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

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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.

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Hikayat Jarot di Agustusan



Born in Ponorogo, East Java, on October 21, 1977, widely-published author **Han Gagah** is an alumnus of the Faculty of Geodesy at Universitas Gadjah Mada in Yogyakarta. His short stories have appeared in mass media such as Horison, Kompas, Tempo, Republika, and Suara Merdeka. His novel *Orang-orang Gila* was published by Buku Mojok in 2018. In June 2021, Interlude Publishers published his latest work, *Sepasang Mata Gagak di Yerusalem*, a short story collection. *Balada Sepasang Kekasih Gila* was the winner of the 2020 Falcon Script Hunt competition, and Falcon Pictures has signed to turn the novel

into a movie. Gagah's travel journal, titled *Adzan di Israel*, will be published by Ivory Publishers at the end of 2021.

Han Gagah currently lives in Solo, Central Java. Aside from working on his own writing, he also manages an online publication Nongkrong.co. He can be reached at han.gagas@gmail.com

Hikayat Jarot di Agustusan

Para penghuni kolong jembatan sebagian masih terlelap; sebagian ngopi, sebagian yang lain mancing dan menjaring ikan. Ada pula yang mendengarkan siaran radio, "Pidato Kemerdekaan oleh Bapak Presiden, dilanjutkan lagu kebangsaan Indonesia Raya."

Jarot sedang membangun bedeng untuk tempat tinggalnya. Saat matanya melihat gitar bas terapung mengalir di arus sungai, dia berlari mengambil. Jarot membersihkan, dan mulai memperbaikinya.

Jarot mau ngamen dengan gitar bas itu buat cari uang. Dia membuat senar dari ban dalam sepeda, dan memasangkannya. Dia coba memetik dan berbunyi "dung-dung-dung."

Jarot mulai bernyanyi menjajal gitar, sebuah lagu didendangkan:

Jarot's Independence Day



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 by writing articles about 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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Jarot's Independence Day

Some of the folks who lived under the bridge were still asleep; some sat drinking coffee; others fished the river. Still others listened to the radio broadcast: "The President's Independence Day speech will be followed by the national anthem, Indonesia Raya."

Jarot was building a shelter to live in when he saw a bass guitar floating in the river. He ran for it. After Jarot caught the instrument, he cleaned it and tried to fix it. He used the inner tubes of a bicycle to make strings for the guitar. Fancying himself performing with the bass guitar to earn money, he tried to pluck. Boom, boom, boom!

Strumming the guitar, Jarot sang, "I'm happy here, I'm happy there. I am happy everywhere. Lalalalalala, lalalalalala, lalalala, lalalalala, lalalalala, lalalala ..."

Di sini senang, di sana senang. Di mana-mana hatiku senang.
Lalalalalalala, lalalalalala, lalalala, lalalalalaa, lalalalala, lalalala....

Jarot menenteng gitar bas memasuki perkampungan yang penuh bendera merah putih, umbul-umbul terpasang di tepi jalan, berjajar-jajar, semarak karena Agustusan, perayaan kemerdekaan. Dia mendekati sebuah rumah dan mulai menyanyi.

Halo-halo Bandung, ibu kota Periangan. Halo-halo Bandung, kota kenang-kenangan, sudah lama beta... tidak berjumpa dengan kau, sekarang telah menjadi lautan api, mari bung rebut kembali!

Jarot bernyanyi dengan gegap gempita, hingga banyak orang yang mendengar pada senyum-senyum sendiri.

"Edan, ngamen pakai lagu kebangsaan, hehehe," terdengar suara seseorang.

Jarot juga menyanyi lagu Indonesia Raya, suaranya semangat penuh seluruh.

"Indonesia Tanah Airku/Tanah Tumpah Darahku/Di sanalah aku berdiri jadi pandu ibuku/ Indonesia-kebangsaanku/Bangsa dan tanah airku/Marilah kita berseru/Indonesia bersatu."

