

LAUT TADOR LAKE

Danau Laut Tador

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LAUT TADOR LAKE

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Cerita Rakyat dari Sumatra Utara

Danau Laut Tador



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Foreword

Literature work is not only series of word but it also talks about life, both realistically and idealistically of human. If it is realistic, the literature work usually contains life experiences, good model, and wisdom which have been added various style and imagination along with it. Meanwhile, if it idealistic, the literature work contains moral lecture, good character, advices, philosophical symbols, culture and other things related to human life. The life itself is very diverse, varies, and full of various problems and conflicts faced by humans. The diversity in humans life also affects to the diversity of literature work because the contents are inseparable from civilized and dignified humans life.

The literature works that dealing with life utilizes language as medium of deliverance and imaginative art as its *cultural land*. On the basis of the language medium and imaginative art, literature is multidimensional and multi-interpretative. Using language medium, imaginative art and cultural dimension, literature deliver messages to be reviewed or analyzed from various perspectives. The outcome of that perspective depends greatly on who is reviewing and analyzing with various socio-cultural and knowledge background. There is a time when a literary reviewer reviews from the point of view of metaphor, myth, symbol, power, ideology, economy, politics, and culture can be refuted by other reviewers who see from perspective of sound, referent, or irony. Even so, Heraclitus said, "However opposite they work together and from different directions, the most beautiful harmony emerges".

There are many lessons that we can get from reading literature, one of which is reading folktales that are adapted or reprocessed into children's stories. The results of reading literature always inspire and motivate readers to be creative in

finding something new. Reading literature can trigger further imagination, open enlightenment, and add insights. For this reason, we express our gratitude for the processors for the story. We also express our appreciation and gratitude to the Head of the Coaching Center, Head of the Learning Division, and Head of the Subdivision of Modules and Teaching Materials and staffs for all the efforts and hard works carried out until the realization of this book.

Hopefully this storybook is not only useful as a reading material for students and the community to foster a culture of literacy through the National Literacy Movement program, but also useful as an enrichment of our knowledge of past life that can be utilized in addressing current and future life developments.

Jakarta, June 2016

Regards,
Prof. Dr. Dadang Sunendar, M. Hum.

Preface

Book is a window to the world. By reading book we will open the window, then see and know about the world that we haven't known before.

Books that can broaden insight and knowledge and it is not only about present, but also about past life. Old literary works that load information on past life needs to be presented again in today's life because it saves a lot past stories that have big role in organizing life today.

In North Sumatra there are various kinds folklore (myth, legend, fairy tale) that develop and become the basic of the identity of the region. This folktale also used as advice and teachings material for parents, teachers, and also become a tradition that is still believed by the people who own it. However, because young generation tends to enjoy the foreign soap opera and film shows on television, the fate of the old folklore is no longer popular, forgotten and finally lost.

For this reason, the book of the Lake of Tador is presented for you. The book needs to be welcomed with joy because it is a form of love for culture and as an alternative effort to preserve folklore of North Sumatra.

Medan, April 2016
Agus Mulia

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LAUT TADOR LAKE

In a village in Batubara Regency, North Sumatera Province, there once lived a married couple. They led a normal life, like everyone else in the village. They earned their living by farming, cultivating their fields every day with the man's parents.

Their happiness was complete when the wife gave birth to a boy. They became parents. They named the boy Tador. He was a cute, healthy baby. As he grew up, Tador became a cheerful boy who never gave his parents a moment of hardship at all.

His face was a beautiful combination of his parents'. Tador inherited his father's dark brown skin. The lines of his jaw, lips, and nose were also of his father's. Her mother's features were apparent in his forehead, eyes, and straight hair. The hair was the most prominent difference between Tador and his father, who had a mop of curly hair. Tador also looked a little like his grandparents. His thick eyebrows were similar to his grandfather's and his round pointed chin resembled his grandmother's.

With Tador in the house, the family's happiness increased a thousand folds. Father, Mother, Grandpa, and Grandma took turns holding him, and none wanted to let go. Even his cries when hungry or wet himself were a joy for them.

However, life had to go on. They could not spend their lives waiting on Tador all the time. They still had to work. Fortunately, Tador was not what people call '*bau tangan*', 'smell of mother's hands'. It meant that he did not need to always be handled by his mother. Some babies were irritated and fussy if it was held by anyone other than its mother, but not Tador. He was fine with anyone. If Mother had to help Father and Grandpa in the fields, he would be okay to stay home with Grandma. He also did not mind if it was Mother who took care of him while Grandma and the men of the house worked their fields. Tador seemed to be so understanding in this situation.

However, their joy was not meant to last. Grandpa passed away when Tador was only two years old. Sadness filled the house. It was so unexpected. Grandpa had always been healthy. He had had no serious illness. The only illnesses he had suffered were common cold and coughs. Grandpa had been a strong man.

He had been able to cultivate the fields for hours a day, every day. He had also been able to carry sacks of crops they harvested from the fields to the house, even though it was not a small distance.

That evening, when they returned from the fields, Grandpa went to take a bath. When he got out of the bathroom, he groaned in pain, clutching his chest. His eyes bulged out. Father, Mother, and Grandma panicked. They took Grandpa's hand and got him to sit on the bamboo couch. Grandpa managed to lie down. His

breathing became more regular, but he still felt sharp pain in his chest. An hour later, when Grandpa seemed to have calmed and no longer groan with pain, they found out that Grandpa had passed away. He had a smile on his face.

