

KERONGO
Si Kerongo

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KERONGO

Once upon a time, in a remote village of Tanjung Lalung in West Kutai in the hinterland of Kalimantan lived a woman and his son named Kerongo. The woman just lived with her only son Kerongo, since Kerongo's father had passed away when Kerongo was only a little child.

Kerongo's mother was a humble woman who made a living for her and her son Kerongo by cultivating a field. Kerongo was a dull boy with lower intelligence than his friends of his age. However, his mother loved Kerongo very much. She brought him up and taught him many things patiently and perseveringly.

At that time, Kerongo has grown up to a strong young man. However, his mental capacity developed more slowly than his physical growth. Although he was already an adult, he still bothered his mother with his childish behaviour. His mother was frequently complained by her neighbours because of Kerongo's annoying behaviour. However, Kerongo's mother never got angry with him. She accepted her son's condition without any lamentation. Painstakingly, she educated and taught Kerongo about many things. Whenever she looked at Kerongo, she realized that she assumed a large responsibility for him. She had to give much love to her only child.

With that much love from his mother, Kerongo had someone who was willing to accommodate his complaint when someone else humiliated his disadvantage. Therefore, Kerongo loved his mother very much since he knew that his mother had protected him patiently and educated him perseveringly to make him equal to other young men. Kerongo's love to his mother was manifested in his obedience. Their behaviour indicated that mother's love and patience in educating her child might result in an obedient and helpful child.

Kerongo and his mother lived a humble but happy life. Every day Kerongo's mother took him to collect plants in the forest and catch fish in the river for their daily meals.

"Kerongo, I'll go to the forest to collect vegetables for our lunch. I'll also go fishing in the river for our side dish."

When he heard that his mother would like to go to the forest and the river, Kerongo enthusiastically wanted to join her. He had always been happy to go along with his mother to the forest and the river since he could muck around there.

"I'm going along with you, Mom. I'll help you carry the vegetable and fish baskets," Kerongo ran after his mother right away. When they reached the forest, his mother looked for some edible fruits and vegetables. Kerongo helped his mother by carrying the luggage basket. After collecting the needed vegetables and fruits,

Kerongo walked to the river to catch some fish. In the river, while mucking around with the river water, Kerongo also do the fishing. That was how Kerongo lived. He did everything happily. Kerongo's lower level of intelligence did not make him delinquent. Instead, he grew up into a cheerful and obedient child.

The skill that Kerongo lacked was hunting an animal in the forest. Although his mother had shown how to hunt an animal in the forest, Kerongo had never caught any animal himself. Even worse, frequently he released the captured animal due to Kerongo's negligence.

One day, a small antelope was trapped in the trap prepared by Kerongo's mother some days earlier. Seeing a relatively large animal in the trap, Kerongo's mother was very happy. She left to get a rattan to tie up the animal.

"Kerongo, watch the animal. Don't ever let it escape or somebody take it. I'll get some rattan to tie it up," said Kerongo's mother to her son.

"All right, Mom." Kerongo obeyed his mother. When his mother had left, Kerongo looked at the trapped small antelope. He looked at the small antelope's hurt legs. They were hurt because of the antelope's constant struggle to escape from the thorny rattan trap. Suddenly Kerongo pitied the small antelope. He released the thorny rattan from the small antelope's legs to relieve the pain.

The thorns had stabbed into the skin and meat. Kerongo did not realize that what he had done would make the trapped animal escape. When the antelope's legs were released from the trap, the antelope escape right away. It ran away as long as it could with its crippled legs. Kerongo was very shocked to realize that the animal had escaped. However, it was no use of crying over the spilled milk. His mother came with some rattans intended to tie up the antelope.

His mother felt sad and helpless to realize that the trapped antelope had escaped due to Kerongo's negligence. She expected that one day Kerongo would have comparable skill as other young men in their kampong so that Kerongo could help her when she was much older.

When the planting season came, Kerongo's mother wanted to open an agricultural land. Since the rice stock in the rice barn had almost run out, the people in Kerongo's community expected the coming of the planting season in August. Most of the people in the kampong relied on the rain-fed agriculture starting in August. They relied on the rainfall to irrigate their rice plants in the dry agricultural field in the forest.

Kerongo and his mother prepared all they needed to clear up the land. They decided to leave for forest the next morning. They

would bring food supplies for several days.

After reaching the forest where they would like to clear up the land for an agricultural field, Kerongo and his mother began working. To prepare an agricultural land, they had to clear up the forest. The first thing that Kerongo's mother did was asking Kerongo to cut down the large trees.

"Kerongo, my son...."

"Yes, Mom...."

"We are going to open an agricultural land here. However, first, you will have to clear up the land by cutting down the trees. I want you to cut down a number of large trees in this area."

