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DAYANG PUTRI BUNGSU BERADEK TUJOH

Hj. Yusuf Heaton and Hj. Tugo bin Lee

[This story was obtained by Haji Yusuf Heaton from Haji Tugo bin Lee of Kampung Baru, Kabong. It tells the story of a remarkable *berok* (monkey) who married a beautiful princess and then turned into a handsome prince charming- much to the chagrin of the princess's six older sisters, who tried to emulate her feat but with fatal consequences for themselves.)

Once upon a time, there lived a Rajah who had seven daughters but no sons. None of these daughters were married: all were waiting for suitably eligible young men to ask for their hands in marriage. The Rajah had, in fact, invited the young men of his state to come forward if they wished to marry any of his daughters, but thus far, the response had been negligible. The reason for this was not hard to find. Each of the Rajah's seven daughters was very beautiful but, unfortunately, the characters of each of them did not match their looks. The six eldest daughters were each of them cruel, spiteful and bad-tempered. It was not surprising, therefore, that prospective suitors for these six sisters were few and far between.

The Rajah's seventh— and youngest— daughter, Dayang Putri Bungsu, was the only exception. Not only was she the most beautiful of all the Rajah's daughters, but she had a character that matched her looks. Sweet and gentle, patient and kind, virtuous and obedient, her beauty and charms were such that she caused a flutter in the hearts of all who happened to see her.

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by

Hj. Yusuf Heaton and Hj. Tugo bin Lee

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The Rajah's seventh – and youngest – daughter, Dayang Putri Bungsu, was the only exception. Not only was she the most beautiful of all the Rajah's daughters, but she had a character that matched her looks. Sweet and gentle, patient and kind, virtuous and obedient, her beauty and charms were such that she caused a flutter in the hearts of all who happened to see her.

UNLUCKY LAST

As the youngest daughter, poor Dayang Putri Bungsu was in a very unfortunate position. Almost every young bachelor in the state would have gladly have given his all to be allowed to marry her, but they were all inhibited by the fact that Dayang Putri Bungsu's six older sisters were still unmarried. To ask for Dayang Putri Bungsu's hand in marriage

while her older sisters were still unmarried would, under the etiquette of the people, be an unpardonable breach of good manners which would draw upon the offending suitor the wrath of the Rajah.

So it was that none dared ask for permission to marry Dayang Putri Bungsu, and it seemed that she was thus doomed to wait for an eternity until each of her older sisters managed to acquire for themselves a husband.

A CURIOUS CREATURE

Also living in this particular state was a very remarkable *berok*. This *berok* was exactly like a human being in all respects except for his appearance. Encik Berok, as he was known, could walk like a human being, talk like a human being, eat like a human being and dress like a human being. He even lived in a house like a human being. But in his appearance, Encik Berok was exactly like any other *berok*. His face, arms and legs were all furry, he had claws instead of fingers and toe nails, and he even had a tail.

Encik Berok happened to be a very carefree, happy-go-lucky creature who did not believe in the virtues of work, just like many a human being then and now. Instead, he preferred to spend all his time rearing fighting cocks and entering them in cockfights which were daily occurrences in the state at that time. At the cockfights, Encik Berok would gamble whatever money he had and in this manner he managed to acquire sufficient money to support himself and his aged, widowed mother. She, too, was a *berok* just like her son and she was known as Ma' Berok.

Like any other mother, Ma' Berok was naturally very unhappy to see her son squandering his time the way he did, and she was forever urging him to find a respectable job like everyone else, instead of gallivanting around the countryside all the time. But Ma' Berok's pleadings were without avail. Encik Berok continued to carry on doing just as he pleased, heedless of the shame and sorrow he was bringing upon his mother.

AN ANNUAL EVENT

It happened to be a time-honoured tradition in this state to hold a huge cockfighting competition once a year in the capital, and this competition always succeeded in attracting competitors and spectators from throughout the length and breadth of the state. Being the biggest event of its kind, the competition always succeeded in generating great interest each time it was held, so much so that even people who normally had no interest at all in cockfighting, found themselves attracted by the noise, the excitement and the general carnival atmosphere created. The seven princesses were amongst the people who were attracted by the scenes of the cockfighting competition.

Encik Berok was, of course, another of the spectators.

It was customary for the competition always to be held on a huge open field behind and quite near to the Rajah's *Istana*. So huge was the crowd of spectators gathered around the cockfighting pits that the noise and tumult they were making could be heard quite clearly in the *Istana*. Intrigued by the shouts of delight and the cries of anguish that filled the air after each bout had ended, by the raucous cries of the hawkers selling their wares and by the crowing of the hundreds of cocks tethered all over the field, the Rajah's seven daughters came out onto a balcony of the *Istana* and began to watch the proceedings with great interest.

During the lull in the fighting, Encik Berok decided to move away from the crowded cockfighting pit for a few moments to catch a breath of fresh air. In doing so, he happened to glance in the direction of the *Istana* and suddenly he caught a sight of the seven beautiful princesses standing on the *Istana* balcony. Struck by their beauty, Encik Berok began to stare at them with wide-eyed admiration.

Suddenly oblivious to the noise and excitement around him, Encik Berok stood entranced by the sight of the seven princesses. For several hours he stood rooted to the spot, mesmerised with delight at the sight before his eyes. Eventually, however, the cockfighting came to an end and the princesses withdrew into the *Istana*.