Father, Mother, and Grandma could not stop crying. Tador, who understood nothing, also cried. Neighbors came in droves. After offering condolences and prayers, they helped preparing for the burial. Everyone helped without being asked to. Together, they prepared the bathing ceremony, the place to *salat* the body, and the grave. It was a tradition in Batubara that a body should never spend a night. It had to be buried immediately. It was not appropriate for the spirit if the body stayed at home for too long.

That was why they buried Grandpa's body in the middle of the cold night. Tador had fallen asleep in his mother's arms. Mother and Grandma stayed home. It was another tradition; only men were supposed to go to cemetery to bury a body.

The next seven days, a wake for Grandpa was held in the house. However, the family still had to work. They had to save the crops for harvest. All day, Father and Mother went to the fields, Tador was left at home with Grandma. At the evening, the whole village came to the house for the wake, mainly praying and reciting Quran.

This past week, Grandma's eyes were always wet. One morning,

she cried in front of Tador. “Tador, my beautiful grandson, why did Grandpa have to go so quickly?” she asked.

Apparently, Grandma had not been able to let go of Granpa’s passing away although it had been six months. She was always sad. Not even baby Tador could cheer her up. Lately, Grandma was deep in sorrow. She did not eat. She did not sleep. She just cried and cried all day.

Mother tried to lift her spirit up, asking Grandma to help in the fields. Mother thought that maybe getting back to work could cheer Grandma up, could take her mind off Grandpa for a while. However, Grandma refused. She chose to stay home, taking care of Tador.

“Tador, you have to be a good kid. Be filial to your parents. You have to listen to them and not demand too much from them,” Grandma said to Tador, who was sitting on her lap. The last couple of weeks, Grandma always took Tador to sit in the veranda every afternoon. She would talk to him, even though she knew he would not understand. At dusk, when it was time for *salat Magrib*, they would go inside. Grandma would put Tador on his crib while she prepared dinner for the family. Then they would wait until Father and Mother returned from the field.

This afternoon, Grandma had been giving Tador a lot of advice. She then concluded, “I want to see your Grandpa, Tador. Soon.”

Late in the night, Grandma did follow her husband. She passed away in her bed. After *salat Subuh*, the prayer at dawn, Father and Mother were getting ready to go to the fields. They tried to wake Grandma up, as usual. They would go to the field and Grandma would watch Tador. Today, however, Grandma did not wake up. When Mother touched her hand, it was ice cold. Father checked her pulse and he knew there was nothing they could do. Just like her husband, Grandma died with a smile on her lips.

Sadness filled the house again. Tador jolted awake when he heard her Mother wailed. Apparently, the neighbors also heard her. They quickly came to the house and found Father sobbing quietly. Like before, the neighbors helped arranging everything. In the morning, they buried Grandma beside Grandpa's grave. They put a simple headstone on her grave, similar to Grandpa's and two other little graves next to it.

With Grandpa and Grandma both gone, Father and Mother were worried. Tador was only two years old and their fields still needed to be cultivated. Father could never manage it alone. But if Mother helped him, who would take care of Tador? They could not bring him along; the fields were five kilometers away from the house. Asking the neighbors to help was also impossible. Everyone had their own fields, and children, to take care of.

For the meantime, Father tried to make it work. He cultivated the fields alone while Mother stayed home with Tador. They barely

managed because the harvest was significantly less than it used to.

It was a year later that they found a way out. One of the neighbors could no longer work at her field. She was a widow without any children. Since she had no other way to make money, she agreed to work for the family; to take care of Tador while his parents were in the fields.

Father and Mother went to the fields before the sun rose. Tador was left alone until the widow came in the morning. Fortunately, Tador always slept soundly, only waking up when the neighbor arrived. At first, Tador was confused when he did not see Mother when he woke up. But as time flew, he got used to it. Tador never complained. He understood that his parents had to work hard to provide for the family. He never said a thing even though he only saw them in the evening.

When Tador was a little older, sometimes Father would explain to him, “Father and Mother did not want to leave you, Son. But we have to work. There are a lot of things to do in the fields and we do them all for you. We work all day so we can have a better live, so we can eat every day. You know that, don’t you?”

Tador was five years old at the time. He did not fully comprehend what his father was saying, but he nodded nonetheless. In fact, Tador did not fully listening to his father. His focus was absorbed



in *ole-ole*, a toy made from paddy stalks that Father brought back from the fields. The toy made noises that Tador found very interesting. Seeing that his son was happy, Father smiled. Mother was busy preparing dinner in the kitchen.

It did not take long for the meal to be ready. Father prepared the table while Mother put papaya leaves soup, roasted salted fish, and chili sauce on the table. Chili sauce was almost an obligatory condiment in the area. Seeing those delicious food, Tador put down his toy and grabbed a plate.

“Wash your hand first, dear,” Mother reminded him.

Tador turned and looked at her with his bright brown eyes.

“Here, let me feed you,” Mother said.