"All right, Mom. Just sit there at the edge in order that no cut-down trunk would fall on you."

Kerongo's mother moved right away so that no trunk that Kerongo cut down would fall on her. Cutting down the trees in the forest was a very hard work. However, Kerongo had a strong energy. Therefore, he managed to cut down the trees easily. Approaching the evening, all of the large trees in the area had been cut down. After that, Kerongo and his mother took a rest by sitting on a piece of fallen trunk. The sun would set soon.

"Kerongo, it's already dusk. I think it's enough for today's work. Tomorrow morning we are going to go on our work to open the

agricultural field.

Now, let's go home and take a rest."

"All right, Mom," Kerongo agreed and followed his mother walking down to their hut for a rest.

After taking a rest for all night long, the next day Kerongo and his mother were prepared to go on opening the agricultural field. After cutting down the large trees, the next job was burning the residue of the cut-down trees as well as the dried twigs, branches, and leaves. To do so, Kerongo and his mother shared the job. His mother asked Kerongo to burn the residue of the woodcuts in their agricultural field, while his mother kept the flame from extending to other parts of the forest.

"Before we plant this field, we have to clear, clean, and burn the field," said his mother while looking at Kerongo. Kerongo prepared the fire to burn the land. Then, his mother went on her instruction.

"Kerongo, set our land on fire," said his mother while pointing towards the land to be used as the agricultural field.

Kerongo looked at his mother. He indicated that he did not understand. Realizing that Kerongo did not understand what she meant, Kerongo's mother explained it more clearly to make it more understandable for Kerongo.

"We just burn this part of our land. Leave the other part of the forest. Let the plants grow so that we will still be able to collect the produce for our daily food. If you burn all of the forests, we will lose the plants to meet our daily needs. That's how our people had utilized the forest since long time ago." After hearing the explanation from his mother, Kerongo finally understood.

"Then, what should I do to prevent the whole forest from getting burned, Mom?" Kerongo asked his mother. So far, Kerongo had helped his mother clear the land in the forest. However, he never had such a heavy responsibility.

"To evenly burn the land, you have to feel from where the wind blows by noticing the sunlight direction. We have to put some dividers at the edge of the land so that the flame will not extend wildly. In that way, the flame will not damage the unexpected part of the forest. Have you got what I just explained?" Kerongo's mother explained in such a way that Kerongo understood. Kerongo finally understood his mother's explanation and smiled.

"Yes, Mom," said Kerongo while nodding his head.

Then, his mother described how to burn the land to prevent the flame from uncontrollable expansion to other parts of the forest.

"Burn the field from the back part, Kerongo! It is at the lower part of the mountain. Burn the field against the wind blow!"

When Kerongo carried out his mother's instruction, Kerongo's mother left the direction to which the wind blew. She would like to make dividers to protect the other parts of the forest from the unexpected flame. After Kerongo had started the fire in a moment, the flame had burnt the dried woods and twigs.

When the dried woods and twigs had been burnt down, the land was full of ash and burnt woodcuts.

Kerongo was very satisfied with his work. He perceived himself as a useful son who had helped his mother open the agricultural field. He expected that his mother would be proud of his work that day. After finishing the burning, Kerongo went home to his field hut. He waited for his mother to come home. However, until evening, his mother had not returned home yet. Kerongo was very anxious to realize that his mother had not been home. He panicked and thought that something bad might have happened to his mother. He had a negative thought. He thought that his mother was trapped in the burning field and was burnt due to his careless work.

"God...what's going on? I'm afraid my mother was trapped in the fire when I burnt the land." Kerongo wept since he knew that he had done something wrong. However, what made him more depressed was that he had lost his mother who was his only family.

Kerongo rushed to the field he just recently burnt down. His eyes searched the sign of the existence of his mother. Impatiently, Kerongo rushed to examine the whole parts of the field to search his mother although the billowing smoke indicated that the land was still hot. How sad he was when in the middle of the field he found a burnt corpse. He thought that she was trapped in the flame of the dry woods and twigs when he burnt them.

The corpse trapped in the burning field was actually the corpse of a deer that he could not recognize. It seemed that Kerongo mistook the deer corpse for the corpse of her mother. The legs of the deer corpse looked like those of human.

With his dull intellectuality, Kerongo mistook the corpse of the deer for the corpse of his mother who died during the burning. Carefully Kerongo lifted and carried the deer corpse to his home. When he got home, while sobbing, Kerongo took his mother's dress usually worn in the ceremonies in the Palace of Maharaja Aji. He put the dress on the deer corpse he mistook for his mother's dead body. It was apparent that none of the dresses was suitable for the corpse. Meanwhile, Kerongo wanted his mother to appear before the Almighty God in a neat dress. He had attempted to put the dress, bracelet, and other apparels but none of them was suitable for the body of the dead deer.

