

Kunang-Kunang Gunung Ledang

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Gunung Ledang, the highest peak located at the land's end of the Asian Continent, is renowned as the abode of fireflies. In that world between darkness and light, legends grow.

It is so said that here, a 'Puteri' of unsurpassed presence guards the mythical mountain. Like the firefly, in a twinkle of an eye, she comes and goes but her presence remains to the senses.

At the foothills of Gunung Ledang nestled the 15th century port of Malacca - the Venice of the East. Sultan Mansor epitomised the height of Malacca 's imperial glory. From the island of Java, he wedded a princess and from the Asiatic Mainland he married a Chinese princess. In his eyes they were but mere mortals. His final possession that would immortalised him in the Annals of Kingdoms was to capture the heart of Puteri Gunung Ledang. He mobilised his trusted men, led by Hang Tuah - the greatest Malay warrior - to ask the hand of Puteri Gunung Ledang.

In their journey into the home of fireflies, their senses were shrouded by veils of illusion and reality. Mighty Hang Tuah was humbled by the mountain. His companion Tun Mamad braved on and finally arrived at this sacred ground where Puteri Gunung Ledang treads. He confronts challenges pregnant with symbols.

Puteri Gunung Ledang tested the limit of the Sultan's power by setting tasks which seem impossible for ordinary mortals. She requested a golden and silver bridge linking Malacca to the summit of Gunung Ledang, seven trays of the hearts of mosquitoes, seven trays of the hearts of mites, a vat of young areca nut water and a vat of tears. All these requests, the Ruler was ready to fulfil but her final request of a cup of blood of his own child, he could not.

Thus, Puteri Gunung Ledang - the "Kunang-kunang Gunung Ledang"- remains the unfulfilled desire of any mortal and the human realities are delicately portrayed in this enchanting legend.

Part I

Scene 1 - High on top of a mist shrouded Gunung Ledang where the waters of life is touched by the gentle winds and lit by countless fireflies, is the sacred ground of the legendary Puteri Gunung Ledang.

The glow of the fireflies radiates lights that throb in the night beckoning Puteri Gunung Ledang to show herself. The enchanting jewel of the mountain arrives with the playful winds and from that mountain abode she sends her presence down the slope to the peoples of the plains, the islands and the seas.

Scene 2 - In the maritime kingdom of Malacca, Sultan Mansur reigned over a vast empire. His court included consorts from the celestial empire and the island Java. He was served by the greatest of the Malay warriors, Hang Tuah and his trusted friends. There was no other empire in the archipelago that could rival Malacca's brilliance. The Sultan's wish was always a reality.

Looming over the plains where the Malacca Port was nestled is Gunung Ledang who is about to test the strength of Malacca. Sultan Mansur, while in deep sleep is touched by the mountain breeze. This triggers off a dream where he meets Puteri Gunung Ledang and he immediately recognises that if he weds her he will be remembered as the greatest ruler in the annals of history. Driven by ambition and fantasy the amorous ruler pursues the enchanting jewel of the mountain, leaving behind a trail of evidence.

His fantasy world is rudely shattered by his two consorts, Puteri Jawa and Puteri China who both sense that they will lose him. Even the pleas of his beloved son would not stop his obsession from fulfilling itself.

He summons his court and instructs Hang Tuah to follow the path of the wind into Gunung Ledang in search of a princess that bewitched him in his dreams.

Scene 3 - Gunung Ledang is empowered to create illusions to protect itself from the unwelcome intruders who are about to violate her sacred grounds. It is into this world that Hang Tuah, Tun Mamad and Sang Setia journeyed to fulfil the command to the Sultan, seeking her hand in marriage. They carried with them the Sultan's keris representing himself.

They were watched by the guardians of the mountain who occasionally revealed themselves as images in the mind's eye of the intruders.

Hang Tuah and his trusted friends feel that they have entered into a garden where Puteri Gunung Ledang is with her court maidens. Further up the mountains they next stumble into the grounds where the followers of Puteri Gunung Ledang danced out the act of loyalty. Never before had Hang Tuah, Tun Mamad and Sang Setia experienced such strange happenings.



Part 2



Scene 4 - Deep in the forest of the sacred mountain, Hang Tuah goes into meditation to understand life and awaits for a sign from nature. Convinced that he is dealing with the fundamentals of life that goes beyond material culture, he instructs Tun Mamad to continue the search.

Scene 5 - Tun Mamad journeys on and unveils a presence that had the ability to change from grace to awesome fury. On the verge of exhaustion he sees an aged woman, Nenek Kebayan and in a blink of an eye he sees Puteri Gunung Ledang herself. Illusions are alive on the mountain. Nenek Kebayan sets the conditions for the marriage of Puteri Gunung Ledang to Sultan Mansur.

Scene 6 - In the court of Malacca, Everyone was mobilised to prepare the gifts that would defy ordinary mortals. There was one request that remained unfulfilled, a cup of blood of his beloved son. Nonetheless, the mighty Malaccan ruler proceeded towards his heart's desire.



Scene 7 - On the sacred grounds, the preliminary rituals leading to the forthcoming marriage proceeds in earnest. Each of the gifts are closely inspected by the guardian spirit of the mountain.

Sultan Mansur had matched all but one of the terms set by Nenek Kebayan. The guardian spirit was outraged by the audacity of the gift bearers who dared to appear before them without fulfilling all the marriage conditions.

Sultan Mansur was mocked for his lost of honour and was tested to produce a cup of blood from his son.

The failure of the Malaccan empire in this quest for marriage is a triumph of nature over the worldly wants of mankind.

