



SASTRAWAN INDONESIA ***INDONESIAN WRITER***



PENERIMA HADIAH SASTRA ASIA TENGGARA
AWARDEE OF THE S.E.A. WRITE AWARDS

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INDONESIAN WRITER



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NH. DINI

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PUSAT BAHASA
DEPARTEMEN PENDIDIKAN NASIONAL
THE LANGUAGE CENTER
MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION
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PUSAT BAHASA
DEPARTEMEN PENDIDIKAN NASIONAL

Buku ini disusun oleh Dwi Pratiwi dan disunting oleh Abdul Rozak Zaidan dan Siti Zahra Yundiafi dalam rangka penyerahan hadiah *The S.E.A. Write Awards* 2003 oleh Putra Mahkota Thailand Maha Vajiralongkorn pada tanggal 10--16 Oktober 2003 di Oriental Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand.

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DAFTAR ISI/CONTENTS

Daftar Isi/ <i>Contents</i>	viii
Kata Pengantar/ <i>Preface</i>	1
Kepala Pusat Bahasa/ <i>The Head of The Language Center</i>	2
1. Kata Sambutan Penerimaan S.E.A. Write Awards 2003	3
<i>Acceptance Speech S.E.A. Write Awards 2003</i>	5
2. Biografi Ringkas	7
<i>Brief Biography</i>	12
3. <i>Literary Works</i>	13
Novel/Novel	13
<i>Jepun Negerinya Hiroko</i>	13
<i>Japan Hiroko's Country</i>	15
Cerita Pendek/ <i>Short Story</i>	16
Penanggung Jawab Candi	16
<i>The Keeper of the Temples</i>	31
Jatayu	44
<i>Broken Wings</i>	56
4. Dewan Juri Pemilihan Sastrawan Indonesia Penerima Hadiah Sastra Asia Tenggara 2003	67
<i>Panel for the Selection of the Indonesian Awardee of The S.E.A. Write Awards 2003</i>	67

KATA PENGANTAR KEPALA PUSAT BAHASA

Sejak tahun 1978 hadiah sastra The S.E.A. Write Awards diberikan kepada sastrawan berprestasi di Asia Tenggara. Dalam hubungan itu, Pusat Bahasa, Departemen Pendidikan Nasional, melalui Proyek Pembinaan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia dan Daerah Pusat, setiap tahun membentuk Panitia Pemilihan Sastrawan Indonesia. Tugasnya memilih dan menentukan tiga orang sastrawan terbaik untuk tahun yang bersangkutan. Salah seorang dari mereka ditunjuk menjadi wakil pengarang Indonesia untuk menerima The S.E.A. Write Awards dari pihak Kerajaan Thailand.

Tahun 2003 ini, Indonesia telah menetapkan sastrawan NH. Dini untuk menerima hadiah itu. Dalam rangka penyerahan hadiah itu, Pusat Bahasa menyusun buku *Sastrawan Indonesia Penerima Hadiah Sastra Asia Tenggara 2003* untuk keperluan Upacara Penyerahan Hadiah The S.E.A. Write Awards di Bangkok, Thailand.

Kepada semua pihak yang telah mengupayakan penerbitan buku kecil ini, saya sampaikan penghargaan dan terima kasih yang tulus.

Jakarta, September 2003

Dr. Dendy Sugono

PREFACE

THE HEAD OF THE LANGUAGE CENTER

Since 1978 The S.E.A. Write Awards has been given to prolific writers in the South East Asian countries. In relation to this, The Language Center, Ministry of National Education, through the Central Project for Cultivation and Development of National and Regional Languages and Literature every year sets up a committee for selection of Indonesian literary writers. The task of the committee is to select three best literary writers for the corresponding year. One of them is pointed to represent Indonesian writers to receive the S.E.A. Write Awards from the Kingdom of Thailand.

For the year of 2003 Indonesia has chosen NH. Dini as the recipient of the award. In this connection, The Language Center has published the booklet *Sastrawan Indonesia Penerima Hadiah Sastra Asia Tenggara 2003 (Indonesian Writer, Awardee of the S.E.A. Write Awards 2003)* for the presentation of the award in Bangkok, Thailand.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere thanks to those who enabled this booklet to be published.

Jakarta, September 2003

Dr. Dendy Sugono

1. Kata Sambutan Penerimaan S.E.A. Write Awards 2003

Acceptance Speech S.E.A. Write Awards 2003

Paduka Yang Mulia Putra Mahkota dari Thailand

Yang terhormat

Para Menteri

Para Duta Besar

Panitia Anugerah SEA Write Award,

Ibu-Ibu dan Bapak-Bapak.

Yang pertama harus saya ucapkan dengan hati tulus adalah rasa terima kasih saya atas pemberian SEA Write Awards ini kepada saya.

Hadiah ini saya anggap penting, lebih-lebih karena ada bentuk nyatanya yang berupa materi atau uang. Kita hidup di era di mana segalanya hanya bisa didapatkan dengan uang. Di negeri saya sendiri, karya sastra masih sangat bersifat spiritual, belum komersial. Diibaratkan, dari lima ribu orang yang membaca buku-buku saya, barangkali hanya seperlima dari jumlah tersebut yang membelinya dengan uang mereka sendiri. Sebagian besar pembaca itu hampir bisa dipastikan hanya meminjam atau meminta dari penerbit.

Para pengarang susastra di Indonesia harus mempunyai pekerjaan lain agar keperluan hidupnya bisa terjamin. Kebanyakan dari mereka adalah wartawan atau dosen. Sepengetahuan saya, hanya ada tiga atau empat pengarang yang berani terus berkarya tanpa memiliki pekerjaan sampingan. Dan dengan rendah hati saya akui bahwa saya adalah seorang dari beberapa manusia nekat itu. Memang hidup saya nyaman, tetapi jika saya sakit, dengan sedih saya menyatakan bahwa saya masih menjadi 'parasit' bagi teman-teman dan lingkungan.

Dengan eksisnya SEA Write yang telah berusia tahunan ini, dapat dibuktikan bahwa ada satu pemerintah di ASEAN yang peduli terhadap pekerja seni di bidang susastra dan hasil karya mereka. Mudah-mudahan kepedulian tersebut melangkah lebih maju dengan penerbitan karya-karya dari para penerima hadiah ke dalam bahasa asli negara-negara Asean sehingga akan terjalin pengertian lebih mendalam. Karena dengan mengenal kehidupan yang tercermin dalam karya tersebut, komunikasi menjadi lebih akrab.

Sekian, sekali lagi terima kasih.

Nh. Dini

1. Acceptance Speech S.E.A. Write Awards 2003

Your Royal Highness

Honourable Cabinet Minister and Ambassadors,

The Committee of the SEA Write Awards,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my gratitude for this honour of SEA Write Awards. The Award is very meaningful to me, most especially because it has a material, economic form.

We are living in an era when money is the only means of getting what we want. In my own country, Indonesia, literary works are considered spiritual, not commercial. If, say, five thousand copies of a book of mine are printed, probably only a fifth of that amount will actually be purchased by readers. Most people who read my books borrow them or get them free from the publisher.

Most Indonesian writers have to other jobs in order to live. Many are journalists or college teachers. So far as I know, there are only three or four writers who dare to pursue their writing career without having another job. I confess that I am one of those determined writers. And indeed, I have a good life. But if I fall ill, then I have to admit sadly that I still become a 'parasite' on my friends and my society.

The existence of the SEA Write Awards for so many years, demonstrates that there is a country in Southeast Asia that cares about its art workers in the literary field and about the fruits of their work. I hope that the government's concern will be extended further, to publishing these works in the languages of ASEAN countries. This step would deepen our understanding of each other, because by knowing of the lives reflected in our literatures we will achieve closer and more sensitive communication.

Thank you,
Nh. Dini

2. Biografi Ringkas

NH Dini lahir di Semarang, 1936. Pengarang berbakat ini sudah menulis sastra sejak masih di SMA, tahun 1950-an.

Dia pernah menjadi pramugari Garuda Indonesian Airways (1957--1960). Juni 1960 dia menikah dengan Yves Coffin, diplomat Prancis dan mengikuti suami tugas keliling dunia, termasuk ke Jepang, Filipina, Kamboja, Amerika, Belanda, dan Prancis.

Setelah 20 tahun keliling dunia, Dini kembali ke Indonesia tahun 1980. Sejak itu dia aktif di LSM Wahana Lingkungan Hidup dan Forum Komunikasi Generasi Muda Keluarga Berencana.

Pada tahun 1986 Dini mendirikan *Pondok Baca NH Dini* --taman bacaan untuk anak-anak dan remaja-- di Semarang, lalu pindah ke Yogyakarta. Kini, Pondok Baca NH Dini memiliki cabang di Jakarta dan tempat-tempat lain.

Tahun 1988 cerpen Dini *Le Nid de Poisson dans la Baie de Jakarta* 'Sarang Ikan di Teluk Jakarta' menjadi juara I Lomba Penulisan Cerpen Berbahasa Prancis yang diselenggarakan oleh surat kabar Prancis *Le Monde*--Kedutaan Besar Prancis di Jakarta--Radio *France Nationale*.

Dini menerima Hadiah Seni untuk sastra dari Departemen Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan (1989), Bhakti Upapradana bidang

sastra dari Pemda Jateng (1991), dan Hadiah Seni dari Dewan Kesenian Jawa Tengah (2000).

Tahun 1998 Dini diundang Pemerintah Kota Toronto untuk membaca karya sastra bersama penyair-pengarang-dramawan lain dari Jepang, Korea, Filipina, dan Thailand.

Tahun 1999 Dini menetap tiga bulan di Prancis atas biaya Pemerintah Prancis untuk melakukan riset penulisan lanjutan seri cerita kenangannya.

Dini memperoleh SEA Write Award tahun 2003 karena keajekan berkarya dan pencapaian artistiknya. Dari keseluruhan karya kreatifnya yang mencakupi sekitar 15 novel dan 4 kumpulan cerpen, Dewan Juri memilih *Jepun Negerinya Hiroko* (2000) sebagai representasi pencapaian artistiknya sebagai pengarang.