Tador’s eyes glinted with joy. He loved it when his mother fed him. In a few minutes, a whole plate of food was finished. Father and Mother smiled seeing that Tador had a healthy appetite. When Tador went to sleep without being told to, they were very pleased.

Days like that went for a long time. Father and Mother left when it was still dark, the widow came with the first light, Tador stayed home all day. In the evening, Father and Mother came home, had dinner, and then went to bed. Tador was ten years old now. One day, the widow had to move out of town. No one could take care

of Tador when his parents went to work. Father and Mother were in the same dilemma like they had been years ago.

“What if I come with you to the field?” Tador offered a solution.

Father and Mother exchanged looks. They had considered that option. Tador was a ten year old boy, playing in the fields might actually do him some good. However, they did not have the heart to let him walk five kilometers in the dark every morning. They just could not bear to imagine that he had to walk back home through creeks and forests every afternoon. It was not an easy walk for a boy that young.

“Father, please. I’m a big boy, now,” Tador tried to persuade his father.

“I can help in the field, too,” he added, looking at his mother.

Father and Mother exchanged another look at each other and nodded. They both knew what the other was thinking. They wanted nothing more than protect their beloved son. Father looked at Tador and shook his head.

“It’s better if you stay home, Tador. It’s safer for you,” he said.

Tador was disappointed. He really wanted to contribute to the family. He was sure he would be able to help if they just allowed him to.

“For now, you just stay here, okay? You can play with your friends. Don’t worry about us. You can help us later, when you are older. Alright, dear?” Mother said.

Tador gave in. He could not change their minds and he knew when he was beaten. So, Tador stayed home. Every day, since he woke up until the afternoon, he was alone. His routine was set. He woke up, took a bath, ate whatever his mother prepared for breakfast, and went out to play. He came back home in the afternoon, took a bath, and waited for his parents.

Lately, Tador often played in the river with his friends. He had been playing there for quite some time that now he was able to swim. Father and Mother never knew about it. Although they never explicitly told him not to play in the river, Tador felt that they would not like it. That was why he never told them. He never spoke about it because he did not want to lie. After all, they allowed him to play with his friends, didn’t they?

Besides, Tador knew what was dangerous and what was safe. Father and Mother always told him stories, at least once every night, about the dangers of the world. Concerning rivers, they told him to avoid rocky ones with strong streams. He might slipped, hit his head on the rocks, or got carried away by the stream. They also said that calm river was dangerous because it meant that it was deep and probably had crocodiles in it.

Tador listened to them very closely because he knew they loved him. Tador never played in very calm or very rocky rivers. He never played in rivers with strong streams either. He spent his days in a river near a bridge. It was safe because a lot of people used the bridge all the time.

He played many games with his friends. One of their favorite games was floating. Not far from the river bank were many coconut trees. They used the fallen coconuts, the brown, dried, light ones, as buoys. They dumped the coconuts in the river and each boy put his hands on a coconut. The coconut would help them float so they could swim, swinging their legs like a propeller.

When they got bored playing that, they would look for the stem of coconut leaves. They would not take the one with leaves, however. What they wanted was the stems near the coconuts, the thinner ones. These stems would fall down if they were old enough. They were curved, shaped like a hammock. One end was wide and the other was pointed. They were wide and long enough for a boy to sit on. That was exactly what Tador and his friends did. They took turn to sit on the stem and the other would pull the other end. They would put the stems on higher ground on the river bank. One of the boys would sit on one stem, and the others would pull it, running as fast as they could towards the river. When they reached the river, they would release their grip and the

stem, with the boy on it, would splash in the water. That was always fun.

Tador was also fond of fishing. He and his friends made fishing poles out of small branches or bamboo rods, using threads or nylon as the line. They used worms as bait. They would dig the ground using sticks, stones, or their own hands to find worms.

At first, Tador never caught any fish, unlike his friends. It boggled his mind why he could not catch anything. They use similar rods, similar lines, and similar baits.

His friends said that the best way to fish was by being patient and quiet. He had done that but he still caught nothing.

Tador then watched his friends, trying to learn how they fished. He saw a couple of them shook the rods every so often and he imitated them. It was working, a fish ate his bait. However, it did not get hooked. Tador then looked at his other friends. He realized that one of them, who always caught the most fish, always picked a different spot from the rest of them. He casted his line in a calmer water near rocks and bushes. Tador followed his trick.

With his diligence and patience, he managed to catch several snakehead fish. The fish never made it home, however. It was not that Tador deliberately wanted to keep it a secret from his parents. It just happened that they always roasted the fish on the river

bank and ate them.

Another thing that Father and Mother did not know was that Tador was an expert in climbing coconut trees. He never told them, even though he knew it was safe enough to do. The trick of climbing coconut trees was to not step on dried, withered stems.

Every day his parents left him to work in their fields, Tador learned many things from his friends. One day, he would show his parents all his skills. He wanted to surprise them with what he could do.

Days after days, weeks after weeks, months after months, Tador was always left alone in the house. Years went by and his parents never took him to the fields. It did not matter what season it was, whether seeding or harvest season, they never changed their minds. Tador had not lost hope, he often asked them to take him, but they repeated the same thing. They did not want Tador to walk the distance. Every time they said that, Tador gave in.

