

**STRANDED AT RENAH MANJUTO**  
*Terdampar di Renah Manjuto*

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## **STRANDED AT RENAH MANJUTO**

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## STRANDED AT RENAH MANJUTO

Riri observed the man dressed in a black shirt who was talking to a large, tall foreigner wearing a uniform with red-white-and-blue sign on his left breast. The foreigner's hair was dark-blond and his eyes were blue, while the man in black shirt was only as tall as the foreigner's shoulder. He was wearing a brown cot with a red line on his head.

"They will try to attack Muko-Muko area tomorrow night, Sir," said the man in black shirt. The foreigner nodded eagerly.

"Okay, I will put the troops directly in a state of alert in Muko-Muko starting tonight," said the man in Indonesian language which sounded strange because his accent was not like that of the man in black shirt. Riri could not see the face of the man in black shirt because the man was standing with his back facing Riri. They mentioned something about "war", "helping the Dutch", and "gift" several times.

Riri hid under a kapok tree. When she saw a white object hovering nearby, she immediately raised her face. Old kapok flakes from the tree were fluttering in the wind around the forest. Riri's sensitive nose became itchy.

"Oh, my goodness," Riri said slowly, trying to close her nose.

"Ahchoo! Ahchoo!" Riri could not help sneezing. The two men stopped their conversation.

They searched for the direction of the voice. Riri tried to run, but unfortunately, the blue-eyed man already caught a glimpse of her little body.

Unforgivingly, the man in black shirt also hit Riri's stomach until Riri fainted.

"Haahh, just an obstinate girl!" Shouted the man in black shirt to the foreigner.

Riri opened her eyes. She squinted her rather narrow eyes because of the sun's glare. When her eyes were already adjusted to the light around her, she slowly sat down.

"Aaaah, she's awake!" Shouted a shrill voice that after being observed, apparently came from one boy who might be her age, teenage children.

Suddenly many children were coming out of the bushes. Riri who was still confused was trying to observe the circumstances surrounding her. She sat in the middle of the forest with bushes growing here and there. "Wow, this is a great place to play hide and seek," Riri told herself.

The forest seemed to get darker because the sunlight had started to disappear. Besides, the air in the forest also began to feel cold on her skin.

Riri turned her attention from where she was to a group of boys who suddenly came out of the bushes. Some of the boys were of a size smaller than Riri's body size, but there were also some boys whose size was bigger. They were now watching Riri curiously, just as Riri was watching them curiously. Their clothes were definitely not the clothes commonly used by Riri's friends. They were wearing sarongs wrapped around their waists, while their top shirts were the kind of clothes she used to see on TVRI when she watched the local Jambi TVRI (Indonesian National Television) show while on vacation at her cousin's house.

Riri's own appearance might be strange in their eyes. Riri was wearing dark brown cargo pants and a plain yellow cotton shirt that read "Rimba Boy" (Jungle Boy) which was a souvenir from one of her cousins who came from Jambi. Riri's hair was cut short a week ago, like a boy's haircut. She was petite.

"Why are you wearing this kind of clothes?" "What is your name?"

"Why are you in the woods where we're playing?" "What are you doing here?"

Those were the questions the boys asked so much that Riri was at

a loss as to where to start. Riri raised her right hand up as if she wanted to ask like in school.

"Hold on," she said firmly. "I will answer your questions one by one. But where am I? Why are you dressed like that? What are you doing here? Why am I here? Why ...?" Continued Riri no less than them.

The tallest of them, a snub-nosed, thick-lipped, and narrow-eyed boy represented his friends. He looked like the oldest of them. "I am Ridwan," he said. His voice was heavy and deep, a sign that he was coming of age. He reached out to Riri to help her up. "I am Riri," Riri said as she welcomed Ridwan's hand.

Though Riri felt weird, it seemed to her that such friendship had already started for many years. Riri felt she had been familiar to the environment surrounding her for so long. "Your clothes are like boys'," said the first boy who was eventually known as Aziz.

"Hush, you are not polite, Zis! Obviously he is a boy. Just look at his appearance," said the other children.

When Riri saw them begin to question her, the girl spoke in a loud voice, "Already, that need not be discussed again. The important thing is, I want to know where I am."

"Oooh, you're in the forest of Mount Kerinci area. Precisely in Angkak Village," replied a boy. Riri gasped. She tried to

remember since when she had been in the woods. Lastly she was in Jambi local library, reading the history of Jambi. How could she now be in the jungle of Mount Kerinci?

"Where do you live?" Asked one of the other children. Riri was still confused with her situation. She had met a man in a black shirt and a foreigner somewhere, but then she was beaten and fainted.

The long whistling sound that split the quietness of the forest stopped their conversation and Riri's reverie. The children immediately changed attitude. More alert, they turned their heads to the right and to the left. They turned to be more and more alert. Soon Riri was withdrawn by the children and ran out of the forest. When they were out of the forest, they ran to a village. Probably the village was the one where the children lived. However, when Riri had not been able to observe the situation of the village, she was immediately drawn to follow the crowd of villagers who started flocking out of the village from the other way.

"What is this?" Asked Riri who was immediately alert to the circumstances around her. The villagers' faces were almost pale. They were all wearing clothes which were almost identical to the clothes of the boys she had met.

She began to combine all the information she'd found since she'd been knocked unconscious by the man in black shirt, ranging



from the boys she'd met in the woods to the kind of stilt houses she rarely met in town. She felt she had stepped into the past. However, how could she start this from the local library, where she read the history books, then suddenly be brought by the flow into the past?

