

Catherine Diamond

## The Three Tasks of Puteri Gunung Ledang

The legend of *Puteri Gunung Ledang* (the Princess of Mount Ledang) has been the source of several films and plays, but a film version, *PGL*, in 2004, which was remade for the Kuala Lumpur stage (2006), became the Malaysia's most popular musical. In the original, the fifteenth-century Sultan Mahmud Shah of Melaka who, desiring to marry the Princess Gusti Putri Raden Ajeng Retno Dumilah, sends his loyal warrior Hang Tuah to fetch her from the mountain. Unwilling to marry, she gives the Sultan seven impossible tasks, the last being the blood of his heir. While he tries accomplish them, she carries on a romantic relationship with his emissary. The **KETEP** version changes the tasks to three local environmental problems that the Sultan must address.

### Cast:

Sultan Mahmud Shah

Hang Tuah, *his emissary*

Gusti Puteri, *the Princess*

Maid 1

Maid 2

Maid 3

Servant I

Servant II

Fish Seller

Slime Doby Representative, *palm oil company manager*

### Scene I *Sultan's Palace*

Sultan:

Ah, what a glorious day! The sun shines golden on me and my kingdom. The flowers bloom, butterflies fluttering, the fruits ripen, and the garden glistens with last night's rain. Everything is fertile, multiplying...getting it on, you know.

Tuah:

Your Majesty is unusually poetic this morning.

Sultan:

I'm feeling good, very good, younger than my years.

Tuah:

Your Majesty is not many in years, yet we always take delight when he is a salubrious mood.

Sultan:

Salubrious? Yes, salubrious, hah! You get my meaning!

Tuah:

Your Majesty?

Sultan:

What could be more salubrious than a new wife!

Tuah:

What indeed! Our ministers always have on hand an up-to-date list of available princesses. Would your Majesty like to...

Sultan:

No, none of those. I've decided on the Gusti Putri Raden Ajeng etc. etc. With a name like that, she has to be one hot chick. Ever since I heard that her beauty surpasses all others, I haven't been able to sleep. Then last night, she came to me in a dream and afterwards I slept like a babe. You will go to Gunung Ledang and persuade her to accept me.

Tuah:

Me? I'm a warrior, Your Majesty, not a sweet-tongued courtier.

Sultan:

Hah! You have a way with words. And I know that girls with spirit like adventurous men. Tell her of some of your exploits and she'll be impressed and want to be queen over a land with such men.

Tuah:

Wouldn't it be better to send a portrait of yourself? Your handsome face would be the quickest way to the princess's heart.

Sultan:

You're right. Take my portrait with you. Your words and my looks will win her over for sure.

Tuah:

The journey is long. Perhaps you should send a younger man.

Sultan:

What! A rival! And have her fall in love with him! No way. I know I'm safe with you. You're loyal and won't lose your head over a woman. No, you're the perfect go-between. Now, go, between us, and be quick about it.

***Black out***

## **Scene II** *Gusti's Palace*

Gusti:

I'm so bored. How I envy the birds that can fly where they want. Look how cheerfully they flit from tree to tree, hear how joyously they sing.

Maid 1:

But they're always threatened by the hunter's net or arrow, or an attack by larger birds.

Maid 2:

Or starvation.

Maid 1:

A bird's life's not easy. Always searching for food, feeding itself and its young ones, escaping dangers, finding a mate.

Gusti:

Oh yes, finding a mate. I knew you would get around to that again somehow. Always finding a mate. But do I get to find one myself? Even in that the birds are luckier than me. At least they choose each other.

Maid 1:

I'm sure you'll be lucky in love.

Gusti:

I haven't been so far. What a miserable lot of suitors have come my way—pampered princes who can't even dress themselves, playboys, businessmen who just want to use my connections, proud men who just want to add me to their collection of jewels, ugh! And then there's my brother eager to sell me off to the highest bidder. I am beginning to think there's no such thing as love. It's a poet's lie, a trick capture girls' hearts with foolish romanticism. Only when they're caught and married do they wake up and see the trap.

Maid 1:

Only one who hasn't loved could speak like that. Your turn will come.