Karya-karya Nh. Dini

Nh. Dini's Literary Works

A. Poetry

1. "Februari" (February), 1956
2. "Pesan Ibu" (Mother's Message), 1956
3. "Kapal di Pelabuhan Semarang" (A Ship in Semarang Harbour), 1956
4. "Kematian" (Death), 1958
5. "Berdua" (Both), 1958

6. "Surat kepada Kawan" (A letter to a Friend), 1964
7. "Bertemu Kembali" (Seeing Again), 1964
8. "Dari Jendela" (From the Window), 1966
9. "Sahabat" (Best Friend), 1968
10. "Kotaku" (My City), 1968
11. "Penggembala" (The Shepherd), 1968
12. "Terpendam" (Buried), 1969
13. "Pulau yang Ditinggal" (The Left Island), 1969
14. "Bulan di Abad yang Datang" (A Month in the Next Century), 1969
15. "Anakku Bertanya" (My Child is Asking), 1969
16. "Tetangga" (Neighbour), 1970
17. "Kelahiran" (Birth), 1970
18. "Burung Kecil" (Little Bird), 1970
19. "Pagi Bersalju" (Snowy Morning), 1970
20. "Sesaudara" (Same Blood), 1970
21. "Jam Berdentang" (The Belling Clock), 1970
22. "Musim Gugur di Hutan" (The Fall in the Wood), 1970
23. "Penyapu Jalan di Paris" (The Street Sweeper in Paris), 1970
24. "Yang Telah Pergi" (The One Gone Away), 1970
25. "Rinduku" (Longing), 1970
26. "Tak Ada yang Kulupa" (Nothing I Forget), 1971
27. "Paris yang Kukenal" (Paris I Know), 1971
28. "Mimpi" (Dream), 1971
29. "Dua yang Pokok" (The Main Two), 1971
30. "Kemari Dekatkan Kursimu" (Here, Close Your Seat), 1971

B. Short Stories

1. *Dua Dunia* (Two World), 1956
2. *Tuileries* (Tuileries), 1982
3. *Segi dan Gadis* (Shape and Line), 1983

C. Novels

1. *Hati yang Damai* (Peaceful Heart), 1961
2. *Pada Sebuah Kapal* (On The Ship), 1972
3. *La Barka* (La Barka), 1975
4. *Namaku Hiroko* (My Name is Hiroko), 1977
5. *Keberangkatan* (Departed), 1977
6. *Sebuah Lorong di Kotaku* (A Street in my City), 1978
7. *Langit dan Bumi Sahabat Kami* (Our Best Friend is Sky and Earth), 1979
8. *Padang Ilalang di Belakang Rumah* (The Savannah in the Backyard), 1979
9. *Sekayu* (Sekayu), 1981
10. *Kuncup Berseri* (Cheerful Bud), 1982
11. *Orang-Orang Trans* (Trans People), 1985
12. *Pertemuan Dua Hati* (The Meeting of Two Hearts), 1986
13. *Jalan Bandungan* (Street of Bandungan), 1989
14. *Istri Konsul* (Consul's Wife), 1993
15. *Tirai Menurun* (Lowering Curtain), 1993
16. *Panggilan Dharma Seorang Bhiku* (The Duty Call of a Buddhist Monk), 1993
17. *Tanah Baru* (New Land, the Second Land), 1993
18. *Kemayoran* (Kemayoran), 2000

19. Jepun Negerinya Hiroko (Japan, the Hiroko's Country), 1993
20. Monumen (Monument), 1993
21. Dari Parangakik ke Kampuchea (From France to Kampuchea), 1993

D. Biography

Pangeran dari Negeri Seberang (The Prince from Overseas), 1981

E. Works of Translation

1. *Dongeng dari Galia* (The Story from Galia), 1981
2. *Peri Polybotte* (Peri Polybotte), 1983
3. *Sampar* (La Peste), 1985

2. BRIEF BIOGRAPHY

NH Dini was born in Semarang, Central Java, in 1936. She first began to write as a senior high school student in the first half of 1950's.

Dini worked as a stewardess for Garuda Indonesia Airways (GIA) from 1957--1960. In June 1960 she married a French diplomat, Yves Coffin and has two children, Marie Claire Lintang and Pierre Louis Padang. After around the world for more than 20 years (including Japan, Phillipine, Cambodia, Holland, and France) she then back to Indonesia and became an activist of NGO's such *Wahana Lingkungan Hidup and Forum Komunikasi Generasi Muda Keluarga Berencana*.

In 1986 Dini established Pondok Baca NH Dini (NH Dini's Library), a library for youths in her home town, Semarang. The library then moved to Yogyakarta. Nowadays the library has branches in Yogyakarta and many places another.

Dini's short story entitled "Le Nid de Poisson dans la Baie de Jakarta" won the French short story writing contest held by France newspaper *Le Monde*--France Embassy in Jakarta--Radio France Nationale in 1998.

Dini received "Hadiah Seni" Indonesia's National Arts Award from Department of Education and Culture, "Bhakti Upapradana" for literature from Governor of Central Java in 1991, and "hadiah Seni" Arts Award from Central Java's Arts Council.

In 1998 Dini was invited by Toronto's Government for reading her literary works with another writers from Japan, Korea, and Thai. One year later, 1999, funded by France Government, Dini stayed in France for three months for her research to continue her memories story writing.

In 2003 Dini received SEA Write Award for her consistently in creative activity and her artistic achievement.

3. Literary Works

Novel/Novel

Jepun Negerinya Hiroko

Japan Hiroko's Country

Hiroko menjadi sahabatku. Kurang lebih sebulan setelah kami berteman dekat, dia pindah ke sebuah rumah besar bertaman indah di kawasan Rokko. Kami tetap bertemu secara teratur. Pergaulan kami bersifat intelek, karena kami bertukar pengetahuan bahasa Jepang dan bahasa Inggris. Selain kami memperbincangkan masalah hidup, hak dan kondisi wanita, aku berbicara bahasa Inggris kepadanya, sementara dia berbicara dalam bahasa Jepang ke-

padaku. Dan sebagai wanita mandiri, dia bangga termasuk golongan wanita Jepang pertama yang bisa menyetir mobil di kota Kobe pada masa itu. Tentu ada beberapa wanita bangsa asing yang menjajarnya. Dia bahkan bercerita, bahwa ketika ujian untuk mendapatkan SIM, ia agak dipersulit. Kekasihnya terpaksa mengantarkannya supaya menerima perlakuan lebih layak dari polisi-polisi yang bertugas.

Hiroko bagiku adalah contoh wanita yang merasa damai dengan dirinya dan lingkungannya. Meskipun tidak menikah resmi, dia bahagia bersama lelaki yang dia cintai. Perkakwinan hanyalah sebuah pintu di mana orang yang di luar ingin masuk, yang berada di dalam ingin keluar, demikian katanya. Kata-kata itu kemudian kusitir di dalam bukuku *Namaku Hiroko*. Bagi dia, semua yang dia inginkan sudah dimilikinya. Di kemudian hari anak-anaknya tumbuh dengan menggunakan nama keluarga Numazawa. Itu tidak menjadi soal di Jepang. Meskipun tidak menggunakan nama ayah kandung mereka, tetapi kasih sayang si ayah adalah yang terpenting dan berguna. Masyarakat menerima mereka seadanya, sebagai manusia penuh. Tetapi Hiroko Daimaru sadar, bahwa anak-anaknya harus menjadi manusia yang lebih baik daripada anak-anak lain. Karena bila terjadi sesuatu yang kurang pada sifat dan sikap mereka, tuduhan orang akan lebih kejam.

Japan Hiroko's Country

Hiroko became my best friend. Less than a month after we were close friend, she moved to the big house with the beautiful garden in the Rokko's region. We continued to meet each other regularly. Our relationship was intellectual because we exchanged knowledge of Japanese and English. We talked about life matters, women's right and condition, and I spoke English to her whereas she spoke Japanese to me. As an independent woman, she was proud to become one of the first Japanese women who could drive a car around the city of Kobe at that time. Certainly, there were several expatriate women who equaled her. She even told me that she was complicated when she took a test to have a driver license. Her boyfriend had to accompanied her so that she deserved more appropriate manner from the police who was to be on duty.

For me, Hiroko was an example of a woman feeling peaceful with herself and her environment. Although unofficially had married, she happily lived with her loving man. A marriage was like a door where the outside wanted to come in and the inside wanted to come out, that was she said. The words were then I quoted in my book *My Name is Hiroko*. For her, all she wanted she had already have. In the future, her children would grow using the family's name of Numazawa. That was not a problem in Japan. Although they did not use their father's name, their father's love was the most important and useful. The society accepted them of what they were, as a human completely. However, Hiroko Daimaru was aware that her children must become a better human

than the others. If something happened with their behaviour and attitude, the people's accusation would be worse.

Translated by Dony Setiawan

Cerita Pendek/*Short Story*

Penanggung Jawab Candi

Turun dari tempat tidur, dengan cepat dia mengenakan sarung yang tersampir di gantungan pintu. Lalu dihentikannya alat pendingin.

Brrr, sejak beberapa hari itu udara dengan nyata menjadi lebih sejuk. Musim hujan dengan angin musonnya tidak lama akan menjenguk negeri itu. Perbaikan-perbaikan candi yang ada di bawah pengawasannya yang memang tidak berjalan dengan lancar, akan terhenti sama sekali selama musim basah. Tetapi, oh, itu tidak mengapa. Yang penting, dia tetap dibayar oleh pemerintah tuan rumah. Tidak menjadi soal baginya jika pegawai-pegawai serta pekerja-pekerja kecil bawahannya menerima gaji harian. Itu urusan mereka dengan rajanya.

Dia keluar dari kamar langsung duduk di hadapan meja makan yang panjang dan lebar, menghadap kebun yang lepas meminggiri semak-semak hutan di sekeliling kompleks candi.

Dua puluh dua tahun sekarang jadinya. Selama itu dia bertanggung-jawab atas rumpunan bangunan kuno di negeri itu. Waktu yang cukup untuk menjadikan seseorang dewasa. Buat dia

sendiri jumlah itu merupakan jaminan akan tetap tinggalnya di negeri tersebut tanpa gugatan serta usiran dari pihak pemerintah. Dia orang penting. Menjadi penyelamat gedung-gedung batu pemujaan nenek moyang raja. Dia berhak menerima sanjungan maupun berbagai rupa kebaikan hati semua penduduk, terutama dari raja sendiri. Mereka begitu pula orang-orang sebangsanya yang terdapat di negeri itu setiap kali mendengar namanya, berebut saling mengatakan berkenalan baik dengannya, telah membaca atau melihat buku-buku yang ditulisnya. Setiap kali ia turun ke ibu kota, kenalan dan pejabat tinggi berebutan mengundang makan ke rumah mereka. Pengertian kesadaran untuk itu semua membikinnya meluap oleh kebanggaan. Siapa orangnya yang tidak senang hidup seperti dia. Apalagi jika semua itu tercapai tanpa kerja keras maupun limpahan tenaga yang berlebihan. Semua itu adalah hasil dari keuntungan yang luar biasa.

Dia lahir kebetulan sebagai anak tunggal bapaknya, yang pada waktu itu telah menjadi penanggung jawab candi di negeri itu. Orang tuanya memang bekerja keras. Mengetahui setiap lipatan batu-batu di sana, mengenal setiap sudut dan sela masing-masing bangunan kuno di seluruh negeri. Siang malam menyelidiki, mene-mui dan akhirnya mengerti gambaran-gambaran maupun tulisan lama itu. Mengumpulkan berbagai teori, mencoba kesamaan berbagai sisa-sisa basa yang terdapat di sekeliling rumpunan candi maupun mendengarkan pendapat dan penapsiran penduduk pribumi yang berumur lanjut.

Dia sendiri? Oh, biasa saja. Seperti telah menjadi tradisi, dari sekolah menengah dia melanjutkan pelajaran ke tingkat tertinggi.

Dan seperti telah menjadi tradisi pula dia memilih atau diarahkan untuk memilih jurusan yang sama dengan lapangan bapaknya. Tidak ada kemauannya sendiri untuk menolak. Baginya itu merupakan salah satu dari pekerjaan-pekerjaan lain. Tidak ada yang disukai benar. Kalau kebetulan dia mewarisi nama keluarga bapaknya, lebih baik menjabat pekerjaan yang sama. Selain merupakan kelanjutan, setidak-tidaknya banyak keuntungan pribadi yang akan diterimanya dari negeri matahari itu.

