

**THE TALE OF THE TWO PRINCESSES AND THE
SERPENT KING**
Kisah Dua Putri dan Si Raja Ular

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THE TALE OF THE TWO PRINCESSES AND THE SERPENT KING

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Suntre's Dream

The amber glow of twilight dimmed as it bade farewell to the dusk, ushering the coming of night. Leaves were bowed and limp, as if exhausted from having spent the day in the company of the sun. The birds had stopped chirping, retiring one after the other to their nests. Once in a while the flapping of bat wings could be heard as they flew over the house where Sasandewini and Suntre lived. The sisters were close. Every day they would work side by side, helping each other with the housework. Sasandewini liked to cook while Suntre preferred to sweep and tidy up the house. The girls lived with their ailing grandmother and shared the responsibility of tending to her needs. Both their mother and father had died several years before from a plague that ravaged their village.

“Why is it so cold tonight, Sis?” Suntre’s voice rang through the silence.

“You’re right, Suntre. It’s chilling me right through the bone,” Sasandewi replied.

“It’s so cold that I can almost feel my hair shivering,” Suntre went on as she curled up inside a blanket, hands hidden snugly beneath her head. The cold air numbed even her earlobes. “How can it be this cold in the dry season, Sis?”

“It’s just like dad used to say, the night air in the dry season is always colder than in the rainy season,” Sasandewini said.

“Right. My feet are really cold, Sis.” “Use that cloth, Suntre!”

“I am, that’s the blanket,” Suntre replied, pulling the blanket over her feet.

“Suntre, in the morning, let’s go up the mountain and gather fiddleheads,” Sasandewini said, changing the subject. “Fiddleheads?”

“Yes, we’ll pick fiddleheads and melinjo leaves on that mountain over there, Suntre.” “Alright, Sis,” Suntre answered. “We’d better be off before sunrise.”

“That’s right. Now off to bed so we could leave very early in the morning.”

Suntre straightened her teeny body, wrapped herself in blanket, and started to sail in dreams as the night crawled away slowly. The cold of the night accompanied the two little girls to make it through morning. Crickets chirped as accompaniment during journey of the night. Sasandewini looked at the front door to

make sure that it was really locked. She took the small lantern that had sat in the living room as she walked to the front door. The flame in the lantern seemed to dance into the rhythm of the blowing wind. She pressed the door bar with all her strength. “Secured,” she muttered. Sasandewini then returned to her bedroom. She laid herself beside her sister. Suntre was sound asleep. In her sleep, Suntre had a dream.

“Where are you going, Little Lassie?” greeted a long-bearded old man in a white cape. “I... I... I... want to go to the river,” replied Suntre in a stutter.

“Why did you come here?” “I don’t know which way to go, Gramp.”

“The river is deadly, Child. There’s a white crocodile haunting the river.”

“Crocodile?” replied Suntre in shock.

“You’d better go back, Child.” Suntre was about to answer but the old man suddenly vanished. She carried on her journey to the river. She quickened her paces, and with utmost caution she hiked down the cliff. Suntre tried her best to forget about the old man and what he’d said. Suddenly, a white crocodile jumped right before her.

“Haaaaaa,” she suddenly jolted. Suntre was wide awake. She pinched her hands and cheeks and stamped her feet onto the floor. She finally realized that she’d fallen off the bed. “Ugh... Thank God that was just a dream,” she grumbled as she rubbed her eyes while her heart was still beating fast. She looked everywhere in the hope of finding her sister to no avail. “Sis...!” she shouted as she ran.

“What is it, Suntre? You had a dream?” “I’m scared, Sis.”

“Don’t be. Dreams are just reveries in your sleep.”

Picking Fiddleheads

The morning in Tamakuri Village was marked with the crowing roosters. Farmers have yet started their activities in their farms.

Puffs of white smoke filled the village’s morning air, indicating that the villagers were cooking for their breakfast and preparing supplies for their farms. They were cooking papeda. Papeda was the staple food of the Tamakuri people in Papua instead of rice. The food was made of sago. The Tamakurians believed that once they ate papeda, they’d be healthy and strong. “Suntre, have yourself some papeda,” said Sasandewini.