"Oh...oh...oh... what should I do? Mommy, forgive me for making you killed. Even worse, your dead body is so ugly so that none of

your beautiful dresses is suitable for you." Kerongo sobbed. At that time, suddenly his mother appeared in front of the door. His mother came home late because she had to call on the house of Kilip, her neighbour, to ask for rice seeds to be planted in the recently burnt field. His mother wondered why Kerongo was dressing up the dead deer.

"Hey, Kerongo! Why are you sobbing? What the hell are you doing with the burnt deer?" Kerongo's mother shouted at his son who was sobbing and lamenting the dead deer mistakenly to be his mother. Kerongo turned around his face when he heard the voice that he recognized very well. He was so surprised to see that his mother was still alive and standing in front of him.

"Mommy...Mommy...uhh..uhh...." Kerongo called out and cried more loudly.

"Why are you still alive?" Kerongo rushed to his mother and hugged her firmly.

"Well, of course Mommy is still alive and what you have dressed up is a dead deer. Look at the dead body carefully!" Embarrassedly Kerongo looked at the burnt dead deer. His face was flushed with embarrassment. Although his mother was angry, she was emotionally touched by what her son had done. Kerongo's worry about her safety indicated that Kerongo loved her very much.

"Thank God that you are still alive. I thought you were burned in the field since I failed to find you in the field when the field has totally burnt down," Kerongo said with his tears dropping.

"That's all right, son," his mother soothed Kerongo.

"Now stand up and call Raja Belau to help us skin off, clean up, and cook the deer meat! We will not be able to cook it ourselves and we don't have the required tools for that," said his mother to him.

After getting the instruction from his mother, Kerongo rushed to Raja Belau's house, which was located rather far from Kerongo's house. Raja Belau was a greedy demon who was fond of eating any meat he found in the forest. Raja Belau had a strange body shape. He had a human's head and lion's body. He was very deceitful and cruel so that nobody dared to challenge him. He would pounce on the humans who challenged him. Raja Belau lived with his children and grandchildren in a hut in the middle of the forest. They were the only neighbour living near Kerongo and his mother.

When he arrived at Raja Belau's stilt house, Kerongo called out Raja Belau. Raja Belau who was sleeping soundly got annoyed with Kerongo's calling out. He would be very infuriated with the one who had disrupted his afternoon nap. Angrily, he searched the man who had disturbed him.

"Ugh.... Who the hell is disrupting my afternoon nap?" Raja Belau called out angrily. With hurried steps, he went to the front of his house to identify the person who had disrupted his afternoon nap. He cursed that he and his descendants would pounce on the man who had disturbed him. When he got the front door, he saw Kerongo calling him out from the lower ground. Raja Belau scolded Kerongo who was constantly calling out his name.

"Hey, Kerongo, why the hell are you calling out my name in front of my house? Don't you know that you have disrupted my afternoon nap? As a consequence, you'll be the lunch for me, my children, and my grandchildren."

Hearing to what Raja Belau had said, Kerongo got scared and stopped calling out his name. He looked up and found that Raja Belau was looking at him angrily. Fearfully, Kerongo tried to explain why he came to Raja Belau.

"My mother asked me to come here because she wants you to help us cook the antelope's meat. It was trapped in a fire when I burnt the land for an agricultural field."

In response to Kerongo's mother request, Raja Belau thought for a moment. He was very happy with the offer to cook the antelope meat since he would take a larger portion for himself and a smaller portion for Kerongo and his mother.

He would deceive them and get a larger advantage. He knew that Kerongo and his mother were easily deceived. He decided to take Kerongo's offer to cook the antelope meat in an expectation that he would earn many benefits.

"All right, I'll take the offer to cook the antelope meat," he said enthusiastically. He already imagined a large quantity of antelope meat for him and his family.

"Wait for me at your home! I'll be there right away," Raja Belau said convincingly to Kerongo that he was willing to help Kerongo and his mother.

When Raja Belau arrived, Kerongo and his mother trusted Raja Belau to cook the antelope meat for them. First, Raja Belau skinned off the antelope's dead body. Then, he cut the meat and bones into pieces. After that, he cooked the antelope meat and bone.

With such a large quantity of meat, Raja Belau cooked it for various types of dishes. He cooked curry and brochettes and grilled the remaining meat in some bamboo tubes. When some of the meat had been done, Raja Belau instructed Kerongo to send it to his children and grandchildren in the forest. Knowing that Kerongo ate much, Raja Belau prohibited Kerongo from tasting the food since it was exclusively reserved for Raja Belau's family. Kerongo naively nodded in agreement.