Jadi, dia pun mengarahkan sekolah ke sana. Benar dia juga menghabiskan waktunya untuk belajar, untuk melalui ujian-ujian, tetapi semuanya hanya merupakan hapalan yang tidak banyak meminta daya kerja lebih dari semestinya. Apalagi itu disebabkan karena sebagian besar dari guru besar yang memberi kuliah bukanlah ahli-ahli yang mahir benar. Juga kemudahan yang didapatnya di sekolah tinggi itu disebabkan karena sejak kecil dia telah berkecimpung di lapangan tersebut, dapat dikatakan tumbuh bersama mengalihkan teori-teori yang muncul dari *kejenialan* bapaknya mengenai seluk-beluk bangunan kuno. Kemudian setelah bapaknya meninggal, tepat ketika dia keluar dari perguruan tinggi, catatan-catatan yang teliti serta menarik didapatinya di laci meja orang tuanya. Itu adalah salah satu dari peninggalan yang berharga. Peninggalan lain yang tidak kurang menyenangkan adalah jabatan sebagai penanggung jawab bangunan kuno di negeri tersebut. Barangkali raja dan kelilingnya berpendapat bahwa itu lebih muda daripada mencari orang lain. Barangkali pula karena orang-orang itu mengirakan *kejenialan* yang sama, ketakutan yang sepadan serta ketelitian cara kerja yang patut akan dapat diharapkan dari orang

muda itu. Dan dia tidak mau mengecewakan mereka. Dia memang memperlihatkan kedinamisan kerja. Dengan jipnya orang dapat melihatnya berkeliling dari satu kumpulan candi ke kumpulan lain. Turun sebentar dari kendaraan untuk melihat ini itu lalu menghilang. Sekali-sekali, dikeluarkannya beberapa kalimat dari catatan bapaknya untuk memperlihatkan hasil kerjanya. Dalam laporan yang diperuntukkan raja, bercampur aduk disusunnya pendapat pribadi yang didengarnya dari pelancong-pelancong cendekia yang ditemuinya. Lalu diselakan teori hasil penyelidikan bapaknya. Pada waktu-waktu yang diperlukannya, dia terpaksa benar-benar tekun mempelajari buku-buku atau batu-batu kuno yang kebetulan ditanyakan orang. Dengan demikian dia selalu dapat memberi jawaban yang teguh serta menyenangkan hati raja negeri itu. Begitu tenar nama yang diwarisi dari bapaknya, sehingga orang akan selalu menerima pendapatnya. Dan tinggalnya di negeri itu semakin terjamin kelanjutannya.

Makanan pagi dibawa oleh seorang wanita pribumi. Pakaiannya kain hitam berkilat yang turun hingga ke batas telapak kaki, dengan baju berkembang-kembang warna terang tepat sampai di pinggang, menunjukkan keindahan lekuk punggung menuruni pinggul.

Dari kursinya, dia menuruti tantangan yang dirasakannya. Tangannya terulur untuk mengelus sejenak kenikmatan garis yang tersuguh. Lalu menyelinap ke bawah baju. Perempuan itu terkikih melengoskan pandangannya sebentar ke arah majikan. Karena memang itulah sambutan yang diharapkannya di dalam tempat tinggalnya.

Lima hari yang lalu dia berganti "pengatur rumah tangga." Setiap kali ada pendatang baru, dia menjelaskan agar hubungan di luar tempat tidur tetap sebagai pekerja dan majikan. Di negeri yang masih penuh dengan serba pengertian cara feodal, ini tidak merupakan kesukaran. Perempuan-perempuan itu tidak memperdulikan benar. Yang penting bagi mereka adalah memiliki kehidupan yang lebih baik daripada orang-orang lain sebangsanya. Dapat bersolek, berdandan serta makan lebih dari secukupnya. Ditambah ketinggian anggapan oleh karena melayani tuan besar seperti dia.

"Tukang masak sudah ke pasar?" tanyanya dalam bahasa negeri yang bertekanan keras.

"Belum. Menunggu Anda. Saya bawaan buku belanjanya."

Tukang masak telah lama tinggal bersamanya. Dia adalah seorang perempuan tua. Rambutnya dipotong tukang seperti laki-laki. Oleh kemudahan maupun kemalasan, sekalian disebabkan oleh jarangny air di musim kemarau, orang-orang perempuan yang melampaui batas umur tertentu tidak lagi memiliki hiasan di atas kepalanya. Kebanyakan pula nenek-nenek yang telah lanjut usianya berkepala licin halus. Dipandang dari jauh kebanyakan dari mereka tidak dapat dibedakan dari kaum laki-lakinya. Dada mereka yang sempit keriput tergantung lunglai dan rata.

Sejak dia berumur sebelas tahun, tukang masak itu telah tinggal di sana. Tidak banyak jenis makanan maupun lauk yang dapat dihidangkannya. Tetapi itu tidak menjadi soal. Yang penting baginya, perempuan itu tidak dapat mengikuti serta menuruti kehendaknya. Tidak banyak bicara, pembantu yang setia itu telah melihat datang dan perginya berbagai macam pengunjung, keluar masuknya

"pengurus rumah tangga." Di samping itu, tidak seperti kebanyakan tukang masak yang bekerja di rumah orang asing, perempuan tua itu tidak terlalu menambahi harga-harga makanan yang dibeli di pasar maupun di warung.

Wanita yang sama datang kembali memberikan buku tulis dengan pensil yang pendek dan tumpul.

Dia melayangkan pandang selintas ke deretan harga-harga yang tertulis. Beberapa kelihatan sekali atau dua kali diganti dengan angka yang lebih tinggi.

"Masih ada sisa uang buat pelajaran menjahit yang kubayarkan kemarin?" tanyanya.

"Masih," jawab perempuan muda di sampingnya.

"Berikan itu dulu untuk belanja," perintahnya.

Dia menutup buku tulis, lalu hendak meneruskan makan.

Pengurus rumah tangga tetap berdiri di sana, sebentar seperti akan berlalu, tetapi ragu-ragu.

"Apa lagi?" tanya majikan sambil mengunyah roti. "Berikan sekarang, jadi tukang masak bisa pergi."

"Uang sisanya untuk membeli bahan."

"Sudah atau belum?"

"Belum."

"Berikan itu dulu, nanti kuganti," dia mengulang.

Perempuan itu belum juga beranjak.

Dia mengangkat muka dari kopinya untuk memandang kepada perempuan muda itu. Tiba-tiba mereka bertatapan pandang. Wajah lonjong yang segar coklat itu seperti ketika bercahaya dengan senyum yang merata. Dengan kepala yang digerakkan manja,

pengurus rumah tangga itu berkata:

"Sekolah menjahit itu jauh. Saya akan memerlukan sepeda; kalau tidak naik siklo pulang balik."

Sejak hari pertama perempuan itu datang, sudah berapa kali meminta ini dan itu! Lebih banyak menarik uang dari pada yang baru pergi.

Majikan menurunkan pandangannya ke dada perempuan muda itu. Lebih montok dan keras daripada yang lalu. Meskipun pinggangnya tidak seramping yang dulu, tetapi kakinya panjang dan kuat buat kenikmatan-kenikmatan yang membutuhkan waktu berulur.

"Kita lihat nanti. Cepat berikan uang kepada tukang masak. Katakan dia pasti berangkat sekarang."

Akhirnya perempuan itu berlalu, langkahnya lampai indah. Dia menuruti gerak betis yang merupa di balik kain hingga ke pintu dapur.

Dia dapat leluasa membelanjakan uangnya. Rumah yang didiami adalah milik perguruan di mana dia menjadi anggota. Gajinya sendiri besar, ditambah hadiah serta ditambah biaya ini-itu yang dibayarkan pemerintah tuan rumah maupun sekolah tinggi di Paris, ditambah lagi dengan warisan buku-buku yang ditulis bapaknya dan satu bukunya sendiri; itu semua mengumpul menjadi kekayaan gampang yang menyenangkan. Kelihatan benar bahwa dia memiliki kehidupan yang mudah. Belum lagi mencapai umur tiga puluh tahun tubuhnya telah melembung seperti balon karet. Apa lagi sekarang. Badannya yang pendek, membulat karena gemuknya. Mukanya selalu kemerahan oleh panas daerah tropika

dan minuman bir. Tidak dipraktikkannya satu pun dari macam olah raga membikinnya semakin berdaging lembek serta berotot kendur. Semakin tahun berlalu, wajahnya semakin kelihatan tua mendahului umurnya.

Sebetulnya banyak kesempatan yang tersedia untuk sekedar berjalan kaki. Beberapa candi terletak tidak jauh tempat pengawasan di candi yang terbesar. Tetapi ia lebih suka mengeram di sana. Kadang-kadang berteriak menyerukan beberapa perintah dari jendela. Lalu pembantu bangunan datang berlari-lari untuk menerima perintah yang jelas dari padanya. Sekali-sekali jika kewajiban memerlukan, dia keluar dari rumah untuk mengawasi perbaikan-perbaikan yang dikerjakan pegawai-pegawai bawahannya. Kalau turun dari kendaraan, dia hanya akan berjalan sampai ke teras candi induk. Kuli-kuli di sana merunduk-runduk menyalaminya, penjual-penjual makanan di warung yang dilaluinya bersenyum berusaha menarik hatinya.

Sebagian besar waktunya dihabiskannya di rumah untuk membaca kiriman roman-roman terbaru dari Perancis, mendengarkan piringan hitam dan bercumbu dengan pengurus rumah tangga yang dimilikinya waktu itu. Di atas meja yang tebal dan lebar selalu bertumpukan buku ilmu bangunan kuno serta kertas-kertas, beberapa terbuka dengan sengaja. Pada waktu-waktu ada kunjungan yang tiba-tiba, pembantu selalu membawa tamu tersebut ke kamar kerja dan dapatlah ditunjukkan bahwa penanggung jawab candi itu sedang bekerja dengan tekun. Oleh karenanya, si pengunjung yang pada umumnya bersifat sopan itu akan berusaha meninggalkan tempat kediaman tersebut dengan secepat-cepatnya.

Pagi itu ia harus turun ke candi induk. Seperti telah diperintahkan-punya dan sesuai dengan petunjuk-petunjuk yang diberikannya pula, pegawai-pegawai telah membuat singa dari semen untuk menjadi pasangan singa lain dari batu yang terdapat di gerbang teras candi. Hari itu orang akan membawa singa baru ke tempatnya. Kejadian penting yang harus diawasinya. Dia akan menyaksikan untuk pertama kalinya sejak menjabat kerjanya dua singa mengagit pintu masuk dari candi induk, dia penjaga seperti berabad-abad yang lalu.

Cepat dia menghirup sisa kopi di cangkirnya. Lalu menoleh ke dapur sambil memanggil. Perempuan muda yang tadi muncul dari kamar tidurnya, berdiri di ambang pintu sambil memandang.

Dia menyorongkan kursi dengan gaduh, menghampiri pasangannya. Ditariknya pinggang yang pasrah. Berdua menghilang ke kamar.

