

### The Story of Malin Kundang

Once upon a time, in the West Sumatra hinterland, a man lived only with his elderly mother. The man was called Malin Kundang. A handsome and kindhearted young man who loved his mother, Mande Rubayah. Malin and his mother adored one other despite their poverty. Aside from that, being the only one who lived with his mother, Malin was sometimes plagued by a strong feeling of obligation. It was so big that it made him both worried and depressed. One night, when it was time for dinner, this sense of responsibility struck Malin's once more. He had always wanted to be fully grown and change his family's situation to get out of their poverty right now. He then looked at his mother and called her.

"Mom.." Mande Rubayah turned her head in response. "I was already an adult. It is part of the Minang culture for a grown man to wander and be his own man. So, please let me wander, mom. I beg you. After all, it can help to change our situation for the better, too." This wasn't the first time Malin begged his mother to let him wander. However, his mother always prevented him, "Then who will stay here with me, Malin? You're the only one I have." Mande Rubayah always responded this way whenever Malin asked for permission to wander.

"Mom, please understand. That is a duty that has become a part of our culture. It's an obligation I must undertake as a son. I am the only man who can be a hope for our family. How long will we stay like this if I don't go?"

Mande was silent. She understood very well that Malin wanted to wander, as with any other man. She didn't want to be far from her son after her husband left her first. She thought for a moment, then took a deep breath. As if making sure that her heart was ready to answer. "Okay. I'll let you go. Go after what you want to pursue. As long as you don't forget your mother in your homeland." Malin smiled. So vast that it seemed as if he was saying a very big thank you through his smile.

The next day comes. Despite the constant rejection, Malin had prepared himself for wandering. Tears had never stopped flowing from Mande Rubayah's eyes since morning. How couldn't it be? No mother is willing to let her crown jewel go wandering into the unknown. The noon is nigh, and the ship in which Malin would get on to travel overseas finally came. Malin and Mande Rubayah had their farewell moments before Malin eventually got on the ship, but before Malin was out of Mande Rubayah's reach, she made sure to remind him once again to come home later. Malin agreed to his mother's plea and finally sailed away from his homeland.

Time went by so fast. It still flashed in the memory of how Malin first set foot in the urban land of Sumatra. An older man advised him to find the address of a well-respected wealthy merchant in that city. Hope the merchant can give him a decent job. Sure enough, thanks to his struggles and hard work, Malin proved that he deserved to be given a permanent position.

That was finally where he belonged—six months working as one of the employees who manage goods in and out of the ship. Malin made a lot of new friends who also wandered like him. They were all very close, like a new family to Malin. But unfortunately, Malin's friends were those who came from wealthy families. Even though they wandered, they carried their family's good name as sons of the rich in their hometown. Malin's self-esteem was scratched when his friends said he was unworthy of them. With a blind heart and reluctance to bear the shame, Malin lied. He said that he also came from a wealthy family. For the sake of prestige and self-respect, he faked his family background. It was forbidden for him to be ridiculed because of his social status.

Day after day, his attitude continued to change. He dissolves into the lifestyle of his friends, who like to spend money. It never crossed his mind that a mother was waiting for him to come home and needed to be provided for a decent living. Malin was always busy with himself. Worked and sought pleasure.

As time went by, Malin fell in love with a gorgeous girl. The girl who always smiled and was friendly to everyone. He had fallen in love at first sight. Malin took the risk of approaching. It wasn't easy at first. But with the persistence and seriousness that Malin showed, the girl finally melted. Everything Malin wished for was working properly. After waiting and trying, the girl he desired returned his love after a long time. She was Zainab. A lovely young lady with a pleasant demeanor. They were in a relationship with no idea what would happen next. Everyone thought they were a happy couple.

Malin had intended to visit his girlfriend's family up to that point. Malin's persistence pleased Zainab. When Malin was going to visit her home to meet her parents, she was excited. She grinned brightly when she discovered Malin already in front of her house. Malin, who had just arrived at his girlfriend's house for a brief while, was fascinated. He could see how big Zainab's house was, indicating that she was the daughter of a wealthy and well-respected family. Malin hesitated for a moment. He realized he did not come from a wealthy family like Zainab's. His thoughts were rushing until his eyes caught the figure of Zainab, who went out of the house and smiled widely at him. Zainab welcomed Malin entering her house and stated that her father was waiting for Malin's presence. He entered the home, nervous and tense, carrying Lamang in his hands.