Gusti:

Then help me go out and find him. I know other princesses like Busba have dressed like a man and gone to find her Panji. Help me disguise myself and escape!

Maid 2:

Do you dare?

Gusti:

Yes. I must. Whether you help me or not, I'll do it.

Maid 3:

*(enters)* Gusti Putri Raden Ajeng Retno Dumillah.

Gusti:

I know when you call me by my full name you have bad news. What is it?

Maid 3:

An emissary from Sultan Mahmud Shah of Melaka has come. He has heard of your beauty and spirit and wants to marry you.

Gusti:

I wonder which one of his neighbors is attacking him so that he needs my brother's help. What a nuisance. I'm like some not-so-secret weapon they barter between themselves. Well, I refuse.

Maid 3:

You refuse to see him? He's waiting outside.

Gusti:

Drat! What a nuisance. You don't give me much choice, do you? Well, let's entertain ourselves at his expense. Show him in.

*Tuah enters, they fall immediately in love, then quickly recover. The princess is haughty, Tuah shy and humble.*

Gusti:

You come from the Sultan of Melaka?

Tuah:

Yes, Your Majesty. He has heard of your...

Gusti:

...outstanding beauty and can't wait to possess it.

Tuah:

...sagacity and spirit and is eager to be better acquainted with it.

Gusti:

The reputation of my sharp tongue hasn't daunted him?

Tuah:

My king loves a duel between experts, admires an honorable adversary, and...

Gusti:

...and in the end expects complete devotion and submission...such as you've given him.

Tuah:

The Sultan has earned my complete loyalty and respect. I give it freely.

Gusti:

Is that why he sent *you*? Are you his best emissary for the job?

Tuah:

*(laughs)* No, there I protested. I'm out of my element.

Gusti:

Which is?

Tuah:

I'm a warrior...of some repute.

Gusti:

Ah yes, a most valued commodity, the king's teeth and claws.

Tuah:

We do not expect beautiful young women to understand such things...

Gusti:

Well they do, even if they're kept ignorant and imprisoned like I am. We do understand and we do not approve. Well, go back and tell your master, I'll none of him or you either until he fulfills my three demands.

Tuah:

Three? I thought there were seven.

Gusti:

Three impossible demands are as good as seven, aren't they? Why waste each others' time. I'm economical, ecological and efficient. Tell him...

*Fade out*

### **Scene III** *Sultan's Palace*

Sultan:

Well, what's she like?

Tuah:

Smart, witty, and clever with words, good sense of humor...

Sultan:

Her looks, man! Is she as beautiful as I've heard?

Tuah:

Yes, beautiful.

Sultan:

Well, describe, describe!

Tuah:

Words would not suffice, especially not mine. I've done better. I've got her photograph.  
*(hands it to Sultan)*

Sultan:

Show me! Ah! Not touched up, is it? Really her?

Tuah:

Yes, Your Majesty. In fact, it does not do her justice.

Sultan:

Well, I'm willing. What does she want? Jewels? Clever, you say? Books?

Tuah:

I believe she loves nature.

Sultan:

Excellent. She'll love my garden. She'll be the flower par excellence in my bower. I'll send her every kind of bloom and guarantee it will open just as you arrive at her palace. They'll release their beauty and fragrance representing my love.

Tuah:

Very imaginative...and romantic, Your Majesty. But she's named her own conditions.

Sultan:

Well, what are they? Why do you hesitate? Embarrassed? Now you've aroused me. Kinky, are they?

Tuah:

Very difficult...to accomplish.

Sultan:

A test! A quest? Tell me, I'm ready. I love a good challenge!

Tuah:

One hundred trays of live leatherback turtle hatchlings.

Sultan:

Goodness all mighty, what's that?

Tuah:

Endangered turtles, Your Majesty. A gentle animal almost extinct because of getting entangled in fisherman's nets. Their eggs are being sold and eaten by too many villagers, and tourists...

Sultan:

No, no. I mean how many hatchlings per tray?

Tuah:

A good point, Your Majesty. Though I assume she means the regular size that all diplomats use to offer their presents to you.

Sultan:

B5?

Tuah:

A little larger.

Sultan:

*(sighs)* Well, go on.

Tuah:

A hundred swimming pools of river water from the last flood without rubbish.