Banyak orang yang mendengar jadi turut menyanyi, terutama pada kalimat, Indonesia bersatu! Seruan itu menggetarkan dan mengobarkan semangat semua terlecut sifat kebangsaannya bahkan beberapa anak mulai mengekornya saat mengamen.

Orang-orang tua, yang dimulai oleh seorang mantan pejuang kemerdekaan yang berbaju coklat, juga ikut. Jadinya mulai banyak orang-orang tua termasuk emak-emak turut mengekor Jarot.

Sambil menyanyi makin semangat, Jarot mengamen dari rumah ke rumah, termasuk kios-kios dan toko.

Semua yang mengekor ikut menyanyi bagai paduan suara jalanan yang penuh gelora. Bulan Agustus, bulan perayaan kemerdekaan Republik Indonesia, ini tahun terasa lebih ramai dan semangat. Sebagian warga segera mengenakan pakaian terbaik yang mereka miliki, sebagian lain mengambil ember untuk suara tabuhan. Suara Jarot dan paduan suara jalanan itu makin menggetarkan bendera merah putih dan baliho yang berkibar-kibar di seantero jalanan.

Saat menemukan bendera berkibar di depan SD, Jarot berhenti dan berteriak, "Siiiiiaaaaaaappppp! Graaaakkkk!!" Orang-orang tua yang mengekornya, termasuk anak-anak turut berdiri dalam keadaan siap.

"Kepada bendera merah putih, hormaaaatttttt graakkk!" seru Jarot.

Jarot menghormati bendera. Orang-orang mengikuti.

Masyarakat yang menonton jadi senyum-senyum sendiri.

Tak jauh dari arak-arakan Jarot, di sebuah warung, sejumlah orang bercakap-cakap sambil makan.

"Orang edan, gemblung kok diikuti!"

"Ndaklah, dia menyatukan mereka, coba lihat, itu ada yang sukunya Batak, Jawa, Sunda, macam-macam jadi satu, iya khan hehehe...."

"Iya seh, hehehe."

"Eh, pengamen itu siapa namanya?" tanya yang lain. Dia menunjuk Jarot yang wajahnya seperti orang lugu, hidungnya pesek, dan giginya tonggos.

"Jarot tha, kenapa?"

"Asyik orangnya, kemarin aku lihat dia membersihkan sungai. Sampah-sampah dia kumpulkan dan dia pilah mana yang secara alamiah dapat terurai dan mana yang tidak, sebagian dia bakar. Dia juga menanami bantaran sungai dengan bibit pohon mangga."

"Wah, sungai yang bersih sana itu tha?"

Ibu penjual yang mendengar ikut menyahut: "Iya, Jarot yang bersihin!

Carrying his bass guitar, Jarot entered the village, decorated with red and white Indonesian flags and banners lining the roadsides in celebration of Indonesia's Independence Day on August 17. He approached a house and began to sing.

"Hello, hello, Bandung, capital of the Periangan. Hello, hello, Bandung, city of memories. I haven't seen you for a long time; now you've become a sea of flames; let's reclaim it!"

Jarot sang so loud that he made many people smile.

"He is crazy, singing patriotic songs," someone said, laughing.

Jarot also sang Indonesia Raya with enthusiasm.

"Indonesia is my homeland, the land where I spilled my blood. It's where I stand to support my fatherland. Indonesia is my nationality, my nation and homeland. Let us shout: Indonesia unite!"

Many people began to sing along, repeating, especially, the phrase "Indonesia unite!" It was such a rousing call that it ignited everyone's feelings of nationalism. Some children even began to follow the street singer, as he moved about the village.

The elderly, led by a brown-uniformed ex-freedom fighter, also joined. Thus, many adults, including mothers, started to trail behind Jarot.

Jarot's singing became more and more enthusiastic as he went door to door, visiting food stalls and shops.

His followers looked like a lively street choir. This year's August celebration of the independence of the Republic of Indonesia seemed livelier and more spirited. Some residents put on their best clothes; others took pails to use as drums. The voices of Jarot and the street choir seemed to make the red-and-white flags and banners decorating the streets flutter faster.