"I must be dreaming," Riri told herself. However, when she heard the sounds of explosion from the distance, she also panicked like the villagers who immediately scattered in all directions to save themselves. But unfortunately, many of them were shot dead.

The soldiers who attacked the village finally started to enter the village. The soldiers were still very vigilant and their weapons were still stretched forward as they were examining every corner of the village to find survivors of the village. If they met survivors, whether men, teenagers, women, or children, the soldiers would gather the survivors in the village square. They were Dutch soldiers.

The Dutch soldiers got closer to Riri's hiding place. Riri felt sick and wanted to vomit because she saw the incident, but she could not run. Her legs would not move. Somehow, someone pulled her roughly into a greasy rice barn, a sign that the barn was rarely used. Startled, Riri tried to scream with all her might, but her mouth was instantly smothered so she could not make a sound.

"Shhh, be quiet, girl," said the voice. A women's voice, guessed

Riri with confidence. She could not see who had pulled her into the unused rice barn. Her eyes still could not adjust to the dim atmosphere in the rice barn.

"You do not want the Dutch soldiers to find you, do you? Come on, come quickly with me," she said as she walked quickly to the back of the darker barn. She pulled Riri down. "Be careful," the woman mumbled.

There was a staircase leading down to the basement under the shelf where the sacks of rice were kept. Inside the basement, Riri saw the survivors of the village. As soon as the woman and Riri entered the basement, the lights were turned off until the basement became pitch-black. Riri hoped the Dutch soldiers would not find them.

Riri could hear the feet of the Dutch soldiers out there. When the soldiers began to examine the rice barn where Riri and the surviving villagers were hiding, Riri prayed that the Dutch soldiers could not find them.

After a while, the Dutch soldiers left the rice barn. Heavy rain began to fall out there.

"We'd better get out. Apparently, the Dutch soldiers have all gone," said a man's voice. A murmur of agreement echoed everywhere.

"All right, let's get out. Ishak, please get out to check on the situation," said the woman who had helped Riri. Her voice was authoritative.

"Things are safe out there. I have checked all over our village, but I do not find the whereabouts of the Dutch," Ishak said after leaving for some time.

"All right, let's get out. Take the necessary things from your houses, then we will go to Manjuto Valley as our original plan. We should not give up now. We will gather with our friends there to negotiate for defending our territory," the woman said vehemently and was greeted with a steady nod from the remaining villagers.

They came out of the basement of the rice barn. Everyone rushed to various parts of the village to collect their necessities. Before everyone left the village, the surviving villagers buried the people who had died of the previous Dutch assault on that night. Riri who observed the lifeless bodies that began to be buried after being prayed for was angered when she saw little children's bodies.

"Why is there still a war? Why should be like this? Why did everything happen so suddenly?" Riri thought irritably.

Still curious about the circumstances around her, Riri was about to ask one of the villagers who survived. The possibility that she

had been thrown into the past had indeed happened, so thought Riri. As she had expected, the clothes of the villagers did look strange to her eyes. The children of Riri's age were still walking barefoot. In fact almost everyone was still walking barefoot.

However, before she opened her mouth, she realized that she was the center of attention of the survivors of the village. The striking difference between the clothes Riri was wearing and the clothing of the children of her age was obvious.

The woman who had helped her suddenly put her hands on Riri's hips. Riri felt anxious. Among all her thoughts, she did not know what to say to these people if they asked her who she really was.

"Wait a minute. I've never seen you in this village, girl. Who are you?" The woman asked. Riri fell completely silent and was confused about what to say.

"I've been watching you for some time and you're not from this area, are you? You look like a boy, your clothes also resemble a boy's clothes. However, I have never seen the kind of clothes you are wearing. In fact, Dutch children are not dressed like you, girl," the woman continued.

The villagers began to look at each other. They became more and more suspicious of Riri.

"Maybe she's a Dutch spy!" Said a man in black shirt with a kind

of black-brown striped headdress on his head. Riri remembered this man. He was the one who talked to a foreigner in the woods this afternoon.

"You must not be a local here. You must be Dutch," exclaimed the other.

"Look, suddenly she came here and all of a sudden the Dutch came attacking!" Said the others again.

Riri tried to speak, but the villagers' angry screams silenced her. She could not say anything either. Riri realized that she would not be able to defend herself in the midst of the villagers' anger.

Riri thought, "It's useless to talk to angry people. I think I'll just wait until these guys are calmer."

A man dressed in black shirt with a brown headdress on his head burst among the villagers who swarmed around Riri. He looked at Riri sharply. His eyes were ruthless as if he wanted to wipe out Riri forever. Like most of the villagers, in the man's waist was tucked a kind of traditional dagger called *kris*. When he came in front of Riri, this man showed a defiant attitude with his arms akimbo.

"Be honest, you're a Dutch girl, aren't you? You want to spy on us, huh?" He snapped with a face that looked as if he was about to swallow Riri.

The woman who helped Riri advanced. "Patience," she said calmly to stifle the mounting emotions of the villagers. Presumably the woman was a person who was respected by the villagers because they always listened to her words. Riri understood their feeling when she saw the woman.

A calm feeling suddenly enveloped Riri because she felt that this woman was fair. Surely she would not accuse Riri arbitrarily without any clear evidence. Riri really hoped so.

The girl who was about 10 years old was observing the woman carefully with the help of full moon light. The woman was dressed in a red suit with curled hair that made her face looked round like a full moon.

