

# Panjamon: I Was a Headhunter.



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Author s Preface

Travel, for travel s sake, is to my mind a waste of time and energy and an unnecessary expense. It is so much better to arrive. But alas, I m obliged to travel to satisfy my vice. Let me make this clear: My vice, for that s what it is, is the study of animals. This unreasoned passion has

often taken me to remote parts of the earth.

What have I not endured in order to have a fleeting glimpse of a rare species of monkey hidden away in the foothills of the Annamite mountains? And when I think of the number of times my passport was stamped, the amount of dust I inhaled and the pounds I sweated off, before being able to observe a tribe of proboscis monkeys in Borneo . . . no, I don't like travel.

The reason for setting off this time was two strange animals, or rather reptiles. One was the Komodo lizard, a kind of antediluvian monster straight out of popular legend, which lives on a small, remote Indonesian island. About twelve feet long, it weighs all of three hundred pounds. The other was the sphenodon of Stephen Island, *Sphenodon punctatum* to the knowledgeable. It is not much to look at—thirty inches long at most, thin, little different from any ordinary lizard. But it existed in its present form 250 million years ago, long before the dinosaurs and brontosaurus appeared on earth.

More amazing still, this living fossil, which flourished during the Triassic and Jurassic periods, possesses a third eye—the parietal eye, which corresponds to the pineal gland in mammals.

These two reptiles are of great interest. Unfortunately,

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