will be off and new ones starting, and there will be no song."

"Gorgeous, beautiful——" Daunt was murmuring superlatives.

"The work of centuries," said Ti Fong. "While my family has been breeding the birds, nations have risen and fallen, and I almost destroyed what had been achieved by lavishing so much care upon them that they refused to propagate their beauty. They were so vain of it that they were not interested in the purpose of those love-songs until my daughter Bibi-Ti began devoting herself to them. She showered them with adulation. She was able to interest them in one another. Now we have a nest of fledglings and another of incubating eggs. They are royal birds and refuse to degrade themselves by hatching and rearing their broods. . . ." His words halted.

Jornado had approached the girl, and the hen bird swooped to the perch, the bird-song ended abruptly.

"You will have morning rice with me, Captain Daunt. I regret to hasten you from the court, but visitors affect these birds, and to me they are priceless, more valuable than the Kohinoor or the six-pound-weight ruby of Somnaut. Their lives depend on my daughter because they will take food from no one else. It was a situation causing us anxiety because she is to marry a man of my race in two weeks. But for the sake of my Celestial Singers he has agreed to waive the honored custom of carrying his bride over his own threshold and will make his home here."

**T**I FONG was angry at Jornado's bold attempt at speech with the girl, whose eyes revealed the sudden tempestuous emotions of his blazing admiration

and soft speeches for her ear alone. It was as bold a wooing as Daunt had ever seen, and it imperiled them both. He was glad when Ti Fong deliberately spoke to the girl, who seemed startled, even frightened as she turned and went through the Moon Gate. Jornado stared after her with his heart in his eyes and came reluctantly.

"The birds are not the greatest beauty in your garden," he told Ti Fong. "But I would like to possess a pair."

"Should the nestlings show that the strain is set, who am I to hide my triumph from the world?" said wily old Ti Fong. "But they are difficult to rear, though on the island where I hear you plan to establish a home, they might do well, even as the Birds of Paradise."

"News reaches you quickly, Ti Fong," said Jornado. "I plan to raise black panthers there for shipment. There are orang-outangs on it, and I hope to try Birds of Paradise for easy trapping and shipment."

Daunt could feel the bristling challenge between Jornado and Ti Fong and was glad when the meal ended and they could set out for their car. Ti Fong insisted on their riding to it in his own big limousine, but during their return trip Jornado seemed in a trance.

"Girl-struck?" asked Daunt. "It's time we started for your island, Jornado. We've seen a miracle, and it's time to come out of the clouds."

"More than one miracle. I'd rather have Bibi-Ti than a flock of Celestial Singers."

"You fool!" exclaimed Daunt. "The sooner you're away the safer I'll feel. Ti Fong knows all about you and Lemft's ape. You'd better dig in and stock the schooner while I go after the panthers. And I'll be back in two weeks or less,



expecting to haul up the mudhooks and get out, while the going is good."

**T**WELVE days later Daunt had returned with one pair of black cats behind cage bars and news that another pair would be delivered at a port of call down the coast to be picked up. Jornado had the vessel stocked and fueled and was ready to start when the tide served that night. He had gone into the village on some pretext and left Daunt sitting on Jeck watching the slow stars wheel and glad that Jornado had said nothing more about Ti Fong.

He was startled at the appearance of a big car without lights purring down to the wharf. There were too few cars in that country to be in doubt about Ti Fong's limousine. From the door the huge figure of Jornado emerged, carrying the daughter of Ti Fong and running toward the gang-plank. He stood her on her feet on the schooner deck, kissed her and said:

"Run below, sweetheart. I'll fetch the birds. Lively, Daunt!"

Before Daunt could protest, he dashed back to the car and came running again, swinging two wicker cages.

"Kick her up, Loga," he called to the quartermaster.

"Jornado, you can't do this!" cried Daunt. "Good God, man!"

But Jornado's vehemence had galvanized the crew into action, and further protestations were halted at the sight of a woman's face at the window of the limousine, agonized as the schooner's light struck it, the Russian wife of Ti Fong deliberately assisting Jornado to elope with her daughter and the Celestial Singers.

The screw was kicking up a riot astern as the vessel backed and turned, headed for the open sea. Jornado had run below

with the birds. Daunt stood staring at the limousine, shining in black and silver on the wharf, as it started forward, gathered speed and plunged into water deeper because of high tide. When he ran aft with news of that tragic end to an unhappy woman's life, Jornado himself was at the engine control, speeding it until the fine shrill hum of motors deafened them both.