“Alright, Sis,” replied Suntre. “Has Nana eaten anything, Sis?” she asked.

“First and foremost, we eat only after Nana had finished eating.”

“Oh, okay. Are we picking fiddleheads in the forest, Sis?”

“Yeah, sure. Don’t forget to bring the noken.”

After finishing their breakfast, the two sisters prepped themselves to go to the forest. They also said goodbye to their nana.

“Don’t go too deep into the forest, Kids,” said their nana.

“Okay, Nana,” replied the two girls in unison.

“Be sure to get home before sundown,” continued their nana.

“Alright, Nana. We’ll be right back soon,” answered Sasandewini.

After kissing their nana’s hand, off they went. They were bound eastward. The two sisters walked excitedly into the forest. The noken was hung onto Suntre’s head, ready to contain fiddleheads and leaves. Though a bit tatty, the Papuan traditional bag was one of the things they were proud of. The noken was older than the two of them. “This noken is good, right, Sis,” said Suntre, while she rubbed the noken.

“Yes, of course. Nana made it herself,” replied Sasandewini.

“It’s very strong, Sis, We can’t make something like this one, Sis.”

“Yeah the materials for this Noken is really hard to come by. Not to mention that we won’t be patient enough to make it.”

“Oh, okay,” Suntre replied shortly.

The air was dry. The grass dried, trees withered, and the soil cracked as if they were all had been patiently waiting for water to pour from the sky. The length of the dry season this year had diminished the well-being of the Tamakuri Valley in Waropen. Once in a while, Sasandewini turned, making sure that her sister was still following her. The journey of the two girls had brought them into a dense forest. Sasandewini and Suntre walked as they observed birds hopping from some tree to another.

“Chirp ... chirp ... tweet... tweet... chirp...”

“Kek ... kek ... kuek ... kek ... kek” “Tweet ... chirp ... tweet ...”

The tweeting sound of the birds seemed to greet the two sisters.

“Keep up, Suntre.” “My legs started to feel heavy, Sis,” replied Suntre, “what if we stop for a moment.” “Alright. Let’s rest under that tree, shall we?”

The two girls sat under a tree. Dried grass and bushes around the tree seemed to accompany them as they rested. Sasandewini opened a supply box they had brought from home. “Suntre, look at that little butterfly.” “What about it, Sis?”

“It must’ve been looking for flowers. It must be very difficult these days.”

“I really feel sorry for it, Sis,” Suntre moved away from her place as she wanted to catch the butterfly “Don’t you catch it, Suntre.”

“It’s wings are very beautiful Sis,” replied Suntre as she chased the butterfly.

“No, Suntre, don’t. Let them fly wherever they want.”

“What do you call that insect with long wings, Sis?” “Oh, that’s a dragonfly.”

“Come on, let’s go that way!” “Sis, we just rested for a short while, and you want us to walk again?” “It’s almost noon, Suntre. I just don’t want us to return home too late at night.” “How long till we get there, Sis?”

“Shortly, Suntre,” said Sasandewini as she held the hand of her baby sister.

”La ... la ... la ... la ...,” Suntre hummed as she ran to catch her sister’s paces.

The two girls carried on. They quickened their paces. They couldn’t care less about the spikes and thorns from the bushes along the way. They moved the falling twigs and branches that had been on their way aside. The rough and cracked dirt path

didn't stop the two girls. The path witnessed their little steps. They were really excited and that put any hindrance to rest. Sasandewini and Suntre started to enter the Kowera Forest. They dared not to come too far into the forest as they were scared to be lost. "Hmmm, fiddleheads...", Sasandewini muttered.

"Fiddleheads are very delicious when cooked with coconut milk," said Suntre.

"You mean fiddleheads curry? That's our favourite veggie, Suntre."

"Yeah, that's right. Fiddleheads curry."

"Nana is very skilled in cooking delicious fiddleheads curry," said Sasandewini. "We have to learn how to cook from nana," she continued. "Aye aye! I want to be a cook!" "Good! Careful, Suntre. Don't get yourself tripped over."