Kerongo went on food to deliver the package of antelope meat curry and brochettes. The food smelled delicious. Gradually, Kerongo was tempted to taste the antelope meat. He wanted to taste the delicacy of the food prepared by Raja Belau who had been famous for being a good cook.

"I think it's all right if I take just a little. The food prepared by Raja Belau is tempting," Kerongo thought. He took a little part of the food and tasted it. Because the food tasted very delicious, Kerongo gradually ate a larger portion of the food parcel.

"Oh. It's very delicious. It would be a waste if I don't eat it up," Kerongo said while continuously eating the food. He did not realize that he finally consumed the whole part of the food on his way to Raja Belau's home. Nothing was left for Raja Belau's children and grandchildren.

When Kerongo arrived at the house of Raja Belau carrying the emptied food parcel, the hungry children and grandchildren of Raja Belau rushed to stand around Kerongo. They competed to grab the food remnants carried by Kerongo.

Kerongo almost fell down when the children and grandchildren of Raja Belau attacked him. Kerongo was upset with such a treatment. He got many scratches all over his body. Raja Belau and his family were very cruel. They were actually humans' enemy since they would greedily attack humans. Kerongo got

much more annoyed when he remembered that Raja Belau would attack anybody he encountered when he was hungry. Raja Belau did not attack Kerongo and his mother just because Kerongo and his mother shared some meat with him. Therefore, Kerongo and his mother were just lucky.

Kerongo worried that Raja Belau would get angry when he knew that his children and grandchildren did not get their food share. He certainly would claim much higher compensation to Kerongo and his mother.

"What should I do to get rid of Raja Belau's anger? If he knew that I have eaten up the food supposed to be for his children and grandchildren, he will certainly get angry and will eat my mother and me right away.

"What should I do?" Kerongo thought hard using his limited intellectual capacity. At that time, accidentally a quite large wild boar passed. The wild boar ran quickly and hurriedly to avoid the attack of a school of bees. Kerongo was surprised and spontaneously shouted. The wild boar chased after by the bees was shocked with Kerongo's shout and ran towards Kerongo. In response, Kerongo ran and escaped from the attack. The hungry children and grandchildren of Raja Belau took the chance to immediately attack the wild boar without noticing the bees flying behind them.

As a result, the children and grandchildren of Raja Belau became the target of the bees' attack. They ran back and forth to escape the attack. They constantly ran away arbitrarily, and finally, they were out of Kerongo's sight. Kerongo was startled for a moment seeing what had just happened unexpectedly. A few minutes later Kerongo yelled happily after he realized that the children and grandchildren of Raja Belau had left voluntarily without having to be forcefully driven away.

"It seems that gods stand for me. They send a wild boar and bees to keep me from the attack of Raja Belau's children and grandchildren."

After that incidence, Kerongo returned home. He reported to Raja Belau who was busy cooking and eating the antelope meat that Raja Belau's children and grandchildren were very happy to enjoy the antelope meat he had delivered.

"How did my children and grandchildren feel after receiving the meat you delivered to them, Kerongo?" Raja Belau asked Kerongo.

"Oh... They were very happy to get the antelope meat. On account of happiness, they climbed up trees, roofs, and house pillars while yelling happily." Kerongo told a lie to Raja Belau.

"Well, Kerongo, that's what my children and grandchildren do when they are eating something nice and delicious," Raja Belau

praised the whims of his children and grandchildren while chewing the antelope meat continuously.

Until night, Raja Belau was still cooking in Kerongo's house. The Antelope meat was very delicious and he would not miss any single piece. Raja Belau wanted to eat much and left a little part for Kerongo and his mother.

The next day, after he had eaten much of the antelope meat, Raja Belau went home while carrying some parcels and some pieces of bamboo tubes full of antelope meat. When he got home, he was shocked that he did not see his children and grandchildren. Raja Belau did not know what had happened to his children and grandchildren. All he knew was that Kerongo was the last man who met his children and grandchildren. Even worse, he did not see the remnants of the foods delivered by Kerongo for his children and grandchildren. He was sure that Kerongo had deceived his family. He was convinced that Kerongo was the last man who met his children and grandchildren. He decided to take a revenge on what Kerongo had done to his children and grandchildren.

"Damn you, Kerongo. I'll take revenge on you," said Raja Belau angrily. He took a spear and sword from his house and rushed to attack Kerongo and his mother. However, when he arrived at the targeted house, the two humans whom he wanted to attack had gone. He found the house was unoccupied.

"Kerongooooo...get out with your mother. I'll take revenge on what you have done to my children and grandchildren," Raja Belau called out angrily. He shouted repeatedly. However, there was no response at all. Raja Belau realized that Kerongo and his mother had left the house and escaped from him.