"Aah, *teluk belanga* model," thought Riri as she tried to remember various traditional clothing models from areas all over Indonesia that she often saw in her map book. The woman was also wearing a kind of headdress called *kuluk* on her head and a *kris* on her waist just like the men in the village.

"Do not question something as trivial as this," she said firmly.

The man who wanted the most to eliminate Riri said, "It's strange. She's here all of a sudden."

The woman raised her hand to stop the villagers' protest.

"Right, she's suddenly here," she said rather angrily. "However,

look at her carefully. Do not accuse anyone with such vague charges," she paused.

"Our village was just attacked by the Dutch, but that does not mean we can judge a stranger ...," she said pointing Riri "... as a traitor. Probably she was a lost girl and separated from her parents when they passed through the area around here, right?" The woman continued, looking at Riri right in her eyes. Riri nodded.

The woman's words stopped the villagers' protests.

"Well, it's obvious, isn't it? If she's a girl of Dutch descent, she may not understand our words. Obviously she understands our conversation. Let's get ready to leave this village for Manjuto Valley. You will come with us, girl."

The villagers who had gathered around Riri began to disperse and began preparing to flee to Manjuto Valley. The woman stretched out her right hand to Riri.

"Let's go," she said, smiling. Riri welcomed the woman's helping hand with her left hand. Near this woman, she felt very calm. The calm feeling she felt with her was the same with the calm feeling she felt when she was near her mother.

"Mother, where is Mother?" Riri thought of her mother because she was sad to be stranded in a strange place.

They walked through a forest located in the west of the village. Despite the full moon, they still carried a torch if at any time the sky was overcast.

"The people in the village call me Makzu. What's your name?"  
Asked the woman.

"I am Riri, Makzu," Riri said softly.

"Makzu, if we are still around here, the Dutch will know that the villagers still live, Makzu," Riri said after a while.

"How will they know?" "From the torches," said Riri swiftly.

"Aaaah, a smart kid," Makzu told herself.

"You're right, Riri. However, we are deep in the wilderness that has never been explored by the Dutch. We have the advantages in this forest because many of us are already familiar with the subtleties of this forest," said Makzu with a reassuring smile.

They walked through the wilderness of Mount Kerinci. The atmosphere in the forest was tense. People chose to walk in silence. In addition to saving energy, they were also too tired. Their moods were very sad for the deaths of their relatives and neighbors. The thick fog had enveloped the forest so that visibility was limited. The moon was out of sight.

If there were no torches, they would be separated from the group.



The air felt very cold.

Fortunately they were all moving continuously so that they did not feel the cold air that bit the bones. Besides, many of them slipped because the soil they stepped on was slippery after the rain that poured down the area after the Dutch attack.

Riri did not want to imagine what animals were currently crawling on the grass in the woods or in the leaves of the shrubs that she had trampled on. If she thought about it, she would shudder to imagine what the animals looked like.

In the distance Riri could hear the sound of the flow of water that was getting more and more rapid and felt close. She could also see flickering torch rays from the left and right. It seemed that besides the village that Riri visited, other villages were equally attacked by the Dutch.

"Let's hurry, we have to get together with groups from other villages by the river. Otherwise we will be abandoned by the groups," someone shouted in line before Riri.

"Come on, hurry up. If we stay here too long, the Dutch will soon find us!" The shout was heard from the river.

The refugee troop moved faster. Riri was pulled by Makzu to make her run faster.

"Hurry up, girl. As you said, it is true that these torches would be

a clue to the Dutch soldiers to find us."

Without asking a lot, they eventually ran faster.

Shortly, Riri's and Makzu's group reached the riverbank and met with other groups who had been waiting and other new groups who had just arrived like theirs. Riri looked at the refugees. All their clothes were almost the same as the clothes worn by Makzu and the people of her village.

Then the group began to move back down the river downstream. They were walking difficultly because they were exhausted. Among the refugees were some who carried heavy loads on their backs; others who carried goods with both hands; some who carried large bags of sacks containing household appliances and clothing. Little children were picked up by their mothers or their families. Later on the group grew as the human waves unbroken because at every point they met with other refugees who had been waiting in certain places.

The longer Riri became more curious about their destination so she dared to ask, "Makzu, where are we going?"

"We will evacuate, Riri. To Renah Manjuto. The last news I heard, people said, the Dutch will occupy the City of Sungai Penuh. The Dutch troops will attack from Muko-Muko region of Bengkulu. "

"Why do the Dutch want to attack us? Haven't we been independent for a long time, Makzu?" Riri asked again. Makzu wrinkled her eyebrows at Riri's words. However, Makzu did not pay much attention to what Riri had just said because she was busy watching the people who were getting tired.

"Independent? When will we be independent, girl? The Dutch are still everywhere. They intend to colonize us!" Makzu said excitedly.

Riri thought confusedly, "Geez, what's happening to me?"

Riri fell silent and continued following Makzu's steps along the riverbank along with the rest of the group. In the end they arrived at the destination. The place was like a fortress with walls made of wood felled from forest wood. In some places, there were watch towers each of which was occupied by two or three persons armed with simple firearms. Its entrance was also guarded by some of the handsome young men who also carried simple rifles. Riri had seen that kind of weapon in a national museum when she was invited by her father to visit her uncle in the capital.

The fortress itself was located in a vast lowland. Inside the modest fortress stood large houses that could accommodate many people.

All the houses were stilt houses made from wood. Some young men coordinated the placement of the refugees in the houses.

Women's groups would join women's group, while men's groups would sleep in separate homes. Dinner was provided by a group of women who had arrived at the refuge not too long ago.

