

**THE SILVER LININGS BEHIND THE MISERY OF  
BORU TOMBAGA**  
*Di Balik Derita Si Boru Tombaga*

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# **THE SILVER LININGS BEHIND THE MISERY OF BORU TOMBAGA**

## **The Encounter at Sugasuga**

On the banks of Lake Toba there was an area where many plants had grown, with a large empty space. Unfortunately, the area had not been inhabited. The first to set foot on the unnamed area were Guasa and Tobok. They had both been raised in Gurgur Village. Before reaching the area, they took shelter under a huge tree. As he observed their surroundings, Guasa spoke to Tobok.

“Bok, the land in this area looks very fertile. Had this place been inhabited, its dwellers would be happy, as long as they’re willing to toil. Look at the plants around. They all flourish. This place is so unlike our barren homeland where plants can hardly grow. Should anyone in need of woods, they’d find plenty here. If one wants to farm, the land and the spring will be suitable. What if we name this area Desa Sugasuga?”

“Sugasuga? Why did you choose that name?” asked Tobok.

Guasa asserted, “My Friend, from our experiences along the way to this place, there are signs that we don’t seem to be aware of. On our feet there are marks of thorn puncture. Just look at our

feet, blood's still spilling. It's obvious though, because we're not wearing any footwear."

"I couldn't agree more, Guasa, but this area that you just named Sugasuga, is not too large for us two. If we both live in this area, it won't be enough. Well, I tell you what. Let me live in another place, while you stay here. But, I say that you should look after this area carefully. Don't you ever abandon it. Just look, half of this area is flat, the soil must be fertile, with dense forest and plenty of water. This area is suitable for farming and animal herding. One day, many people will come here to keep you company." "Where do you want to go, Bok?"

"I'll be leaving in the morning."

When morning came, Guasa told Tobok, "Once you find a new place, let me know immediately. I'll wait for your words. Go with all your ambition and hope.

Farewell, my friend. I shall stay. May this area bring me and my friends' happiness and safety." "Thank you, Dear Friend," said Tobok as he paced away and waved.

### **The Look of a Woman**

Tobok left Desa Sugasuga. After he left, Guasa started to toil so the area in Desa Sugasuga could turn into a better settlement. For the improvement of the village, Guasa worked on his own

tirelessly. It didn't take long for the village to be known by people from other villages. They even came to Sugasuga on their own. Guasa heartily welcomed them. He was happy to finally had some company. Many of them decided to live there. Eventually, there were many people who lived in the village.

Guasa, the trailblazer of the Desa Sugasuga was still alone, he remained single. Unknowingly, his age grew more and more. The elders of the village had many times suggested him to get married. Yet, to Guasa, those suggestions were just gone with the wind. One day, a king named King Paniroi paid a visit. The purpose of his visit was to see the progress of Desa Sugasuga. Actually, he admired the way Guasa had worked on the village. He then visited Guasa's house. They had a discussion on many issues. During the visit, the king invited Guasa to his residence. Guasa welcomed the invitation gladly. The next morning Guasa went to answer the invitation of King Paniroi. He went directly to the residence of the king. When they were having a nice conversation, a woman served some drinks in a dignified, truly-lady manner. After the two men had a conversation for another while, Guasa bade farewell. As he got home, the conversation he had in King Paniroi's house still resounded in his head. Even till midnight, he found that it was difficult to start departing to slumber land. The image of the woman who served the drinks at King Paniroi's residence kept haunting him. The next morning,

one of the village elders named Martua paid a visit to Guasa's house. When Martua arrived, Guasa was daydreaming.

"You seem to be musing, Guasa. What are you thinking?" asked Martua.

"Nothing, Sir, none. It's just that I can't find myself sit comfortably today. I don't even know why." "Nothing? That's impossible. Was King Paniroi angry at you when you were at his residence?" "Oh, no, but..." "But what?"

"Here's the thing, Sir. I was invited by King Paniroi to his residence. We had an all-day-long discussion about many things. Then, a woman came out to serve drinks for us.

I had no idea who she was and I didn't have the guts to ask. But the look she gave me made my heart beats faster."