Sesungguhnya dia dapat berjalan kaki menuju ke candi induk. Itu terletak tidak jauh dari pagar depan yang membatasi kebun tempat kediamannya. Tetapi tubuhnya terlalu berat untuk dibawa-bawa. Sebab itulah pagi itu dia menyeter kendaraan kantor ke luar dari gedung tua namun megah, menuju ke jalan tanah. Tanpa tergesa, dia masih sempat mengulangi kesedapan yang segar dan muda dari badan pasangannya beberapa saat yang lewat.

Pertama kali dia melihat gadis itu ketika di dalam perjalanan ke Batambang, berkeliling memeriksa kumpulan candi-candi lain. Berhenti minum di sebuah warung, dia ditarik oleh ketinggian yang lampai. Lebih-lebih garis betis dari kaki yang panjang tergambar melalui lipatan sarung hitam. Begitu saja dia merasakan

kehendak yang kuat yang menggelapkan pandangnya. Lalu dia berbicara dengan gadis itu. Tidak sukar. Karena orang asing seperti dia tidak lagi dianggap asing oleh penduduk pribumi. Yang menjadi keinginannya merupakan perintah bagi penduduk asli. Sebentar berbicara, malam itu juga gadis itu dibawanya langsung ke Batambang. Dan keperawanan gadis yang siang tadi dilihatnya, malam itu telah dimilikinya. Dua kali perjalanan ke kota yang sama, akhirnya dia memutuskannya. Pulang kembali ke tempat kediamannya, dia membekali pasangan yang hingga waktu itu tinggal bersamanya dengan sejumlah uang, lalu mendatangkan kekasihnya yang baru.

Itu adalah hidup yang mudah dan nyaman! Seperti yang semacam ini tidak akan dapat dimilikinya seandainya dia pulang dan menetap di negeri asalnya. Orang-orang di sana hidup dengan cara serba tergesa, masing-masing dengan kesendirian yang kuat dan keras kepala. Segalanya memakan biaya besar. Mengenai perempuan, tidak ada yang sepatuh yang dapat dipunyainya di negeri itu. Kalau datang bosannya dia dapat berganti tanpa soal tanpa kesukaran.

Ya, pada hakikatnya dia puas hidup begini. Selama negeri tuan rumah penuh dengan orang-orang bodoh dalam lapangan pengetahuan bangunan kuno, selama itulah dia dapat mempertahankan kedudukannya. Sebab itulah dia berbuat sekuat tenaga untuk mencegah berhasilnya orang-orang muda mencapai tanda selesai dalam pelajaran bangunan tersebut. Kaki tangannya di perguruan tinggi di Paris semua sekata dengan dia. Pengalaman yang didapatnya dari sebuah negeri tetangga tidak dilupakannya. Itu juga disebab-

kan karena negeri itu memiliki anak-anak negeri yang ahli dalam lapangannya. Ketika suatu kali oleh satu atau lain sebab diperbantukan oleh pemerintah negeri raja itu ke negeri tetangga, terjadilah bentrokan beberapa kali dengan ahli-ahli itu yang merupakan hasil cara-cara kerjanya yang sembrono dan semaunya. Negeri tetangga itu ternyata lebih pintar daripada yang disangkanya semula. Tanpa suara dia mengundurkan diri setelah menerima surat dari kepala ahli bangunan kuno yang menyatakan bahwa mereka tidak lagi memerlukan kehadiran maupun pertolongannya. Dengan kemarahan yang tertahan di hati, dia pulang ke kumpulan candi-candi yang menjadi tanggung jawabnya. Sebagai pembalasan dendam, dia menyebarkan cerita-cerita fitnahan, komentar-komentar mengenai candi-candi negeri tetangga yang salah cara pembangunannya maupun pembedulannya.

Dihentikannya mobil tepat di tangga candi induk. Dia membalas salam beberapa orang yang dikenalnya dengan anggukan kepala. Setelah berkeliling sebentar agar kelihatan sibuk, dia mendekati pegawai-pegawainya yang sedang membuka balutan-balutan pembungkus singa semen. Seorang bawahannya memberikan surat-surat yang datang pagi itu di kantor pos di kotak perguruan tinggi yang diwakilinya. Sambil menunggu, disobeknya beberapa sampul untuk mengetahui isi surat-surat. Satu di antaranya bertuliskan tulisan tangan. Dibacanya nama si pengirim. Dia teringat, kepala sekolah perguruan pernah mengabarinya mengenai si pengirim sampul tersebut. Dengan setengah perhatian dia membaca lembaran kertas yang tipis yang datang dari negeri lain. Dengan keluarganya, si penulis surat ingin mengunjungi negeri yang terkenal candi-

candinya itu. Surat itu berisi macam-macam pertanyaan maupun keterangan mengenai hal-hal praktis kendaraan, hotel yang tidak terlalu mahal, termasuk pula permintaan tolong untuk mencarikan, kalau mungkin seorang pembantu perempuan sebagai pamong anak berumur setahun selama keluarga itu tinggal di negeri tersebut, ialah sepuluh atau lima belas hari.

Dia mengerutkan kening. Tidak pernah dia menyukai pelancong-pelancong yang terlalu bersungguh-sungguh, yang mengerti terlalu banyak mengenai batu-batu kuno maupun yang membuat potret-potret terlalu baik. Kalau dia tidak keliru, kepada perguruan di mana dia menjadi anggota menyebutkan bahwa si pengirim surat itu termasuk orang yang serius dan mengenal banyak mengenai bangunan-bangunan tua.

Sambil melipat kembali lembaran surat itu, dia mulai mengarang jawaban yang akan dikirimkannya. Akan dikatakannya kesukaran-kesukaran yang dapat ditemukan orang di negeri itu agar si pengirim surat tersebut membatalkan kunjungannya. Dia akan menambahkan, bahwa dia berada di negeri itu sebagai ahli bangunan kuno, bukan sebagai agen pariwisata yang dapat memberikan berbagai keterangan.

Seseorang memberitahukan bahwa singa dari semen telah keluar dari bungkusan. Segalanya siap untuk penempatannya. Dengan kereta besi yang rendah, kuli-kuli itu mengangkut singa itu menurut jalan sampai ke pinggir tangga gerbang. Kelihatan berat, kereta itu bergoyang kadang ke kiri lalu ke kanan, diiringi suara ramai dari kuli-kuli itu. Dia mengikuti dari belakang. Sampai di dekat tangga, pegawai bawahannya menurunkan singa ke atas

tanah. Kemudian mengusungnya ke tingkat teras, bertentangan dengan singa lain yang terletak di sana sejak berabad-abad lamanya. Dengan perlahan dan hati-hati, kuli-kuli mengangkat singa dari semen itu ke atas batu yang tersedia sebagai tempat duduk. Pada waktu itulah orang baru melihat bahwa singa dari semen itu menolehkan kepalanya ke arah luar, yang berarti memungungi pasangannya. Dengan perkataan lain merupakan tiruan tepat dari singa yang ada di tentangan lain dari teras. Pada hal singa yang diperlukan adalah singa yang menoleh ke arah dalam di mana pengunjung candi berduyun masuk ke pintu teras. Dengan demikian kedua singa seharusnya saling berhadapan, memandang ke satu jurusan.

Untuk beberapa waktu tidak ada yang berani mengucapkan kata-kata meskipun semua yang hadir mulai menyadari kesalahan itu. Kuli-kuli saling berbisik, pegawai-pegawai bawahan mengelus kepala singa seakan-akan dengan begitu binatang dari semen itu akan berbalik menolehkan kepala ke arah lain. Masing-masing mencari kesibukan untuk menghindarkan pertanyaan penanggung jawab candi yang dapat jatuh kepada mereka.

Tuan penanggung jawab candi itu bergerak ke belakang. Memandang sebentar kepada kedua singa yang saling memungungi. Maju lagi menyentuh kepala singa dari semen. Lalu mundur selangkah. Memegang dagunya seolah sambil berpikir keras. Diusapkannya lengannya ke dahi yang jelas bertitikan keringat oleh kepanasan matahari maupun kekesalan hati.

Tiba-tiba dia memberi perintah. Seseorang datang membawa palu besi. Dia menerimanya, mendekati singa dari semen. Dengan

sekali pukul dia menghajar singa baru itu. Debu dari kuping yang hancur mengepul. Diminta pensil dari pengawainya. Ditandainya selingkar di leher singa itu, berputar seperti kalung. Lalu dia memberi perintah supaya kepala singa itu dihancurkan hingga ke leher seperti yang telah ditandainya.

Dengan serentak orang beramai-ramai melaksanakan perintah itu. Masing-masing pegawai dan kuli bersenjatakan batu maupun alat lain menjatuhkan pukulan keras ke arah kepala singa yang malang. Sebentar kemudian dari dalam semen muncul juluran besi yang dipergunakan pematung sebagai rangka penegak. Itu pun dipukul, dilengkungkan mengarah ke bawah serendah mungkin.

Kerja itu selesai, tuan penaggung jawab candi menapakkan kaki lagi ke belakang untuk mengamati dengan nyata hasil jerih payah pegawainya. Dari jauh kelihatan sempurna. Singa dari semen seolah-olah terletak di sana sejak berabad lamanya, dengan kepalanya yang hilang entah mengapa. Sedangkan singa pasangannya mellihatkan keheranan. Tentu saja dilihat dari dekat, orang-orang pandai dapat menemukan garis asal dari leher baru itu yang memutar ke arah luar. Tetapi itu tidak mengapa. Tidak akan banyak pelancong pandai yang ke sana. Kalaupun ada golongan itu yang datang biasanya mereka langsung melihat dinding bercukil di dalam candi, tidak akan memperhatikan singa-singa maupun hiasan di pintu gerbang.

Kedua tangan di dalam saku, penanggungjawab candi mulai memerintahkan pembersihan sisa-sisa yang dihancurkan. Dilayangkannya pandangannya ke arah singa yang baru.

Sekali lagi dia puas dengan kehidupan yang dimilikinya. Dengan perlahan menuruni tangga, menuju ke kendaraannya.

Budaya Jaya, Nomor, 65, Tahun VI, Oktober 1973.

The Keeper of The Temples

Getting out of bed, he quickly put on a sarong that had been hanging on a peg on the door and turned off the air conditioner. Brrr. For several days now the air had really been getting colder. The repairs on the temple that were under his control had not been going well. The rainy season and its monsoon winds would soon be upon them and would force the repairs to stop entirely. But that didn't matter. What did matter was that he continued to receive a salary from the host government. What was it to him if the clerks and the workers under him got their daily wages? That was their problem with their king.

He left room and sat down at a long, wide dining table, cafting a wild garden that bordered on the forest brush surrounding the temple complex.

It was now almost twenty-two years that he had been responsible for this cluster of ancient buildings, time enough for a man to mature. For him it was enough time, too, to have assured his continued stay in the country without fear of being tossed out by the government. He had become an important person, a savior of the stone buildings where the king's ancestors were worshipped. He deserved the praise and the generosity of the people, and especially of the king himself. Whenever fellow expatriates heard his name mentioned, they vied to claim him as a close friend, or boasted of having read or seen the books he'd authored. Every time he went down to the capital, friends and high government officials competed to invite him to dinner at their homes. His

awareness of all that attention made him swell with pride. Who wouldn't envy a life like his, especially since he'd done almost no real work and exerted little effort to achieve it? It had all been the result of extraordinary luck.