"Okay, Sis," replied Suntre shortly.

Fiddleheads were a kind of ferns, commonly found in damp and soggy forest. It could also be found in the cliffs, on trees or rocks, areas next to rivers or lakes, and sometimes in an unmaintained building. Fiddleheads were water-dependent. In the dry season, fiddleheads would shed their leaves while they waited for water in the rainy season. Sasandewini and Suntre were now picking those remaining leaves of the fiddleheads.

Crowned Pigeon

It was a cloudless sky and the sun shone fiercely. The dry air made the atmosphere of the forest stiflingly hot. Withering trees marked the continuance of the dry season. The rustling bamboo leaves sounded to be begging God for rain. The earth cracked, as though waiting for the water to pour into its crevices. In order to survive the dry season, trees prevent evaporation of water by shedding their leaves. Those trees would regrow during the rainy season. Banana trees and taros seemed to be wiser in welcoming the dry season. Mosses that had grown on the rocks started to peel off as they couldn't contain the heat of those rocks.

Fiddleheads could be a bit more surviving during this dry season. Sasandewini and Suntre managed to pick buds of fiddleheads though not as much as expected. They still enjoyed this journey nonetheless. Suddenly, they heard a sound of animals.

“Klepaak ... klepaak, gedebum, blug ... blug ...”

“Koak ... kak ... koak ... koak ...” “Kuuuk ... kuk ... kek ... kek ... koek ...”

The two girls were shocked. They drew closer to each other and started to listen very carefully to the sound they just heard.

“Keeek ... kek ... keek ...” “Klepaak ... klepaak ... blug...blug ...”

“What was that sound?” asked Sasandewini. “Sounds like birds,” Suntre replied.

“It sounds like something is stomping the ground.”

“Could it be birds falling to the ground?” “Birds falling?”

Again, Sasandewini and Suntre tried to listen carefully. The sound became clearer and clearer. The two sisters were curious about what was really happening. In order to answer their curiosity, they tiptoed towards the bushes behind an old tree in the search for the source of the sound. Dust and dried leaves were hovering everywhere. Feathers and dust hovered, and this raised the curiosity of the two sisters even more. “This is weird, Sis,” said Suntre “Yes, Suntre, oddly weird,” replied Sasandewini. “It’s terribly hot.” “Look, Sis. Look at the dust over there,” said Suntre as she pointed towards the direction of dust that had been mixed with dried leaves. “We must quietly see what’s really happening. We can’t decide in a such rush.” “So...” Sasandewini and Suntre took the chance. The thoughts of the two girls were aimed at the mysterious sound. The flapping sound that hit the ground became more audible.

“Bruuus ...,” suddenly two birds fell right beside Sasandewini’s left toe. “I almost stepped on them,” said Sasandewini as she retreated.

“What happened, Sis? Why did they suddenly fall?” asked Suntre in bewilderment.

“Look, they were trying to fly again.” “Huh ...?”

“Let’s just observe them,” replied Sasandewini.

Sasandewini and Suntre kept observing the birds that were fighting. The two birds moved here-and-there, fluttered in every direction. Strangely enough, they always headed back and fought around the liana trees. This really puzzled the two sisters.

“What an odd fight,” said Sasandewini. “That’s right. Nobody wins this fight.”

“Everytime they were thrown from the melinjo – liana – trees, they always returned,” said Sasandewini. Suntre and Sasandewini fell silent. They stared at the two birds, unblinking as they were trying to keep the two birds within their sight. As they crouched, they approached the two birds. The two sisters tried to seize those birds. The birds tried hard to escape the sisters. Sasandewini and Suntre chased them. They were very difficult to catch for two seemingly helpless birds.

“They’re getting weaker, Sis. They can’t fly too far.”

“We must’ve been able to split those two birds. Don’t loose them, okay? I’ll guard this side.” “Well, you have to jump there,” said Suntre as she hopped across. Without too much trouble, Suntre

and Sasandewini captured the two helpless birds. They saw that the two birds were wounded. Feathers of those crowned pigeon had fallen off. Their legs were bleeding.