Previously Kerongo had told his mother about the incidence that involved him and the children and grandchildren of Raja Belau.

"Mom, I'll have to admit that I have eaten up the meat supposed for Raja Belau's children and grandchildren." His mother was shocked to hear that.

"What's going on, Kerongo?" His mother asked worriedly.

"I was very hungry at that time so that I ate up the meat. They got angry with me and scratched my body. Suddenly a wild boar and bees showed up to save me. When the children and grandchildren of Raja Belau were about to catch the wild boar, the bees that followed the wild boar attacked the children and grandchildren of Raja Belau," Kerongo answered in fear. Kerongo's mother understood what her child had done. Moreover, she thought that Raja Belau had gone too far by instructing Kerongo, the real owner of the antelope meat, to deliver the foods for his own children and grandchildren while Kerongo was very hungry.

"That's all right, Kerongo. I don't blame you. Raja Belau had deceived us by taking too much antelope meat" his mother

calmed Kerongo down.

"Now we have to leave our house to escape from the attack of Raja Belau before he realized what has happened to his children and grandchildren," said his mother. Fearfully, his mother took Kerongo to escape from Raja Belau and hid on top of the very tall tamarind tree. Before leaving their house, first, they install a trap in the thorny salak and dadap trees. They put dresses on the trees to resemble their figures.

Raja Belau who had seen the figures resembling the humans rushed to the trees. He mistook the two figures for Kerongo and his mother.

When he saw the figures of Kerongo and his mother in the middle of the salak and dadap trees, Raja Belau pounced on them right away. He tore off the thorny trees. Consequently, the thorns of the dadap and salak trees hurt Raja Belau. Raja Belau got more infuriated when he knew that Kerongo and his mother had deceived him. He constantly tore off the salak and dadap trees. When he had almost run out of energy, he saw that Kerongo and his mother were hiding on top of the tamarind tree. Furiously Raja Belau climbed up the tall tree. He strived to capture Kerongo and his mother but he got weaker and run out of energy. However, Raja Belau had an idea. He pretended to arrange peace agreement with Kerongo.

"Kerongo, look at my condition now. I am too weak to fight against you. I run out of energy. I just want to offer a peace agreement with you. Therefore, just get down along with your mother. I won't disturb you any longer."

Raja Belau persuaded Kerongo sweetly. However, Kerongo's mother had told Kerongo that Raja Belau was practicing a trick and therefore he had to ignore Raja Belau's offer. He and his mother arranged a strategy to defeat Raja Belau who had strived to trap Kerongo through a false peace agreement. They trickily informed Raja Belau who had been too tired to climb up the tree.

"I have climbed up the tree and cannot get down. If you want to make a peace agreement with us, climb up this tree." Kerongo assured Raja Belau.

"How can I climb up the tall tree, while I am completely exhausted?" Raja Belau asked Kerongo beseechingly.

"I'll let you know how to climb up this tree using minimal energy. What do you think?"

"How can I do it, Kerongo?" Raja Belau asked enthusiastically.

"Embed the spear and sword with the pointed end facing upward. Then slowly climb up. In that way, you will find it easy to reach the top of the tree," Kerongo tried to trap and ruin the greedy Raja

Belau.

Raja Belau had no better idea due to the extreme exhaustion. Therefore, he just took Kerongo's advice. He embedded all of his weapons as Kerongo had suggested. Then Raja Belau climbed up the tall tamarind tree. Raja Belau kept his intent to kill Kerongo and his mother. Nevertheless, unfortunately, when he only climbed up several meters of the tall tamarind tree, suddenly some tamarind fruits dropped on him. He was not prepared for Kerongo's attack. Consequently, he got off the tree and fell down on the standing spears and swords that he had embedded in the ground.

That was the end of the life of Raja Belau. The success of Kerongo and his mother in the killing of Raja Belau was heard throughout the country of Tanjung Lalung. An intellectually retarded young man and his mother had successfully defeated Raja Belau, the gigantic demon who had become the enemy of the people of Tanjung Lalung.

Maharaja Aji and the people appreciated Kerongo as the meritorious hero for the people and the country. They no longer looked Kerongo down with his poverty and dullness. Since the death of Raja Belau who had been very frightening for humans and animals in the forest, all people throughout the country lived

peacefully.

After defeating Raja Belau, the life of Kerongo and his mother went on as usual. Both of them lived a humble and hardworking life. The only difference was that since the death of Raja Belau, they strived to live independently without any reliance on anybody else. They expected that the conflict with Raja Belau would never occur again. Even better, Kerongo and his mother had learned how to cook meat better. The people of the kampong frequently shared their meat to Kerongo and his mother as an expression of gratitude to Kerongo and his mother who had successfully killed Raja Belau. Kerongo had also been skilful in animal hunting in the forest after a long and serious training provided by his mother.

