

THE DECEIVED LIZARD
Bengkarung Terpedaya

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THE DECEIVED LIZARD

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Language Development and Cultivation Agency
Ministry of Education and Culture, Republic of Indonesia
Jalan Daksinapati Barat IV, Ramangun, Jakarta
Telepon (021) 4706287, 4706288, 4896558, 4894546
Pos-el: badan.bahasa@kemdikbud.go.id
www.badanbahasa.kemdikbud.go.id

THE DECEIVED LIZARD

Bengkarung, Ruler of the Jungle

The sound of raindrops was still heard this morning. It was quite chilly around the lake. The birds were reluctant to sing. They hid under dense foliage. Even rabbits were reluctant to leave their burrows. Usually, the lake was lively with swans, ducks and geese that were swimming around and chasing each other, but this morning there was none. As if the nature was sad because the sun refused to appear.

Behind a lush, massive tree, there stayed a lizard named Bengkarung that was revered by the whole jungle. The lizard sprawled languidly, enjoying the morning atmosphere. Bengkarung's dwelling did look beautiful, with flowers that appeared well-tended and gracefully arranged.

It was said that a long time ago, Bengkarung was resembling the most poisonous animal compared to the other venomous creatures. Its venom bite was lethal to the other animals. The lizard's venom roused admiration from all creatures in the wilderness. Bengkarung became a highly respected reptile. All other creatures obeyed and bowed down to it. In addition to its extremely potent venom, Bengkarung also garnered much respect due to its kindness. The animals felt safe living in that beautiful

and enchanting jungle. As was its habit, before nightfall Bengkarung always circled the lake where the animals gathered and greeted every animal it met along the way.

“Good evening, kind Deer. How are you?”

“Very good, Sir,” the Deer replied deferentially.

Bengkarung resumed its walk again.

“Good evening, pretty Pony.”

“Good evening to you too, Sir.”

“Why the long face?”

“I...I was thinking about how enjoyable our lives here in this jungle.”

“And Sir, as a leader, you are held in high esteem by the inhabitants of this jungle. We get along well, without internal discord, but our kin’s situation in the other jungle, on the other hand, did not look too good,” said the Pony anxiously.

“Really? What kind of trouble that makes you feel sorry for your friends in the other jungle?” asked Bengkarung again.

The Pony started to share its experience when it saw the animals that lived in fear due to the cruelty of Tedung the Cobra. Bengkarung listened seriously to every word said by the Pony.

After that, Bengkarung left the Pony who still stood on the edge of the lake. Bengkarung resumed its walk down the lake, greeting the animals that it came across.

Bengkarung pondered on ways to help the inhabitants of the jungle on the other side, who lived in fear due to the cruelty of their leaders. As the evening turned into night, the jungle became quiet. Once in a while, the sound of bats hunting for food was heard. And cries of a Gibbon were heard in the distance, as it looked for a place to lie down after spending the whole day playing with its friends. Late at night, fireflies showed up to illuminate the pitch-black world in the north side of the wilderness.

“Guards, do you have any idea to stop the wickedness of the Cobra in the southern jungle?” asked Bengkarung.

“We haven’t had thought about ways to conquer the ruler of that jungle. We feel sorry knowing that the animals there are living in fear and distress because of Tedung’s cruelty.”

“I can sense how the beasts there also wish to experience the same life as we have here. How unlucky they are, Guards.”

Like A Snake in the Grass

Tedung the Cobra became the most-feared ruler amidst the inhabitants that lived in the dense forest on the hillside. All beasts

and reptiles were afraid of the fierceness of their ruler. Not a single animal dared to refuse its order.

Tedung was very envious of Bengkarung's standing. "Just what is the strong suit of that ugly Bengkarung?" asked Tedung to itself. "The scales were not as smooth and slick as my skin. It could not shed its skin like me," said Tedung again, hissing loudly in resentment. Because of that jealousy, Tedung intended to have the potency of its venom contested against Bengkarung's.

"I shall go to the north side of the jungle that is ruled by that Bengkarung. I want to know the extent of Bengkarung's strength that makes its name so revered by all the creatures."

"It was said that Bengkarung's venom is more potent than any serpentine venom. All animals succumbed to it. Bengkarung's name is well known in the animal kingdom. I shall prove all that." All this time, this thought occupied the mind of Tedung the Cobra.