The two birds had bruises, even the slightly smaller crowned pigeon had some wound around its chest. Those birds were panting. They were exhausted.

“Poor birds,” muttered Sasandewini.

“Let’s cure them, Sis,” said Suntre. Sasandewini and Suntre then decided that they were going to take those birds home to cure their wounds. They stroked the two birds affectionately. Then, they put the two birds into their noken.

Simundui The Serpent King

Carrying the birds and fiddleheads, Suntre walked in front of Sasandewini. Together, they took the same path where they had come from earlier. A few paces, Sasandewini came to a halt. She was stunned when her gaze fell on the melinjo trees; they seemed to be neatly planted and somewhat formed what appeared to be a gate. It was the exact spot where two birds had started their fight. Sasandewini remembered that the birds they caught always returned to that very spot.

Sasandewini tried to be certain about what she saw. “Melinjo?” she muttered. She was yet convinced.

“Is that the melinjo tree we’ve been looking for?” asked Sasandewini while she pointed to a tree.

“It’s my favourite leave, Suntre. Seared melinjo leaves are very delicious,” said Sasandewini.

“I thought you said your favourite was fiddleheads,” replied Suntre.

“It’s my favourite too,” said Sasandewini trying to convince her sister.

“*Ba’iwimamba*, all the same,” said Suntre. Immediately, the two sisters climbed the melinjo tree and started picking the shoots of melinjo leaves.

“Let’s rest, Sis” said Suntre.

Suntre and Sasandewini rested under the melinjo trees. They picked plenty of shoots this time. “Sis, where is our supply? I’m hungry,” asked Suntre.

“So am I,” replied Sasandewini as she took their supplies out of their noken. They ate like they could eat a horse.

“I can’t stop thinking about those melinjo trees, Sis. They were perfectly lined up as if somebody had planted them.”

“I see your point,” said Sasandewini. She just realized that those trees were lined up neatly. The sun had moved westward. It wasn’t hot like before. The dry wind blew the faces of the two girls as they headed home. With bold footsteps the two girls left the Kowera Forest. Their struggle for picking fiddleheads and melinjo shoots had paid off as they managed to get what they had come to the forest for. Anyone could see the faces of the two sisters shone with excitement. They spare no more time on their way home. Aside from cooking fiddleheads, they wanted to nurse the two crowned pigeon immediately.

“Keep up, Suntre,” said Sasandewini as she held her sister’s hand.

“Nana must’ve been waiting,” said Suntre. “Poor Nana, she’s been waiting for us.”

“What took you so long?” asked Nana. She looked very worried.

“Sorry, Nana. We saw some birds fighting in the forest,” replied Suntre.

“Oh, really? Alright then. Why don’t you two have your bath, then get some rest”, Nana continued.

“Okay, Nana, but we have to treat these birds, Nana.”

Once they’re done with dinner, Sasandewini and Suntre treated the two birds, one for each. Those birds’ wounds were mostly on the same spots; heads, wings, and legs. After nursing the birds,

they placed them in a chicken cage that had been lined with some rags. Before they went to bed, the two sisters made sure that the birds rested comfortably. Finally, the two sisters went to bed. Unlike Suntre, Sasandewini immediately fell asleep. Suntre tried her best to sleep to no avail. She remained up until it was very late. She couldn't take her mind off of the fighting of the two birds. She couldn't help the feeling that the incident was weird. At midnight, Suntre was shocked by a cracking sound that came from beside their house. It sounded like human footsteps. She wanted to wake her sister up, but she didn't have the heart to wake her up, she slept so tight. She tried to convince herself that the cracking sound came from beside the room. She tried to peek outside, but it was very dark. Once her eyes were used to the darkness, she was stunned. She retreated one step back and now tried to convince herself of what she just saw. "Is it really?" she muttered. Suntre saw something yellowish green and shiny at the size of a man's fist. She could vaguely see a tongue flicking. A basilisk now stood before Suntre.