One day Kerongo went home from the forest and carried a quite large antelope. Kerongo was proud of his work. He was impatient to go home and showed it to his mother. He wanted to show his mother that he was capable of hunting just like other young men in his kampong. When he got home, his mother was surprised to see that Kerongo got a quite large antelope.

"Wow...you have got a large animal, Kerongo. Did you get it yourself?" His mother did not believe what his son had.

"Of course, Mom. Now I am a good hunter," said Kerongo proudly. His mother was very happy to see the advancement of

her son. It was of great use that she had taught his son to be self-reliant.

"I'm so proud of you, son. All right, Kerongo, now I'll cook this meat for you. But before I cook it, help me cut the antelope's meat into pieces." His mother prepared some bamboos to cook the meat. Then she realized that she ran out of salt. His mother instructed Kerongo to go to the nearest neighbour's hut in the upper area.

Before leaving, Kerongo's mother instructed Kerongo to bring the antelope's limb with him.

"Kerongo ask for some salt to our neighbour. Don't forget to bring the antelope's limb as the peniding (protector) for your eyes.

Don't embarrass your mother and obey our customary rules."

"All right, Mom," Kerongo answered while carrying a limb of the antelope on his shoulder. Although he did not understand what his mother meant, Kerongo left with the limb of the antelope. On the way, Kerongo moved the limb of the antelope from his shoulder to his head. Because the sunlight was so searing, Kerongo used the limb of the antelope to protect him from getting sunburnt.

After he had walked a long way, finally Kerongo arrived at the hut of his neighbour. To the owner of the hut, Kerongo said that he asked for some salt to cook the antelope's meat. His mother

had run out of salt.

"Excuse me, my mother had sent me to come here to ask for some salt. We have run out of salt so that we cannot cook the meat of the antelope that I have captured from the hunting. Can you give us some salt?" Kerongo said naively. Hearing what Kerongo had said, his neighbour smiled and took some salt for Kerongo right away.

"Wait a moment, Kerongo. I'll take some salt for you," said the neighbour. "Here is the salt Kerongo, give it to your mother!"

After receiving the salt, Kerongo thanked the neighbour and went home right away. He took his antelope's limb back. The neighbour wondered why Kerongo brought limb of the antelope back home. However, he understood Kerongo very well. He just smiled since he understood that Kerongo was intellectually limited. Actually, in the tradition of Rentenukang, what Kerongo had done was very embarrassing. However, his neighbour understood Kerongo's dullness.

When Kerongo got home, his mother wondered to see that Kerongo got the salt but he still had the antelope's limb. Soon his mother asked him why he brought the limb of the antelope home.

"Kerongo, why are you bringing the antelope's limb back home?" Kerongo did not understand what his mother meant. He asked, "Well, this antelope limb belongs to us, Mom. I use this

antelope's limb to protect me against the searing sunlight on my way of asking for salt to our neighbour. What do you mean by bringing home the antelope's limb? Of course, I bring this antelope's limb home because the sunlight was searing and it glared my eyes." Kerongo said surely.

Hearing what Kerongo explained, his mother realized that Kerongo had not understood what she meant by peniding (protector) in their custom. His mother just took a long breath. She had always patiently understood Kerongo's disability. Patiently and slowly, his mother said to Kerongo.

"What I mean by peniding is that the antelope's limb that you brought was not exclusively intended to protect your eyes from the sunlight. Instead, we have to exchange it for the salt that you asked. By doing so, you don't lose your face."

"Why do we have to exchange the salt to the antelope's limb?" Kerongo asked naively.

"Kerongo, my son, in our custom, begging is embarrassing. Moreover, we just ask for such simple stuff as salt. Therefore, in order that we don't lose our face, we have to give something in exchange for the salt that we ask from someone."

After hearing a long explanation from his mother, Kerongo finally understood. After giving a long explanation about the custom of the people, Kerongo's mother asked his son to return to

the neighbour's hut to submit an antelope's limb in substitution for the salt that his mother has asked. Kerongo understood why his mother wanted him to go to his neighbour's hut again and gave the antelope's limb to the neighbour when he got there.

Kerongo's mother was a patient and loving woman. She taught such life values as good manners and orders to Kerongo. Kerongo's mother expected her son to be self-reliant. She also expected that he would adopt the customary values of good manners in social communication. She taught him about life conduct through wise words and role models so that Kerongo could easily understand. After hearing the advice from his mother, Kerongo finally understood what his mother meant. Then he went to the neighbour's hut to give the antelope's limb to the neighbour who had given him some salt.

"Humph...I'm coming here to give you the antelope's limb in exchange of the salt that you have given to me. I am sorry, I had brought it home," said Kerongo. His neighbour smiled. He understood Kerongo's disability.