Tador was twelve years old when he decided to tell his parents. He wanted them to know what he had learned all these years. He wanted to show them his skills. Tador hoped that if they see his abilities, swimming, climbing coconut trees, and fishing, his parents would see that he was growing up. He hoped they would see that he was old enough to help in the fields. He was old enough to walk ten kilometers to and from the fields. He was old

enough to not be afraid of the dark.

“So, you have lied to us?” Mother said when Tador told them what he did when they went to the fields.

Tador looked at his feet. He was afraid that Mother would get mad. It would hurt his chances of going to the fields.

“You cannot lie, Tador. It’s one of the greatest sins, especially lying to your parents,” Father added.

“But I can take care of myself. I know how to do it safely. I only swim near the bridge, where everyone can see me. Please, Mother, I’m a big boy now. Please take me with you to the fields,” Tador said.

Father and Mother exchanged glances but none of them nodded. There was no signal of agreement whatsoever. Tador tried again, “Please, Father. I’m sure I can help.”

“Well, you will. But not now. I promise we will take you with us when you are older, okay?” Mother said with a note of finality.

Tador bit back everything he was going to say. He was disappointed. He had expected that they would let him go. He had imagined what he would do in the fields. He could not wait to go. However, Mother and Father had made their decision and Tador would always listen to them.

One day, it was almost *Ramadan*. In Islamic calendar, *Ramadan* was the month in which all Moslems performed fasting for the whole month. There was a tradition in Tador's village regarding *Ramadan*. One day before *Ramadan* began, the people would go to the river and took a bath. It was a special bathing ceremony called '*mandi pangir*', '*mandi balimau*', or '*marpangir*'. People brought various kinds of flower petals and sweet smelling spices to the river and mixed them in the water. This tradition was a symbol of cleansing one's self from past sins. Everyone in the village old enough to perform fasting would take part in the ceremony. It was one of the moments where people came together as a community.

Besides taking a bath together in the river, with flower petals mixed in the water, there was another important part of *marpangir* tradition. Every household would cook chicken broth and papaya leave soup to take with them to the river. In between taking bath, the people would gather on the river bank and eat the food together. It was a testament of how close the community was.

That was why Father and Mother decided not to go to the fields the day before *marpangir*. Tador accompanied his father to find some chickens. They bought them from a neighbor. Tador's family was one of the few families that did not kept chicken in their household. Father managed to obtain two young roosters.

Father chose young roosters because everyone knew the old ones had hard rubbery meat. Even if they cooked it with papaya leaves, which were known to tenderize meats, old roosters' meat would still be hard.

Tador was excited when he was tasked to hold the chickens' feet and wings while his father slaughtered it. His right hand hold the first chicken's feet tightly, and his left hand grabbed the curved of the wings. He carefully aimed the chicken so that its head pointed to *kiblat*, the direction of *ka'bah*. It was one of the requirements to slaughter animals in Islam, so that the meat would be *halal* or kosher to eat. In the meantime, Father was sharpening the knife. He squatted in front of a grind stone, and moved the blade in one direction on the square stone.

Another requirement to make a *halal* meat was to use a sharp blade. It was meant to make the process as less painful as possible for the animal. The blade should cut the animal's artery in one swift stroke. Once his knife was sharp enough, Father stood up. He smiled seeing Tador tried to hold the struggling chicken as well as he could.

"Careful, Son. Don't let it go. We don't want to not have chicken when *marpangir* tomorrow, do we?" Father chuckled.

Tador steadied himself. He even planted his feet firmly on the ground. "I got it, Father. It won't move, now," Tador yelled to his

father.

Father finally approached Tador, holding the knife in his right hand. The blade glinted brightly under the sun. Father quickly held the chicken's head, right on the top of its neck. He quickly recited a prayer, "*Bismillahi wallahu akbar.*" It meant 'In the name of Allah the Almighty'. Then, his right hand moved swiftly, slitting the chicken's throat. "Hold it tight. Don't let go," he said to Tador.

Tador nodded. In one quick motion, Father made sure that he opened the artery on the chicken's neck. Once it was done, he removed the blade.

"Throw it to the ground!" Father told Tador.

Tador threw the chicken down, blood pouring from its neck. For a moment, it thrashed about on the ground. Tador squatted to see it better until it stopped moving.

"Come now, Tador. There's still another one over there," Father called.

Tador smiled. "Are you ever sorry for the chicken, Father?" He asked.

"You can't think like that, Son. The chicken's life ends because it is a form of its servitude to God. It's its role in the greater scheme of life, helping human to survive. Providing food for us. That's

why we pray before we slaughter it. *Bismillahi wallahu akbar*. We kill it in the name of Allah. Therefore, its meat is *halal* for us to eat and it probably will be counted as good deed for the chicken,” Father explained.

Tador nodded.

“Let’s get the other one. Do you still want to help?” Father added.

“Of course,” Tador said confidently.

“Alright. Put that dead chicken in the bucket and give it to you Mother.”

Tador quickly did it. He picked the chicken up from the ground and put it in a bucket before taking it to the kitchen. Mother smiled when she reached for the bucket. There was another bucket in front of Mother, filled with boiling hot water.

“This bucket is to drown your chicken, dear. We have to pluck its feather, don’t we?” Mother explained before Tador even asked.

“Why should it be hot water, Mother?”