Sultan:

Before or after the smart tunnel?

Tuah:

She doesn't specify.

Sultan:

Well, there was probably more rubbish before the tunnel was built. It should be cleaner now.

Tuah:

Oh, pardon, Sire, in the small print, it says, "from the Sungai Gombak" and the tunnel only deals with water from the Sungai Klang.

Sultan:

Always read the fine print, Tuah.

Tuah:

My apologies. My eyes are getting bad.

Sultan:

Well, go on with the next.

Tuah:

This one is the most difficult of all, I'm afraid.

Sultan:

What? The blood of my only son? I'm brave, let me have it.

Tuah:

Collecting and cleaning the so-called 'green' clothes of Slime Doby.

Sultan:

Slime Doby. Sounds like a shady character.

Tuah:

Yes, she says when the 'green' clothes are properly exposed and cleaned in the sun, they'll turn transparent.

Sultan:

Not much good as clothes, then, are they? Does he have a nice body, this Slime Doby. Should I be jealous of him?

Tuah:

Your Majesty has much foresight, not to mention, acuity. I think she's giving you a covert warning, that indeed, he is so powerful he endangers your rule, and that only by undressing him, will you make him a lawful subject.

Sultan:

I knew there'd be a man in it somewhere. Are you sure she isn't telling him the same thing about me, and secretly hopes to do me in, or both of us?

Tuah:

I don't think that's her intention, Your Majesty.

Sultan:

Well, I have my doubts. But go on.

Tuah:

That's all.

Sultan:

All? I thought there were supposed to be seven demands—hearts of mosquitoes, bridges of gold and silver, etc. etc.

Tuah:

She's modernized; economical, ecological and efficient, I'd say.

Sultan:

Hmmm, I don't agree. These are beyond kinky. They sound suspicious—like plot to destroy the economy...or my reputation. Whoever heard of a king messing around with turtles and rubbish? But they are impossible, aren't they?

Tuah:

Difficult, but not impossible.

Sultan:

She's trying to tell me I don't have a chance. This is an indirect rejection, isn't it? And if I try to comply with her demands, I'll ruin our economy. How dare she interfere with our internal affairs. No! She mocks me. Buckle on your sword, Hang Tuah, we are going to war. No female treats me like this.

Tuah:

Your Majesty! I don't think she means either dishonor or rejection!

Sultan:

Huh?

Tuah:

Her demands are difficult but not impossible. They test the will of the leader, and his ability to lead and educate his people. They are a test of character and determination. Your Majesty can pass the test with flying colors—if you truly want to.

Sultan:

To win her?

Tuah:

Yes, and to improve your country, the life of your people...and its other inhabitants.

Sultan:

Improve! Melaka is the richest kingdom in the world. Watch your words Tuah or I'll try you for treason.

Tuah:

I only meant that our economic prosperity has come at a heavy cost to our natural environment. A sustainable balance is already technologically achievable, what we need now is only the will and the leadership to put it into practice. Your Majesty can use her test as a great opportunity.

Sultan:

Are you sure you don't want a war instead? Tuah, you're getting old, this might be your last chance for a good fight. Getting soft, are you?

Tuah:

You're right, I am older, but a mature man prefers a battle of wits to that of arms.

Sultan:

Very well. I put you in charge of fulfilling the Princess's requests. Report back to me in two weeks.



Tuah:  
B-b-b-but Your Majesty, I'm only a poor soldier....

Sultan:  
Enjoy the challenge to your wits. Dismissed, and on your way out, tell the steward I am ready for lunch!  
**Black out.**

**Scene IV** *Tuah's Office*

Tuah:  
*(he sits deep in thought; his food untouched, the servant takes it away)*

Servant I:  
You didn't touch your food. Thought needs food as much fighting does.

Tuah:  
I can't eat until I make a little progress. I've started with the easiest task, finding a few leatherbacks, but it seems that if they're not already extinct, they're too few to reproduce. If I don't act fast, they'll all be gone.

Servant I:  
Ah turtles. How much I loved eating their eggs as a boy. We'd roast them on the beach. Delicious. I haven't had one since I moved to Melaka.