When Jarot saw the flag flying in front of an elementary school, he stopped and shouted, "Attention!" The parents and children who followed him straightened up.

"Salute the colors!" cried Jarot and saluted the flag.

Everyone followed suit.

The bystanders watching them, smiled.

In a food stall, not far from the Jarot-led procession, a number of people were eating and making comments.

"Foolish people. Why are they following Fatso?"

"Jarot unites them. Look! Amongst them are Batakese, Javanese, and Sundanese. Don't you think all of them are having a good time together?"

Even some of the old people have joined him!" The commenter laughed.

"Hey, what's the busker's name?" another asked, pointing at Jarot.

With his flat nose and protruding teeth Jarot looked like the village fool.

"That's Jarot. Why?"

"He is a busy person. Yesterday, I saw him taking trash out of the river. After he sorted the garbage, separating the biodegradable from the non-biodegradable, he burned some of it. He also planted mango saplings on the riverbanks."

"Wow! Is that the river he cleaned up over there?"

The food stall owner was listening to the conversation and chimed in, "Yes, Jarot is the one who cleaned it!"

Gradually, over time, a number of residents began helping Jarot clean up the river. Previously very dirty and filled with shrubs, the river was now cleaner and the surroundings were better managed. As time went by, the trees grew bigger and taller, creating a cool and shady

Lambat laun sejumlah penduduk membantu Jarot maka sungai yang sebelumnya sangat kotor dan dipenuhi semak belukar itu kini jadi lebih bersih dan tertata. Seiring berjalannya waktu pohon-pohon makin membesar dan meninggi membuat lingkungan sekitar sungai jadi rindang dan teduh, sehingga jadi tempat yang enak buat memancing. Kadang-kadang pula Jarot ikut memancing, dan memperoleh hasil yang lumayan untuk lauk makan.

Makin hari kehidupan di sekitar sungai makin bertambah maju, dengan dibangunnya taman dan tempat bermain anak-anak. Saran itu adalah usulan yang disampaikan Jarot di rapat warga yang disetujui Ketua RT dan RW. Dengan bantuan dana dari pemerintah kota, taman dan tempat bermain anak itu dibangun. Makin majulah kehidupan di sekitar sungai, dan itu jadi percontohan tempat-tempat lain untuk memajukan wilayahnya masing-masing.

Jarot sendiri makin dikenal sebagai penggiat lingkungan. Kehidupan di tepian sungai itu yang sebelumnya sepi-sepi saja sekarang berkembang.

Jasa parkir dibuka di dekat bantaran sungai, beberapa warung tenda dibuka untuk melayani pengunjung taman. Toko pulsa, tukang cukur, warung nasi, jualan es, jualan bensin dan toko kelontong mendadak ramai, bisa dibilang berkat Jarot usaha para warga sekitar jadi makin laku, makin banyak mendatangkan keuntungan.

Jarot sendiri tak memungut beaya dari siapa saja yang ingin menikmati taman dan tempat bermain anak-anak itu. Hanya ada seorang tetangga yang bertugas mengawasi kendaraan sambil memasang kaleng besar buat wadah uang seikhlasnya untuk membayar parkir. Lembaran-lembaran uang yang masuk ke dalam kaleng itu nanti akan digunakan untuk kebutuhan warga, khususnya untuk membantu biaya pengobatan bila ada yang sakit, dan biaya melahirkan.

Hari-hari jadi penuh kesibukan, penuh kesungguhan. Semua berjalan sesuai adatnya selama beberapa tahun hingga pada satu malam yang tak biasanya, Jarot bermimpi aneh yang membuatnya merasa gelisah, merasa terancam.

Ada bayangan gelap membekapnya malam-malam. Jarot megap-megap tak berdaya, dan terbangun saat dia nyaris kehabisan napas. Keringat dingin bercucuran di dahi.