“It will help soften the skin, making it easier to pluck. Cold water won’t do the trick,” Mother said. She then added, “I thought you can’t wait to taste it?”

Tador laughed, “But I thought it’s for *marpangir* tomorrow.”

“It is. But we don’t have to use the whole chicken for the broth. I can save some pieces for dinner today.”

“Yes!” Tador exclaimed with joy.

“Tador!” Father yelled from the yard, calling him. Tador suddenly remembered that there was another chicken to slaughter. He quickly ran outside.

“Tador, take the bucket back with you!” Mother called after him.

Tador turned back and entered the kitchen again.

Mother smiled at him knowingly.

Tador grinned widely. “Sorry, Mother. I have never do this before. We have never go *marpangir* before,” he said.

“Don’t worry. We will go tomorrow,” Mother said.

Father had been waiting for him outside, holding the other chicken. “Here, hold it like before,” he said.

Tador took the chicken from his father and did what he had done before. He held the chicken tightly and naturally turned its head towards *kiblat*. When the chicken stopped moving on the ground, he quickly put it in the bucket and gave it to his mother.

“Now that you are done with the chickens, your next task is finding some flowers. Can you go to the house next to the

mosque? There are some Jasmines and Roses there. Just tell the owner that I send you. Don't forget! Be polite and take only as much as we need, okay," Mother said.

"Yes, Mother. But, why should we ask for other people's flowers? Don't we have some in our yard?"

"Yes, we do. But we only have *Asoka* flower. We need more to make it smell nice. I have brought home some flowers, lime leaves, *pandan*, and limes from the fields. The Jasmine and Rose are just to complete it," explained Mother.

Tador nodded and went out. Outside their yard, he broke to a run towards the house that his mother wanted.

It was a common thing in the village. Prior to *ramadan*, everyone was busy preparing for it. Not just the adults, the kids were also involved in the preparations. It was even busier in the last two days before *ramadan*, the days the people allocated especially for *marpangir*.

That night, at dinner, Tador could not stop smiling. In front of him was a piece of fried chicken, one that he had a hand in the making. He was happy with himself.

"Stop smiling and eat your chicken, Son. You earn it," Father said.

Tador's smile got wider. He was more than proud about the

chicken; he was happy about his first *marpangir*. For eleven years, he had never been involved in anything related to *mandi pangir*. He had never participated in *marpangir*, he had always stayed home. It was one of the things that Father and Mother decided for him; he could only go to *marpangir* after he was twelve. Tador never knew why. A lot of his friends had done it since they were seven.

“Father, Mother, why can’t I go to *marpangir* before?” Tador asked casually.

Father and Mother exchanged glances. “Well, I think it’s time to tell him. He’s old enough,” Mother said.

Father swallowed the food in his mouth and grabbed a glass of water. He drank it slowly. Then, he began to tell the story. Father had two older brothers. One of them died when he was eight years old. He was drowned while *marpangir* in the river. The other brother also died during *marpangir*. He was ten.

“That was why Grandpa and Grandma did not want the same thing happening to me. They decided to allow me go *marpangir* when I was twelve, just like you are now. And I’m still alive, aren’t I?” Father concluded.

Tador nodded. He began to understand. He knew he had uncles who had passed away. He had visited their graves, the two little ones besides Grandpa’s and Grandma’s.

“But, Tador, Grandpa and Grandma only forbid me from going to the river. Before I was twelve, I did *marpangir* too. I took a bath of flowers at the well behind our house, just like you did all these years,” Father added.

Tador smiled. He remembered that Mother always told him to take a bath of flowers at the well a day before *Ramadan*. “It is just a symbol, Tador, to clean ourselves before fasting. It’s a holy month, and we have to enter it with a clean body and soul. In fact, we don’t really have to use flower petals. What’s important is we have good intention and clean body.

Mandi pangir is just a tradition, including the chicken broth and papaya leaves soup. It’s just a tradition the people have done for generations in this village. It helps us to get together and be united in fasting,” Mother explained to him.

Tador nodded again. Finally, his questions were answered. “I can’t wait for tomorrow,” he mumbled.

“Come on, finish your meal. Don’t just sit there and daydream,” Mother reminded him.

“Yes, Ma’am!” Tador replied.

Now, the flower petals for *marpangir* was ready. The meal of chicken broth and papaya leaves soup had been cooked. All preparation was complete.

Tador could not wait until tomorrow. He had been waiting for this for too long. He could not wait to play in the river with his friends, and to eat his favorite dishes. Besides, he also wanted to show his parents how good his swimming skill was. It was time to show off. Father and Mother needed to see it for themselves because just telling them had not convinced them to take him to the fields.

However, as fate would have it, his wish would not come true again. The very morning they were supposed to go to *marpangir*, Tador had a fever. He was burning up and his head felt like someone was hitting it with a mallet. Anything he would do only made it worse. He could only lie on his bed.

Tador never thought it would be like this. He did not know why he suddenly got a fever. He was deeply disappointed that he would once again missed *mandi pangir* tradition. Tador was devastated.

Father was quick to respond. He gave Tador herbal medicine known to reduce fever. However, it did nothing to Tador. As the sun getting higher, Tador became even hotter. His headache was getting worse.