When he relinquished his post, Jornado busied himself in the spare cabin given over to house the birds and arranging still another for Bibi-Ti. Recriminations were useless. But Daunt's sleep bred nightmares. He was all for leaving extra panthers behind and putting leagues of ocean between themselves and Ti Fong.

"To hell with Ti Fong!" was Jornado's ultimatum. "You've paid to have the panthers brought, haven't you? Head her in. If you're afraid to go ashore, I'm not."

"Go ashore if you choose," said Daunt doggedly.

"Scared of a Chink!" shouted Jornado, and laughed. Never had he looked more magnificent. The adoration of the small lovely girl in the cabin, which she seldom left, had set Jornado aflame. He stalked the deck like a god from Olympus, swaggered like a buccaneer and left the vessel for Daunt to look after.

The Celestial Singers had moulted their long tails, but Bibi-Ti was seldom far from them except to walk the deck after nightfall beside Jornado. Daunt was a little awed at the splendor of love enveloping both and did not darken it by mentioning the tragedy at the wharf for some time.

"I wish you'd forget those extra panthers," he urged. "Ti Fong will kill you for this, Jornado."

"He may try, but on that island there are old Dutch cannons and shells, Lemft

said. I'll guard the lagoon so no boat can enter without my orders. If anything happens to me, Ti Fong will kill Bibi-Ti. But on that island we'll be safe. I'll make a palace for her out of the old Dutch mansion. I'll set her up like Sheba, with tame black panthers at her feet and a guard of trained orang-outangs around her. If Ti Fong can train the apes, so can I. What man has done, man can do, Daunt." Defiantly Jornado shook his fist in the direction of the hills where Ti Fong mourned the loss of the birds and the empty Fragrant House bereaved of his wife and daughter.

Daunt's sympathies were with Ti Fong. Then he felt perturbation seizing and shaking him as the hot, tawny-colored sky sent him to inspect the barometer. He tapped it and stared again.

"The damn' thing is cock-eyed," he said to Jornado.

"Crawling out of the bottom, all right. Better head in for those panthers and give her all she'll take. Precious cargo aboard."

As if the gods Ti Fong served rushed to answer his demands, a storm of mighty fury hounded them with its sulphurous portents, the yellow sky, the sea crawling like a cur cringing under a lash.

"It looks bad," agreed Jornado. "And listen! If anything should happen, Bibi-Ti and the birds are to be taken to that island. Ti Fong would have married her to a Chink she'd never seen. Her mother was a damned unhappy woman with Ti Fong. That's why she helped me take Bibi-Ti and the birds. They'd have died without Bibi-Ti anyway, and she wouldn't leave them behind."

"What do you imagine happened to Bibi-Ti's mother?" asked Daunt.

"She intended to drive to a port and take a steamer for some place where Ti Fong wouldn't find her."

"He won't find her," said Daunt grimly, and explained what had happened. "You've done enough to turn him into a devil that would make the old Scriptural devil a Santa Claus by comparison, Jornado."

"I hope he's mad enough to burst and end a nuisance," was Jornado's retort. The lodestone of a *grande passion* offset the enormity of his folly, but an inward monitor, like a cat's whiskers warning of too narrow an aperture for escape, troubled Daunt as they sighted the hazy mountains of southern Sumatra and were flying from the eery moaning of a storm beginning at the end of the world, rising to a screech of wind that had not yet touched the glassy sea. Jornado hurled defiance at the screaming elements:

"Howl, damn you! I've beaten you in as I beat Ti Fong!"

**H**IS good fortune held. They anchored safely in a shelter not too violently disturbed for little trade canoes to ride out, but all hell broke loose beyond the roadstead and they would wait its fury.

"No, you're not coming on deck to sell fruit or eggs or anything," Jornado shouted to the boat natives. "I don't need anything but what I've got: life, love and an island kingdom!" But it seemed to Daunt he was showing fear of Ti Fong's cunning at last.

When the storm let up, the cage of panthers came out lashed across two big canoes and was loaded on the vessel; and in relief at getting the business over, Jornado treated the natives to drinks and tobacco, and watched them leaving, hauling their boats over the winking puddles of tide flats at ebb-time.

"As soon as there's water enough to get out, we'll fly," said Jornado. "I'll keep deck-watch till eight bells and call you."

Daunt had been strengthening and lashing fast the cage of enraged panthers, and his exertions were responsible for as sound a sleep as he remembered. The quartermaster's touch on his shoulder wakened him. Fear blanched the face of the dark-skinned Marshall Islander. His speech labored between his own lingo and pidgin.

Daunt dressed and went on deck. Wind had cleared the storm clouds, and starlight showed him the body of Jornado near the rail and pouring from it the dark viscous blood of his veins. Daunt bent over as the quartermaster gibbered in terror. Jornado had been decapitated and his head was gone!