While resting and enjoying the simple meal she had prepared, Makzu asked Riri, "Tell me, Riri, why do you say we are independent?"

Riri swallowed the food she was chewing. "Yes, it is true we are already independent. Colonialism, slavery, and the like have been removed from all over the world, Makzu," Riri replied firmly. Makzu looked at Riri sharply.

"What do you mean, Riri?" Makzu continued what she knew, "From the information I heard, the war with the Dutch is taking place everywhere. The war in Aceh has just ended. There are many casualties there. The people of Aceh are very persistent in their struggle. However, they eventually have to surrender because the Dutch cheated the Acehnese people by assigning there a false Muslim cleric. If I'm not mistaken, his name is Snock Hurgronje."

Makzu continued, "With his assistance, the Dutch succeeded in crushing the Acehnese people's resistance. Among Aceh's fighters, there are also woman fighters who are not less great than the male warriors. I forget their names. We do not yet know their fate. However, suddenly the Dutch actually want to control this

Kerinci area."

Riri was just stunned by Makzu's explanation. "How do you know that the Dutch want to control this area?"

"Our spy at Muko-Muko reported it to us, Riri. After all you have seen with your own eyes the attack by the Dutch soldiers in the village where we live, haven't you?" Makzu said bitterly.

Riri immediately remembered the man in black shirt whose face she did not had time to see and who had talked to a foreigner with a strange Malay accent. Riri was still not quite sure about something and perhaps it wouldn't be right to say it in an atmosphere like this.

"Aaah, I remember the names of the fighters from Aceh, Makzu. The men are Teuku Umar and Teuku Cik Ditiro, while the famous female warriors from Aceh are undoubtedly Cut Nyak Meutia and Cut Nyak Dien. They have fought bravely. The Dutch are very afraid of them," Riri said with a grin.

"Yes, right. If I am not mistaken those are the names of fighters who feared by the Dutch. However, how do you know about them?" Makzu asked curiously.

"I learn from historical books about the heroic struggles that I found in the library, Makzu. Moreover, almost all national hero figures like them are also listed in history textbooks in schools,"

said Riri. Makzu was increasingly confused by Riri's explanation. However, she only drew the conclusion that Riri probably was just raving because of fatigue. She herself was too tired because of the incident that happened today.

"All right, girl. We are both exhausted. We should rest," Makzu said after they finished eating and washed their hands with water from a small basin. Riri had also changed into the clothes of little girls her age given by Makzu. Although Makzu was surprised at Riri's admission that she was a girl, Makzu did not show it.

"How can girls wear boy clothes? Actually where does this little girl come from?" Makzu thought.

Early morning Riri was awakened by a rooster's crowing. She peered out the window. Outside, it was still pitch black, but she could see people who had woken up performing dawn prayers or doing other activities, such as cooking.

"Has the evacuation to this place been prepared, Makzu? These stilt houses in the middle of the forest are already built," Riri asked as she observed the stilt houses.

"Yes, girl. It's been a long time since we wanted to flee here. However, we did not expect we had to evacuate so quickly." Makzu's face seemed to tell that she wasn't willing to leave her village.

Riri also looked moody. She remembered her activities when she woke up in the morning before leaving for school. She would tidy up the bed, the study table, and her room, then she would take a shower, have breakfast, and get ready for school. Riri always wondered, "Will I be able to go home?"

The sun began to penetrate the darkness of the square where the refugee camp stood and the surrounding forest. Birds chirp sounds began to fill the forest and bring comfort. After everything that happened yesterday, it seemed that everyone in the refugee camp welcomed the new day with new hope too. Maybe that was why everyone looked excited even though their sadness still showed.

That morning Makzu grabbed Riri's arm gently.

"Look at that," Makzu said, pointing at a group of middle-aged men who were generally bearded. Riri turned her gaze in the direction shown by Makzu.

"You see that white bearded man, Riri? It is Mr. Parbo. But we call him Mr. Depati."

"You mean Depati Parbo, Makzu?" Riri muttered softly.

"May I ask you, Makzu?" Riri asked, though she already knew what answer Makzu would give. However, she just needed confirmation to make everything clear.

"What year is it now?"

"I do not know, Riri. However, I hear it is now the year three," Makzu replied unconvincingly. This was the first time Riri had heard an uncertain tone in her voice. Kerinci people's struggle to expel the Dutch from Kerinci region occurred either in 1903 or 1913. Riri herself was not sure which year it was.

"Can I get around for a while, Makzu?" Riri asked.

"Of course, girl. Meet the kids of your age. Be careful. Do not talk haphazardly," Makzu said worriedly.

"Yes, Makzu. I understand," Riri said as she turned toward the exit of the modest fortress that surrounded the refugee camp.

The evacuation camp might not be as big as the village that Riri visited yesterday, the village where she was rescued by Makzu. There were only six buildings inside the refugee camp. Four of the buildings were large houses without any partitions in them. The rooms inside the houses were like large halls where all the people gathered and slept together. However, the wards for women and the wards for men were separated.

The shape of the buildings in the refugee camp was the same as that of the stilt houses she saw yesterday afternoon in the village. The shape of these houses was much simpler and without any decoration, just a large rectangular building with windows for air



circulation. The big houses faced each other and were arranged in two rows. On the left were houses for refugee men, while in the opposite were houses for refugee women.

There were two smaller buildings located next to the wards for women and men. The buildings were apparently the soup kitchens. The public kitchen building was as simple as the ward building. In it many clay furnaces were lit with firewood as a source of energy, indicating that cooking was underway. The building also had many windows to remove smoke.