Martua continued, "Oh, is that so? Alright. I see. Well, I think I'll go to King Paniroi's residence tomorrow morning. Let's hope that King Paniroi will be at home. I will ask him about the woman you just told me about. Who knows, that dream woman of yours wants to be your wife."

When Martua left Guasa's house, a woman appeared in Guasa's eyesight. The woman looked like the woman who served the drinks at King Paniroi's residence. Guasa grew restless because of the apparition. He then was puzzled, what had the apparition

meant for him. The arrival of Martua to his house had also impacted his mind. Unknown to Guasa who was in utter restlessness, the woman who served the drinks were also musing in her own bedroom. The young man who once came to her house also came to her imagination. She couldn't sleep well as the young man who had come to discuss with her father kept coming to her mind. She hoped that the young man would soon return to her house. However, her hope grew fainter as there was no appointment to meet the young man. Even when they met, there was no conversation at all.

### **The Time Comes**

As he returned from King Paniroi's residence, Martua quickened his paces in order to reach Guasa's house. He saw that the door and windows of Guasa's house were still closed; not as usual. However, with a slow pace, Martua knocked.

"Guasa, Guasa," called Martua.

"One moment," answered Guasa as he took some water to wash his face.

Martua remained at the door and suddenly Guasa greeted him, "Oh, it's you, Sir. Come in."

As he sat on a mat and drank the tea Guasa had served him, Martua said, "Guasa, I have met King Paniroi. I dared myself

asking about the woman who served drinks for the two of you that day. Turns out, the woman is the king's daughter. She's still single. I also asked the king would he agree if a young man wished to marry his daughter. The king said he would, as long as they would both love each other."

"Oh, alright," answered Guasa. "So, what do you think, Guasa?" asked Martua.

"I'll leave everything to the village elders. To be frank, I'd lost the love of my father and mother since I was a child. I take all elders in this village as parents," said Guasa. The next morning, Martua went to King Paniroi's residence. He then asked the king if he would allow Guasa to marry his daughter. The king then asked his daughter and she didn't refuse. The king gave them his blessing. As they have found suitability for each other, they planned for wedding proposal ceremony. Martua then hurried home and came to Guasa. "Guasa, I've spoken with King Paniroi. You have been accepted as his son-in-law to be. We have even arranged for the wedding proposal ceremony."

"Proposal? That's impossible, Sir. I am but a common man, a poor one. I started to live here from zero. It was poverty that'd driven me to stay here."

Martua answered, "Guasa, you're right. But don't you for once underestimate yourself too much. We know you're the one who



fought for this village. When it comes to wedding suitors, don't you ever distinguish between common man and daughter of a noble. We're equal in the eyes of the Almighty. King Paniroi didn't refuse or persuade you to marry his daughter. Now, are you willing to become the son-in-law of King Paniroi? Say 'yes' if you are."

"Have it your way, Sir. I am confident that the elders of this village will not ruin or lead my future into despair," answered Guasa.

After the villagers of Desa Sugasuga finished deliberating on the matter, Guasa proposed wedding to Donda, the daughter of King Paniroi. They then agreed about the time and all the necessary preparations for the wedding ceremony. The wedding of Guasa and Donda was celebrated in the village of King Paniroi.

What made the ceremony unique, all the wedding costs were covered by the villagers of Sugasuga. After the series of ceremony was concluded, villagers of Sugasuga returned home. Meanwhile, Guasa remained in the residence of King Paniroi. Guasa and his wife returned to Desa Sugasuga not too long after the ceremony, accompanied by the family of King Paniroi. All villagers welcomed the arrival of the newlyweds.

"Horas ... horas ... horas! The newlyweds have arrived. Roll the drum. O, dancers, dance you all well," greeted Martua.

## **Brotherless**

The welcoming ceremony had finished. Village elders convened and agreed to crown Guasa as the king of Sugasuga. It was an idea refuted by nobody. Everyone agreed that Guasa would be crowned as king. The king's coronation ceremony has now passed. The next day, King Paniroi and his closest relatives returned to their realm. Before leaving, King Paniroi gave such royal advice and said, "You, my two children, never lie to escape difficulties. You must know and exercise this. Righteousness are more valuable than beauty. The dimwitted ones would never gain honour. Learning is a must if one wants to be intelligent. Pay attention to advice so you won't suffer. Elders must be respected. Tasks must be carried out well. You two mark my words. Use what we have given you to help those in inadequacy and in need. Never expect reward when you help someone. Be sincere, be just, and be wise so your subjects remain in peace and mutual love."