But as Daunt straightened, sick, faint with horror, the screw began to hum, the schooner was backing and heading again into seas still troubled. A wind-blown cloud spattered, then poured rain, and Daunt stood soaking, heedless of everything but the vengeance of Ti Fong.

It could be nothing else. Daunt realized there was grim justice, tempered with mercy unusual in a Chinese whose race had perfected refinement of torture unequalled in the world.

There was nothing Daunt could do but head for the island lest Ti Fong take similar vengeance on his daughter. A sudden fear for her safety sent him below to knock on her cabin door.

"Where is he?" she asked in her slurred pretty speech as she opened the door.

Daunt could not tell her what had happened. She was like a lovely child in her white silk pajama suit, and the light of the cabin showed him a photograph of Jornado on the wall above a small Buddha on a shelf. Draping the picture were her strings of pearls and priceless jade of red and the rarest imperial green.

A love affair of exquisite perfection had begun—and ended terribly.

"Bibi-Ti, he had to go ashore on business. He told me to take you and the birds to the island and he would follow as soon as possible."

She pondered the explanation a moment. "Perhaps it would be best that way. The birds have felt they were sharing my caresses and I should not leave them night or day."

Daunt was glad she was gullible enough to believe his invention.

Through strewn wreckage of the storm they came to seas of burning jade and purple by day, webbed with phosphorescence by night, and the sea-fire tempted Bibi-Ti to the deck, where she stood beside him speaking of Jornado, always of Jornado.

"He will be glad the birds are in health, though it separated us on the voyage. And I have news for him. I will give him a son to rule his island kingdom when we are called to the ancestors."

"Good God!" said Captain Daunt, mentally hectic over the outcome of this new complication.

THE island he sought lay green on the lazy cobalt sea, guarded by barrier-reefs through which he picked a slow course, flying the lead as he went, and watching for curling jade waters over submerged coral fangs. Palms like bunched sabers glittered in sun and wind. The long white coral reef swept from its tip like a dagger to a hilt of red rock, and through the glass Daunt saw natives on the rock and spurts of red dust from tools with which they gouged it. But he thought nothing about their curious occupation at the time.

He landed on coral sand and found a path overgrown with lianas leading to

the long-deserted work of ancient Dutchmen abandoned to the natives and the elements. Orange trees had run wild. Ripe fruit fell as he approached, golden shaddocks rolled and bounced from the marble steps of a square old stone dwelling and plopped into a pool fed and drained by stone conduits leading from the hills to the sea. Vines and flowers waved pallidly through empty window-frames, and as Daunt entered an orang-outang leaped from an upper room to near-by tree branches.

He set his men to clearing the rooms of debris, shoveling rotted fruit into the sea, scouring floors and walls, building the great screen cage for the Celestial Singers. Only when it was finished and the house furnished did Bibi-Ti come ashore with the birds that required her devotion constantly. Daunt and his natives hauled the panther cages into the thick jungle far beyond the house to release the cats, after which he explored the island, and found it exceeded even Jornado's expectations. At a straggling village on one side, natives showed him *bêche-de-mer* and trocha shell, spice trees and vines. Small monkeys pelted him with debris, and patriarchal orang-outangs peered boldly from the trees. And when he came to the red rock he found a village of new huts and natives shaping the stone into a figure curiously ape-like, hunched and squatted, with its uncouth head gazing sullenly out to sea.

Something about the crude form stirred and crawled like maggots in his brain, reminding him of the *danse macabre* of Lemft's she-ape; but when he questioned them the little brown men said they were making a god. Only later did Daunt recall the freshness of their hut thatch and remember that his Malay speech was understood by them though the other village spoke a different lingo.

He was glad to return to the civilized sanctuary of the house, where the fine napery, silver and glass that Jornado had provided for his bride gleamed under candle-lights on the table between him and Bibi-Ti. She was charming, and Daunt ached with pity for her, though the girl was gay as a child, speaking of Jornado's coming and talking of things quaintly mixed in mind, the Russian teaching of her mother and Chinese training of Ti Fong's house. Daunt wondered what the end would be, since he dared not desert her on the island and dared not take her within the long reach of Ti Fong's punishment.

It was impossible not to fall under the languidly lovely spell of the island, but Daunt speculated on its rich resources once he could leave and start trading again. In three months he was wakened each dawn by the songs of the Celestial Singers. The days were his own in which to wander, make friends with the island natives and persuade them to fetch shell and dried sea-slugs, and make copra against a day when he would leave. At evening he sat on the stoep hearing night rustlings in the thickets beyond the clearing and oranges plop-plop down the steps and splash into the pool. The only menace was the curiosity of orang-outangs that peered in the house windows, but Bibi-Ti was not afraid. He heard her talk to them as she did to the Celestial Singers.