Compared to the cold air outside the building, the air inside the kitchen was very warm. Besides, the pleasant smell from the food that was being cooked made Riri drool.

"It must be comfortable inside there," Riri thought. She thought back to her mother at home and the same activities she did on this morning. "What is my mother doing? Does she know if I disappear?" Asked Riri.

In the building opposite the kitchen, there was a stilt house about the same size as the soup kitchen in its opposite. Inside were several men negotiating something. Riri seemed to recognize two of them. However, Riri only guessed.

She remembered his posture. She did not see his face at all because at that moment the man had his back facing her. Seemingly, the man was the one she saw in the forest with the

Dutchman yesterday afternoon. It was unclear whether he gave the Dutchman information or the opposite. However, Riri could only bet in her heart that the man was actually a Dutch spy. In addition, Depati Parbo was also present.

Riri left the building. Her thoughts were chaotic. She felt very anxious when the man she noticed also looked at her. Riri also began to worry about her own safety. Would she be able to return to her world? But Riri knew, she would not cry. She would do her best to help Kerinci people in their struggle with what she knew.

Her brain began to think of the incidents of the fighters' resistance in Kerinci area that she had read in history books in school libraries and local libraries. However, she was worried about the presence of the man in black shirt she met in the woods yesterday afternoon. She wondered whether he was the one who spied on Kerinci people's struggle.

That afternoon Makzu called Riri who looked restless and depressed.

"Calm down, Riri. Our troops led by Depati Parbo are very strong. Help comes from everywhere. Everyone wants to fight to drive the Dutch out of here, girl. In addition, Depati Parbo himself is bulletproof," she said.

"Yes, Makzu. I know that," Riri said. "You know?" Makzu surprised.

Riri nodded. "What do you know about the heroes of Kerinci area? How many?" Makzu asked curiously.

"In addition to Depati Parbo, there is a warlord who is not less great than him. His name is Juwad. They called him Commander Juwad," Riri replied. Makzu nodded her head. "You are right. What you've just said is true. Maybe your knowledge is more than mine." She said later, "But I told you not to speak haphazardly about your knowledge, okay?"

"Right, Makzu," Riri said with a smile. She could not tell what she had learned from history books or history lessons from her history teacher at school. If she told too much, they could call Riri a liar because she was just a small girl who was thought to be still unreliable. She was well aware of that.

After a moment's silence, Makzu said, "Tell me again about what will happen next." Makzu had considered Riri as a soothsayer.

"Commander Juwad has a wife named Puti Mas Urai, Makzu. She is a persistent woman, just like Cut Nyak Dien from Aceh," Riri said after thinking for a moment.

"Right, girl. We call Commander Juwad's wife by the name of Urai. I and Urai are both fighting to help Depati Parbo defend our Kerinci area from the Dutch."

Riri did not want to tell much about the subsequent events even

when Makzu asked. People thought this refugee camp was isolated in the middle of the forest, so the Dutch would not reach this place easily. Therefore, they estimated that they were safe in this place. However, Riri was not sure about it.

"Have you ever seen Urai?" Makzu asked.

"Never, Makzu. I have never met or seen her," replied Riri briefly.

"Do you know that Urai is a woman who has strong determination of steel?"

"I know about Urai whose determination is as strong as steel, Makzu. She blindly opposes the Dutch, taking revenge on the Dutch over the death of Commander Juwad. However, in the end .... "

"Wait a minute!" Makzu cut off Riri's words in an angry tone. Riri silenced her careless mouth. She had promised herself not to say anything more.

"What do you mean by that? Don't be careless. Are you predicting something that is not necessarily going to happen? "

"Yes, Makzu. I know very well that it will happen," Riri said with a grin.

"Do you know that Juwad will die while fighting?"

"Correct. He will fall on the battlefield shortly after this. He fell bravely as a hero, Makzu." Makzu shook his head.

"I cannot believe this," she said. "From now on, shut up!"

Riri just wanted to say that Juwad and other young heroes died because of someone's betrayal. However, she kept herself silent because it seemed that Makzu was very angry and began not to believe her words.

Makzu opened the box of betel which she always carried everywhere. She took a piece of betel and added lime and gambier to it. Then she folded the betel and chewed it slowly. She seemed to think very hard.

"You're like a soothsayer," Makzu said with a sly smile.

"Well, tell me, Riri, what else do you know? Just tell me what will happen tonight," Makzu said in a tone intended to mock Riri.

Riri frowned in dislike when someone doubted her words. She did know something like this would happen, but she did not know what to do then.

"What date is it now?" Riri asked curtly.

"The 15th of Zulhijjah," Makzu replied.

Riri did not know what happened on that date. However, she tried

to recall the events as far as Kerinci people's struggle that she had learned from her teachers at school.

"Makzu, Depati Parbo will hold a meeting at Renah Manjuto with all his warlords. The meeting itself will discuss defense strategies to defend Kerinci area from the Dutch's reach, Makzu." Makzu was astonished at Riri's reply.

"You're right, Riri. Later that night a meeting will be held as you say. However, this meeting is only specific to the leaders of the fighters including Urai and me," said Makzu.

"Several times over with you, I was suspicious of you. You could be a Dutch spy like the villagers accused you of last night, right? But I bet you are not a spy."

"It's true Makzu, I'm not a Dutch spy," said Riri fiercely.

After her conversation with Makzu that afternoon, Riri begged permission to go to play. She went out of the refugee camp to go around the camp. As she had expected, the refugee camp was located in an open section. Not far from the camp was a dense forest with typical tropical rain forest plants like large trees overgrown with moss. The diameter of the trees was so large that Riri could not embrace it. The forest floor was covered with many shrubs such as ferns. The smell of moss and soil moistened by the overnight rain stung Riri's nose. The air inside the forest was cool and clean that made her mind clear.