Tuah:  
I forgot you were from Terengganu. Plentiful were they? You used to steal them from the beach, even when it was illegal?

Servant I:  
I confess, sometimes, we did. But other times my mother just bought them in the market.

Tuah:  
In the market? They were readily for sale?

Servant I:  
Sold to locals and tourists alike.

Tuah:  
When it was illegal?

Servant I:  
*(shrugs his shoulders)* It was common.

Tuah:  
Do you think they're still being sold in the markets?

Servant I:  
Probably. Where there are buyers, there are always sellers.

Tuah:  
You'll go immediately and find some.

Servant I:

B-b-b-but Sir, I don't know anyone there anymore. I-I-I-I-

Tuah:

Go!

**Black out**

**Scene V** *Market in Terengganu*

Seller:

Fresh fish! Fresh shrimp!

Servant I:

Hey Lilah, remember me?

Seller:

Who are you? I see now –you're Rosman, the show-off who went away to the big city to get rich. What are you doing here? Lost your job, have you? Come back in shame?

Servant I:

No, I work in the Palace.

Seller:

Oh, big man now, is it?

Servant I:

But I need your help. I need turtle eggs.

Seller:

No problem. You pay big bucks.

Servant I:

Money's no problem. But they need to be live eggs—I need to hatch them.

Seller:

Not eat them? Ahh, I see, you're going into business, very clever. Turtles almost gone, you raise some hatchlings and sell the eggs for big profit when no one else can get them. You sell to Sultan, is it? If I find some, we go 50-50, okay?

Servant I:

That wasn't my plan. It's not a bad one except that it won't work. Turtles migrate and only lay their eggs in a favored place. The hatchlings have to swim to sea and learn to migrate too.

Seller:

But they'll learn to adapt if it means their survival, everyone does. Look at me, I used to work for (use the name of business that went bust in Malaysia) and here I am selling fish to survive. I'll scour the market and see what I can find for you. Come back tomorrow.

Servant I:

One more thing—they have to be live *leatherback* eggs.

Seller:

Now he tells me. That's impossible. We haven't seen leatherback in two years. They're gone.

Servant I:

Gone! Then so is my head. Why did I ever open my big mouth!

Seller:

*(sighs)* Come back tomorrow. If you're offering gold, usually something can be done.

**Black out**

**Scene VI** *Tuah's Office, the servant is sweeping and cleaning up*

Servant II:

Sir, why are you so sad? You haven't eaten or changed your clothes in days. Let me get you a fresh sarong.

Tuah:

Go away, leave me alone. All is rubbish. Every night I have the same nightmare—in the next flood of the Sengai Gombak, the houses will be covered in mountains of rubbish. I see nothing but rubbish from fast food, cheap clothes, plastic bags, plastic bottles, electronic gadgets piled high.

Servant II:

Ah, yes, so convenient, plastic. In my childhood we had nothing but banana leaves or old newspaper to wrap things. Plastic is so much better.

Tuah:

Why is it better? A banana leaf you could toss over your shoulder when you were finished, and a week later, it would be gone, ground into the soil. The plastic lasts for a thousand years, clogs up the sewers, makes the floods worse. People have become accustomed to living in rubbish—they don't even see it anymore, except when it blocks the drains and floods their houses.

Servant II:

It's more convenient. Not so many banana leaves in the city. Plastic is everywhere, and it doesn't leak. I remember the juices dripping out of the leaves and staining my sarong. Such a nuisance.

Tuah:

Yes, plastic is everywhere. That's the problem. We have to convince people to use it less, and companies to make less from it in the first place.

Servant II:

But it's so cheap.

Tuah:

Much too cheap—you think it's free. I'll tell the Sultan he must tax all plastic—then people will think twice about using it once and throwing it away.

Servant II:

The people will hate you, and besides, the Sultan won't dare. It would make him the most unpopular Sultan in history. He is concerned with his legacy.

Tuah:

We must persuade people to change their views and habits, but education takes too long, and we don't have time! (*notices her for the first time*) What's that nonsense you're wearing?

Servant II:

(*she's wearing plastic jewelry, bangles, made popular by a celebrity*) Oh, everyone's wearing it nowadays, sir.

Tuah:

Why? It looks ridiculous.