A Challenge

Early morning, before the rooster crowed, Tedung's party was getting ready. The party will travel to Bengkarung's home. This morning, mist enveloped the entire surface of the earth so the air was very cold. The scurrying of beasts was heard from time to time. The wolves wailed despondently as though starving, but

unwilling to get out of their lair because of the very cold air outside.

Tedung's party began their descent off the cliff, then crossing the long, wide river one by one. For snakes, crossing the river like that was not a problem. However, if they were to be less careful, they could be swept away by the current and would be separated from their party. Furthermore, there was an enemy that was no less dangerous, the crocodiles that could swallow them at any time. Bengkarung was completely oblivious that the arrival of Tedung the Cobra and its party would bring it harm. Bengkarung ordered its guards to entertain the party.

A lively party welcomed their arrival. Bengkarung told its guards to prepare the most exceptional meal to welcome guests that come from afar.

“Guards, prepare the most delicious food to welcome our guests!” ordered Bengkarung to them.

“Yes, Sire. We will prepare the tastiest dishes to entertain your guests immediately,” said the guards most respectfully. Whilst the party of Tedung the Cobra took a rest, Bengkarung gathered its guards in another location.

“My guards, we have some unexpected visitors today. Therefore, please serve them well as if they were your own kin. And heed my message, do not be disrespectful to them. Actually, I have

heard about Tedung's wicked ways in the northern jungle. I will try to advise it in some ways. Therefore, I hope everyone could watch each other and refrain themselves from expressing distrust."

"As you wish, Sire. We will carry out your message."

Tedung's party was impatiently waiting for the opportune moments to defeat Bengkarung. All of them were just waiting for an order from their group leader to act immediately. However, their leader was still thinking about ways so that its speech and conduct did not arouse Bengkarung's suspicions. Early in the morning, Tedung's retinue was getting ready to face Bengkarung. They could not wait to make the purpose of their arrival known. After finishing breakfast, they finally expressed their real intention.

"Bengkarung, I'd like to convey my purpose of visiting here with the group," said Tedung, starting the conversation.

"Please tell us your intention in coming here. We are listening," replied Bengkarung.

"I want to know, what is the trick to make you respected by all inhabitants in this jungle? Is it your venom, which makes them obey your commands?"

“They give their regards to me because we respect each other. We live by helping and cherishing each other. They never feel that they are under my rule. They do everything willingly,” answered Bengkarung.

“Bengkarung, if so, I want to be like you, honored and respected by the inhabitants of the jungle. However, I still doubt the potency of your venom. So far, I have been the most venomous creature alive, but as far as they know, it’s your poison that is the most lethal so they submit to you. In fact, they have a reason to obey you. It’s because they are afraid of your poison. That is why I am here to challenge you to decide whose venom is the most deadly. Therefore, animals in the southern wilderness will know which one is the most lethal. If it turns out that my venom is the one, I will earn their respect too.”

“If it will make you wiser, I accept your challenge, Tedung.”

So, the preparation was made immediately. They would find a place and set a time for their poison contest.

The Cobra’s Slyness

Tedung deliberately incited Bengkarung to anger with its words, but it still felt that Bengkarung was not that easily provoked. In fact, Bengkarung showed composure in front of every word that Tedung said, which was actually rude and impolite. However, no matter how great the patience, if Bengkarung continued to be

derided, of course it would get angry. Tedung deliberately mocked and belittled Bengkarung. In the end, Bengkarung finally lost its patience.

“Tedung, I already told you that my poison is the most lethal. So, it is pointless to challenge me,” said Bengkarung.

“It was the same for me. There is no creature on earth that I’m afraid of. I’ve tested the potency of my venom, no creature can fend it off, they all fell victim to it,” not to be outdone, Tedung replied back. Listening to Tedung’s arrogant words, Bengkarung lost its temper. Its eyes reddened, it spoke with anger.

“Tedung, I accept your challenge! We can test our poison against a human or animal.”

So, the guards began to look for a suitable place for their poison contest. They had to go down the valley, from the upstream high in the mountain and down by the river. They had to pass through the forest so dense that no human ever trod upon, in order to reach a populated area. Bengkarung’s messengers had to work hard to reach the human settlement. After a long, arduous journey, they found a settlement just as what their master wanted. The sun had already set in the western horizon. Only when the moon came out of its resting place did they arrive at the inhabited area. They surveyed the place carefully and began to hear faint, rustling sounds of night animals scurrying about.

When the crickets started to sing, they brightened the pitch black night. Bengkarung's messengers saw no sign of life in this place. From before, not a single human was found.