"In Ti Fong's house we had them for servants," she told Daunt. "They understood our talk and spoke to us. I will try to tame them, perhaps teach them to help the house-boys."

Daunt's mind flew to Lemft's obsession regarding the ape Maylo, but in seven months of Bibi-Ti's attempts to tame the great apes they were still merely curious and a little bolder.

A speck on the horizon one afternoon held him engrossed in watching it grow into the gear and hull of a vessel streaking toward the island. Bibi-Ti ran down to where he stood on shore wishing he could have manned the ancient cannons that now were polished and flanked by small pyramids of rusted iron shells. But ramming them with powder, sighting them and applying lighted tow was the art of a century gone.

The oncoming vessel was a yacht, faster than his own, painted black, pugnacious with small modern guns clamped to the decks, and she swooped at the island, veered sharply between barrier reefs, and slipped into the lagoon through a passage so intricate that his vessel had crawled slowly. Her helmsman was no stranger to that passage.

She danced on the clear water over sea gardens of coral, dipped and curtsied in her own swell. A small boat was smartly lowered and a hunched figure dropped down a rope, unshipped the oars as the yacht's propeller kicked foam on the lagoon and she turned and slipped out and away. The glass showed Daunt her crew of Malays, naked except for loincloths, wearing the fancy head-gear of sea Dyaks. Then he was staring at a hairy ape in the small boat, whose short-thumbed hands gripped the oars and pulled with the skill of an old hand, heading toward shore.

**I**N THE tropic heat Daunt shivered; his body trickled with cold sweat. The friendly natives who had gathered to see the arrival of the vessel fled. The boat touched coral, and eyes of human agony in the head of an orang-outang returned Daunt's gaze. Around the sparsely haired skull was a puckered wound scar like the one circling the head of Maylo on that night in Lemft's bungalow. Daunt felt

his knees knocking together as sounds came from the black lips, guttural, unintelligible.

Daunt was assuring himself that apes didn't sit in a boat and try to speak. They chattered among themselves; a mother-ape would croon to her young or scream in rage, and bull apes roared in fury, but they did not utter those hesitant sounds that so strangely resembled the sound of his name:

"Daw—nt. Daw—nt. It-ss-zz . . . Zhor—naw—do-o-o."

Daunt couldn't and wouldn't believe. This was only another of Ti Fong's tricks to bedevil him, another trained ape to hound him to insanity such as Lemft suffered. And he had not robbed Ti Fong except to take Bibi-Ti beyond the arch-fiend's power. He licked his dry lips and glanced down the coast nervously and saw on the coral spit natives who had carved the rock waving their arms and yelling at the vessel, pleading for it to call and take them away. The truth was forcing his belief that Ti Fong had dropped them there to carve the Red God, prototype of this ape in the boat which was now getting to its feet, uttering its pitiful plea:

"Daw—nt. It-ss-zz . . . Zhor—naw—do-o-o," clearer now, but with Jornado's inflection when speaking his own name.

"Yoo-oo-o . . . do—ont . . . bee-lee-eeve. I di-id no-ot bee-lee-ve till one da-ay I sa-aw thi-izz ha-and." The ape's hand was held out, turned at the wrist pivot in a gesture of despair that made Daunt pity the creature as he would a hurt dog. Yet he fought belief until the man-ape spoke again:

"Te-ell me-ee . . . a-bo-owt Bee-ee-tee-ee Tee-ee."

Ti Fong had not pronounced his daughter's name like that. It was Jor-

nado's own way of speaking it. Daunt's control, grown brittle, shattered like glass. Fear made him speak as he would to the inmate of an asylum claiming to be Nero or Napoleon.

"Bibi-Ti is well. She is in the house. But if you are Jornado as you say, tell me what happened to you. Who trained you to speak? Who brought you here? And why?"

"Ti Fong-g-g," the sound of it hummed like a snapped wire. The labored speech went on with an incredible tale while Daunt struggled helplessly in the grip of what seemed a paralyzing nightmare that bound his legs and arms so that he couldn't escape.

As Ti Fong had transplanted the brain of the half-caste girl Maylo into the skull of a she-ape, he had grafted the brain of Jornado in the head of this creature. Jornado's brain had roused from drugged unconsciousness to find his body strapped helplessly. Chinese master-surgeons attended him assiduously, and when the agony of his head was gone and his mind cleared they unbound one arm. He saw its hairy length and the hand of an ape. Ti Fong had come and tormented him with the tale of his vengeance. And as the story ended, rage swelled the ape-king's body. The frightful roar bursting from his chest silenced the chattering of little monkeys peering from the trees, and the gaudy parrots squawked and streaked into the deeper jungle.