Servant II:

It's the latest fashion (from Japan or Korea?) and (name of popular singer) wore it at her last concert and now everyone wants it.

Tuah:

Fashion, you say? When a celebrity does something ridiculous, everyone imitates it. When you do something sensible, no one pays attention.

Servant II:

If it appears in the right magazine or TV show, people will follow.

Tuah:

Hmmm, mass media, social media fashion—perhaps I can use these.

Servant II:

Jewelry, shoes and clothes are all made out of plastic. And fashion comes and goes faster than the moon changes. That's why we like it—always something new and different, at a low price.

Tuah:

What you "love" one week, you throw away the next. These disposable habits are ruining the country. We throw away everything.

Servant II:

But good for business, stimulates the economy. Always buy, buy, buy. If cannot go shopping every week, what to do on day off?

Tuah:

Growth like a cancer that's out of control. When resources are depleted even business can't make something out of nothing.

Servant II:

But sir, advertising been doing that for years!

Tuah:

Right! I need a good poster child for the other side. Someone super popular, like Bono for Africa, Paul McCartney for animals. We need a star. I know! Anna Rafalli! (any celebrity)

Servant II:

But what will she do, sir?

Tuah:

Do? She'll appear in a stunning dress. The latest fashion...

Servant II:

Huh?

Tuah:

...remade from one of her mother's old *kebayas*. Remake will become the new fad. Retro, not copies, but the real thing. Accessories made from bamboo, plastic-looking but not real plastic. She'll redesign her grandma's beaded slippers, elegant new shoes. She'll carry one of those famous "I am not a Plastic Bag" bags. The elegant new 'no waste' model!

Servant II:

But sir, there will still be mountains of plastic bags and bottles from the past.

Tuah:

Bottled water is an unnecessary fad when our water boiled is safe to drink. A two-ringgit tax on all plastic water bottles. Plastic bag production will stop immediately. Every family will be given a set of carry-all bags that can be washed after use, and used over and over again. No more waste, no more stopped up drains and gutters, we'll clean our rivers. (*claps his hands*)

There, that wasn't so difficult, was it? Anna will be our poster girl of the new campaign. I'll create an online where people can see the progress made on the rivers as they grow cleaner and fish return. In a year, we will look back at this dark time and wonder why we lived in this filth for so long. We create it, we can stop it.

Servant II:

It will take more than one celebrity and a little tax.

Tuah:

Not if I actually enforce the new rule. And I will enforce it absolutely. No one who breaks it will go unpunished.

Servant II:

Not even the giant Slime Doby.

Tuah:

Ah yes, Slime Doby, one of the villains who masquerades as a charitable organization. The public only knows the pretty face and not the deeds behind it. Very clever, Slime Doby, I will make you the cleanest greenest dude in all land. You must pay penance for your nefarious deeds. Go get me our KPA (Malaysia's Environmental Protection Agency) team.

Servant II:

Ah, I think he's taking a nap, sir.

Tuah:

Well go wake him up. (*servant goes*) The KPA team must make a report of Slime Doby's occupation of tribal forest lands and see whether he's been bending the laws to suit his purposes.

(*returns*) Sorry, sir, he's on vacation. Servant II:

Vacation? An important public servant? Tuah:

Yes, paid vacation to Timbuctoo. Servant II:

So there's no one? Tuah:

No one for *this* job. Servant II:

Tuah:  
Then go get me the representative of Slime Doby. (*servant goes*) I will see how he defends his record. It may give me some clue as to where to begin disrobing him.

**Black out**

## **Scene VII** *Tuah's Office*

SD Rep:  
We've an excellent record in environmental protection, and we've brought prosperity to thousands of people.

Your shareholders. Tuah:

The working people in rural areas. SD Rep:

Tuah:  
Your laborers are mostly Indonesians. Your palm oil plantations have destroyed enormous sections of forest all over Borneo. You have disrupted rural practices and forcibly removed entire communities as well as endangering wildlife.

No gain without pain. SD Rep:

Those who suffer the pain are not receiving the gain. Tuah:

SD Rep:  
Who are those? A few elephants and monkeys? Hah hah, very funny. You want me to open a bank account for them? You know, we started the 'adopt-an-orangutan' program.