Dia tak tahu siapa pemilik bayangan itu. Jarot mulai menyelidiki hal ikhwal yang barangkali berhubungan dengan mimpinya. Dia menelisik ke dalam dirinya sendiri. Dia tahu ada sikap suka dan tidak suka dari warga masyarakat mengenai dirinya. Baginya semua itu wajar sepanjang dia tak diganggu, dia sendiri tak berniat mengganggu yang lain, dia akan menjalani semua hal dengan hati ringan.

Dia selalu percaya pada naluri yang kerap terbukti, bahwa ada orang lain yang tak menyukai kehadirannya. Pastinya pemilik bayangan itu. Wajahnya gelap.

Saat Jarot mencoba menerawang lebih dalam dan khusyuk, secara aneh tabir hitam menutupi parasnya membuat muka itu jadi rata. Hanya bagian pakaian yang samar-samar bisa dilihat. Setelan bajunya rapi, berjas dan berdas, jam berantai emas terselip di saku baju, dia bersepatu selop.

Mimpi buruk tak cuma sekali mendatangnya. Termasuk malam itu, mimpi lebih menyeramkan! Tak hanya bayangan gelap yang membekap tetapi juga puluhan orang datang menyerbu, sedangkan sosok malaikat kematian pun datang mengancamnya. Dini hari itu, Jarot terbangun dengan keringat bercucuran, bayangan itu tak juga lekas pergi. Cukup lama dia terbangun dan cukup lama bayangan itu ada di pelupuk matanya, seakan menjerat ingatannya. Jarot segera mendaraskan wirid yang panjang, bersembahyang sampai subuh menjelang hingga hatinya merasa tenang.

Hari itu Jarot berpuasa.

Dia berpikir barangkali dalam hidupnya pernah melakukan hal tak baik yang tak dia sadari. Dia ingin menebus hal tak baik itu yang barangkali ada hubungannya dengan mimpi buruknya selama ini. Semua hal baik dia upayakan di hari itu, namun kesialan bisa datang kapan saja, tanpa diduga.

environment, a good place for fishing. Sometimes Jarot joined the fishermen and caught a good meal.

At a community meeting, Jarot put forth an idea that was approved by the neighborhood and hamlet leaders. With help from the government's city funding, the community built a park and children's playground. Life around the river became more prosperous, and the settlement became a model for other places to develop their rundown areas.

Jarot became increasingly recognized as an environmental activist. The previously dreary life on the riverbanks was now flourishing.

A parking lot and several tent stalls opened near the riverbank to serve visitors. Cellphone shops, barbershops, food stalls, a gasoline outlet, and variety stores now buzzed with customers. Jarot could be credited for the booming businesses of the local residents, as well as for their now thriving lives.

Jarot did not collect any fees from people who wanted to enjoy the park and the children's playground. Instead, a person from the neighborhood was put in charge of the parking lot, where visitors could place their voluntary donations in a large can. The money was used to help residents with medical expenses, such as childbirth.

Jarot's days were filled with noble activities. Everything continued as usual for many years until one night, he had a strange dream that made him feel uneasy and threatened.

In his dream, a dark shadow appeared and swiftly smothered him until he could hardly breathe. Gasping helplessly, Jarot woke up just as he was about to suffocate. Cold sweat dripped down his forehead.

He didn't know who the shadow belonged to. Jarot began to investigate things that might explain his nightmare. He looked within himself. He knew that in the community there were people who liked him and people who disliked him. To Jarot, this was to be expected, as long as no one disturbed him. He was a light-hearted person and did not intend to bother others.

But Jarot had always believed his often-proved instinct that some people didn't like his presence. Jarot figured that one of these people must be the owner of the shadow. His face was dark. When Jarot tried to take a better look, the black veil that covered the strange figure flattened his face. Only his clothes were vaguely visible. Standing in loafers, the figure was dressed in a nice suit and wore a necktie. A gold chain was attached to the watch tucked in his vest's pocket.

The nightmare returned. This time, the dream was even more sinister. Not only did the shadowy figure rush in, but so did dozens of people. The dark shadow of the "angel of death" was amongst them.