The basilisk flicked its tongue. Its eyes were like fireballs that was ready to burn anything that stood on its way. Suntre felt like she should return to her bedroom, but her legs felt as though they were glued onto the ground. She wanted to scream but no sound came out of her mouth. It felt as if her tongue was tied. She felt amazed and scared at the same time. Then, she saw the creature's mouth wide opened and made a booming voice.

“Fear not, Sweetie,” said the basilisk.

“A basilisk could talk?” muttered Suntre. She was still unsure about what she’s been through right now. “T... tell me who you really are,” she continued as she tried to pull herself together.

“I am the basilisk. My name is King Sumundui,” replied the basilisk.

“The basilisk...?” Suntre was startled, as though stricken by thunder. She felt that her tongue wouldn’t move. She just realized that the talking voice so far was a fearsome basilisk. She just stood where she was, she couldn’t move a muscle. She wanted to wake her sister, but she couldn’t walk.

“Where are you from, King Sumundui?” “I come from Sumundui Kingdom.”

“Where is it?” “It’s in the Kowera Forest, on the banks of the Kowera River”

“Kowera Forest?” “Yes, Kowera Forest.” “We were there yesterday.”

“That’s why I came here.” “Oh, what is your purpose here?” asked Suntre.

“I am looking for my guards, two birds. After their practice they didn’t return to the kingdom,” replied Sumundui. “Kingdom?” asked Suntre in a surprised tone.

“Have you any knowledge about my two guards?”

“Guards?” Suntre became more amazed. “Yes, they were practicing combat.”

“Oh, is that so. No wonder it took them a while to fight.”

“They weren’t fighting. They were practicing combat.” “Oh, is it? They were fighting nearby the melinjo trees?” “That’s true. Those melinjo trees are the gate to my kingdom.” “Oh, I see. So, the melinjo trees that were lining up was the gate to your palace?” asked Suntre. “That’s true, Suntre. Where are my guards? Have you any idea?” “Yes... Yes... I know. We brought the two birds home for treatment.”

“Thank you, Sweetie. You have helped my guards,” said the basilisk.

“Alright, I will return those two birds to you, King Sumundui.”

“As a rewards for your good deeds, I will invite you to my palace tomorrow night.”

“I’m not asking for any reward, King Sumundui. I helped these birds sincerely

“Do come, Sweetie. You two are my friends.” “Alright, we will.”

Suntre gave the two birds that were now still recovering. She put the birds onto the back of King Sumundui. Now everything was clear, the lining melinjo trees had been the gate to Sumundui’s palace and the two crowned pigeons were his guards.

Sasandewini was suddenly awake and then went out of the house. She could see the figure of Sumundui vaguely as the king disappeared into the bushes.

“Did my eyes serve me well?” muttered Sasandewini. “Suntre!” she cried.

“Yes, Sis,” replied Suntre as she approached her.

“Did I really just saw a snake?” “That’s right, Sis,” Suntre answered as she trembled. “I’m scared, Sis,” she continued. “Why are you shaking? What happened, Suntre?” “Th... th... the snake...” “What’s wrong with the snake?” Sasandewini became more curious.

“He was the Serpent King, Sis” “Serpent King?” Sasandewini whispered.

Suntre was still stunned, she couldn’t believe what she’d just gone through. Her mind was still on what Sumundui had said. The two girls then got into the house, speechless. After the two

sat down, Suntre explained to her sister what she had seen and heard from Sumundui. Sasandewini listened to her very carefully.

Diwando, the Beloved Bracelet

That morning Sasandewini and Suntre set off to King Sumundui's kingdom. On board a boat made of sago stalk, the two sisters cruised the river. The boat was moving swiftly following the speed of the stream. The boat was shaky every now and then once it hit the drifting branches and leaves. The water was very clear, making the bottom of the river visible. Small fish that swam behind some rocks drew Suntre's attention.

“Look, Sis... Plenty of fish in this river. They seemed to be following us, huh?”

“Wrong, Suntre. There are too many fish along the river. It seems that they followed us, meanwhile they were actually different fish all along.”