Tuah:  
If you hadn't cut down the trees there would have been no need for such a program. That is just the sort of green clothes I have to undress. You cut fatal wounds and then cover with green band aids, and pat yourselves on the back. What's wrong with you people? Have you no traditional values of loyalty, honour or integrity? You only think in terms of money and profit, and even those you don't manage very well.

SD Rep:

Tuah, forgive me for saying so, but your virtues are for children's textbooks, not the financial reports that make adult reading.

Tuah:

It's because I have lived a long time and remember the past, and can see into the future that I know you are on a path to disaster.

SD Rep:

Ah yes, you want us to return to a Golden Age—that never existed except in your textbooks. We are looking forward to 2030 and making Malaysia a First World country.

Tuah:

With expensive First World problems. Why must we imitate other countries' mistakes and feed their unreasonable demands? We stood up to the IMF and World Bank. Prosperity not based on long term sustainability is doomed.

SD Rep:

The government backs us 100%. Palm oil *is* the way of the future—when it was declared a biofuel, our stock skyrocketed. Soon we'll be supplying not only our own Protons, but the cars, trucks and planes of the world. We are a global player. Moreover, we have just donated five million ringgit to UKM for climate change research. We have impeccable green credentials.

Tuah:

No, just more fashionable green clothes! You must have a very guilty conscience! But you don't fool me.

SD Rep:

We aren't trying to fool anyone. Our company stands on the five YSD pillars—Education, Youth, Sports and Recreation, Arts and Culture, Community Development, Conservation of the Environment, Protection of the Ecosystem. We have established a three-year program to study climate change and invited experts from all over the world.

Tuah:

All that is merely to make you more efficient in covering up your destruction. We're a monocrop country—first rubber and now palm oil. We need not only economic diversity, but biodiversity.

SD Rep:

We're far ahead of you with that too. Our Big 9 campaign funds the preservation of sun bear, orangutan, pygmy elephant, cloud leopard, hornbill, banteng, proboscis monkey, Sumatran rhino and Malayan tiger. We've already collaborated with National Geographic Channel to show our conservation efforts in the Tabin National Wildlife Reserve. This year, we established the Stability of Altered Forest Ecosystems, SAFE!.

Tuah:

SAFE! Hah! First you destroy ecosystems and then claim to protect them. These acronyms are just a cover for your cutting down more forest. How do you go about protecting your Big 9 when you've destroyed their habitat? That's quite a magic trick. You can fool the public with such gimmicks but not me.

SD Rep:

All right. If you are so smart and virtuous, what would you have us do?

Tuah:

Stop cutting immediately.

SD Rep:

S-s-s-top c-c-c-cutting! Impossible!

Tuah:

Instead of spending token money to undo the damage you are doing, just stop doing the harmful cutting until a more comprehensive study can be made. It's simple.

SD Rep:

It's not so simple. The market for palm oil is growing by leaps and bounds. We can hardly keep up with it already.

Tuah:

What if I told you I have a secret weapon that could bring all those plans crashing down in one year.

SD Rep:

Impossible. The government will do everything to protect us. We aren't foreigners, you know; everybody has a stake in us, from the highest to the lowest. Even the villagers appreciate the jobs. They're against the environmentalists from the city telling them that the forest is better—to leave everything alone and for them to remain poor.

Tuah:

Eco-tourism is taking off. People come from all over the world to see the pygmy elephants and orangutans.

SD Rep:

A pittance compared to the fortune we make from palm oil. Now, that I've made our position clear, I have a golf tournament to attend. Too bad you never learned the game; I think you could have been a good player. Exchange your famous Keris Taming Sari for a long iron club.

Tuah:

I said I had a secret weapon.

SD Rep:

You're going to fine us for not following some obscure law? Oh, I'm so scared. Shoot me! Shoot me! The prize money for the golf tournament will be higher than your piddling fine! Good day.

Tuah:

I'll give you a clue. Dutch elm disease.

SD Rep:

Dutch! The enemies of Melaka? You're bringing them back! No way. No foreigners will help you. Foreigners have no say in our internal affairs.