Jarot woke up sweating profusely. The image of the shadow remained, even after Jarot had been awake for a long time. It seemed to be stamped into his memory. Jarot immediately recited a long wirid, hoping that the prayer said after the regular prayers, would calm him.

That day, Jarot fasted.

He wondered if perhaps he had inadvertently done something wrong. He wanted to make up for the bad thing that might have something to do with his recurring nightmare. All day, he tried to do good, but he knew that bad luck could come at any time, unexpectedly.

That evening, after Jarot broke his fast, he prepared himself with his usual enthusiasm for the celebration of Indonesia's Independence Day. Inside his shack, Jarot was gathering flags for the flag ceremony when suddenly dozens of people stormed the bridge.

"Jarot!" someone shouted.

In the darkness, the riverbank was visible, basking under the moonlight. The light from the lantern at the corner of the bridge, shimmered between the rocks.

There weren't many people under the bridge that night, and even if there had been, they would have fled when they saw dozens of menacing people arrive.

"Get out!" the people shouted louder.

Malam itu sesudah Jarot berbuka puasa, seperti biasa dia mempersiapkan diri dengan semangat untuk esok hari merayakan hari kemerdekaan. Jarot mengumpulkan bendera untuk persiapan upacara bendera.

Tiba-tiba datang puluhan orang.

"Jarot!" teriak seseorang.

Dalam kegelapan, gelaran air sungai masih terlihat hamparannya karena tersirami cahaya sinar rembulan. Lampu merkuri di pojok jembatan berkemilau bergoyang-goyang karena

cahayanya terhambat bebatuan.

Tak banyak orang di kolong jembatan pada malam itu, andai pun ada akan menyingkir melihat puluhan orang datang membawa ancaman.

"Keluar kau!" teriak orang-orang itu lebih keras.

Jarot tergeragap, hatinya berdesir, jantungnya berdetak tak biasa, namun dia segera menenangkan diri, melangkah keluar dari bedengnya.

"Ada apa? Tenang, semua bisa dibicarakan."

"Persetan dengan omonganmu!"

Beberapa orang langsung merangsek menyerang Jarot, mengeroyoknya.

"Tenang, sabar, apa mau kalian? Ayo bicara baik-baik," kata Jarot sebelum berbagai tonjokan dan tendangan menghantam tubuhnya, bertubi-tubi. Hidungnya berleleran darah, perutnya nyeri tanpa ampun. Kepalanya pusing, pening, ngilu, dan rasa nyeri meradang di sekujur tubuhnya.

"Pergi dari sini kalau kau tak mau mati!" Hajaran itu berlangsung makin beringas tak peduli.

Jarot diam tak melawan. Tubuhnya tersungkur ke tanah.

"Minggat! Kalau besok kau masih ada, kau akan kami habisi!"

"Ingat itu!"

Sejumlah orang meludahi muka Jarot, "Cuihh! Cuihh! Cuihh!"

"Pergi jauh dari sini! Kalau tidak, kau mampus! atau mereka warga kampung akan kami habisi, rumah mereka akan kami bakar!"

Diluar sepengetahuan Jarot, sesudah kejadian malam itu, di sebuah kantor pemerintah daerah, seorang yang berbaju rapi, berjas dan berdasi, dengan jam berantai emas di saku kanan dan bersepatu selop, berbincang dengan seseorang.

"Bagaimana?"

"Sudah kami bereskan, Tuan."

"Bagus. Tak ada yang bisa menghubungkan gembel itu denganku, karena beberapa bulan lagi pembangunan baru akan dimulai, hahaha."

"Benar sekali Tuan, hehehe."

Lelaki yang dipanggil tuan itu puas siasatnya berhasil dengan baik. Dia tahu betul bahwa Jarot bisa jadi ancaman pada pembangunan jembatannya. Dia tahu Jarot punya kemampuan menghalangi rencana pembangunan yang akan merubuhkan jembatan lama dan menggantikannya dengan yang lebih lebar dan besar.