He happened to have been born the only child of the man in charge of the country's temples. His father had worked very hard. He had known every fold in the rocks, every corner and crevice of every ancient structure in the country. From morning to night they had investigated, identified, and, finally, come to understand the carved images and archaic inscriptions. He had come up with countless theories, had sought correspondences among various tone fragments found around the temple complex, and had listened to the opinions and theories of elderly local informants.

But what of the son? He turned out to be quite ordinary. As if following a tradition, he went on after high school to acquire the highest degrees. Also as if by tradition, he chose, or was urged to choose, the same field as his father's. He had no real will to refuse. To him it was just one of several possible careers and there was nothing else the really preferred. Since he had inherited his father's family name, he might as well take up the same profession, not only to carry on a family tradition, but also for the great personal advantage it might afford him in this land of sunshine.

So, he decided to study archaeology. He spent all his time on his studies and on preparing for his examinations, but most of what he had to do was simple memorization and didn't require much mental exertion, for most of the lecturers themselves were

not really qualified. The ease with which he breezed through university was also partly due to his familiarity with the subject matter an early age. While he was growing up, his father had genially passed on to him various theories and facts about the ancient monuments.

After his father died, not long after the son's graduation from university, the son discovered a set of detailed and important notes in his father's desk. That was one of the most valuable of his father's legacies. No less valuable was the position as keeper of the nation's monuments that the son had virtually inherited from him, too. Perhaps the king and his attendants had decided that it was easier to appoint the son than to have to look for someone else. Maybe, too, they had assumed that the young man would be as kindly, as devoted, and as careful in his work as his father had been.

Of course, he didn't want to disappoint them. He gave the appearance of great energy on the job. People would see him driving around in his jeep, going from one group of monuments to another. He would get down from the jeep to look at this or that, then disappear. To show the results of his exertions, from time to time he would publish a few lines from his late father's notes. His reports to the king were a mixture of his own opinions with those of the occasional learned visitor. He would also lard them with theories his father had developed. At times, of course, he would be forced to study in earnest the written sources or to examine the ancient stones themselves in order to answer the occasional question. That way he was always ready to give a confident

answer and to please the king. So famous was his father's name that people were ready to accept his opinions, too. As time went on, his tenure in the country became more and more secure.

A native woman brought him his breakfast. She wore a shiny black wraparound skirt that almost reached her heels and a waistlength, brightly colored, flower-patterned blouse that revealed a beautiful hollow in her back all the way down to her waist.

From his chair, he gave into a temptation: he stretched out his hand to stroke for a moment the pleasurable line that her back offered. Then his hand snuck under her blouse. The girl giggled, turning to look at her master for a moment. For that was the sort of reaction he expected in his home.

Five days ago he had replaced his last "housekeeper." Each time there was a newcomer he explained to her that their relationship outside the bedroom was to be that of master and servant. In a country where feudal ideas still lingered, this was not difficult for the girls to accept. They didn't care. What was important to them was to have a life that was a little better than their countrymen. They could dress up, put on make up, eat more than enough. And there was the prestige they garnered by serving an important master like him.

"Has the cook left for the market?" he asked in his native language with a heavy inflection.

"No, she's waiting for you. I'll go get the accounts book."

The cook had with him for a long time. She was an old woman with hair cut short like a man's. Whether for ease, out of laziness,

or because water was so scarce in the dry season, women of a certain age chose to keep their heads bare. In fact, most old grandmothers had smooth, bald heads. When seen from a distance, the old women, with their shriveled and wrinkled breasts hanging flat, were hard to distinguish from men.

The old cook had lived in the household since he was eleven. Her repertoire of dishes was rather small, but he didn't mind. More important was that she could understand and follow his wishes. She didn't talk too much and she didn't pay attention to the comings and goings of various visitors, or to the regular change of "housekeepers." Finally, unlike many cooks who worked for foreigners, she didn't jack up too much the prices of the food she bought for him at the market or at local food stalls.

The young woman returned and handed him a notebook and a short, blunt pencil. He glanced at the rows of figures written in the book and noticed that a few entries had obviously been erased and replaced with higher figures.

"Isn't there change left over from the sewing lessons I paid for yesterday?" he asked.

"Yes," the young woman at his side answered.

"Give her that for the shopping, then," he ordered.

He closed the book, intending to continue his breakfast.

The housekeeper remained standing there; for a moment it seemed as if she was about to leave, but then hesitated.

"What is it?" he asked while chewing his bread. "Give it to her now, so that she can leave."

"I needed the change to buy material."

"Well, have you bought it yet or not?"

"No."

"Then give it to her, and I'll give you more later."

Still the woman didn't budge.

He raised his head from his coffee and stared at the young woman. Their glances met and her fresh brown oval face suddenly lit up with a broad smile.

"The sewing course is far," she said with a coy gesture of her head. "I'll need a bicycle or I'll have to take a pedicab back and forth."

Ever since the day she arrived, she'd been asking for this and that! She was much more of a spendthrift than her predecessor.

His gaze fell to the young woman's breast. They were larger and firmer than the last one's. Although her waist was not as slim as the latter's she had long legs that were strong enough for the time-consuming pleasures he contemplated. "We'll see. Go on, give the money to the cook. Tell her she can go now."

Finally the girl went off, her walk winsome and graceful. He followed the movements of her calves, visible through her skirt, until she went through the kitchen door.

He was free to use his money as he liked. The house where he lived belonged to the institute of which he was member. He had a large salary to which were added various gifts and other emoluments from the host government and his home university in Paris. And there were royalties from his father's books and from the one book he had published. It all added up to an easily acquired and pleasant fortune.

It was obvious that he led an easy life. Even before he reached thirty his body had expanded like a balloon, and now he was even fatter. His short frame made him look all the more rotund. His face was always red from the tropical heat and from the effects of drinking beer. Since he never engaged in any form of physical activity, his flesh was soft and his muscles slack. As the years passed, his face came to look prematurely old.

Actually, there were many opportunities for him to go walking. Several temples were not far from his post near the largest temple. But he preferred to vegetate at the post. Occasionally he'd shout orders down from his window and his assistant on duty would come running to receive them. Or, if duty demanded it, he would himself leave the house to supervise the restoration being carried out by his subordinates. He would get out of his car and walk as far as the portico of the main temple. The workers would bow before him as they greeted him and the vendors at the foodstalls he passed would smile, hoping to attract his attention.

He spent most of his time at home reading the latest novels from Paris that the had sent to him, listening to records, and flirting with the latest housekeeper. His massive desk was always piled high with books on architecture and archaeology and with stacks of paper left there purposely. If he had unexpected visitors, a servant would escort them to his study where they would see the keeper of the temples diligently at work. That was encouragement for the more polite ones to take their leave as quickly as possible.

That morning he had to go to the main temple. Working

according to his instructions and specifications, his underlings had made a statue of a lion from cement to match the original stone one on the temple portico's gate. Today they were to put the new statue in its place in the temple, an important event that required his supervision. For the first time since he had taken up his ost, he would see two lions flanking the main entrance of the temple, two guardians, as in centuries past.

He quickly finished the last of his coffee, turned toward the kitchen and called out. The young woman came out of her bedroom and stood in the doorway looking at him. He pushed back his chair noisily and approached his companion. She let him take her by the waist, and the two disappeared into the bedroom. The main temple was actually in easy walking distance, just beyond the front fence that separated it from his garden, but his body was too heavy to drag around on foot. So, that morning he wheeled his official car from the old but elegant building towards the dirt road. Driving slowly he was able to rehearse in his mind the fresh, young delights of his lover's body, savored but a few moments before.

The first time the girl was on his way to Battambang, while touring another group of temples. He had stopped to have a drink at a roadside stall and was attracted by her height and her grace, and especially by the line her long calves visible through the folds of her black sarong. The physical desire he felt for her was instantaneous and clouded his vision. He spoke to the girl. It wasn't hard to do; after all, foreigners like him were not really considered to be foreign by the local people and the foreigner's

desire is the native's command. A few moments of talk and he was free to take her with him that night to Battambang. The girl's virginity, apparent to him that afternoon, was his for the taking that evening. After two visits back to the town he had made up his mind. Upon returning home, he gave his companion of the moment a sum of money and sent for his new lover.

This was an easy and pleasant life! If he were to return to his home country to live, he would certainly never be able to live like this. There people were in a constant rush, each person self-assured and willful. Everything there was expensive. And none of the women at home were as obedient as they were in this country. Here if he became bored, he could just exchange one for another without difficulty.

Yes, all things considered, he was contented with his life. And as long as the host country was full of people ignorant of archeology, he could keep his present position. For that reason he tried as hard as he could to prevent any young people from finishing their degrees in his field. His associates back at the university in Paris were all in league with him, too.

He would never forget the lesson he had once learned in a neighboring county due to the presence there of locals who were expert in their fields. He had been sent, for some reason or other, by the king's government and had quarrelled several times with the local experts, who objected to his reckless and arbitrary ways of working. It turned out that the neighboring country was cleverer than he had originally thought. After receiving a letter from their head archaeologist stating that they no longer required his presence

or help, he had withdrawn without a word. Concealing his anger, he had returned to the cluster of temples for which he was responsible. In revenge he spread vicious lies, claiming that the temples in the neighboring country had been improperly rebuilt or restored.

He stopped the car before the steps of the main temple and returned the greeting of several acquaintances with a nod of the head. After making brief tour in order to appear busy, he approached the workmen who were about to tear off the packing material around the cement lion. One of his subordinates handed him some mail that had arrived at the post office that morning addressed to the postbox of his institute. As he waited for the workmen to finish their task, he tore open a few envelopes and read their contents. One of them was handwritten. He noted the name of the sender and remembered that the head of the institute had told him about this person. Half paying attention, he read the thin sheet. The writer and his family wanted to visit this country with its famous temples. The letter was full of various questions and requests for information about practical matters like vehicles, inexpensive hotels, and baby-sitters for the writer's one-year-old during the family's proposed two-week stay.

He furrowed his brow. He couldn't stand visitors who were too earnest, or who knew too much about the ancient monuments, or who took too many good photographs. He seemed to recall that the head of his institute had said that the writer of the letter was a serious student of archaeological remains and ancient buildings. While refolding the letter, he began to compose in his mind a

reply. He would describe the difficulties that a visitor would encounter in this country so that perhaps the letter writer might cancel his visit. He would add that that he himself was in this country as an archaeological expert, not as a travel agent ready to dispense practical information.

An assistant informed him that the cement lion had been cleared of its wrappings. Everything was ready for the final placement. Putting the lion on a low metal cart, the workmen wheeled it to the edge of the steps of the gate. Clearly overburdened, the cart swayed from left to right accompanied by the noisy cries of the workmen. He watched from behind. Near the steps, his subordinates lowered the lion to the ground. Then they hoisted it by hand to the level of the portico, opposite the other lion, which had stood in the same spot for centuries. Slowly and carefully, the workmen lifted the cement lion into the stone that had been readied as its foundation. At that moment it became clear that the cement lion would be facing outward, that is, facing away from its companion. In other words, it was an exact replica of the other lion on the portico, whereas what was needed was mirror image of the original that would face inwards towards the spot where visitors stream through the temple. The two lions should have been facing each other and looking toward the same spot in the middle.

