



Your Stories

This page will feature the selected short story, poem, or article of the month along with its English translation.

Bilingual writers, we would appreciate your help with the translation of Indonesian work into English. Please contact us at dalangpublishing@gmail.com

Please adhere to the following maximum word limits:

Short story – 3000 words.

Poem – 500 words / poem – please submit 5 poems on individual pages.

Article – 2000 words.

Please follow our [Writer's Guidelines](#) for formatting and other submission directions.

Mitoni Terakhir



Ranang Aji SP is an Indonesian fiction and nonfiction writer. He was born in Klaten, Central Java, on December 1, 1978. His short stories have appeared in anthologies such as *Srigala Yang Berzikir Di Akhir Waktu* (Nyala, 2018), *Hujan Klise* (Penerbit Buku Kompas, 2019), and *Urban(is)me* (Binsar Hiras, 2020). Ranang has a

presence in both printed and online publications, as well as numerous newspapers, including Kompas, Koran Tempo, Media Indonesia, Republika, Jawa Pos, Lampung Post, Harian Fajar Makasar. His essay, "Sepotong Senja Untuk Pacarku: Antara Sastra Modern-PascaModern, Makna Dan Jejak Terpengaruhannya," was included in *Antologi Kritik Sastra: Teks, Pengarang dan Masyarakat* an anthology of the 20 best essays from the 2020 Literary Criticism Contest, held by the Indonesian Ministry of Culture and Education.

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Mitoni Terakhir

Di halaman belakang rumah, peninggalan suamiku, aku duduk sendiri, memandang pohon randu alas yang meranggas. Kukira, waktuku sudah segera akan tiba. Aku tidak tahu kapan itu terjadi, tapi, cepat atau lambat, malaikat maut itu pasti akan segera datang menjemputku. Menyusul para leluhurku untuk berkumpul bersama. Kematian adalah kepastian buat siapa saja, apalagi buat perempuan seusiaku saat ini. Sebelum ajalku, aku hanya ingin merasakan, menyaksikan dan memberikan berkah pada darah dagingku yang terlahir di bumi ini, agar tumbuh sehat sebagai jiwa terberkati. Seperti para leluhurku juga memberkatiku di masa lalu.

Dari rahimku ini, telah lahir tujuh anak perempuan dan setiap anak telah melahirkan anak-anaknya, para cucuku yang lucu. Kecuali anak bungsu, Setyaningsih, dia baru dua tahun menikah dan belum sempat mendapatkan anak. Semua anak dan cucuku mendapat restu dan berkah dari orangtuanya dengan cara yang sama. Eka Yuningsih, anak pertamaku, ketika mengandung anak pertamanya, semua menyambutnya dengan bahagia. Ketika usia kandungannya menginjak tujuh bulan, seperti adat Jawa yang terberkati, kami, ayah dan ibunya menggelar acara mitoni. Demikian pula dengan anak-anakku yang lain.

Dalam setiap hajatan itu, semua kerabat datang, semua tetangga hadir juga anak-anak sekitar yang ceria menonton rangkaian acara. Mereka

The Last Mitoni



Novita Dewi started writing poetry and short stories during her elementary and middle school days. She published in *Si Kuncung* and *Bobo*, children magazines, as well as wrote for the children's columns featured in *Kompas* and *Sinar Harapan* (now *Suara Pembaruan*). She now nurtures her interest in literature and translation for scientific journals. Novita is widely published. The short stories translated and published by Dalang Publishing are her first attempts of literary translation.

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The Last Mitoni

Sitting alone in the backyard of the house I inherited from my husband, I look at the withered tree. I think my time will come soon. I do not know when it will be, but, sooner or later, the angel of death shall come to unite me with my ancestors. Death is a certainty for everyone, especially for a woman of my age. But, before my time comes, I just want to feel, witness, and bless my children so that they become healthy, honorable souls. I'd like to give them what my ancestors gave to me.

I have given birth to seven daughters and six have given birth to my adorable grandchildren. My youngest daughter, Setyaningsih, has been married for two years and has yet to have children. All my children and grandchildren have received their parents' blessings in the traditional Javanese way.