“My companions, we have gone so far to reach this place, but I have not seen any human until now. Have we picked this place wrongly?”

“I don't know either, my friend. Perhaps they are in their huts because we arrived here close to midnight.”

Bengkarung's guards already prepared a place for Tedung and Bengkarung to pit their power against each other. Tedung was impatiently waiting for that moment. Tedung was really confident that it will win the contest. Tedung kept pacing back and forth the whole morning. It waited for news from Bengkarung about the time the competition will be carried out. “Stupid Bengkarung! Why it keeps delaying the time? I will prove to everyone that I am the most venomous creature in the whole world,” it said to itself.

Suddenly, one of Tedung's guards reported that the contest can be held immediately. Tedung was very pleased when it heard the news. In fact, Tedung was very cunning in its preparation. They already suspected that Tedung's venom was nothing compared to Bengkarung's. Therefore, they were not actually making a preparation in the truest sense, but the opposite. Meanwhile,

Bengkarung's side also proceeded with the preparation. Bengkarung ordered its guards to organize everything required for this strength contest. Unlike Tedung's false preparation, Bengkarung's side was truly preparing for the contest. Bengkarung realized that Tedung is a sly creature. However, Bengkarung did not want to doubt the Cobra.

"Guards, have you prepared everything for our strength contest later?" asked Bengkarung.

This morning, in a fairly large clearing, Bengkarung the Lizard as the ruler of the northern jungle will compete with Tedung the Cobra from the southern jungle. All eyes were cast upon the two creatures as they entered the clearing where the strength competition was to be held. Then, Tedung said to Bengkarung.

"I, the ruler of the southern jungle Tedung the Cobra, am challenging you today Bengkarung the Lizard, the ruler of the northern jungle. This place is your turf. That's why I will give you the first chance out of my respect. Show us the might of your poison! After that, I will display the potency of my venom before your eyes," said Tedung haughtily. Tedung deliberately gave Bengkarung the first opportunity because it actually had a dirty trick up its sleeve to deceive Bengkarung.

Hearing these words of challenge from Tedung, Bengkarung was flushed with anger. It got furious listening to Tedung's call for challenge. So, Bengkarung answered with a loud voice.

“Tedung, you should not be conceited in front of me. Do not blame me if you lose. Not just my bite, by simply spouting on the shadow of a human or animal is already lethal to them. Still you did not believe that my poison was the deadliest?”

“Bengkarung, you should not talk too much,” Tedung said back, “Just prove it!”

“Very well, you shall see the extent of strength of my poison.”

“How can you prove it if there is no human here?” asked Tedung.

“The human's presence is not necessary. As I told you, I can kill them simply by spouting poison on their shadows,” Bengkarung said, irritated.

“Now, let us look for any trace of human or animal around this area. I will be ready to spew my poison on them, and you will see them perished.”

“All right, let us look for any human's or animal's trace.”

Later, Bengkarung and Tedung walked along the path heading to a human settlement to look for any footprints of a human or animal. They had to find it because Tedung wanted to prove that

by simply spouting Bengkarung's poison on the human's or animal's trace can kill them instantly. They walked and looked around the way.

Deceived

Bengkarung and Tedung finally found some trails in the direction of the human village. They stopped there.

“Bengkarung, do you not see footprints in front of us heading to that human village? Why you do not spew on it? Were you just bluffing?”

“Stop talking so much, just watch me.”

“Sssshhhh...,” the hissing sound was heard from Bengkarung's mouth. Then, Bengkarung spouted its poison again.

“Sssshhhh...,” the hissing got louder. Without much thought, Bengkarung asked Tedung to look for the owner of that trail.

“Now look for the man who owns the footprint. You will see yourself. He must be dead already,” said Bengkarung with red eyes after exerting all its strength. Fast as lightning, Tedung followed the human's footprints ahead to prove the might of Bengkarung's poison. While Tedung was leaving, Bengkarung and their group stayed there to wait for its return. Bengkarung did not realize that that opening will be used by Tedung to trick Bengkarung.

Tedung was startled seeing the man who had the footprints dropped dead. “What an incredible poison, Bengkarung. What you have said is actually true. The man who owns the footprints has a quick death by your poison. That way, it was proven that your poison was the most potent on earth,” Tedung said in its heart. Then, it called for the guards.

“Guards, we have proved that Bengkarung’s poison was the most potent, so what is your plan next?” Tedung said.

“Sire, there is no need to worry since I already have a plan.”