Time passed unnoticed, Guasa and Donda were gifted with two daughters, Boru Tombaga and Boru Buntuon. Since their early age, the two were very kind and they liked to help those in difficulties. One time, Donda was heavy with the third child. King Guasa hoped that it would be a son so he could become an heir. In pain, Donda writhed, "Ouch, ouch, I want to speak. You two, be good. You must help Father. Ah, ouch... if... you walk forward,

think about what you left behind. Don't do... bad thi...ngs... to..."

She was yet finished when she suddenly turned limp and her heart stopped beating.

"Mother...!" screamed Boru Tombaga and Boru Bontuon in unison. "Mother, mother, mother! Don't leave us. Don't..."

Their scream was heard by the women who had been patiently waiting for the labour of the king's wife. Madam Tio, who had patiently been waiting since morning straightly said, "the king's wife and her unborn child might have passed."

Madam Tio was right. The king's wife and her unborn child had passed for good. The next day, the two were buried. King Guasa, his two daughters and all subjects were in deep grief as they had been left by the loved ones.

### **The Persuasion of the Children**

It had been a while since Boru Tombaga and Boru Buntuon did chores that should've been done by men. They never complained about it. They just whined for the fact that they were brotherless, not to mention that they heard so many times that brotherless women were not too favoured among the kinfolks of Batak Toba.

When she was with her sister, Boru Tombuaga said, "Sis, I always remember our mother. Why have we lost a mother's love

this soon? What if we persuade Father to remarry? Heaven knows, if Father remarries, we will have a brother.”

“Sis, I couldn’t agree more. Alright, let’s meet Father now. Maybe he hasn’t gone to bed,” replied Boru Buntuon. They both then met their father that night, with a hope that their Father would concede to their persuasion. Actually, King Guasa had an intention of remarrying just as his two daughters expected. Too bad, the intent had never been accomplished because hindrance had always stood in the way. In Sugasuga and some other areas, many children had lived unhappily and miserably from having stepmothers. King Guasa didn’t want the same things to happen to his two daughters. Filled with hope, Boru Tombaga and Boru Buntuon went to see their father and persuaded him to remarry.

Their father answered with, “Getting married? I have intended to remarry, but that’s impossible. Let me remain single. Though without your mother, I am still capable of protecting and raising you two. There’s no guarantee that you would be happier should I remarry. I’ll live unhappily knowing my second wife isn’t as good as your late mother. There is no certainty that I’ll have a son if I remarry.”

“Yes, Father. We have agreed to take anything for granted if you remarry,” said Boru Tombaga.

“Alas, how do I put it delicately? I cannot concede myself to your suggestion. You have to closer look at the Mangolois in Desa Habinsaran.

Mangoloi were gifted with five daughters before his wife passed away. His relatives had always suggested him to remarry, and so he did. From the second wife, he had another two daughters. The dream of having a baby boy had not come to reality. What if the same thing happens me? Okay, let’s look at another family, the Mangatas. He had had three little daughters, and his wife died. To foster his three daughters, he remarried.

The expected baby boy did come. Before adulthood the boy had always troubled Mangoloi. The son, Pangultop, fell into drinking and gambling habit, and wandering places. When he had no money, he wouldn’t think twice of selling cattles without the knowledge of his parents. Money simply slipped through his fingers. His mother and father were constantly in trouble. What would you say about that?”

“Let us not fall into the same thing, Father,” said Boru Bontuon.

Guasa asserted, “Then I don’t want to outpace the plans The Almighty had laid out for our family. If I have really been destined to live as a single father, so be it, and we all have to accept the fact with humility. I am getting old, my hair is turning grey, I grow weaker, my sight is getting blurry, my hearing is

growing fainter, and my mind is diminishing. In the twilight of my life, I want to live happily with you. You two could live happily even without having a brother. Don't be afraid. Though I am without son, I have no worries.”