"After this I will tell Makzu about a person's conversation with the Dutchman in the forest. He's a traitor," Riri was determined in her heart. She took a deep breath. Before she could breathe, someone suddenly covered her mouth and dragged her into the forest. She could not shout because the hand smothering her mouth was very strong even though she had bitten it several times.

"Bad girl!" Said the kidnapper as Riri repeatedly bit his hand. However, he did not release his hand from Riri's mouth.

Riri's mouth and nose were smothered to make Riri rather weak. When the kidnapper tied her hands and legs, Riri could not do anything. Only her eyes spoke.

She became very angry when she recognized her captor's face. As she had expected, the kidnapper was the same man she had seen in the forest yesterday afternoon, and the same man who accused her of being a Dutch spy in front of the villagers last night.

Riri looked closely at the traitorous face of the traitorous man. The man's eyes seemed satisfied when he saw his work. He would soon eliminate Riri.

"Do not blame me, girl. You are in the wrong place and time. You should not have been eavesdropping on my conversation yesterday afternoon. "

"I was not eavesdropping! Let go of me!" Riri said angrily.

"Huh! You obviously overheard!" Snapped the man. "What did you hear? What information do you have? Why are you so close to Makzu?" Riri remained silent watching the man. She would not say anything. Such was Riri's determination in her heart.

"What have you said to Makzu, girl?" He said again with a seductive tone that made Riri sick.

"Please let me go. I do not know anything," Riri said quickly when she saw the man was digging into his pants pocket. Riri was afraid if this man pulled out a sharp weapon. As the man bent slightly from his squatting position, Riri kicked his knee as hard as she could until the man fell backward.

Riri heard his curses that made her ears blush.

Riri was shouting with all her might, "Please! Please!" Riri's scream surprised the birds in the area until the birds flew in panic. Riri got up quickly and tried to run. However, her bound ankle only allowed her to jump and made her unable to run as fast as she wanted.

The man caught her. Riri fell as the man's hand pushed her back to the ground.

"If you were not there, my secrets would be safe. I will not have to worry for the second time. I've tried my best.



They promise a good land and position if I succeed in helping to crush this Kerinci people's rebellion," he said aloud.

"Huh, Kerinci people call it a struggle. Clearly the Dutch are much stronger. Why fighting? Instead they will be rewarded with death penalty if caught by the Dutch because it is considered rebellious. Stupid." The man still told about all the treacheries he had committed against Kerinci people with pride. He was sure this little girl would not survive if she was left alone in the middle of the wilderness.

The man thought that now this little girl could be the main obstacle. He did not know what she had told Makzu. However, he would not risk anything at such an important moment. He tied the girl's mouth with a piece of cloth that he took out of his pants pocket so that the little girl could not scream for help again. He would leave this girl in the woods.

"At most you will be eaten by wild animals. Hahaha!" He thought cruelly as he started walking away and left Riri alone.

"If this is the case, I can starve to death, be eaten by wild beasts, or freeze to death. God, why does this have to happen to me?" Riri sighed in her heart with annoyance.

Makzu began to worry. Riri had just asked permission to briefly get out of the fortress in the evacuation camp. She said she just wanted to look around out of curiosity with the plants in the

forest. Makzu thought Riri had been gone for too long so she began to worry. She had been asking all the inhabitants of the refugee camp whom she had met. However, no one claimed to see Riri. When she asked the gatekeeper, he was startled by Riri's voice shouting for help with the birds flying into the sky. Quickly, Makzu organized several people to go towards the direction of Riri's voice which led to the left side of the refugee camp.

They walked quickly through the woods and tried to find Riri's trail carefully. In the end they found Riri's footsteps from Riri's sandals which slipped off her legs and were separated about 25 meters in the forest. No other traces were found. Even if there was any, the trail was hardly visible. Anyone who might kidnap Riri was someone who could disappear without being noticed.

"Smart girl," said one of the men in the search party, who was none other than Commander Juwad. When no one understood what he meant, he explained. "Her sandals are separated some distance away. This gives us an estimate of where she is going," he said. He was not very articulate. So he always talked as necessary.

Makzu nodded in agreement. In her heart she felt proud of Riri. They scattered in the forest while calling Riri's name. Finally they heard a muffled and very small and also weak voice. Quickly they headed to the source of the sound and found Riri whose legs and hands were tied to a pine tree.

"Riri, are you okay?" Makzu said as she hugged Riri as all the bonds that held her body were loosened.

Riri hugged Makzu tightly. She closed his eyes.

"I will not cry, I will not cry. I have to be strong," she said to herself.

"Makzu, there is a traitor among the fighters. He is the one who kidnapped me. He kidnapped me for knowing that I saw him talking to a Dutchman in the forest near the village yesterday afternoon. He is the same person who accused me of being a Dutch spy last night," said Riri, who started talking quickly and almost uncontrollably. She told Makzu and the search party looking for her about what had happened and what her captor had told her.

Riri saw the emotions that flashed across Makzu's face and the faces of the people Makzu asked to join her in the search. Among them was a man who spoke little, but seemed to think hard. An angry and more irritated expression crossed the people's faces. The tall man who had been silent when listening to Riri's story became very angry. Riri would not want to deal with the man, especially if it upset him. Riri feared him.

"Riri, this is Commander Juwad," Makzu said gently. "Do not be afraid of him. He is a good man."