Namun perbaikan itu tidak akan dapat terlaksana tanpa merusak taman Jarot dan menyingkirkan penduduk desa. Belum tersebut dampak pembangunan yang akan timbul pada lingkungan sekitar sungai. Seorang pengusaha juga telah berjanji akan mendirikan sebuah pabrik besar di tepi sungai itu baginya.

Semua jalan telah ditempuhnya. Sesama teman pejabat pemerintah sudah disuap. Hanya baru-baru ini dia menyadari ada perubahan pola pikir dari warga di sekitar jembatan dan sungai, dan itu berasal dari pergerakan yang disebar oleh Jarot. Hal itu mudah dilihat dengan

Jarot staggered, his heart hammering. Quickly, he calmed himself and walked out of his shack.

"What is wrong?" he asked the crowd. "Calm down. Everything can be discussed."

"To hell with your talk!" Several people charged at Jarot, ganging up on him.

"Calm down, be patient, what do you want? Let's talk!" Jarot cried before he was overtaken by the mob and repeatedly punched and kicked. His nose was bloodied. His stomach hurt terribly. He was dizzy and ached all over.

"Get out of here if you want to stay alive!"

The beating from the mob accelerated without mercy. Jarot did not fight back. He fell to the ground.

"Get lost! If you're still around tomorrow, we'll kill you!"

"Remember!"

Several people spat on Jarot's face. Ptui! Ptui! Ptui!

"Leave! Or you'll die! We'll burn this village and kill the residents!"

Later that night, a local government official was holding a conversation with a man standing in loafers, wearing a nice suit fitted with a necktie. A gold chain was attached to the watch tucked in the man's vest pocket.

"Well?" the official asked.

"We've taken care of it, sir."

"Good! I don't want to have anything to do with that scumbag. In a few months, the new bridge construction project will start." The official laughed.

"That's right, sir," the man said, joining in the laughter.

The official was satisfied that his scare tactic had worked. Only recently had he noticed a change in the mindset of the population living under the bridge and on the riverbanks. Jarot's ideas had changed them. This was evidenced by the cleaner and more orderly environment around the river. He was sure that Jarot was not an ordinary person, and he was sure that causes such as human rights activists, leftist NGOs, and labor union groups supported Jarot.

Therefore, the official knew very well the threat that Jarot posed to carrying out his bridge construction plans. He also knew that Jarot had the ability to block the construction project, which could not take place without destroying Jarot's shack and removing the other villagers in order to tear down the old bridge and replace it with a wider and bigger one. The negative impact that the development would have on the river's environment was another factor, as was the large factory that a businessman promised to build for him on the riverbank.

But now, all safety measures had been taken. The official had even bribed his government colleagues.

On the eve of Indonesia's Independence Day, the day when the Indonesian people celebrate their freedom from the colonizers, Jarot left the place he had fallen in love with. He was evicted from the shack under the bridge, which he had called home all this time and pained from the fateful night that had stripped off his freedom.

On the morning of August 17, there was a big commotion among the villagers. Without Jarot, everyone was confused. And on that Independence Day there was no one to direct the flag ceremony, no one to lead the parades, and no one to direct the street choirs in the riverbank settlement under the bridge.

semakin bersih dan tertatanya lingkungan sekitar sungai. Dia yakin Jarot bukan orang sembarangan. Dia yakin, Jarot disusupkan oleh gerakan kelompok tertentu. Setidaknya oleh para penggiat lingkungan, atau HAM, LSM kiri, atau kelompok ikatan buruh.

Di malam menjelang hari perayaan kemerdekaan, Jarot melangkah kesakitan menjauhi kampung yang telah membuatnya jatuh cinta. Malam itu malam yang naas bagi kehidupan Jarot yang direnggut kebebasannya.

Di hari kebebasan bangsa Indonesia dari penjajah, Jarot terusir dari gubuk tempat tinggalnya selama ini.

Paginya, orang-orang kampung geger, semua bingung tanpa Jarot.

Tak ada Jarot yang memandu upacara bendera, tak ada lagi arak-arakan dan paduan suara yang membahana di kampung itu tepat di Hari Kemerdekaan.

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