While Tador's family was frantic with his sudden illness, everyone else began to get busy. All the villagers poured out of their houses and walked towards the river. Each family brought



their provisions. The smell of chicken broth filled the air. Packages of rice and papaya leave soup filled their baskets.

Tador could only enjoy all that from his bed. His eyes were closed. He tried to open them and sat up, but he felt so weak. He was burning and any movement felt so heavy.

Like Tador, Father and Mother were restless. On one hand, they were worried about Tador. On the other hand, they had to join the neighbors soon. It was a dilemma. One that was not so easy to choose from. Their son was sick, yet *marpangir* was a once in a year event. They exchanged looks several times. Clearly they were trying to make a decision. Taking Tador to the river was out of the question. Could they leave him alone and go *marpangir*? Or should they let this one go and stay home with Tador like previous years?

Tador struggled to open his eyes. He saw Father and Mother whispered urgently. Meanwhile, the sun was getting higher and higher. A few moments later, apparently Father and Mother had made a decision. They would go *marpangir* and leave Tador at home.

Tador was disappointed. He never thought he would be left alone again.

“Son, I will come home as soon as I can. Just stay in bed, alright, don’t go anywhere. Wait for us at home,” Father told Tador

before leaving. It seemed that Father did not feel too bad having to leave Tador behind. It was probably because they had left him at home all too often that it did not feel wrong at all.

However, Tador could not accept that. He did not want to be left alone again. This was supposed to be a special day. He was twelve years old and they had promised he could join everyone *marpangir* in the river. He wanted to see his friends. He had waited for this moment for eleven years, and now he had to go, no matter what. He felt cheated when Father and Mother said he could not go. He had been a good boy, never demanding and always following whatever his parents said. And they still did not allow him to participate in the annual tradition.

“Tador, you are ill. Your temperature is too high to swim in the river. It could be dangerous,” Father tried to explain.

Tador did not reply. He just looked at Father’s face with tears in his eyes.

“Later, when you are well, we will have plenty of chances to go *marpangir* together. But today you have to stay home, okay?” Father tried to persuade him.

Tador would not have it. He insisted that Father and Mother took him to the river. He wanted to experience *marpangir* like other children. Tador began to throw a tantrum. He stomped his feet, even though they were weak. He swayed his body, even though it

felt heavy. He even slammed his head to the bed. Tador did not want to be left alone!

Unable to contain his sadness, because all his hopes were gone, Tador cried. He cried loudly and pitifully. It was as if he was releasing all his pent-up sadness. He had been a good boy, he had never caused a problem, why did they still not want to take him? Tador protested silently in his mind. He could not comprehend how his parents could do this to him. His being sick was not a reason to leave him at home. Shouldn't they stayed home, too? Shouldn't they accompany him, instead?

For the first time in his young life, Tador felt abandoned. He had never mind that they never took him to the field. But this time was too much. It was unfair. All his friends could always spend time with their families, whether at home or at their fields. Tador never had that experience. Today was his special day, and Father and Mother had spoiled it.

“I want to come, Mother! Please, don't leave me alone! I am twelve! You promised to take me!” Tador shouted.

Hearing that, Mother was touched. She did not have the heart seeing Tador crying like that. “Why don't we just take him?” Mother said to Father.

Father declined that suggestion. Father believed that if Tador played in the river, he would not get better. His fever might even

get worse. The next day was *Ramadan* and they all had to fast. If Tador was ill, fasting would be impossible for him. Besides, who would manage their fields if they had to stay home because Tador was unwell?

“We have to leave you not because we don’t love you, Tador. It’s not about how old you are. You are ill. We don’t want anything bad happens to you. It’s because we love you so much. I don’t want you to be sick. I want you to get better soon,” Father said.

Mother tried to be calm. What Father said was true. She caressed Tador’s head and said, “Tador, please, could you stay home just this once? We can go next year. You have a fever and I don’t want it to get worse.”

No matter how hard his parents tried to sooth him, Tador cried even louder. He did not want to be left behind. Father and Mother began to worry. Tador did not seem to be going to stop crying, and most of their neighbors had started to leave for the river in the next village. It would take them more than half an hour to reach the river.

Mother and Father debated what they should do. Mother wanted to take Tador, while Father insisted that he should stay home. They had a row in front of Tador. As their voices increased, Tador’s cry also became louder.

“What is it with you, Tador? You have been home alone every



day. Why are you making a fuss about it?” Father yelled at Tador.

“Father, he is ill,” Mother said.

“Exactly. He has to stay because he is ill!”

“I’m sorry for him, Father! We have left him alone every day, shouldn’t we take him today?”

“Do you want him to get worse? Do you ou want us to not join the others *marpangir* because we have to watch over him on the bank? Or are you saying we all should stay home and not go *marpangir*?” Father yelled again.

Mother said nothing. She finally gave in. Mother tried to talk to Tador and get him calm. However, Tador would not listen. He kept crying, wanting them to bring him along. Tador wanted to go *marpangir*. He wanted to enjoy chicken broth and papaya leaves soup by the river. He wanted to play in the water with his friends.

Father and Mother began to lose their patience. They could not miss *marpangir*. Mother, who had just taken Tador side, was irritated. She looked at Tador with an angry look. Instead of being afraid, Tador made more fuss. He stomped his feet. He bumped his head to the bed. “Enough, Tador!” Mother yelled.