### **Departing for The Almighty**

At times, Boru Tombaga and her sister still envied those who had been gifted with brother. As they didn't have any definite answer from their father, they then tried to hold the *parmahuhon* ceremony, or the 'spouse sortilage' by inviting *Partungkot Bosi* – fortune-teller. The coming of Partungkot Bosi to the residence of King Guasa was warmly greeted. Boru Tombaga said, “Sir, we invite you to come here because we want to have a brother. We had always envied those who were gifted with brothers. We would like to ask you to conduct a spouse sortilage. Who knows we could see signs that our father is to remarry so we would be gifted with brother. By having a brother, our lineage can survive.” The spouse sortilage ceremony was then performed. The Partungkot Bosi decided that King Guasa must perform caution. He prophesized that some unwanted event would transpire within two days, three days, or a week.

King Guasa was advised not to go anywhere and he should just stay at home. Should there be any important affair to attend to, it was advised that such affairs be handled by Boru Tombaga and her sister. If within the two days, three days or the week nothing

happened, King Guasa would be allowed a new wife. King Guasa did not wholeheartedly follow the directions of the Partungkot Bosi. He then asked for leave to his two daughters as he wanted to see their cattles. Boru Tombaga disagreed the idea of letting her father out of the house.

Yet, King Guasa's intent to oversee their cattles was so tough; he was unstoppable. He then left despite the strong disagreement from his daughters. Once he returned home, King Guasa could not walk. It was lucky that their shepherd managed to bring King Guasa home for treatment. Boru Tombaga and her sister were thunderstruck and they both seemed to be able to feel their father's ailment. Shortly after, Boru Tombaga hurried herself to meet her father's brother, Silitonga, to inform him of his brother.

As he opened the door, Silitonga said, "What are you here for?"

"Fa... fa... father is ailing."

"What if he's ailing? Just treat him, end of story. I'm busy. Don't bother my family. Go home and tell that to my brother. I don't have the time to visit him for I am occupied."

Boru Tombaga had no idea at all that her father's brother would say such a thing. She rushed to meet her father again. Before she even had the chance to sit, King Guasa asked, "Had anyone told my brother Silitonga that I am ailing?"

“Yes, Father. I just returned from uncle’s house.”

### **The Search for the Treasure**

Boru Tombaga went back to meet Silitonga as her father kept asking about him. Yet, Silitonga remained unmoved. “Ah, go home will you. I have no time to visit my brother. He’ll surely recuperate,” said Silitonga. Boru Tombaga attempted to summon Silitonga to no avail. She was very disappointed. Shortly after arriving home, King Guasa said, “Come on. Come to me. I knew what you two did. I know my brother very well. I will soon depart to meet The Creator. Be patient. Don’t envy and fear others who had been gifted with brothers. Should I pass away, please bury me next to your mother.”

Those were the last words of King Guasa to his two daughters. He then passed away peacefully, meanwhile none of his daughters were married yet. The death of King Guasa was a *sari matua* which meant a death with many dependants. The word of King Guasa’s passing reached the ears of people in other villages. His funeral ceremony was celebrated for seven days and nights. During the ceremony, many guests came. All the supplies for the ceremony were covered by them all. Before the funeral, Silitonga came to visit his brother.

One of the servants of King Guasa said, “What have you come here for, Bapak Uda? You really are heartless, huh? You never



even came to visit your brother when he was ailing. When he's about to be buried, now here you are. The deceased had asked for your presence, but you never came, not even once. You gave us too much excuse. Just leave us immediately before we banish you from this ground. For your information, we deign not receive any help from you. We are ready to maintain the family of the deceased intact.”

Silitonga remained silent, he was upset and aware of his fault. Nevertheless, Silitonga tried to hatch a plot. He had always wanted his brother's possessions. He thought he deserved it. He knew his brother died without a male heir. When a father died without a male heir, his possessions would be passed to his brother. He thought that Boru Tombaga and Boru Bontuan didn't deserve to inherit his brother's kingdom. In his opinion, he was entitled to all his brother's possessions. Yet, in no time, the remains of King Guasa was about to be buried.