Tuah:

Not even foreign investors? Think about it, my friend. I give you one week to get back to me. Now go hit your little white ball around the green. But what Dutch elm disease did to the elms in America, BSR could do for you and no greenwashing will save you. Good day!  
(*Tuah leaves*)

SD Rep:

Tuah, your saber-rattling doesn't scare me. BSR? What the hell is he talking about? Secret weapon? Never mind, I'll check on Wikipedia. (*opens laptop and begins tapping*) Greenwashing, indeed. We donate in all directions. That old Hang Tuah can't threaten us over a few elephants and monkeys. Some foreign environmentalists must have been needling him. Some journalist will run a few stories about the destruction of the forest, the disappearance of animal species, and the removal of a few backward people. They'll huff and puff, and soon the whole thing will blow over, and then it's back to business as usual. Let's see, BSR. Ganoderma Basal Stem Rot, lethal and incurable disease of oil palms, up to 80% loss in Papua New Guinea, with Malaysia and Indonesia next...

*Fade out*

### **Scene VIII** *Sultan's Palace*

Sultan:

Well, Tuah, time's up.

Tuah:

Your Majesty, I've done my best, but failed. I face death with peace in my heart knowing that I've done some good, but not accomplished the impossible.

Sultan:

Drat! The princess will think I'm worthless. My reputation stinks. Well, show me what you've got and I'll decide whether it's worth showing her anyway.

Tuah:

I think she would be pleased and might soften her resistance. We set up the turtle sanctuary. Devoted naturalists are rescuing turtles, nursing them to health and releasing them. I have posted special police to guard the beaches against poachers. I've set up a training program for tourist guides so that they do not let tourists approach the turtles when they are laying eggs. Many of the necessary rules had already been made by Your Majesty...

Sultan:

Me?

Tuah:

Yes. They just needed stricter enforcement. Fishermen in the area are now required to use nets that have special escape routes for turtles, marine mammals and large endangered fish. We inspect the nets and their catch. They must report any unusual sightings.

Sultan:

They will complain about this.

Tuah:

I don't think so. Good fishermen know they need to sustain the balance in order to continue fishing. Once we gave them clear guidelines, they were willing to cooperate.

Sultan:

Well, no hatchlings then?

Tuah:

The refuge center and the fishermen are working together to tag hatchlings once they have reached the sea. They count them when they leave and then see how many return. It will require many years because the turtles are so few. But we have hope in other examples of recovery...

Sultan :

Such as?

Tuah:

The bald eagle.

Sultan:

That American bird?

Tuah:

Yes, it was almost extinct in 1970s, but strictly enforced laws have helped them reach sustainable numbers. It is a success story we can follow, but only if we are consistent and vigilant.

Sultan:

Can I send her at least one grown leatherback? They're big and one will fill at least a whole tray.

Tuah:

I suggest you send her these photographs of us protecting the hatchlings as they scramble to the sea, and making sure the mothers laying eggs on shore are not disturbed. We're not up to a hundred trays, but I think she'll appreciate our effort.

Sultan:

You're reading between her lines? I hope you're correct.

Tuah:

And, I'm happy to report, a miracle has occurred. Puteri Rantau Abang, a 32-year-old princess arrived on the shore.

Sultan:

Another princess? Thirty-two is a little old. Is she still pretty?

Tuah:

Beautiful, Your Majesty! She is the first leatherback turtle to arrive on that shore and lay her eggs since 2006, and then there were no hatchlings. So we must pray for her eggs to hatch this time and grow to maturity.

Sultan:

Assign a special guard to the Puteri Rantau Abang's nest!

Tuah:

I have already found the perfect guards. Bring them forth. (*The seller Lilah and servant are brought on.*) These two were caught buying eggs; they will now be responsible for protecting them.

Sultan:

Your lives depend on the safety of Puteri's children. Do you understand? Go! Now, the next task.

Tuah:

The question of finding river water unpolluted with rubbish is both easier and more difficult to solve.

Sultan:

Please Tuah, no riddles. Just tell me what you've done.

Tuah:

The math is simple. If each of the 28 million Malaysians uses only one plastic bag per day, they create rubbish of 10 billion plastic bags in one year. In KL alone, we produce 7 million tons of rubbish a day, much of it non-biodegradable.