“You see, Sire. None of Bengkarung’s guards knows that the man who owns these footprints has met his demise. So, we can reverse the story easily.”

“I know, Guard. We shall say that the owner of the footprints does not die. Bengkarung would believe it because Bengkarung would not be here to confirm the deed itself. However, you must hide the human body quickly,” said Tedung.

“We will hide the body immediately, Sire.”

“While you take care of the remains, I will carry out our plan.”

Bengkarung had no suspicion whatsoever of Tedung’s sly plan. Bengkarung was waiting leisurely on the clearing together with its guards. Tedung came back.

“Proud Bengkarung, you said your poison was the most lethal, but what is the truth? Nothing happened to the man who owns the footprints, in fact, he can still do his activities without problem,” said Tedung, pretending to be calm. He hid his fear of Bengkarung. Upon learning that the man who made the footprints did not die, without thinking twice Bengkarung said to Tedung.

“I’ve tested my poison on a human’s footprint. Now, try doing the same on that footprint as well.”

Bengkarung did not try to confirm first what it had done to the man who owns the footprints. Bengkarung simply believed without questioning what Tedung had said.

Shortly thereafter, Tedung pretended to focus its attention to spew the poison on the man’s trail in front of it.

“Sssshhhh...,” there came a hissing sound. Tedung spouted its poison once more to convince Bengkarung that it was exerting all of its power to spew poison on the man’s trail.

“Sssshhhh..., let death claim the man who owns these trails,” it said pretentiously.

“Bengkarung, come, let us look for the owner of these trails together so you know that my poison is the most potent of all.”

“I will not believe it unless I see with my own eyes the death of the man who made these footprints.”

“You may do so, you and all your guards, even this whole jungle can witness my magnificence.”

“I will definitely bring my guards to prove it,” replied Bengkarung.

“Very well, Bengkarung. You’ll see for yourself the potency of my poison,” Tedung replied, convincingly.

Then, they roamed around searching for the owner of the trails. Along the way, Tedung acted as if it was busily looking left and right for its victim. Slithering along, Tedung was apprehensive that perhaps the guards had misplaced the body of the human who owned the footprints. “Oh no, perhaps they haven’t finished setting up strategies. What will happen if Bengkarung knows of my deceit?” Tedung anxiously thought to itself.

They trod on, accompanied by their respective guards. Gazing to their left and right, they were looking for any human’s or animal’s trails. Bengkarung was still confident that its poison was more potent than Tedung’s poison.

“Guards, are you sure that my poison will not lose to that Cobra’s venom?” asked Bengkarung.

“We believe that your poison is stronger than Tedung’s,” said the guards.

“You saw for yourself that I had spouted my trusted venom. So, I’m sure that the man who owns these trails will die instantly. Strangely, Tedung said that he did not die and could even carry on his activities. If that human still did not meet his demise under my poison, let alone Tedung’s poison, which is nothing compared to mine.”

“Well, that is what we are going to find out. Is it true that Tedung’s venom was lethal to the man who owns the footprints? Only after seeing it ourselves that we can believe it, Sire.”

“You are correct, Guard. We have to prove the strength of Tedung’s venom first. Now, search along this road thoroughly, is it true that there is a corpse of the human who owns the trails?”

Suddenly, Tedung and Bengkarung arrived at the place that was previously arranged by Tedung’s guard, where the human who had died of Bengkarung’s poison was placed. Bengkarung was very surprised. It could not believe its eyes but unable to deny either that the human had truly died.

“Impossible. It is impossible for the human to die by Tedung’s poison.” Repeatedly, the words came out of Bengkarung’s mouth. Bengkarung’s eyes reddened. It truly could not believe what it had seen. On the other hand, Tedung scoffed at Bengkarung. It looked proud. With truly an innocent face, it said to Bengkarung.

“Bengkarung, you have seen for yourself how my poison can kill this human. I only spouted my venom on his shadows, what do you think will happen if I spout the venom on a human body? I could not imagine what will become of that human.”

Seeing the incident, Bengkarung was furious. It could not think clearly about what it just went through. “If so, what is the use of my poison then? It’s pointless. It cannot kill human or animal. For that reason, I can no longer protect the animals in the north side of the jungle,” Bengkarung said loudly.