Malin was shocked to find that her father was the same guy he had known all along as the merchant owner of the place where he worked. Malin had visited the merchant's house when he wanted to ask for a job, but this was not the same place. Why did no one, not even Zainab, ever mention that she was the daughter of a wealthy merchant? Malin was both embarrassed and deceived. But love was the most important thing. When he saw Zainab happily welcoming his presence, he couldn't bring himself to be angry. It was too late to go back. Malin firmly decided that he would continue to fight for the merchant's or the merchant's permission of their relationship. Zainab invited Malin to sit down. She did feel a little guilty for not saying from the start that her father was Malin's boss. She did this so that Malin would not feel inferior to her. She had already fallen in love with Malin when she saw how difficult it was for Malin to gain affection from her. She had never met a man as gentle as Malin.

They sat together in the living room. Malin could feel the unpleasant gaze from her girlfriend's father. The severe expression he had seen the last time had been replaced with a look that indicated that her father did not seem to accept their relationship. Malin asked himself. What did the man opposite him think?

Malin could see that Zainab, who was linking and playing with her finger, was as nervous as he was. It is to be expected, Malin had already known since the beginning that this man who was his superior was an assertive and undisputed individual. However, he had pride and his love on the line. He could not have given up after the things that he did.

Malin introduced himself. He explained a little detail about his family, and unfortunately, he had to lie again. He explained that he came from an esteemed and wealthy family in his village. He further explained that his parents were well-respected individuals due to their wealth. Malin wanted to make sure that he sounded like a flawless man to his superior and remove the image of the decrepit old mother who lives alone in the village. The esteemed merchant suddenly got up from his seat, surprising everybody. He walked and stopped right near the door of his house. Zainab's father sighed deeply while staring right at Malin's eyes. "I know that you are a diligent and hardworking man. However, upon seeing you, I fail to see any convincing qualities in you, so I cannot trust you. How could I entrust my only crown jewel into the man I do not trust?" Zainab was extremely surprised by what her father said. So does Malin, but he hid it well.

Malin calmly replied that he had no problem with it. But the merchant remained firm in his decision that his daughter should not continue their relationship any further. After all, every parent wants the best for their daughter. That day's conversation did not go well. Malin came back home empty-handed, with nothing but rejection.

On the other hand, Zainab felt sad about what her father did. She knew that her father only wanted the best for her. But Zainab had already fallen in love with Malin. Zainab's disappointment grew when her father said that she would be betrothed to another young man who was also a merchant and whose family origins were more apparent. Zainab repeatedly refused, but the father was still a father whose decision could not be disputed. Several days passed. Malin and Zainab agreed to fight for their relationship until her father melted down, no matter what. Malin repeatedly came to Zainab's house to steal his heart, but it always ended the same. Zainab's father still refused to approve of them.

Until one day, Malin and Zainab began to run out of ideas. They didn't know what to do anymore. Zainab even almost knelt at her father's feet to marry Malin. Zainab, who was usually cheerful and always smiling, now looked resigned with a face full of tears. This sight made her father in pain. He wanted to give the best for his daughter, but it broke her because she had to part with the man her daughter loved. Unexpectedly, the father reluctantly nodded. In the end, he gave his blessing to his daughter to marry Malin. Initially, the father asked Malin to bring his family to meet them first. But with a thousand reasons, Malin dodged. No wonder his behavior has turned manipulative since he wandered off. Zainab's father became increasingly unsure of Malin's answer. They were a prominent family. As a result, the family that would become their new family must have a clear origin rather than simply telling stories.

Meanwhile, Zainab was pleased. Happy tears rolled down her cheeks. So happy, she thoughtlessly trusted Malin when Malin said that Zainab would be brought to his hometown to meet Malin's family one day. Unsuspectingly, Zainab also asked her father to believe Malin because she was sure that Malin was an honest and kind young man, without knowing what was behind it all. Long tale short, Malin and Zainab got married. They lived a happily married life. Many people saw these two as a perfect match.

Unfortunately, even until they got married, Mande Rubayah still had not heard anything about Malin Kundang.

As promised, Zainab asked Malin to meet his family in his hometown almost every day. But Malin always avoided it. He constantly changed the subject when his wife asked where his family was. Even to show the mother's figure, Malin was very reluctant. Zainab's face was always filled with question marks when she talked about Malin's family. She only knew a few stories from Malin without knowing how they were. Until one day, when Zainab was going to the place where Malin worked to deliver lunch, she was approached by an older man who also seemed to be a worker there.

The old man greeted Zainab and congratulated her on her marriage to Malin. He then asked when they would visit Malin's hometown, considering that her frail elderly mother was waiting for them to come home alone. Zainab, who had never heard of any story regarding the mother figure of Malin, was both interested and curious. She asked the older man further questions, trying to get as much information as possible. The older man also explained how he had met Malin for the first time when Malin was about to leave, including the actual condition of the Malin family. When he wanted to talk further, the man realized that Zainab didn't seem to know about this until he decided not to tell more.