For a while no one dared to utter a word, although all present began to recognize the mistake. The workmen whispered among themselves and the assistants rubbed the head of the lion as if to persuade it to face in the other direction. Everyone looked for

some way to busy himself to avoid questions from the keeper of the temples.

The keeper of the temples moved back to take a better look. He stared for a while at the two lions facing away from each other. He approached and touched the head of the cement lion, then stepped back again. He grabbed his chin as if thinking hard. He wiped his arm against his forehead where beads of sweat had appeared, no doubt both from the heat of the sun and from irritation.

Suddenly he gave an order. Someone brought him a metal hammer. He took it and approached the cement lion. He gave the head of new statue a single crushing blow. Dust billowed from a broken-off ear. He asked for a pencil from an underling and with it made a series of circular marks on the neck of the lion, like a necklace. Then he ordered that the head of the lion be smashed down to the line he had drawn.

All at once the men busily carried out his order. Each assistant and workman used a rock or some other tool to chip away at the unfortunate lion's head. Eventually there jutted out from the cement a metal piece that the sculptor had used as a frame. That too they hammered away at and bent down as far as possible.

When they were finished, the keeper of the monuments again stepped back to observe the result of his underling's labors. From far it looked perfect. The cement lion looked as if it had been there for centuries, with its head missing for some mysterious reason. Meanwhile, the matching lion appeared almost as if surprised. Of course, if examined up close, a clever observer could

have seen the recent line of the head that had faced outwards. But that was no problem, since clever observers were rare. And those that did come usually went straight to the basreliefs inside the temple without paying much attention to the lions or the other decorations on the gate of the portico.

With both hands in his pockets, the keeper of the temples instructed the workmen to clean up the remains of the smashed head. He glanced again at the new lion.

Once again he was pleased with his life here. Slowly he descended the steps to his car.

Translated by Alan H. Feinstein

JATAYU

bagi Nuning gadis kembarku

Dia tidak pernah diam. Kepalanya menggeleng ke kiri atau ke kanan sambil matanya melirik; atau tiba-tiba dianggukkannya kepala itu seperti gerak yang sungguh-sungguh diiringi senyum atau kecerahan pandang yang mesra dan lembut. Sangat lembut hingga orang meragukan apakah ia betul-betul sudah tidak lagi dihuni jiwa yang sempurna.

Orang-orang sekampung tahu bahwa ia anak dalang di ujung kampung. Tumbuh besar di rumah yang penuh gambar dan bentuk wayang atau senapas dengan kebudayaan Jawa itu.

Sewaktu ia lahir, masih ada gamelan seperangkat di rumah. Dan kelahiran yang diharapkan bapaknya adalah kelahiran yang sangat bahagia bagi keluarga. Bapaknya ingin anaknya yang lahir itu perempuan. Benarlah! Rupa-rupanya dewa-dewa wayang juga ikut mendengarkan permintaan dalang itu dari dalam petinya.

Anak perempuan itu menjadi adik dari anak sulung laki-laki. Tapi alangkah jauh beda umur antara kedua anak itu. Dan dia, anak perempuan idaman bapaknya itu mendapat nama Prita, nama yang sangat dipenuhi harapan oleh orang tua itu untuk menjadi manusia yang baik, seperti Prita ibu Pendawa dalam cerita wayang. Tapi nama itu terlalu berat, tak terdukung oleh gadis itu, kata orang-orang sekampung. Karena setelah menjelang umur enam belas tahun Prita ternyata sakit keras. Sakit malaria tropika

yang menggerogoti otak dan sarafnya. Dewa-dewa wayang marah kepada gadis itu karena memakai nama yang begitu agung. Desas-desus semacam itu lepas mengedari kampung. Dan Prita tetap memakai nama Prita. Bapaknya tak hendak mengubah nama itu.

Prita dikeluarkan dari sekolah. Waktu itu dia baru kelas dua esempe.¹ Terlalu jauh pikirannya untuk mengikuti pelajaran-pelajaran di sekolah. Otaknya sudah digerogoti kuman-kuman penyakit. Kerjanya sejak itu antara lain cuma duduk bermain-main dengan wayang bapaknya, berdiri di depan pintu rumah sambil tersenyum-senyum. Atau menunggu penjual rokok di ujung kampung sana, agak ke samping dari rumahnya.

"Heh!" kadang-kadang dia membentak orang yang bersepeda melalui depan rumahnya. Sesudah itu, satu senyuman memenuhi wajah yang lembut. Dan orang akan segera memalingkan muka untuk lekas-lekas berlalu. Terlalu lembut wajah gadis itu sehingga sangat jauh hati orang hendak menggodanya.

Di rumah, Prita tak hendak diam menganggur. Dia mainkan wayang bapaknya, dan yang paling dia hafal ialah lakon-lakon Ramayana. Bagi hatinya yang mau bebas dia sangat erat dengan raja garuda Jatayu, burung yang menunjukkan kepada Rama ke mana Sita dibawa raksasa. Dia mau lepas, terbang ke angkasa seperti burung.

Cita-cita semula yang dikandungnya ialah hendak menjadi penerbang. Dia mau terbang meskipun dia seorang perempuan. Tapi dia tak boleh terus sekolah, dan dia tak jadi duduk di

¹SLTP

belakang kemudi pesawat terbang. Dulu sewaktu masih sekolah, dia tak jarang menirukan sikap orang yang sedang mengemudikan kapal terbang; di dalam kelas, di atas bangkunya sambil tangan mengarah ke depan, dengan suara dari mulutnya menderu. Kemudian sejenak kelas sepi, semua mata terpaku kepadanya. Mata yang menyinarkan rasa geli dan terharu.

Ya. Prita gadis yang lahir tanpa berkah dari dewa-dewa, wajah lembut membikin setiap orang yang memandangnya menjadi mesra terhadapnya.

Seharian Prita duduk saja di atas peti wayang ketika dia mendengar bahwa bapaknya hendak menjual wayang itu. Kebutuhan yang mengejar manusia tak dapat dikalahkan oleh manusia yang berotak tak waras. Bapaknya merasa perlu menebus rumah yang didiaminya dari gadai setahun lalu, ketika kenduri kematian anak sulungnya hendak digenapkan seribu hari.

"Bapak jahat, Mak," katanya kepada emaknya dengan wajah muram.

"Bapak butuh uang, kelak kalau punya uang tentu beli lagi seperangkat yang lebih baik," emaknya menghibur.

Bapak tua yang berkuasa terhadap wayangnya yang dilakonkannya itu merasa tak kuasa jika berhadapan dengan wajah Prita, anak gadisnya. Anak satu-satunya bagi keluarga dalang itu sesudah kematian si sulung.

"Aku tak akan punya lagi garuda yang menerbangkan aku," dia mempertahankan Jatayu-nya, tokoh wayang pelaku dalam cerita Rama.

Lalu emak melirik kepada bapaknya.

"Semua orang di rumah ini terlalu jahat kepadaku. Aku tak boleh sekolah. Aku tak boleh jauh-jauh dari rumah. Sekarang garudaku hendak diminta pula."

"Bapak carikan gantinya."

"Apa."

"Kakatua."

"Tak bisa terbang seperti garuda."

"Tapi bisa bicara."

Prita tertegun memandang bapaknya, dalang tua yang kuasa atas wayang-wayangnya.

"Dia akan menjadi teman yang baik tentu," emaknya ikut menyela.

"Aku tak mau punya teman dia. Aku mau garuda yang bisa terbang," Prita menjerit lalu lari menangis di atas peti wayang, kemudian membukanya dan mengeluarkan wayang satu-satu mencari Jatayu-nya.

Bentuk-bentuk yang terbuat dari kulit itu tersebar tak menentu di atas lantai. Di waktu seperti itu, tak ada yang menghargai dewa ataupun ksatria.

Akhirnya, Jatayu tetap tergantung di rumah itu, di papan arah kepala *amben* tempat tidur Prita. Wayang lain sudah pindah pemilik. Bapaknya kalah oleh cinta dan sayangnya kepada Prita, dan pembeli wayang akan kecewa karena satu pelaku tak hadir dalam petinya.

Tapi rasa sepi diri kadang-kadang tak terderitakan lagi oleh Prita. Pada injakan ke tingkat umur yang makin jauh, dia seperti juga manusia-manusia lain, merasakan kerinduan kasih seorang sahabat. Sayup agak kabur dia masih ingat wajah kakaknya. Saudara tunggalnya yang mati entah di mana kuburnya. Dia cuma ingat, dengan pikiran sadarnya, dulu kakaknya itu berpamitan kepada bapak dan emaknya dengan memakai caping, kaus, dan celana pendek, membawa pancing serta *kepis*² tempat ikan. Dan dia merasakan sekali itu cium saudara tunggalnya di kedua pipinya.

Mula-mula dia rindu kepada kakaknya. Kemudian, kepada setiap pemuda yang lewat di depan rumahnya, dia melempar senyum lembut, lebih lembut dari yang dia berikan kepada bapak dan emaknya.

Ada seorang yang sangat memperhatikan dia. Lalu Prita menjadi biasa dengan pandang pemuda itu, yang sering membeli rokok di ujung kampung dekat rumah Prita. Diam-diam Prita sering kali menantikan dia lewat di depan rumahnya.

Suatu sore, Prita keluar dari rumah memakai celana tiga perempat warna hijau. Dia berjalan gontai menuju ke tempat penjual rokok. Lalu dengan suara keras, dia membentak orang yang sedang berada di sana. Orang itu segera menoleh. Alangkah terkejutnya dia karena orang itu adalah pemuda yang telah begitu sering berpandangan dengan dia. Prita tersenyum, mau terus pergi ke jembatan di dekatnya.

²wadah dari anyaman bambu untuk menyimpan ikan hasil pancingan

"Cantik kau pakai pita kuning, Prita!" pemuda itu menegur dengan suara biasa.

Prita memandang kepadanya, tangannya memegang pita pengikat rambutnya yang pendek agak menggelombang.

"Bapak tak marah kau pakai celana?"

"Sudah biasa begitu, Dar," penjual rokok itu menyahuti.

Prita duduk di bangku penjual rokok sambil mengayunkan kakinya perlahan-lahan.

"Kau suka kembang?" pemuda itu mendekatinya, bertanya halus.

Prita mengangguk, mengejapkan matanya.

"Aku punya banyak di rumah. Kau mau?"

Prita mengangguk.

"Tapi kau mesti datang sendiri ke sana."

Dia diam.

Pemuda itu mengharapkan Prita akan bertanya di mana rumahnya. Tapi Prita yang lembut masih bicara dengan senyumnya saja.

"Kau mau ambil sendiri?"

Prita memandang kepadanya.

"Mau?"

Prita tetap memandang kepada pemuda itu.

"Bicaralah! Kan aku tak tahu kalau kau diam saja begini."

Prita tersenyum.

"Ah, senyummu saja yang kau tunjukkan," kata pemuda itu perlahan seperti kepada dirinya sendiri.