Suddenly Bengkarung disgorged all of its poison on nettle leaves. The moment that Tedung had been waiting for finally arrived. Tedung was ecstatic because what it had planned all the way from the southern jungle just came true. At that moment, Tedung jumped in to devour Bengkarung’s poison. “This is what I’ve been expecting. I need to swallow Bengkarung’s poison immediately. Now, no one would dare to oppose me. As I thought, no one can match my cunning,” it said to itself with a wide grin and cackled. Believing to have an upper hand, Tedung freely mocked Bengkarung.

“What did I say, Bengkarung? It was futile to look for a place here since your poison actually worth nothing.”

Bengkarung could speak no word to that. Bengkarung no longer knew what to say to all inhabitants in the northern jungle.

Miserably, Bengkarung left the place. Bengkarung was forced to acknowledge Tedung's power that it assumed had defeated its poison. Bengkarung left the place with its guards.

"It's all right, mates. We should not talk about this anymore. It was our fate. We no longer have the deadly poison. Tedung owns it now," said another guard.

They all sunk into silence. No one dared to disturb their master. It's as if they also sensed what their master was feeling. Meanwhile, Tedung celebrated its victory. Tedung was indeed sly and not remorseful of its cunning. Instead Tedung was proud of its underhanded method. As a serpent, it was Tedung's fate to live the destiny of the wicked.

It turned out that the remnants of Bengkarung's deadly poison was not only devoured by Tedung the Cobra. Without anyone realizing it, Scorpion, Millipede, and Centipede also partook in it. They had been watching what the two had been doing for a while so they also consumed what was left of Bengkarung's poison.

"Friends, let's get the rest of Bengkarung's deadly poison," the Scorpion invited.

"It is not possible for us to get the remainder of the poison. We just saw the snake ate up all the poison," replied the Millipede.

“We should not give up. We have to really prove whether the poison is really gone,” said the Scorpion.

“Let’s go then,” the Centipede urged.

They approached what was left from Bengkarung’s poison. They wanted to verify if there was any poison remained. They were lucky because some leftovers were still there. They divided the poison in smaller portions so they could all get a share.

“Friends, we managed to obtain a little of Bengkarung’s incredible poison,” said the Scorpion.

“We are lucky. If we were giving up hope before, we would not be having any,” said the Millipede.

“Even if it’s just a little, it is still very substantial to us. The poison will increase our strength when we are facing the enemy,” the Centipede exclaimed.

They hurried home to spread the news to other creatures. Now they can be proud for having poison even though it was not as mighty as Tedung’s deadly venom. The poison was desired by not only big animals, even the Caterpillar noticed they scrambled for the rest of Bengkarung’s poison. The Caterpillar did not want to be left behind. It also wanted to have the remaining poison. The Caterpillar crawled slowly to the place where Bengkarung had disgorged its venom. The Caterpillar really wanted to have

some leftover of Bengkarung's poison, but powerless to do so because it could not move fast, and failed to get the remaining poison. "I'm so unlucky. Why I was created to be a slow creature? If only I were able to run, I'm sure I will get the remaining poison," said the Caterpillar, bemoaning its fate. It could not hold back its tears.

The Caterpillar did not realize that some trace of Bengkarung poison that was already consumed by Tedung earlier was still left on top of the nettle leaves, and divided further by the Scorpion and its friends. The Caterpillar wailed and rolled over many times. It wept miserably when it was reminded of its weakness. "I felt like I'm the weakest creature in the whole world. If so, for what purpose was I created if it's to be such a weak creature. Why I couldn't run as fast as a deer or horse so I could beat the Scorpion and its friends." The Caterpillar repeated its words of regrets over and over again.

The Caterpillar continued to bawl and rolled over the nettle leaves where Bengkarung had disgorged its poison before. It regretted for being late. It bawled louder and continued to roll over the leaves until it got exhausted.

Feeling drained, it finally stopped. "I'm really upset, but why I still do this? Why would I cry like this? No matter what, I will never obtain the remaining of Bengkarung's lethal venom. I have to accept this bitter reality for the second time. Not just becoming

a slow-moving creature, I also have no power to sting my enemy,” it said to itself, aggrieved.

The Caterpillar then sat down on the leaves, brooding and lamenting over its fate. Apparently, what it had done did not end in vain. The Caterpillar sensed something changing inside its body. Apparently, specks of Bengkarung poison on the leaves had stuck to its hairs. The Caterpillar became an itchy grub due to its hairs. The Caterpillar was completely oblivious about it, though. It just realized once the other animals felt scratchy after touching its body. The Caterpillar was elated when learning about it. What the Caterpillar did eventually brought good luck to itself.