"Forgive me if I scare you, girl," said Commander Juwad gently as he knelt in front of Riri. The smile on his face made a lot of difference to his scary face. He looked like a person who rarely smiled and was always serious.

"Come on, girl, I'll carry you on my back to get you out of here," he said again, squatting in front of Riri. Riri climbed into Commander Juwad's back. She thought of her long-gone father.

She missed her father's broad back. The group also walked out of the forest with Riri who fell asleep on Commander Juwad's back.

Towards nightfall, Makzu approached Riri who was awakened from sleep while carrying a tray of food and hot drinks.

"You feel better, girl? Eat," Makzu said gently, stroking the girl's head. Riri just nodded her head.

"Can you join tonight's meeting, Riri? Commander Juwad wants you to join us and show us the traitor who betrayed us and kidnapped you this afternoon."

"All right, Makzu. I'll join the meeting as long as my presence does not interfere with the meeting."

"Of course you will not bother. Commander Juwad himself ordered me to take you to the meeting," Makzu said with a smile.

Makzu took Riri to a stilt house on the left side of the ward for

male refugees. Inside the stilt house were already mats spread out. Most people who were already in the room were men. Depati Parbo was seen wearing all-black clothes, ranging from his gold-striped headdress to his dark trousers. He was a man with a sharp nose and white beard. His eyes were as sharp as a hawk's, but he looked shady and made the person who looked at him calm. The lines of age on his face were clearly visible. He placed a sword to the right where he sat. He looked a bit tense.

Commander Juwad whose body was large was already present there. He was wearing a white shirt with a blue headdress. He also looked tense. There was a woman sitting next to him. The woman was beautiful. She was wearing a golden red-colored bracket. She also wore a yellow-red scarf to cover her head so that her hair was invisible, just like Makzu. At her waist was tucked a small *kris*.

Moments after they arrived, the young men began to arrive and said hello. The room was finally filled with many young men in colorful outfits. They looked very serious.

Riri saw her kidnapper arriving in the room. Everyone's eyes were on this man.

"Assalamu 'alaikum, sorry I'm late, Mr. Depati," the man said with a smile. He was not aware of Riri's presence.

"Wa 'alaikumsalam, Amir. You are not too late. Come in and sit

by my side, Amir," said Mr. Depati kindly.

Riri who was sitting somewhat behind Makzu was not seen by the man named Amir. Riri watched him quietly. He was short-bodied as she thought, slightly slender-eyed, and his teeth were not tidy. He seemed to smile a lot.

He looked like someone who always gave precedence to the interests of others and paid extraordinary respect to everyone. Approximately, he was 30 years old just like Commander Juwad. Although he was practically good-looking, Riri shuddered when remembering what this man named Amir had done.

The tension in the room was even more pronounced when Amir sat in the designated place next to Mr. Depati. Riri noticed the look on the face of Commander Juwad who looked at Amir sharply as if he was about to pounce on him. However, the grip of Puti Mas Urai's hand restrained the commander to remain seated calmly in his place.

The meeting began. Depati Parbo opened the meeting.

"My dear brothers and sisters, I will not speak at length. This evening we gather here to set up a strategy against the Dutch invasion of our beloved region. We all know that we do not want to be under Dutch control because we have witnessed their cruelty in various areas around us. Just look at their cruelty to treat us like slaves to work in their plantations in Deli in order to

obey their forced planting rules to meet the needs of Dutch exports to Europe. We should be masters in our homes, in our own land!" Said Depati Parbo excitedly agreed by all the inhabitants of the room.

"The land on earth where we live is very fertile. Anything we plant will definitely pay off. That is why the Dutch want to control the lands of our country. Therefore, my brothers, we will not surrender to the Dutch. We will still fight them. We will keep our beloved Kerinci territory to the last drop of our blood. Do you all agree?" Continued Depati Parbo with fiery.

All around the room shook with excited cries of their approval for Depati Parbo's words. Riri had gooseflesh to hear and see the spirit of the fighters of this nation.

Depati Parbo was relieved that all the youths in the audience agreed with him. He looked at Commander Juwad.

"Is there anything you want to say, Commander Juwad?" Commander Juwad looked intently at the contents of the room. He sat cross-legged and looked excited.

However, he shook his head refusing to speak. "No, Mr. Depati, I feel everyone has understood all this. So, there's nothing else I need to add," he said after a while.

"All right then. For the sake of our struggle to defend this nation

and defend this Kerinci land, we will make Renah Manjuto as the center of our struggle. Any strategy will be arranged here," said Depati Parbo.

Again, all the youths in the room agreed with Depati Parbo. Depati Parbo looked at a stocky young man. In his face was a line-shaped wound that still looked fresh. He was a young man who seemed to be joking, but it seemed that Depati Parbo really trusted him.

"Usman," said Depati Parbo calling the young man's name.

The young man nodded. "Mr. Depati," he responded.

"Go to Kerinci Hulu area. Arrange for defense in Siulak and Kayu Aro. Also in Semurup and its surrounding areas. Leave as soon as this meeting is over," ordered Depati Parbo firmly.

"Very well, Mr. Depati," replied Usman seriously.

Depati Parbo directed his gaze to a skinny young man sitting directly opposite him. The young man seemed almost as tall as Commander Juwad and seemed to be a serious youth type, but always calm in all situations.

"Rashid," said Depati Parbo.

"Mr. Depati," he said. His voice was deep and heavy.