"Stop it!" yelled Daunt. "You'll frighten Bibi-Ti. She hoped this vessel brought you. Jornado—if you are Jornado—you've got to know that the lives of Bibi-Ti and your unborn child depend on your mercy now. She must never know, or you'll complete the vengeance of Ti Fong, who also brought natives here to mark the island with that ape-god of red rock. She needs protection. The

wild apes are curious about the house and stare through the windows. She has tried to tame them, but I've feared the day when they grow too bold. . . . Look, Jornado!"

For Daunt had glanced nervously around and his blood froze at the sight of stealthy movements in the green dark wall of foliage. Peering from thickets, hanging from branches, the great apes had trooped at that roar of a bull ape's lungs. One giant brute swung down, glaring from red shining eyes and growling a stuttering cry.

DAUNT'S escape to the house was cut off. He backed toward the boat on the coral, hearing Jornado the ape mouthing animal talk that swelled to arrogant boasting as he thumped his chest and roared again and again and suddenly leaped at the wild ape.

Fear-thrilled, Daunt watched the battle of monsters, and around them hung the staring circle of giant apes like spectators at a battle of pugilists gone mad, obeying no rules but the law of rending claws and fangs. Daunt crouched and darted down the shore. He reached the house through a jungle silent of bird voices and monkey chattering, voiced only by the distant muffled roaring of fighting beasts which presently fell silent, and he called Bibi-Ti.

Native women answered him with news that kept Daunt prowling with guns at his belt, guarding the grounds, fearing the outcome of the battle on the beach, now ended, if the buzz and hum and clack of insect life beginning at dark was a sign of peace.

Exhausted by fear, he saw the silver and rose of dawn put out the stars, and heard the song of the Celestial Singers. And a woman called him to the upper room, where the wail of a baby met his

ears, and he saw Bibi-Ti, white-faced but radiant-eyed, looking from the window at a great ape that sat on the branch of a tree near by.

"It is a daughter," she said to Daunt. "He would have wanted a son, I think. But it will not matter now. For when the woman told me it was a girl and I cried from disappointment, he called my name."

Her hand pointed to the ape in the trees.

"They are almost as we are, you know. Only they are wiser, for they hear voices in the wind like the radio in Ti Fong's house which brought voices and music from far countries. And he told me that Jornado would not return as I knew him, but his soul was near me, guarding me and the child. And I must rule this island for her as he would rule the jungle. He is the king of the jungle now. And you are to gather the copra and shell and sell it and bring back everything to make it safe and beautiful for Jornado's daughter and me. You do not believe he spoke to me?" she cried. "But I shall make you believe. Come here, Jornado," she spoke to the ape.

The branches moved as the great creature swung to the window and through it, crouching beside the massive old Dutch bed with bowed head while the pretty hand of Bibi-Ti patted the mighty shoulder.

"Tell him what you told me," she said.

"I . . . am . . . the soul . . . of Jornado . . . sent to take possession of the king-ape's body and protect the woman he loved and his child . . . serving her,

obeying her, loyal to her service till death. I am Jornado, invisible owner of this island until my death ends the lease of it granted to Jornado the man. The wild apes obey me, for I have killed their king. All the jungle creatures obey my rule, which shall last until I have repaid vengeance that Ti Fong has begun and will only end when he has paid in full for his crimes.

"The island is rich in cargoes. Through the night I have seen the shell and copra, the bêche-de-mer dried for shipping, the black panthers with their young, and orchids that white men prize. It holds wealth to be used in pursuing Ti Fong, which is the task of Jornado's vessel and his friend, Daunt.

"For Ti Fong, who sent men to mark it with the Red God, will not rest until death quiets him. But I am on guard while you sail out, Captain Daunt, the weapon of my vengeance. But here no evil of man's making shall land. Bibi-Ti will rule, and after her the child. For them it must be kept like a Garden of the Lord, one spot where love and beauty reigns. For this end of vengeance has the soul of Jornado the man been given the strength of the ape's body. You will obey orders, Captain Daunt?"

Fear left Daunt. The mysterious beneficence of a presence burned by suffering of all human attributes except love and just wrath thrallied him as he faced the soul of Jornado looking from the ape's eyes, and prepared to go about the business of gathering cargo and leaving the age-old trinity to their new-found paradise.

Another strange tale of Ti Fong and his weird surgery will appear in next month's  
WEIRD TALES