When Eka Yuningsih, my eldest daughter, was pregnant with her first child, everyone was happy. When she reached her seventh month of pregnancy, following revered Javanese custom, we, her parents, held a mitoni, a ceremonial celebration to bless the mother and unborn child. We did this also for our other children.

All of my relatives and neighbors came with their children to every celebration. The children enjoyed the entire affair. They crowded into the yard, laughing. Sometimes they came to watch how we poured

tertawa sembari berdesak-desakan di halaman. Terkadang mereka ikut melihat bagaimana kami mengguyur tubuh anak dan cucuku yang masih di dalam rahimnya, dengan air bunga. Tentu saja aku tahu anak-anak itu menginginkan dawet ayu, dan juga semua makanan yang kami sediakan untuk hajatan ini. Aku membiarkan mereka ribut, gaduh di antara suara gending Jawa yang mengiringi. Terkadang, aku berpura-pura marah, meminta mereka agar diam dan menunggu di latar. Sambil aku tanya, sudah bawa kereweng belum. Kereweng adalah pecahan genteng. Dalam acara mitoni, biasanya ditukarkan dengan dawet, dan lain-lain.

"Sudaah," jawab mereka serempak.

Namun, semua upayaku agar mereka diam, sia-sia belaka. Para mahluk kecil nan berisik itu, selalu tak tertaklukkan oleh siapa saja, kecuali oleh dawet ayu. Perut mereka yang seluas langit dan sedalam lautan, tak juga kunjung puas, meskipun bermangkok-mangkok dawet sudah disiramkan ke dalam perutnya. Bahkan ketika perut itu sudah dijejali oleh jajanan yang mereka inginkan. Ah, dasar anak-anak.

Semua tampak menjadi sibuk dan repot, memang, namun kerepotan itu membuat kami, para orangtua bahagia. Karena, aku dan mereka tahu, bahwa semua kerepotan dan keringat dari para kerabat, tetangga yang berkumpul dalam acara itu, adalah pancaran tangan kami semua yang menjemput cahaya berkah dari langit. Cahaya berkah yang kemudian kami berikan pada anak dan cucuku di dalam kandungan. Agar kelak, mereka juga tumbuh dan meneruskan berkah itu pada anak cucu mereka. Juga melalui cara ini, sebagai orang Jawa.

Dahulu, di masa kecilku, aku juga seperti mereka anak-anak kampung yang ceria itu ketika ada hajatan, tak kecuali juga ketika ada yang menggelar hajatan bagi seorang calon ibu. Aku bersama kangmasku, setelah mendengar kabar itu, segera berlari gembira di sepanjang jalan kampung, mengumpulkan pecahan genteng, berebut dengan teman-teman yang lain. Semua itu nanti kami tukarkan dengan segelas dawet dan makanan lain. Kami jugaizinkan ayah menonton pertunjukan wayang orang atau wayang kulit setelahnya.

Biasanya, anak-anak punya cara agar mendapatkan lebih dawet ayu. Mereka antri sampai berkali-kali, hingga akhirnya, ibu-ibu tua yang menjaga dan melayani, menegur mereka dengan suara serak dan muka cemberut, "Sudah, gantian sama yang lain. Masak terus menerus berputar seperti itu."

Kami selalu suka dengan semua hajatan, tanpa kecuali. Kami sadar, semua itu cara para leluhur, agar kami anak cucunya bersyukur dan menghargai lingkungan. Tanah yang menumbuhkan semua kebutuhan kami, dan juga pada Sang Hyang Widi di atas langit. Semua itu, tentu saja, seperti kata bapakku, Mitoni adalah cara orang Jawa mencintai, menghargai kehidupan mereka di muka bumi. Juga tentang persoalan bagaimana kelak seluruh keturunan bisa menjalani kehidupan dengan berkah orangtua mereka yang mengemban amanah menjaga kehidupan hingga anak cucu di masa depan.