Zainab chose to come back home. Her mind was torn between holding back disappointment or wanting to believe it. She wondered why Malin hid this fact from her. Why did Malin lie and say that his family was one of the most respected families in his hometown? Did Malin distrust his wife, who would always love him under any circumstances?

Zainab had too many questions. However, whenever she wanted to start asking questions, Malin always seemed emotional, and they almost ended up not being good at times. Therefore, Zainab chose to slowly make Malin understand that Zainab would never leave Malin, regardless of his family's condition. In other words, Zainab loved Malin as she was. Zainab also never stopped hoping that one day Malin would open up and be honest with her about what Malin's condition was. The attention and affection that Zainab gave did not seem to make Malin aware. Malin often felt intimidated because Zainab always brought up her mother's life in her hometown. One day, Malin invited Zainab to sail to his hometown. Without knowing what Malin was up to, Zainab felt very happy because she thought that Malin would finally open up with her after so long.

They sailed far across the ocean. Many crew members witnessed how restless Malin's face was along the way. The ship that brought them was enormous, so everyone knew that the people on board came from prominent families. A small village could be seen from a distance as their ship drew closer to the shore. Malin's face was pale when he saw a group of residents who seemed to be waiting for their arrival with a sense of curiosity that could not be hidden. Malin turned to the side and found Zainab still happy with a big smile on her face. Their ship moved closer and closer to the mainland until it finally stopped at the shoreline, which was already filled with residents. Before they could get off the ship, a frail older woman with very shabby clothes shouted for Malin, her son. She was Mande Rubayah, Malin's biological mother, who had been waiting for her son's return for years without any news.

Everyone who had been cheering was now silent. Those on board looked at Malin as if demanding an explanation. The reason for this was because Malin had always stated that his family was respected, and

it was very inconceivable that the shabby woman there was his mother. Zainab now remembered the words of the old man she met at that time. It turned out that everything the man said was true. Zainab could see her husband flushing with shame. Just as Zainab wanted to take Malin's hand and ensure there was no problem with what was happening now, Malin suddenly walked away, leaving her silent on the ship. She could see Malin walking towards the elderly woman. Zainab thought at first that Malin wanted to hug his mother as an expression of longing, but in fact, Malin mocked the older woman for claiming to be his mother.

All the residents there were astonished at Malin's change in attitude. Even with Mande Rubayah. Her heart ached excruciatingly as if a thousand knives had stabbed it. She did not expect that the son she had been raised with love, waiting and waiting for years without any news, ended up refusing to admit herself and humiliating his mother in front of many people. Malin arrogantly said that he was a wealthy young man who could not have a mother like Mande Rubayah. Mande, who was in front of Malin, could only burst into tears without uttering any words. Zainab just wanted to come down too to stop Malin's actions. But suddenly, "I have raised an ungodly child. Your heart is hard as a rock, Malin. I curse you for being stone. See how hard you can fight it!" Mande Rubayah exclaimed loudly.

Suddenly, lightning struck so hard. It was raining heavily, and the waves on the beach were so big that they seemed to drown the whole village. The wind blew so hard that the trees seemed to want to fall. The waves dragged the ship boarded by Malin into the middle of the sea. Malin glared his eyes when he remembered that his wife was there.

Everyone ran away in fear. Malin, still standing in front of his mother, cried in fear, begging for forgiveness. But it was too late. Malin's body slowly hardened like a stone until finally, he became a stone in a state of kneeling at his mother's feet. Mande, who witnessed it, could only cry in pain. She thought the longing would end beautifully, and avenge ended disastrously like this.

Meanwhile, their ship, which was dragged into the middle of the sea, was rolled by the big waves and hit the rocks until it was smashed to pieces. Everyone in it drowned because they could not fight the swift water current. Zainab was no exception. In the seconds before her death, Zainab regretted it. She was filled with guilt towards her father. It was too late now. A woman as good as herself must have carried a sense of regret when she died. If only Zainab hadn't loved the wrong person, and if only she had done what her father said not to be with Malin, maybe she wouldn't end up like this. Only the ocean was a silent witness to how resigned Zainab was at that time. Her kindness and loyalty were rolled up in the great waves that devoured them. It was the ending of their story, lived happily at first but full of lies and hidden disappointments. Malin was a man who was blinded by wealth and position. While with Zainab, she was too blinded by her love for Malin. Both of them grasped the objects tightly, unwilling to listen to common sense until the two things eventually destroyed them in different ways.

–The End–