"Go to the countryside. Arrange our defense in Ijuk Tebat area and its surrounding areas to Rawang and Kota Baru. Do not let the Dutch sniff out your movements. I know you are very good at strategizing. The Dutch will be overwhelmed by all your fighting tactics there," said Depati Parbo with a smile praising the young man's success in setting up a strategy of resistance in some of the previous battles. Depati Parbo hoped this young man would become a good leader as was Commander Juwad.

"Very well, Mr. Depati," he said in response to Depati Parbo's compliment calmly and humbly.

"You Rizal, go and lead our defense in Kerinci Hilir area. Do not forget our people in the area of Lake Kerinci, Tamiai, Terutung, and Pulau Sangkar. Arrange the line and work well together. I know you are often impatient, but I believe you will do well," Depati Parbo told a young man with witty eyes, a pug nose, and a wide mouth who always smiled with excitement.

His impatient nature had always been a barrier to his success, but Depati Parbo knew he would one day become a good leader to be respected by his comrades.

"Okay!" Rizal said, nodding his head excitedly.

"Good," said Depati Parbo, satisfied with Rizal's ability.

"You, Imam," continued Depati Parbo who was sitting not far from Syaiful.

"Go to Kerinci Tengah area. Make a defense in the area from Sungai Penuh, Pondok Tinggi, to Tanah Kampung, Penawar, Hiang, and surrounding areas. Do not forget also the area of Semerah and Tanjung."

The young man named Imam was a fat man with blushing cheeks like those of a drunk. His eyes also looked like those of a sleepy person. However, he was always alert to the circumstances around him, brawny, and had a cruel lunge on the battlefield.

"All right, Mr. Depati," he said. His voice sounded shrill and high-pitched. Riri almost laughed when he heard Imam's voice if only the situation was not as serious as this.

"Urai?" Depati Parbo looked at Commander Juwad's wife.

"I will gather all the women in this area to fight against the Dutch with Makzu, Mr. Depati," she said while looking at Makzu. Her words sounded steady and without the slightest hesitation. Makzu nodded in agreement with Urai.

"You, Juwad. You will stay here to defend Renah Manjuto and its surrounding area," said Depati Parbo. "All right, Mr. Depati."

"I entrust the division of defense-making in those areas to the five of you," Depati Parbo said, looking at the young men he had

mentioned earlier. "I close this meeting here. You can rest a while before you go back to the duty areas with your respective leaders, the leaders I just pointed out. All of you shall go out, except the five of you, Commander Juwad, and Amir. Makzu and Urai, you should also take a rest. Tomorrow is still waiting," he said, smiling soothingly.

After Riri, Makzu, and Urai left the conference room, Riri heard the heated debate between Depati Parbo with his friends and Amir. Apparently they judged Amir for his treachery. In the end, all those near the building heard the shrill cry of Amir's pain that cut through the darkness of the forest.

Over the next few days, everyone was preoccupied with the preparations for war. Riri no longer provided answers to Makzu's questions about what would happen during the war. Sometimes Riri just replied that she did not know or she could not remember. She was even more worried about how she would return to where she had to be: where she could meet again with his mother, the people in her village, and her friends.

Deafening shots were heard that morning, three days after the meeting at Renah Manjuto. The fighters ran into the woods and hid behind large trees that could protect them from the attacks of Dutch soldiers. Riri trailed right behind Makzu. The people armed with swords, kris, and guns from the spoils of war with the Dutch started out of the hideout and locked up the Dutch soldiers. Close

combat was inevitable. Bloodshed took place everywhere. Renah Manjuto's people under the command of Commander Juwad fought desperately to defend Renah Manjuto.

The battle took place over several days. The Dutch were constantly getting relief forces from Muko-Muko. However, the youths were not discouraged by the fighting. By exploiting the wild forest and Kerinci's nature, the fighters managed to drive Dutch troops away.

The sounds of the cannons, the swords, and the bullets kept ringing out throughout the battle.

Dutch troops who continued to get help from Muko-Muko unceasingly came and then made Depati Parbo's and Commander Juwad's troops finally overwhelmed. One by one the brave fighters who fought fiercely died on the battlefield.

Riri felt something was missing. She ran to save herself behind a big rock from the bullet. However, she kept running without paying attention so that she fell into a cliff. Before she fell, she could see Commander Juwad was hit and then killed by bullets. So was Makzu.

Riri tumbled to the bottom of the cliff while thinking about Makzu and Commander Juwad. Though she remembered what happened next during the war, her heart rested on Makzu. She no longer felt pain when she fell at the bottom of the cliff. She could

have died. However, she pictured Puti Mas Urai leading the struggle of Kerinci people with Depati Parbo and the end of their defeat before the Dutch. Riri was sobbing, not crying for her pain or her fear of never going back to her world. She regretted their defeat.

However, she was also proud of their courage. She was also sad to lose them.

A smooth hand touched Riri's shoulder. She wished it was Makzu's.

"Kid, the library is closed. Let us go home. Tomorrow you can come here again."

"Makzu ...." Riri still burst into tears.

"Kid, why are you crying? Who is Makzu?" The delicate hand wiped Riri's tears.

"Come on, where is your house? I'll take you home." Riri's eyes still blurred so she could not see clearly the face in front of her.

"Home? Yeah, I want to go home, but I lost Makzu."

"Who is Makzu?" The soft hand picked up the history book Riri was reading. Her fleeting smile showed that she understood.

"Let's have some tea in the cafeteria. After that, I'll take you home." Riri followed in the soft hand's hold. She might have returned to her world. She would soon meet her father and mother she was longing for. However, she wished that the one who held her hand was Makzu.