They stopped before noon. Sasandewini and Suntre moored their boat on the river beach. They headed to a banyan tree. Under the tree, the two stopped to rest and have lunch. “Sis, where does King Sumundui live?” asked Suntre in apprehension.

“Oh, wow. What did he say last night?” Sasandewini asked Suntre in return. Despite her anxiety, she showed no such

expression to her sister. She kept smiling in order to toughen her sister.

“King Sumundui said that we should follow the stream.”

“Alright then, follow the stream we should. Come on, let’s carry on,” replied Sasandewini. They hadn’t rowed for quite some time when their boat was stuck.

“Sis, our boat is stuck,” said Suntre. “Right you are. What’s going on?” asked Sasandewini. “Maybe it is blocked by some wood, Sis”

“Come on, turn the oars as hard as we can. Looks like some rocks are on our way.”

Sasandewini and Suntre rowed until they reached a small lake with crystal clear water. They could see the bottom of the lake clearly. The dry season had waned the lake water. They looked at the lake in awe. They could see thousands of fish of many kinds and colours had served as adornment to the lake. They were stunned. For a moment they thought they’d reached the land of nowhere. They suddenly saw a gigantic fish with beautiful colour. They thought it was the incarnation of King Sumundui. Once again, Suntre called her sister.

“Sis, what is that fish down there?” “Where?” replied Sasandewini quickly.

“Under our boat. Look... it’s so big, and the colour is really beautiful.”

“Oh, wow, what a beautiful fish! That’s right, Suntre. I wonder what it’s doing under our boat. I think it was the one that blocked our boat. What fish is this?”

“It must be the king of fish, the master of this river, Sis,” said Suntre.

“Don’t you think it might be the incarnation of King Sumundui?” guessed Sasandewini. Suntre and Sasandewini were a bit cautious upon looking at the fish beneath them. “Dear children, fear not.” “Who are you?” asked Sasandewini.

“I am Sinemanggor, King of the Fish,” replied the giant fish.

“King of the Fish?” said Sasandewini in disbelief.

“Yes, I am the master of this lake. Why had you come here in a night like this?”

“Oh, King Sinemanggor, please accept our apologies. We are heading towards the Sumundui Kingdom. Have you any idea about it, Sire?” asked Sasandewini.

Suntre hid behind Sasandewini. She was scared of the Fish King. She was reminded of King Sumundui who came to meet her that night.

“Sumundui, the Serpent King?” asked King Sinemanggor.

“Yes, that’s true. King Sumundui, the Serpent King,” Suntre repeated quickly.

Finally, Sasandewini walked King Sinemanggor through what they experienced.

“Oh, oh, oh...,” King Sinemanggor responded.

“Allow us to pass through your domain, King Sinemanggor.”

“One moment, Sweet Child. You’re allowed to get past as long as you trade the bracelet you have in your hand with mine, as token of our friendship.”

Suntre and her sister was so glad to give away diwando, the bracelet their nana had given them. They dropped the bracelet onto the bottom of the lake. The bracelet reached the lake bottom in a swimmer’ motion. Quickly, Sinemanggor fetched the bracelet with his mouth. In return, King Sinemanggor gave his bracelet to Suntre and Sasandewini. Then, he also offered his help to take the two sisters to Sumundui Kingdom. “That’s very kind of you. We’ll go by ourselves,” said Sasandewini.

“But... what if you find trouble along the way?”

“Calm yourself, Dear Friend. Hopefully we could reach Sumundui Kingdom in no harm.” Suntre and Sasandewini carried

on their journey to Sumundui Kingdom. King Sinemanggor saw them off with his deepest emotion.

The Friendship Between Sumundui and Sinemanggor

Sumundui couldn't wait for the two girls, Suntre and Sasandewini. He wanted to welcome them. He plunged himself into the river, and followed the stream. His enormous body split the water and created ripples to the river banks. As he approached Sinemanggor's domain, the ripples was heard by the Fish King. Sinemanggor knew that it was Sumundui, the Serpent King. With composure he waited for the arrival of the basilisk. Suddenly, Sumundui emerged from the lakeside. Sumundui felt that there's something that had been on his way.