Tador did not stop crying. He did not care if Mother got mad.

“You can take care of yourself. You have been alone all these

years. You have to stay home!” Mother yelled even louder.

“I want to come with you!” Tador shouted.

Mother turned her back and saw Father was already at the door. He was holding the basket filled with rice, chicken broth, and papaya leaves soup. He was ready to go out.

Tador cried and cried, begging them to let him come along. Mother walked away. Tador cried after them. Father stepped out the front door. Tador screamed.

Even though she felt bad, Mother followed Father and left Tador at home. They locked the front door so that Tador would not follow them. Tador would not give in. He cried, screamed, and yelled at the top of his lungs. He cried so loud that anyone still in the village would surely heard him. He tried to get up, but he was not strong enough. He slumped back on the bed.

Tador tried to cry and call anyone, but no one heard him. All their neighbors had gone to the river. His parents were already on the road. His cries echoed in the empty house.

Few hours later, Tador’s voice was hoarse. He could not make a sound. He cried and screamed without a sound. Only his tears still ran down his face. It streamed like the river, soaking his chest and his body. His whole clothes were wet. So was his bed.



Meanwhile, his parents had joined the other villagers. They believed they had made the right decision. They chatted and cracked jokes with the others, talking about what to do during *Ramadan*.

“Where’s Tador? I thought he would come this year,” a neighbor asked.

“Well, he’s so used to being left at home . . .,” Father said.

“But it’s *marpangir* day, only come once in a year.”

“There’s always be next year,” Father said again.

“Actually, he was rather unwell,” Mother offered an answer.

“Oh, I’m sorry to hear that. He was fine yesterday, when he came over to get Roses and Jasmynes. He was so full of spirit that he did not even notice a rose thorn pricked his finger,” said another neighbor.

Mother and Father exchanged glances. It was possible that Tador caught a fever because he was pricked by a rose thorn. “It’s fine. He is fine and safe at home. He has always been,” Father whispered to Mother. Mother nodded and continued walking.

The neighbors did not talk about it any further. They respected everyone’s private business, and this one was clearly a family matter. They let it go, even though they regretted that Tador was

not there. Their children always enjoyed his company.

“What about your children?” Father asked a neighbor, trying to make a conversation. He did not see any child in the group. In his heart, he hoped that some of the children did not come. At least that way Tador would not be the only one left behind.

“You know them; they have gone since morning. They just cannot wait to play in the water,” the neighbor replied.

Father and Mother nodded, exchanging another glance at each other. They felt a little bad, but the feeling passed as soon as it came. They soon were engaged in conversation with everyone, making the trip seemed so short.

Soon after, they saw the river. Some children were soaking wet. They were bare chested. Their short pants clung to their thighs. A couple of them were shivering with cold; clearly they had played in the water for too long.

Father and Mother prepared to go down to the river. They joined other adults and began *mandi pangir*. They took the flower petals and ointments and poured them to the river. Each woman wore a long, rather thick piece of cloth to cover her body. They wrapped the cloth around them, from the armpit to the knee. Most of the men wore short pants, some only wore boxer shorts. When everyone was ready, they walked slowly to the river, allowing the water to soak their bodies. They then scrubbed themselves with

ointments made from flower petals, lime leaves, *pandan*, and lime. Some petals were stuck in Mother's hair and she quickly submerged her head in the water.

It was a cheerful sight. Everyone was in the river and the water was colorful. Flower petals and various leaves were scattered on the surface, floating away with the stream. The air was filled with sweet smell.

When the sun was right on top of their head, they climbed out of the river. Every family spread their mattress on the river bank and prepared their lunch.

Everyone enjoyed their meal, sometimes sharing them to other family. Soon, everything was cleared; everyone was full.

Then, most of the adults sat down and rested. Some children had already jumped back to the river, playing in the water. They swam, submerged, reemerged, and sometimes threw dirt and mud to each other. Once they were hit, they submerged again in the water. When they came out, all the dirt and mud had gone from their body and head.

Some of the children played their usual game using coconuts. The coconut bobbed up and down in the water and the children float on it. Some older children played with coconut stem, running so fast to pull the stem and let their friends fall into the river. More cautious parents would tried to stop their children from doing so,

but they soon saw that it was a safe and fun game.

Meanwhile, at the village, Tador kept crying without a sound. He was still lying on the bed, unable to move. He was hurt. An intense pain he had never experienced before had taken over his body. More than his burning fever and his unbearable headache, his heart was broken. He felt a pang of sadness that consumed all the joy of life. He kept crying and crying. Tears streamed from his eyes to his face and body. It kept flowing down to the bed and pooled on the floor. There was no sign that he would stop crying. In fact, it seemed that Tador could not stop at all.

When the sun was almost down in the afternoon, *mandi pangir* was over. Father, Mother, and the other villagers began to pack everything up, ready to go home. Soon, they were on the dirt road towards their village.

They walked in line. Children, as always, ran in front of the group, full of happiness. They were happy to play in the river all day. Behind them, the adults were also content, having performed one of their sacred tradition. They talked about anything and everything while walking, their eyes watched the road and their children. Nobody wanted the children to fall and hurt themselves. Everyone wanted the whole village to be healthy and well to welcome *Ramadan*. They cannot wait to start fasting.