Namun, sayang, Setyaningsih, anak bungsu, agak berbeda. Ketika hamil pada akhirnya, dia menolak melakukan hajatan mitoni. Katanya, adat itu sudah terlalu kuno – tak lagi mencerminkan lingkungan masyarakat dan pendidikannya. Katanya, negara barat, Amerika, tempatnya bersekolah, tak ada kebiasaan seperti hajatan di Jawa. Dia memang berniat melakukan hajatan, tetapi dengan cara yang berbeda. Cara yang lebih sederhana. Dia sebut hajatan itu dalam bahasa Inggris, baby shower. Aku belum pernah mendengar sebelumnya, sampai dia katakan itu.

"Teman-teman sudah seperti itu semua, Bu," katanya mencoba meyakinkanku.

"Apa bedanya, Nduk? Lagipula kenapa harus seperti teman-temanmu?"

"Repot, Bu, hajatan seperti itu, ribet dan tak masuk akal," katanya padaku, sedikit tampak enggan menjawab.

"Tentu saja tidak begitu," kataku sedih. "Tentu saja di sana tak ada mitoni. Semua tempat punya caranya sendiri." Kupandang mukanya yang bersih dan halus. Dia perempuan yang cantik. Bahkan lebih cantik dari aku. Lebih pintar dariku. Semua yang diidamkan perempuan, ada padanya. Dia bisa membentuk apa yang dia suka dalam wajah dan tubuhnya, dengan uangnya. Begitu cantik dirinya dengan semua perubahan itu, sampai aku tak yakin apakah benar dia anakku, Setyaningsih. Semua agak berubah, dari alisnya, bentuk bibirnya dan hidungnya yang menjadi mancung. Hampir semuanya tak lagi milikku, atau suamiku.

water, scented with flower petals, over our daughter and unborn grandchild.

I knew for sure that the children craved dawet ayu, a Javanese cold drink made of coconut milk and flavored tapioca balls, and all the food we provided for these celebrations. I allowed the children to make a lot of noise while an orchestra played Javanese music. Sometimes, I pretended to be angry and told them to be quiet and wait in the front yard. I asked them, "Have you brought kereweng with you?" At a mitoni, these roof-tile chips are used as tokens to exchange for dawet ayu and other snacks.

"Yes, we sure have," the children chanted.

But all my efforts to quiet them were in vain. Nothing but dawet ayu could quiet these noisy little creatures whose stomachs were as wide as the sky and as deep as the sea. And, even though they had poured bowls of dawet ayu into their bellies and stuffed their tummies with snacks, they wanted more. Ah, that's just the way children are.

Everyone seemed to be in a frenzy. But the flurry of activities made us parents happy. We all knew that the efforts made by relatives and neighbors who had gathered for the event reflected the light and blessings from the sky — blessings that we then bestowed upon my child and the grandchild inside her womb so that, later, they could pass on these blessing to their children and grandchildren in a similar manner. This is the Javanese way.

Back then, in my childhood, I also acted like those cheerful village children when there was a celebration. One held for a prospective mother was no exception. As soon as we heard that there would be a celebration, my kangmas, brother, and I immediately ran happily along the village road to collect shards of roof tile, fighting over them with other children. Later, we would exchange the shards for a glass of dawet ayu and other snacks. My father also allowed us to watch the puppet show afterwards.

Usually, children would find a way to get more dawet ayu. They would line up many times until, finally, the old woman in charge of the dawet table scolded them. "That's enough!" Frowning, she would add, "Let others have a turn. Don't keep coming back for more." We always loved celebrations of all kinds, without exception. We all knew that through these celebrations our elders showed us how to be grateful and respect our environment, how to revere the land that grows all our needs, and honor Sang Hyang Widi, The Great One, in heaven. Above all, my father said, mitoni is the way Javanese people show love and respect for their life on earth. It is the ability to live a life full of blessings from our parents, who fulfilled the task of protecting the environment for future generations.

Unfortunately, Setyaningsih, my youngest child, thinks a little different. When she finally became pregnant, she refused to celebrate the occasion with a mitoni. She said that the practice was too old-fashioned; it no longer reflected her community and social environment. She said that in Western countries, like America, where she received her education, people do not have traditions like those of the Javanese. She intended to celebrate the rite of passage, but in a different way. A simpler way. She said the celebration was called a baby shower in English. I had never heard the expression before she used it.