“Why are you on my way?” asked Sumundui to Sinemanggor.

“I am not on your way, but I do live here,” Sinemanggor answered.

“Yes, but why have you engulfed the lake?” “I am that large. Who are you?” asked Sinemanggor. “I am Sumundui the Serpent King.”

“Where are you heading? It is uncommon for a snake this enormous to swim along the river stream.” “Have you seen two girls passing this place?” asked Sumundui.

“Yes, indeed. There were two girls who passed through my domain,” answered Sinemanggor. “Alright. Where are they now?” “What have they got to do with you?” “We’re friends. They gave me their words that they’d come to my kingdom. I’m just startled by the thought that they might find trouble in their journey. We’ve promised to help each other during times of trouble. Finally, I decided to go and find them. “Ah, I see. It’s such a delight that you’re all friends. Can I befriend you too?” “Certainly. Will you come with me to find those two girls?”

“Alright, I will. Hop on my back, Sumundui. We’ll go and find those girls.”

The lakeside was not as dry as other areas. Plants around the lake were a wee bit fresh. Grass spread the greenish nuances over the area adorned with a hint of brownish tone of the falling leaves. The blowing dry wind swept the banks of the lake. Sinemanggor wasted no time. He had diwando and arimani with him. Sumundui and Sinemanggor almost reached the Erambori River, nearby Tanjung Mamba. Sasandewini and Suntre had a feeling that Kings Sumundui and Sinemanggor were searching for them. They were very glad as they were about to meet two friends. They halted. “Let’s wait for them, Suntre,” said Sasandewini.

“Alright. Let’s wait for those two Kings.” “Let’s turn around, Suntre,”

“Why don’t we wait for them by the river. Surely they’d come.”

“Let’s walk and follow the stream of the river.” Sasandewini and Suntre soon turned around, and walked along the banks of Erambori River.

”Sis, there they are! Kings Sumundui and Sinemanggor.” “Yes, that’s them.”

Sasandewini and Suntre finally met Sumundui and Sinemanggor, their new friends. The two sisters hopped onto Sinemanggor’s back, as did Sumundui. They then went home to see their nana. Suntre and Sasandewini had been forged by the many series of life events into tough and resilient persons.

They were accostumed to troubles. They were two girls who wouldn’t admit defeat. Everytime they were put to test, they relentlessly prayed to The Almighty, asking for protection. When their prayers were answered, they never forgot to thank Him.

The Spring at Tamakuri

The dry season had gone. The rainy season came and spring soon had its turn. The withering trees had now been rejuvenated to life marked by shoots of fresh, young leaves. Dried grass seemed to have been revived from their long slumber. The cracking ground on the farms and rice paddies had now returned to their real shape

awaiting the farms to plow on them. Rivers seemed cheery with the prospect of abundant water that it would soon contain.

Once in a while, dark clouds came atop the Tamakuri Village. The villagers had long prepared seeds for planting during the rainy season. The thought of maintaining livelihood were strongly embedded in the minds of the Tamakurians. They were known for their perseverance. They were determined though they only practiced nomad farming. They planted root veggies, beans, and fruits. Sasandewini and Suntre returned to their home, only to find their home had turned into an empty lot. Their nana was nowhere to be found. They had a bad thought about their nana. “Has she passed away?” they thought. The two browsed the village to find their nana. Finally, they found out that their nana was ailing and that she lived with their neighbour. Sasandewini and Suntre were very sad for they had left their nana only to find some fiddlebuds to the forest.

“Nana, this is me, Suntre. I’m home, Nana,” Suntre whispered into her nana’s left ear. “Nana, I’m home. This is Sasandewini,” whispered Sasandewini into the other ear. Nana’s eyes remained shut. “Nana, it’s Suntre,” said Suntre as she hugged her nana. “It’s Sasandewini, Nana,” said Sasandewini. She rubbed her nana’s toes. They were a little cold. Their nana was still. Her lips weren’t moving.