Soon, when they arrived at home and performed *salat Magrib*, they would prepare themselves. Everyone would go to the mosque for *salat Isya*, which would be followed by their first *taraweh* for that year.

Few hours later, after midnight, the adults would wake up and prepare meals for *sahur*. They had to eat their meal before *subuh* because fasting started from *subuh* until *magrib*, from dawn to dusk. Everyone was happy thinking about that agenda.

After half an hour of walking, they arrived at the border of the village. All the joy they felt today evaporated in an instant. They were confused. Everyone stared in disbelief at what used to be their village. There was no road nor ditches. There were no cattle, trees, or flowers they could see. All around them was water. The houses were sinking under water, only the roofs remained visible.

Everyone panicked. A state of confusion broke around the people. How come their village got flooded? What happened? There had been no rain, nor storm today; where did all this water come from?

One of the villagers snapped out of his shock and began running. Pandemonium erupted. Children cried and screamed, people running here and there. Amidst all that, Tador's Father and Mother looked at each other. Their faces were pale. As soon as they saw the village drowned in water, they realized one thing.

Tador, their only son, was in the house. He was on his bed and they had locked him in when they left.

Mother screamed hysterically. She cried her eyes out. Father lost his mind. He ran here and there, trying to figure out which one was their house. He climbed a tree but he could not see anything but identical roofs.



“Father! Tador . . . Tador . . . , Father, where’s Tador?” Mother cried. Her voice was drowned by other people’s scream. Everyone was yelling and crying.

Father climbed down. “Father! Where’s Tador? Tador, Father!” Mother yelled right at his face.

Father could not respond. He was tense. His expression was blank. Meanwhile, Mother’s face was pale. Tears streamed down her cheeks. They look at each other and wailed. They thought about Tador. His cry, wanting them to bring him along, echoed in their mind. They had always left him at home all these years. They wished they had not done so this morning. “Tador! Tador! Where are you, Tador?” Mother cried over and over again.

Father still could not say anything. His lips were locked tight. He ran quickly towards the water, trying to swim to the house.

Around him, other villagers were in havoc trying to find the source of water that had drowned their village.

Tador was nowhere to be seen. It was water all over. Nobody knew where Tador’s body could be. One thing was certain, it was Tador’s tears that had caused all this. He had cried all day, pouring out his sadness. His tears had turned into a flood, drowning the whole village. And it did not stop. The water kept rising who knew from whence.

The villagers became more and more panicked. The water kept rising and showed no sign to stop. They had no idea where it came from and how to stop it. Everyone was screaming, “*Laut! Laut! Laut!*”

‘*Laut*’ meant ‘the sea’. Indeed, their village had turned into a vast body of water. Only the sea held that much amount of water. The people kept screaming again and again, “*Laut! Laut! Laut!*”



Meanwhile, Father swam back to the land after failing to find their house. Mother was waiting for him. Seeing that Father came empty handed, Mother began to wail again. Both of them did not know what to do. They did not know where to find their son.

“Tador! Tador! Tador!” Mother cried.

“Tador! Tador! Tador!” Father followed suit.

Their cries combined with other people’s cry, over and over.

“*Laut! Laut! Laut!*” The people screamed.

“Tador! Tador! Tador!” Father and Mother cried.

“*Laut! Laut! Laut!*” The people shouted.

“Tador! Tador! Tador!” Father and Mother cried.

“*Laut!*”

“Tador!”

“*Laut!* Tador!”

“*Laut* Tador! *Laut* Tador!”

“*Laut* Tador . . . *Laut* Tador . . . *Laut* Tador . . . *Laut* Tador!”

Gradually, all the roofs began to submerge under the rising water.

No one knew what happened to Tador. It was too late, Father and Mother cried their hearts out. They were shocked. Their only son was missing because they were selfish. Everything that had happened raced over their mind; Tador was a baby; he learned to crawl, he stood up for the first time, his first word. All that had happened without them there. They had always left Tador alone.

They remembered all things that Tador had wished, all the things they had not given him. Their love and worry about him had made them forget that Tador was a kid. Tador had to have been so sad and disappointed. He had spent twelve years without his parents being with him. It was true that they had always come home in the evening, but it clearly had not been enough. They should have spent more time with him. Father and Mother began to realize their mistake. If they had allowed Tador to come with them to the fields, all this would not have happened.

However, all that regret was of no use. Ever since that day, the villagers called the lake Laut Tador Lake. They built a new village around the lake and called it Laut Tador village.

Meanwhile, Tador's Father and Mother left the village. Rumors had it that they moved far away from Batubara to bury the sad memory of their lost son. Other rumors said that they had another child, a baby girl. They called her Tador, too.

However, people said that they treated her differently. They were

always by her side ever since she was born. Mother decided to not work to take care of the baby. When Tador was old enough, when she was able to walk and run, they brought her along to the fields. She never came down with sickness even though they always came home in the evening. She was always well even though rain and wind sometimes poured over them on the field. Mother and Father took good care of her.

The lesson that their firstborn taught them had opened Father's and Mother's eyes. God had entrusted them with children and they could not waste it.

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