"All my friends throw a baby shower, Mom," Setyaningsih said, trying to convince me.

"What's the difference?" I said. "Besides, why do you have to be like your friends?"

My daughter hesitated for a moment, then said, "Mom, a mitoni is troublesome, complicated, and absurd."

"That's not true," I said, hurt.

"Of course there is no mitoni over there in America. Every culture has its own traditions." I looked at my daughter's clean, smooth face. She was a beautiful woman. Prettier than me. Smarter than me. She had everything that a woman could want. With her money, she shaped her face and body any way she desired.

All of her shapings had made her so beautiful that I wasn't sure if she really was Setyaningsih, my daughter. All her features seemed changed: the curve of the eyebrows, the shape of the lips, and the nose that had turned pointy. Nothing about her was mine or my husband's.

I began to realize that change was easily made in this world. Everything would always change. Apart from death, there was no certainty. My

Aku mulai sadar, dunia ini memang mudah berubah. Semua akan selalu berubah. Tak ada kepastian, selain kematian, bukan? Anakku, Setyaningsih juga tampak jauh berubah. Dia tak lagi seperti anak-anak yang dulu selalu kurawat dan kuberikan pendidikan, agar nantinya ia tumbuh menjadi perempuan Jawa yang ikut merawat miliknya sendiri, dengan percaya diri.

Tapi, tampaknya dia begitu terpesona dengan dunia yang berbeda dari yang dimilikinya. Setyaningsih juga selalu berbahasa lain, yang saudara-saudaranya tak menggunakannya. Berpakaian seperti noni-noni berambut jerami yang menjadi teman-temannya. Suaminya, sama saja. Pramono, seorang pengusaha berhasil yang lebih banyak hidup di negara asing dan mulai kesulitan melafalkan bahasa-bahasa setempat. Dia nurutin saja semua apa yang dikatakan istrinya. Katanya, "Ibu tak usah repot-repot bikin hajatan itu. Biar kami sendiri yang menangani."

Dari tujuh anak perempuanku, Setyaningsih memang berbeda. Persis seperti pepatah lama, tak ada yang sempurna dari semua telur milik kita. Aku tak menyalahkannya. Dia mendapatkan sekolah yang telah membuatnya berpikir dia lebih pintar dari orang lain. Aku hanya ingin dirinya menjadi diri sendiri, sebagai orang Jawa. Menjalani upacara adat yang sudah menjadi baju masyarakatnya sejak dulu. Itu saja.

Usiaku mungkin akan selesai dalam hitungan waktu yang tidak terlalu lama. Meskipun usia manusia hanya Tuhan yang tahu akan berapa lama. Aku hanya ingin menjalani sekali lagi merasakan bagaimana indahnya memberikan berkat pada anak cucuku yang masih sempat aku lihat. Memberkati bersama para kerabat, tetangga dan anak-anak yang lucu nan bandel dalam acara mitoni.

Eka Yuningsih sudah membantuku menyampaikan semua keinginanmu pada Setyaningsih. Katanya, aku harus bersabar. Tidak perlu ngotot dan memaksanya yang sudah punya pendapatnya sendiri. Dia ingin membuat acaranya sendiri, seperti semangat zamannya yang ingin seperti bangsa lain.

"Mungkin paling penting adalah doa ibu saja," bujuk Yuningsih padaku, setelah gagal membujuk Setyaningsih.

"Ibu, jika tetap berkeras hati juga, nanti malah jatuh sakit. Ibu harus jaga kesehatan Ibu, agar bisa menyaksikan cucu-cucu tumbuh."

"Apakah Ibu salah, jika ingin memberikan berkah pada kandungan anakku. Doa terakhir yang tak akan terdengar lagi setelah kematianku nanti?" Yuningsih kulihat bimbang. Dia hanya diam dan mencium tanganku.

"Ibu jangan bicara seperti itu," katanya kemudian.