“Wake up, Nana,” said Sasandewini, “Your two granddaughters are here, Nana.”

“Nana had been calling out your names since last week,” said a neighbour to the two girls. “Maybe she’d missed you two too much,” said another neighbour.

Slowly, nana opened her eyes. Her face looked drained. The wrinkles on her face made it clear that she’d been very old. Her eyes were shut again once in a while.

Her mouth was opened as if she wanted to say something. She was panting. Then, she moved her legs, and tried to raise her arms as though she wanted to greet and hug her two beloved granddaughters. At the sight of her nana’s condition, Sasandewini was bewildered. Her mind was in a great confusion as they had no more home. It would be a great responsibility for Sasandewini to find them a home.

“Sasande, the greatest concern now is that your nana must recuperate,” said Mama Dame, a neighbour who had been looking after their nana. “You could stay here for a while.”

“Thank you, Mama. We must’ve been a great trouble for you,” replied Sasandewini.

“You could help us in the farm. The rainy season is coming anyway,” said Mama Dame’s husband. “Wow, we’d be delighted to,” replied Sasandewini.

“I can plant corns, Mama” said Suntre plainly. “So can I, Sir,” said Sasandewini wanting to brag she’s more of a help than her sister.

“Well, if we all go to the farm, who will look after your nana?” asked Mama Dame.

“Alright, then, I’ll stay at home,” said Sasandewini, “let me take care of nana.”

“Fine. Tomorrow, Suntre will join me in the farm,” said Mama Dame’s husband.

The family of Mama Dame were very kind. They hadn’t been gifted with any child after nearly ten years of marriage. They had wanted to adopt a child, yet they had to cancel the plan for they hadn’t been financially settled. But now, Mama Dame’s family was better. They had been toiling the farm Mama Dame’s parents had left them. They had enjoyed lavish crops since. Mama Dame and her husband had taken nana as their parent. Sasandewini and Suntre had practically been their children. Their presence made the house much more of a family. They now wanted to share goodness in life to fellow villagers.

“Get some sleep, Suntre. It’s late already. Try now to wake up late tomorrow. Didn’t you say you wanted to help my husband in the farm?” said Mama Dame when she found Suntre was still busy tending to some corns in a small basket.

“In a moment, Mama,” replied Suntre as she cleared up the basket.

“Suntre, off to bed, come on,” said Sasandewini. The two girls eventually went to bed. Suntre couldn’t shut her eyes. Her mind was still in the farm. She couldn’t wait to plant corn. It was a long night for her. She even had to cover her head with pillow so she could sleep. And eventually, the night passed on. The next day, Suntre followed Mama Dame’s husband to the farm. She walked very quickly as she tried to be in the same pace with Mama Dame’s husband. She didn’t look tired though she just returned from an adventure in the forest. It looked as though she’d found herself some new source of energy. She hummed as she walked behind Mama Dame’s husband. “Are we there yet?” asked Suntre to Minggo, Mama Dame’s husband. “No, Suntre. But we’ll be there soon. Are you tired, Suntre?”

“Oh, no. I just can’t wait to plant some corn, sir.”

“Yes, yes, you’d be able to plant those corn shortly.”

“What do you have in the farm other than corn, Sir?”

“Quite some things. We’ve got sweet potatoes, cassava, and banana.”

Sasandewini stayed at home to look after her nana. She fed their nana patiently. She didn’t want her to get worse. Mama Dame had prepped some natural herbs, ranging from oral herbal medicine to those that needed rubbing all over the body. Those meds were made of herbs that had been boiled. The rubbing meds were made of plant roots. Nana started to recuperate. Her previously pale face began to look alive as blood started to flow normally. Her eyes started to shine despite her old age. The return of her granddaughters had served as a kind of remedy that improved her health. In the kitchen, Mama Dame cooked some food for supplies in the farm. She did this every day for her husband. Mama Dame’s family became closer and more at peace with the presence of nana, Sasandewini and Suntre. They lived harmoniously with their other neighbours and fellow villagers. The family with all villagers of Tamakuri were ready to welcome the corn harvesting season this year