Dan Prita yang rupanya juga mendengar, menambah lagi senyumnya.

Sejak itu, Prita dan pemuda itu saling dekat. Sering Prita datang ke tempat pemuda itu, jauh ke dalam kampung. Sang pemuda sering pula datang ke rumah dalam untuk mengajak Prita jalan-jalan atau bersepeda keluar kampung. Dunia Prita tak lagi terbatas kampung dan rumahnya, sebab sejak tidak bersekolah dia tak pernah keluar kampung. Tak cuma penjual rokok, bapak, dan emaknya yang dikenalnya dengan baik. Dia juga kenal mobil dan kereta api yang makin aneh bentuknya. Meskipun Prita hanya tahu wujudnya saja. Dia belum pernah naik kendaraan itu. Mata Prita yang lembut itu tak lagi punya sinar bola berpapasan pandang dengan orang lain yang asing baginya. Tapi ketidakwarasan otaknya tetap menutupi kesadaran yang kadang-kadang hilang.

Siang itu mereka, Prita dan pemuda itu, terlindung di bawah atap gereja oleh serangan hujan. Hari yang dipenuhi udara mendung membikin orang kadang-kadang harus mencari tempat berlindung, karena hujan tiba-tiba datang sangat deras dan angin menyelinginya.

Prita merenung ke jalan besar. Angin dan air yang saling bergumul di atas jalan itu sangat mengasyikkan. Alangkah indah daun-daun pohon yang tumbuh sekitar situ turun beterbangan bersama air memutih. Seperti asap rupanya. Dan angin keras yang datang ke dalam lindung gereja itu membawa titik air berkepyuran mengenai wajahnya. Segar. Sejuk.

Senyumnya menyimpul di bibir. Dan mata yang linang itu makin manis tampaknya. Tak ada kegelisahan yang membayangi wajahnya. Sedangkan bagi manusia lain yang juga bersama dia mencari naungan atau berlindung ke gereja itu makin banyak yang

menyesali suasana hujan. Mereka rugi oleh waktu. Air dan angin yang mengabuti jalan itu tak menarik bagi mereka.

"Aku mau terbang," tiba-tiba Prita mengeluarkan suara.

Pemuda itu memandangnya.

"Aku mau menjadi daun itu; bersama angin dan hujan ringan melayang, seperti serimpi."

"Tapi kau mau menjadi garuda, bukan?" pemuda itu menyela.

Prita diam, tapi bibirnya tersenyum.

"Aku baru menulis tentang sebuah siang yang berbadai. Tapi di situ aku bayangkan semua orang ketakutan. Kau takut keadaan semacam ini? Banyak angin dan hujan?"

"Tidak. Aku tak takut," Prita menggelengkan kepalanya perlahan. "Aku suka begini. Dan aku ingin siang terus seperti ini. Indah sekali jalan itu bukan?"

Prita menunjukkan tangan kirinya ke arah jalan yang memutihi seperti kabut.

Sekali-sekali tampak mobil hitam lewat, remang-remang saja bentuknya.

Malamnya Prita makin memimpikan diri terbang dengan megah dan indah.

Akhir-akhir itu, ada seorang kenalan bapaknya yang datang berkunjung ke rumah. Orang itu amat bengis tampaknya, dengan kumis dan jenggotnya yang panjang. Tapi Prita tak ribut *ngopeni*³ orang itu. Cuma, dia mengamati-amati sebuah benda yang dibawa orang itu jika datang. Benda itu hijau, seperti atau hampir seperti

³meladeni

sepeda motor tapi juga seperti kereta angin anak-anak baginya. Ah tidak, seperti sepeda roda tiga.

Dia pernah dengar namanya skuter. Alangkah rindunya dia mendengar suara benda itu. Tiba-tiba dia diserang satu keinginan yang tak bisa lagi ditahannya. Dia mau menaikinya. Dulu dia pernah naik sepeda sewaktu masih sekolah. Dan sekarang, ia selalu memasang matanya baik-baik, mengingat segala cara dan kerja orang berjenggot itu sebelum naik sekuternya. Prita dapat mempergunakan pikirannya untuk mengingat cara menghidupkan mesin skuter itu. Tapi kesempatan untuk menaikinya belum juga dia dapatkan. Kalau orang berjenggot itu datang dan sudah asyik omong-omong dengan bapaknya di serambi, Prita perlahan-lahan mendekat, lalu memegang-megang skuter itu. Matanya memandang penuh keinginan, lembut dan sayang.

Segala keasyikan lain sudah dilepaskannya. Dia tak lagi peduli kepada Jatayu di atas ambennya. Juga dia tak lagi sering menunggui pemuda di rumahnya yang menulis dan membaca saja kerjanya. Seluruh waktu sudah diisi dengan mimpi yang juga tidak berubah: dia mau terbang. Dan terbang kali ini dengan skuter, dengan benda yang punya deru seperti kapal terbang bagi telinganya.

Senja. Gerimis memenuhi hari itu sejak pagi, siang, dan sore. Prita memandang dengan mata yang selembut biasanya. Terpaku pandangannya pada benda yang ada di depannya.

Lalu perlahan tapi pasti tangannya memegang kemudi skuter. Erat, tak hendak dilepaskan lagi rasanya. Dan seperti digerakkan sesuatu yang pasti pula, Prita membalikkan arah skuter, terus

dituntunnya agak jauh dari rumahnya. Kemudian dengan cepat dan tepat tangannya mulai bekerja menghidupkan mesin.

Bapak dan tamunya sedang minum kopi di serambi belakang. Gericik gerimis tak pula ketinggalan untuk ikut menguatkan alasan bagi Prita buat berpura-pura diam di kamarnya.

Prita sudah naik di atas skuter itu. Sudah berjalan keluar kampung tanpa menoleh kepada siapa pun yang ditemuinya di jalan. Dia terus memegang kemudi penuh kesungguhan. Celana tiga perempat yang biru dan baju putih makin dipenuhi titik-titik gerimis. Rambut yang tak pernah teratur itu berpacaran mau terbang dengan angin yang menyorong dari belakang.

Prita tetap tenang. Tapi tiba-tiba dia belokkan skuter itu ke kiri, ke jalan mendaki yang ada di sana. Naik, terus naik. Wajahnya tak lagi lembut, tapi penuh dengan kesungguhan dan kemegahan. Dia rasakan, begitulah rasa terbang. Terbang di antara awan, hujan, dan angin. Inilah mimpinya yang membuntuti sejak kecil hingga umur delapan belas tahun. Dia benar-benar bersikap tegak seperti juru terbang di belakang kemudi pesawatnya, penuh tanggung jawab dan ketegasan pada sikap duduk dan pandangannya. Naik. Dan masih terus naik. Gerimis yang turun ke bumi masih tetap seperti tadi. Jalan yang lenggang itu makin memberi keleluasan kepada Prita buat tetap bermimpi dan di atas awan dan angin. Latar penghabisan tanjakan sudah tampak. Lalu kini menurun. Turun terus. Prita makin tak bisa lagi menguasai kesadarannya.

"Aku terbang, aku terbang! Aku melayang di atas awan dan angin," teriaknya menyelingi gerimis yang terus gemericik.

Dan rumah-rumah serta warung-warung di jalan bawahnya tampak kecil.

Pada desakan rasa yang tak tertahan lagi, Prita merentangkan kedua lengannya. Kemudi dilepaskan. Sebentar dia bisa lurus dengan keseimbangannya. Dia menirukan burung, terbang betul-betul dengan sayap terentang ke dua sisi. Tapi angin dari arah kiri yang menyentuhnya tiba-tiba membuat satu goyangan. Prita tak dapat lagi mempertahankan keseimbangannya. Miring ke kanan. Tanpa memakan waktu lama, dia jatuh terguling bersama skuternya ke bawah. Turun terus turun bersama dengan deru mesin yang mendung di senja yang gerimis.

"Tidak! Aku tak mau jatuh! Aku mau terbang!" dia masih sempat berteriak dengan keras, teriakan manusia sadarnya.

Langit, rumah, gundukan bukit di sekitarnya berputar di atas gulingan tubuhnya yang turun terus turun bersama skuter itu. Tak ada yang mau memperhatikan teriaknya.

Prita tergolek tepat di tanjakan jalan yang mulia naik. Kepalanya terkulai merah dan hitam, darah dan rambutnya. Diam di sana. Diam kaku disiram gerimis senja yang makin gelap. Kediannya menelan kegagahan dan kemegahannya sewaktu tadi terbang dengan tangan terentang.

Prita jatuh, pecah, dan remuk seluruh anggota tubuhnya seperti Jatayu jatuh kena senjata Rahwana. Segala mimpi dan angannya hendak terbang cuma tertebus beberapa menit di atas skuter yang dirindukannya sebagai pesawat terbangnya, sebagai garuda yang mendukungnya di angkasa.

Jatayu masih tetap tergantung di atas ambennya, menunggu buat bersama bermain. Tapi Prita tak bangkit lagi. Dia mati seperti tokoh wayang yang dieratinya sejak kecil mula.

Gerimis terus turun hingga malam dan esoknya.

Sekayu, 1955

BROKEN WINGS

She was never still-forever twisting her head to the right or left while peering out of the corners of her eyes, or suddenly nodding her head vigorously up and down, and always smiling, a gentle smile that was so utterly defenseless people wondered if she were sane.

She was the child of a *dalang*, a puppeteer, who lived on the outskirts of the village. Their house was surrounded by a growth of plants and was full of *wayang*-style paintings and a set of shadow puppets themselves, the life's breath of Javanese culture. At the time she was born there had even been a full *gamelan* orchestra in the house.

Her birth had been a joyous one, for her father had long yearned for a daughter. He had prayed to the *wayang* gods and, as if from inside their box they had heard his request, they granted him his wish. A daughter was born: a sister for their much older and only son. And she, this girl child, her father's desire, was given the name Prita. It was a good name, one full of hope and promise. Prita was the name of the mother of the Pandawas, heroes of the shadow plays, and by giving their daughter this name, Prita's parent's expressed the hope that she would find as good a fortune as her namesake.

Apparently though, the girl was not strong enough to bear the weight such a name, or so said the people of the village, because at the age of sixteen she succumbed to a serious illness. Her brain and her nerves were navaged by malarial fever. The *wayang* gods

were angry at the girl for bearing such a noble and honored name, so said the whispers which blew through the village. But Prita was to remain Prita; her father did not wish to change her name.

Though at the time of her illness she was only in the second year of junior highschool, Prita had to be withdrawn from school. It was too difficult for her to keep up with her studies; her mental faculties had been sorely affected by the disease. Since that time all Prita ever did was play with her father's puppets, stand outside the front door of the house with a smile on her face, or keep the cigarette vendor company at his small kiosk nearby.

"Hey!" she'd sometimes shout at people passing by on their bicycles. A smile would light up her entire face but when the people looked around and saw her standing there, they would quickly avert their eyes and speed away. So innocent did she look, it was not in their hearts to tease her.