Di halaman belakang rumah warisan suamiku ini, aku duduk menatap pohon randu alas yang meranggas –pohon yang tak lagi berdaun di musim kemarau. Mendengarkan tembang megatruh yang mengingatkanku agar bersiap dijemput kematian. Di sana, aku merenung dalam sendiriku. Mungkin aku salah. Mungkin aku semacam orangtua yang kaku. Mungkin aku terlalu memaksakan keinginanmu sendiri pada anak-anakku. Orangtua yang sudah tidak sesuai dengan keinginan zaman. Keinginan anak-anaknya. Tidak tahu keinginan anak-anaknya? Hmm

Sekilas, aku lihat langit yang penuh awan, di antara sela-sela ranting pohon randu alas yang meranggas. Aku bersedih mengingatnya, jika begitu. Namun, kesedihanku bukan semata karena aku tak dituruti keinginanmu. Mungkin memang iya. Aku tak boleh berbohong. Tapi, kesedihanku juga karena mengingat bahwa kematianku nanti, mungkin berarti juga kematian warisan leluhurku di tanahnya sendiri. Kematian doa-doa yang penuh berkah dari langit. Ah, semoga tidak. Aku masih berharap Setyaningsih, anakku yang cantik itu, sadar – sehingga aku masih bisa memberkati anak cucuku dalam hajatan itu untuk terakhir kali. Sebelum ajal menjemputku. Aku berharap seperti itu.

daughter, Setyaningsih, had also changed. She was no longer the child I had raised and cared for so that she could grow into a Javanese woman who confidently took care of her own children.

Instead, it seemed that Setyaningsih was fascinated with a world different from her own. Setyaningsih now spoke a language her siblings did not use. She dressed like her friends, the straw-haired noni-noni, young women of Dutch descent.

Her husband was no different. Pramono, a successful businessman who lived mostly in a foreign country, started to have difficulty pronouncing words of our Javanese language. He followed his wife's footsteps and said to me, "You don't have to bother preparing for the celebration. Let us handle it ourselves."

Of my seven daughters, Setyaningsih is the different one. Just as the old saying goes, nothing is perfect. I don't blame her, especially considering her education that gave her the ability to think differently than most people. I just want her to be herself, a Javanese. To perform a ceremony that has been a tradition of our people for a long time is all I want. I am old and likely to die soon. Even though only God knows when that will happen, I just want — one more time — to feel how beautiful it is to bless my grandchildren, to hold a mitoni with relatives, neighbors, and children who are mischievous but loveable, while I still have time.

Eka Yuningsih has helped to convey all my wishes to Setyaningsih. Yuningsih told me to be patient. Setyaningsih had her own opinions and wanted to make her own plans. True to the spirit of her generation, she wanted to be like someone of another nation.

"Perhaps, your prayers are the most important," Yuningsih said after she failed to persuade Setyaningsih to change her mind. She added, "Mom, if you continue to force the issue, you will get sick. You have to take care of your health, so you can watch your grandchildren grow."

"Am I wrong for wanting to bless the womb of my own daughter? Say the prayer no one will hear again after my death?" I saw Yuningsih turn uncertain.

She quietly kissed my hand and said, "Mom, don't say that."

I'm sitting in the backyard of the house my husband left me, staring at the bare cotton tree a tree that loses its leaves in the dry season. Listening to a megatruh, a Javanese song that reminds me to be ready to meet the angel of death, I contemplate: Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe I am some kind of a willful parent. Maybe I am imposing my own will too much on my children. A parent who is not in sync with the aspirations of the times, oblivious of what her children want. Hmm

Between the bare branches of the cotton tree, I see a clouded sky. My sadness is not only a result of me not getting my way. Or, maybe it is. I can't pretend. But my sadness also comes from the knowledge that my death might mean the death of my ancestral heritage in its very own place of birth. The expiration of the blessings from heaven. Ah, I do hope it won't. I still hope that Setyaningsih, my beautiful daughter, will come to her senses so I can for the last time bestow my blessings upon my children and grandchildren in this celebration before the angel of death comes to collect me. I do hope so.