"That's all right, Kerongo. Thank you for giving me the antelope's limb," said the neighbour to Kerongo sincerely.

That was the story of Kerongo in the hinterland of Kalimantan. Although he was dull, he gained much respect from other people because of his sincerity.

Even better, he was considered the hero since he had successfully defeated Raja Belau, the evil gigantic demon who frequently disturbed the people in the kampong.

Until now the people of West Kutai still respect Kerongo by following the way Kerongo and his mother burnt the land for the agricultural purpose. Even the people practice an agricultural ritual by making a Kerongo doll when they start planting to commemorate and respect Kerongo for his merit to the community.

Before they start burning the field, first they make Kerongo's caricature in funny and foolish style. The people expect that by doing so, their agricultural field would not suffer from any plant pest and disease. In addition, they also ask for Gods' blessing so that the land burning would not lead to forest fire. The people believed that Kerongo had an extraordinary miraculous power in flame management to prevent forest fire. In addition, in the field burning, the people also followed the way Kerongo's mother had practiced, that is making a divider line they call "field". The field line will protect the forest from the danger of fire.

Kerongo and Kilip

One day Kilip intended to invite Kerongo to "menuba" (fish poisoning) fish in the river. When Kilip arrived at Kerongo's house, he called out Kerongo's name from the lower ground of

Kerongo's stilt house.

"Kerongo, let's go to the river. We haven't gone to the river for a long time," Kilip called out. Hearing to Kilip's call, Kerongo went down and met Kilip.

"All right, Kilip. I'm ready," Kerongo said when he was already in front of Kilip.

"Let's go to my house first. We have to prepare a grilling tool for the fish that we will catch. My grilling tool has broken down and doesn't work any longer." Kerongo just nodded in agreement in response to what Kilip had said.

After they had finished making the grilling tool, they went to the river in the middle of the forest in which they can get many fishes. They brought the grilling tool that they had made. When they arrived at the intended river, they were very happy because in the clear river, there were many fishes swimming in the water. They were sure that they would get many fishes.

Then, Kilip and Kerongo looked for toxic roots to poison the fish. When the toxic roots were ready, Kerongo and Kilip brought the poison to the upper stream of the river. They plunged the roots into the river. The water of the river turned into milk-like water. It indicated that the toxic roots had poisoned the river water.

After waiting for some time, Kilip and Kerongo saw that the

fishes had been intoxicated and fainted. One by one, the fishes floated in the water. At that time, Kilip and Kerongo picked up the floating fishes. They walked downstream to collect as many fishes as possible until no fish was left.

"Wow...many fishes got fainted. Even the large fishes were intoxicated and fainted as well. Let's take all of the fishes Kerongo," said Kilip enthusiastically.

"The fishes that we catch today will be sufficient for several days," said Kerongo while picking up the remaining floating fishes.

When they felt that they had enough fish, Kilip and Kerongo brought the fish home. After cleaning and washing the fish, they grilled them. They shared the job of fish grilling. First of all, Kilip lit on the firewood under the grilling tool.

Meanwhile, Kerongo arranged the fishes on top of the grilling tool. After some time, all fishes had been neatly arranged on top of the grilling tool. Kilip and Kerongo waited around their hut while expecting the fishes fully grilled. However, although they had waited for some time, the fishes had not been fully done yet, while all firewood under the grilling tool had nearly been burnt down. Kilip entered his hut to collect some additional firewood. However, the wood supply in his hut had run out. Hurriedly he went out of his hut. Then Kilip instructed Kerongo to collect

some firewood in the forest. However, Kerongo declined the request. Kerongo remained sitting daydreaming on top of a rock near the grilling tool. Kilip got angry with Kerongo. Angrily, Kilip instructed Kerongo to enter his body into the fire as the substitute for the firewood.

"Why don't you hurriedly collect the firewood to grill our fish Kerongo?" Kilip asked Kerongo. However, Kerongo did not answer Kilip's question. He went on daydreaming. In response to what Kerongo was doing, Kilip got infuriated.

"Kerongo, why are you idling that way? If you don't want to collect the firewood, just put your body into the fire instead. You will have to be the substitute of the firewood to grill our fishes faster," Kilip said furiously. Then, Kilip left Kerongo to collect firewood in the forest. When he had collected some firewood for grilling purpose, Kilip returned to his hut. He did not find Kerongo there. He just found a piece of Kerongo's cloth near the grilling fire. Kilip was shocked. Kilip thought that Kerongo compliantly put his body into the fire while Kilip left to collect the firewood. Fearfully, Kilip put the grilled fishes into the two baskets made of tree bark. He reserved one basket of fishes for him and he brought another one to Kerongo's hut. He put Kerongo's cloth piece in Kerongo's fish basket.