At home, Prita was never idle. She played with her father's puppets and memorized the plays, especially ones from the epic Ramayana. Those were her favorites for she felt a strong attachment to the character Jatayu, king of the *garudas*. Jatayu, the eagle-like bird who was felled in battle by the monster Rahwana, nonetheless lived long enough to tell his lord, Rama, where Sita had been taken. Oh, to be an eagle! How she longed for freedom, to be able to fly up high into the sky. Ever since she was a little girl she had longed to be a pilot but now, because she couldn't go to school, she would never get the chance to sit behind the rudder of a plane. When she was still in school, before she had been taken out, she would sometimes suddenly sit straight up on her

bench and pretend that she was an airplane. With her arms thrust outwards from her sides, she would emit a low, droning sound. The classroom would fall silent as all eyes turned towards her. Pity but also nervousness shone in her classmate's eyes as they looked on this child whom the gods had cursed at birth.

One day, after hearing that her father intended to sell his shadow puppet collection, Prita stationed herself on a top the puppet box. Though she maintained a steadfast watch, the needs of life that haunt people are not easily outrun by feeble minds. Her father needed the money to pay off the mortgage on their home that he had taken out a year before to pay for the one-thousandth day ceremonies held in commemoration of his son's death. Prita's brother had died almost four years prior to this time and, as determined by tradition, when the thousandth-day anniversary came round, it had been necessary to hold a ritual meal...

"Daddy's bad," Prita said to her mother, her face clouded in gloom.

"But Daddy needs the money. When he has enough saved, he'll buy another set, one that's even nicer than this one. You'll see."

Prita's mother spoke consolingly but her father, though still strong enough to perform the lengthy shadow plays, could not muster the strength to look into Prita's eyes. Prita was his only daughter and now the family's only child.

"But I won't have a *garuda* that can fly me anymore," she implored, trying to protect Jatayu.

Prita's mother looked at her husband.

"Everyone here is mean to me. I can't go to school. I can't go far away from the house. And now my *garuda* is being take away..."

"But Daddy will buy you something else..."

"What?!"

"A cockatoo."

"It can't fly like a *"garuda!"*"

"But it can talk to you..."

Prita looked defiantly at her father.

"It would be like having a friend," her mother added, trying again to appease her daughter.

"I don't want it for a friend. I want a *garuda* that can fly!"

Prita screamed and ran crying to the chest in which the puppets were stored. She threw open the lid and yanked the puppets from their chest, throwing them across the floor, one after the other, until she found the one she was searching for. In her fury neither god nor warrior had any value for her.

In the end, while the other puppets changed hands, Jatayu was placed in Prita's bedroom, hung on the wall above the headboard of her bed where Prita was able to watch him. The new owner of the set was disappointed to find one of the key puppets missing, but Prita's father could do nothing, such was his love, and pity, for his daughter.

At times the solitude and isolation of Prita's life seem to overwhelm her and as she grew older, she, like most other people --like normal people--felt the need of a friend. She vaguely remembered her brother, long dead and buried, but didn't even

know where he was buried. All she remembered, in more lucid moments, was him one day saying good-bye to her father and mother before setting out to go fishing. He was dressed in a tee-shirt and shorts with a broad hat on his head, and he carried a fishing pole and a basket to put his catch in. He kissed her on both cheeks before he left. She remembered that very clearly and longed to feel that same sensation again. At first she longed for her brother but then she began to smile at any young man who happen to pass by the house. She offered them smiles sweeter and kinder than any she ever gave to her parents.

There was one young man, a customer of the cigarette vendor, who seemed to take special notice of her and Prita soon became accustomed to his glances. She secretly waited just for him to pass by the house.

One evening, Prita left the house dressed in green peddle-pushers, her hips swaying as she walked toward the cigarette vendor's stand. Arriving at the stall, she snapped loudly at a customer standing there with his back turned toward her. The customer immediately turned around and Prita was startled to see that the person was the same young man with whom she often shared passing glances. Prita smiled and turned, intending to walk to the bridge nearby.

"You look very pretty wearing that yellow ribbon," the young man said to Prita in an ordinary voice.

Prita stared at him as her hands played with the ribbon that kept her short wavy hair in place.

"Doesn't your father mind you wearing pants like that?"

The cigarette seller answered, "Oh, she's always wearing them. Her father's gotten used to it by now."

Prita sat down on a bench beside the stall and swung her legs slowly back and forth.

The young man moved towards her, and asked her in a soft voice.

"Do you like flowers?"

Prita shut her eyes and nodded.

"I have lots of flowers at my house. Would you like some?"

Prita nodded once more.

"But you'll have to come and get them by yourself..."

The young man stood in hopeful silence but Prita did not ask him where he lived. She spoke only with her smiles.

"Would you like to come to my house and get some?"

Prita looked at him.

"Would you...?"

She continued to stare.

"Well, say something! I don't know what you want if you're going to just sit there, not saying anything."

Prita smiled again.

The young man muttered as if to himself, "So it's a smile you got for an answer..."

As if having heard him, Prita smiled at him again.

From that evening on Prita and the young man became close friends. Prita often visited his house, far inside the village, and he often came to Prita's house to invite her out for a stroll or for a bicycle ride outside the village. Prita was no longer confined only

to her home and the village, an area she hadn't left since the time she left school. She came to know more than just her father, her mother, and the cigarette vendor. She saw strange-shaped cars and trains but knew only what they looked like because she had never ridden in one. And as new sights and new objects became familiar to her, the strange glow in her eyes grew dimmer and she did not stare so fixedly at people who were new to her. Even so, her mental instability remained and her mind would sometimes blur, loosening her hold on a awareness.

One afternoon while Prita and the young man were out walking, a sudden downpour forced them to find shelter in the doorway of a church. Prita, protected from the sheets of rain and gusts of wind, stared outward towards the road, her powers of concentration completely absorbed by the combat of the rain and wind and their constant grappling the muddy road. The leaves on the nearby trees looked so beautiful and the branches--bending low, then whipped upwards by the force of the wind and rain--reminded her of trails of smoke caught by an upward draft. Raindrops, carried into the church doorway by the wind, splashed against her face. Such a cool and fresh sensation they made on Prita's skin. A smile played on her lips as rain drops trickled and slid down her cheeks. Her features showed no sign of nervousness or apprehension, a striking contrast to the miens of the other people who had sought shelter inside the church doorway and who watched the falling rain with apparent restlessness. The play of the wind and the water that blurred the road and their vision was for them a waste of time; there was no beauty in the scene for them.

Prita suddenly whispered, "I want to fly."

The young man turned to her.

"I want to be a leaf, to move with the wind and the rain, like a dancer..."

"I thought you wanted to be a *garuda*," the young man said to her.

Prita merely smiled in answer.

He then continued: "I've just finished writing about a story afternoon such as this but in my story, the people were all afraid. Does this make you feel afraid - the wind and the rain?"

"No, I'm not afraid." Prita shook her head slowly. "I like it like this. I'd like all afternoons to be like this. Isn't the road beautiful?"

Prita pointed in the direction of the road, now a silvery white. Cars passed by, their shapes distorted by the rain.

That night Prita dreamt of flying, serenity, beautifully.

Sometime later an acquaintance of Prita's father began to visit the house. His moustache and long beard gave him a cruel look, but Prita's attention was drawn not to man or his notable appearance but the vehicle which always brought him to the house. It was green and like - or almost like - a car, but at the same time a little bit like the tricycle she had owned when she was a little girl. It was a scooter, she was told. Oh, how beautiful its sound was to her ears! She was suddenly taken by a desire she could not repress. She had to ride the scooter. Once, when she was still in school, she had ridden a bicycle and now, whenever the bearded man

came to visit, she watched carefully when he left see how he operated the machine. But when would she get a chance to ride?

When the man was engaged in conversation with her father on the veranda, Prita tiptoed to the scooter. Her eyes filled with longing as her hand stroked the remarkable machine. She had but one desire. She no longer cared about Jatayu, hanging in her bedroom, or about the young man who was probably busy reading or writing at his home. All of her time was now spent dreaming of one unswerving fancy: she wanted to fly. She knew that if she could ride the scooter she would be able to fly. Even the sound of the machine was like the drone of an airplane to her ear.

Twilight. Throughout the morning, the afternoon, and now early evening, a drizzle of rain had fallen. The gentle glow of Prita's eyes had turned to a feverish gleam as she stared at the machine parked in front of the house. She went outside. Slowly and surely her hands took hold of the scooter's handles. She held tightly, unwilling to let go. And as if something moved inside her, she turned the scooter around and pushed it a distance from the house. Then, with deftness and determination, her hands began to work the controls, trying to bring the machine to life.

Her father and his guest were chatting on the back porch. With the rain continuing to fall, Prita should have been inside, playing in her room.

Prita was now on the scooter and moving away from the house and on to the road that lead out the village. Her eyes were trained steadily forward. She gave no notice to anyone, did not even turn towards passersby. She clutched the handle bars tightly. Her slacks

and white blouse, already blotched by the rain, grew even wetter. Her hair, usually unkempt anyway, now streamed behind her and was whisked upward by the current of air that ran up her back. She felt calm but then, at an intersection, turned to the left onto a road that ran up one of the hills of the city. Upward, she continued upward, while imprinted on her face was a look of victorious determination. She felt that she was flying. Yes, she really was flying, coursing through wind and clouds. The persistent dream, the dream that had been with her from the time she was a young girl up to this moment, at her eighteen years of age, had come true. She was a pilot at the plane's rudder, and she carried herself as such. She sat erect, upright, with a sense of earnestness and responsibility. Upward, still upward she went. The drizzling rain continued to fall and the deserted road reaffirmed for Prita that she was in fact flying. Above the wind and above the clouds, she was fast losing consciousness.

"I'm flying! I'm flying! I'm above the clouds! I'm above the wind!" her screams alternated with the falling sheets of rain. The houses and the shops in the city below grew smaller. She could hold back the rising pressure no longer. Her fingers loosened their grip, then let go. For a moment she remained erect, with her arms stretched out to the right and left like wings. But then a sudden gust of wind struck her on her left side and she began to lose her balance. Angling to the right, a moment later she was falling down. Down she tumbled with the moan of the marvelous machine rumbling in the twilight rain.

"No, I don't want to fall! I want to fly!" she was able to scream as awareness set in, before the final moment. Sky, houses, the hilltop around her..all were tumbling, upside down. Down and around with the scooter. And there was no one there to hear her screams. The rolling continued. Down and down, down to where the slope of the hill began to rise again. There Prita was still. Her head drooping. Red and black. Blood and hair. She was silent, stiff and still under the drizzling rain and the darkness of dusk showering down upon her. Silence swallowed whatever determination had been alive in Prita only a moment before, when she was flying with her hands stretched open wide.

But Prita had fallen and every member of her body was now broken and shattered. Her dreams and her desires to fly had been bartered for a few minutes on top of the scooter whose roar sounded like a plane or like a *garuda* soaring upward and into the sky.

In Prita's bedroom Jatayu clung to the wall above her bed, waiting to be played with again. But Prita did not rise. She died as the bird, her childhood companion, had died. And the sheets of rain came falling down, through the night and into the next morning.

Translated by John H. Meglynn

**4. Dewan Juri Pemilihan Sastrawan Indonesia Penerima Hadiah
Sastra Asia Tenggara 2003**

*Panel for the Selection of the Indonesian Awardee of The S.E.A.
Write Awards 2003*

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