### **Misery and an Unexpected Help**

The funeral had been accomplished. The night after the funeral, Boru Bontuan went to her father's chamber to clean it. Previously, Boru Tombaga had hidden all the possessions left by their father before he was buried. It turned out that Boru Tombaga was smart and she was aware of Silitonga's evil intent. This was because her father had no son to his death or else his possessions would be taken by his brother. Possessions under such

circumstances would be 'ditean' or taken over by the male sibling of the deceased. Boru Tombaga and her sister couldn't sit idly by to such evil intent. Unexpectedly, Silitonga did come to ask for his brother's possessions all of a sudden. Boru Tombaga abruptly murmured, "It's him again. I'm just afraid he had come for father's possessions."

As he arrived, Silitonga said, "Now, I am to take my brother's possessions."

"What? Father's possession including this house cannot be possessed by anyone but the two of us. We are indeed brotherless women, but we have the right over them as owners and heiresses of our father's and mother's possessions nonetheless. Nobody is entitled to claim, not even you, Bapak Uda."

As the last words of Boru Tombaga hit him hard in the face, Silitonga became upset and furious. His nieces would not comply with his demands. Finally, he couldn't contain himself.

As they refused to follow their uncle's bidding, he then hit his two nieces. Silitonga gagged the mouths of Boru Tombaga and Boru Bontuan so they wouldn't make a sound. As he couldn't find his brother's possession as he had hoped, he left. Not long after Silitonga left, an old woman passed in front of Boru Tombaga's house. She had a bad feeling that she then decided to come by to the house.

“Dear child,” she greeted Boru Tombaga and Boru Buntuon. There was no reply after a while. She then mustered all her courage to open the door. She could see that the house was cluttered. She suspected that something bad had happened, especially after she could see that the two girls sprawled in limp and mouths gagged. With all her energy, she tried to unleash the gags from their mouths. After gaining consciousness, Boru Buntuon said, “Sis, what do we do? Tomorrow morning, Uncle Silitonga will surely return. If we don’t tell him about father’s possession, we will be scolded and thumped.”

“I tell you what, Sis. Let’s leave this village immediately. Now, you go first to the cave in the Partangisan forest. That’s where we will hide. Tomorrow, before the cocks crow, I will catch you up. Take your stuffs as required. Be careful on the way there,” said Boru Tombaga.

### **Initial Encounter at the Partangisan Forest**

Their exodus from Desa Sugasuga to the cave at the Partangisan Forest was blessed by the old woman. They then entrusted their house to Mangoloi. The next morning, Boru Tombaga left to catch her sister up at the Partangisan Forest. They both planned to lived temporarily at the cave until the time was right for them. Only some villagers knew they would be staying there. While they lived in the forests, they would be farming. Their lives were safe without Silitonga having to disturb them.

The cave in the Partangisan Forest had been heard by Asman, a handsome man from Desa Onan Ganjang. One day, Asman went to the Partangisan Forest. He saw a woman washing a *hudon tano* – clay cauldron. He said to himself, “Who might that woman be? Could she be the haunter of this forest?” Slowly Asman observed the woman, Boru Tombaga then looked back. “Sister fear not. I am Asman, from a village nearby this forest.”

“Oh, okay. My sister and I are here to evade and hide the wrath of Silitonga. He is the brother of our father, King Guasa. But...”

“But ... what?” asked Asman

“It’s nearly evening. If you don’t mind, I will clean up my laundry. Should you want it, you are welcomed to come to our place,” said Boru Tombaga. From outside the cave, Boru Tombaga called her sister as she invited Asman to come inside the cave. A weird feeling hit Asman as he heard the mentioning of King Guasa. He had heard this name from his father. In his father’s account, King Guasa was his best friend even back to the time when he was still single.

“You two, when my father was still alive, he told me that he was your father’s best friend. Indeed, they never met again in their old days. Alright, let’s leave this forest immediately. We must return to Desa Sugasuga,” said Asman. When they reached Desa Sugasuga. They were welcomed by the villagers. A thanksgiving

ceremony was offered. Someone uttered from behind a window, “Well, let’s keep it short then. Let’s have Asman marry Boru Tombaga. I think none of us wouldn’t agree.”

Long story short, Asman officially married Boru Tombaga. Not too long after the marriage, Asman was then made the new king at Desa Sugasuga.