When all cooked fishes had fully filled up Kilip's basket and Kerongo's basket, Kilip hurriedly left the hut. Before going to his

home, he dropped on Kerongo's house. When he got Kerongo's house, Kilip put the fish basket and Kerongo's cloth piece in front of the house.

After Kilip left his house, Kerongo magically appeared from the piece of the cloth. It was possible since Kerongo had a miraculous power so that he could deceive Kilip.

Kilip heard the news of Kerongo's safe return from his fishing in the forest. Initially, Kilip did not believe what he heard. As long as he knew, Kerongo had died in the forest. However, after he saw that Kerongo was alive and blessed with abundant health, Kilip finally believed the news. However, he did not understand how Kerongo could survive while Kilip only found a piece of his cloth. A neighbour who knew Kerongo very well then let him know that Kerongo had a supernatural power. Therefore, other people thought that he had died, whereas actually, he was still alive.

"Don't wonder what has happened to Kerongo, Kilip. With his miraculous power, he can make him invisible and people will think Kerongo is dead," a neighbour explained to Kilip. After hearing the explanation, Kilip got furious. Kerongo had played a trick to him. Therefore, he intended to revenge what Kerongo had done.

One day Kilip invited Kerongo to come to his home. Happily,

Kerongo agreed to come. He imagined that Kilip would serve him a kingly menu since he knew that Kilip was a rich man. Enthusiastically, in one afternoon Kerongo went to Kilip's hut.

"Welcome to my home Kerongo," Kilip welcomed Kerongo in front of his house. "Come in. I have prepared some meals for you," he said.

Happily, Kerongo stepped up the stairs of Kilip's house. However, Kerongo felt that there was something strange in Kilip's house. To his knowledge, Kilip's house was a large and strong stilt hut. However, Kilip's house that he entered was an old and decayed one. Kerongo thought for a while. He might have entered the wrong house.

A moment later Kilip showed up with the food served on a plate. He put it in front of Kerongo. When Kerongo saw the food served by Kilip, he was surprised to know that the food was served in a hollowed plate. Consequently, the food dropped onto the floor.

"Humph...Why is Kilip serving the food on a damaged plate? As long as I know, Kilip is a rich man. Doesn't he have any undamaged plate?" Kerongo thought in wonder. When he saw that Kerongo was confused with the foods served, Kilip repeatedly smiled and asked him.

"What's wrong, Kerongo? What's the matter with the food?" Kilip asked Kerongo in pretence.

Kerongo regained his awareness and replied Kilip's questions haltingly.

"Oh...everything is okay. This food is very delicious. Thank you for having served me with this much food," Kerongo lied to hide his amaze.

Bitterly and hesitantly, Kerongo ate the food together with Kilip while they were talking. Time passed and it was already night. Kilip offered Kerongo to spend the night in his house.

"Kerongo, it's already night. You had better spend the night here in my house. It's dangerous for you to go home late through the forest. Tomorrow morning when the dawn has broken you may go home," Kilip offered his help. Hesitantly, Kerongo accepted Kilip's offer. All night long, Kerongo could not sleep for fear of falling since Kilip's house was already decayed and had many holes everywhere. Seeing Kerongo's hesitation, Kilip just smiled repeatedly. Actually, Kilip's house was a strong stilt house. However, with his supernatural power, Kilip had made Kerongo see the condition otherwise. Such was also the case of the food in the hollowed plate. Actually, the plate on which the food was served to Kerongo was an expensive and luxurious one. With his miraculous power, Kilip made Kerongo see the plate otherwise.

The next day when Kerongo was ready to go home, Kilip admitted that he had played a trick to Kerongo to avenge what

Kerongo had done when they grilled the fish.

"We are even now. Nobody wins and nobody loses. Let's forget our past mistakes. We reconstruct our relationship again from the beginning without any ill intention," said Kilip to Kerongo. Kerongo agreed with what Kilip had said to live in peace forever.

The relationship of Kilip and Kerongo ran smoothly as if there had not been any conflict between them since they had forgiven their respective mistakes each other. In their relationship, Kilip and Kerongo respected each other without discriminating the social and economic status. Kilip was a rich man while Kerongo was a diligent man with intellectual dullness. Their personal disadvantages would be complemented with their personal advantages. Although Kerongo was intellectually dull, he was a diligent, honest, and sincere young man. On the other hand, Kilip was a rich man who generously like helping Kerongo and his hardworking mother.

That's the story about Kerongo in the hinterland of Kalimantan. Although he was intellectually dull, his sincerity had made him respected by other people. Even better, he was respected since he had defeated Raja Belau, the evil gigantic demon who had persistently disturbed the people.