Sultan:

Then burn it. But not near my palace.

Tuah:

No, burning it creates toxic gasses. Getting rid of the plastic rubbish is not the answer. We must reduce its use and its production, which at every stage is polluting. Since the rubbish is created by everyone, everyone must be responsible in cleaning it up.

Sultan:

Even me?

Tuah:

Especially you—you are the leader. People follow by your good example.

Sultan:

This does not sound fun. What must I do now?

Tuah:

Tax single-use plastics—disposable bottles and plastic bags. Instead, everyone will be issued free non-plastic reusable bags.

Sultan:

Free? Who will pay for them?

Tuah:

You, and the new tax. Which do you think is cheaper? Issuing the reusable bags to everyone or spending millions in clearing the rubbish after each flood and repairing flood damage? We must take pride in what we make and not be so eager to throw everything away. We must encourage and reward people to change, and if they don't, fine them. (*Sultan has fallen asleep and is snoring*) As I was saying, Your Majesty...

Sultan:

What? Oh yes, very good, very good. So, how many swimming pools full have we got so far?

Tuah:

According to my calculations, in five years we can...

Sultan:

Five years! I can't wait that long. Besides a new political party might be in power and then all plans can be obstructed.

Tuah:

But you, Your Majesty, are constant even when political leaders come and go.

Sultan:

True, true, but I doubt she'll wait that long. How about the last one?

Tuah:

Well, I didn't realize that Slime Doby was a friend of yours...

Sultan:

Friend of mine? I've never heard of him.

Tuah:

He has many faces and disguises. Some, but not all, of his green clothes are The UKM-YSD Climate Change Chair, The Big 9 Campaign, The Stability of Altered Forest Ecosystems project, and The SDGT.

Sultan:

Who? What? Ah, yes, now I remember, the Slime Doby Golf Tournament. The first prize is the Sultan Mahmud Shah Cup. You aren't going to change that, are you?

Tuah:

The tournament will continue—as a charity event—to replant the forest with a variety of native species and allow the return of indigenous people who wish to remain on their land.

Sultan:

He'll be responsible for every broken twig, eh?

Tuah:

I have employed one hundred more scientists for the KPA to monitor...

Sultan:

What? One hundred more bureaucrats to be paid out of my coffers?

Tuah:

Public money, Your Majesty.

Sultan:

That's what I said, my money. What if I put *them* on trays and offer them to Gusti? Think she'll accept them?

Tuah:

I think she'd appreciate them better if they are here doing their job.

Sultan:

Well, all of this has turned out to be a bit of a bore, not at all as exciting as building a bridge of gold. If she likes all this green stuff, I'm not sure she'll turn me on.

Tuah:

Your Majesty could write a love poem.

Sultan:

Excellent idea. You write it and I'll sign it, and then go to her tomorrow with the complete package. On your way out, tell the steward, I'm ready for tea.

Tuah:

*(leaves)* Why do I always open my big mouth. Let's see, love poem. I must be able to find one somewhere. Persian, maybe, French perhaps...

***Fade out***

### **Scene IX** *Gusti's Palace*

Tuah:

Dear princess, Sultan Mahmud Shah offers you this bouquet of roses and a poem expressing his sincere devotion.

Gusti:

*(reads aloud poem as Tuah mouths the words silently to himself)*

The more of my poor heart you take  
The larger grows my heart!  
My heart to yours sounds but one cry:  
If kisses fast could flee  
By letter, then with your sweet lips  
My letters read should be!  
If kisses could be writ with ink,  
Then you would know before you read  
What your loving Sultan thinks!

Hmmm, he wrote this, did he? Very romantic, your Sultan. Now what about my tasks?

Tuah:

I have prepared a DVD with full account of our attempts to fulfill your wishes.

Gusti:

Attempts are not good enough. Sorry.

Tuah:

The Sultan took the opportunity of your demands to implement many improvements. He appreciates your insight, and values even more the chance to have you by his side to guide him further. I think you will be impressed with our progress and view our efforts in good faith.

Gusti:

You speak well on behalf of your Sultan; you would have better luck to speak for yourself.

Tuah:

I don't understand, Princess. I am the Sultan's loyal servant...

Gusti:

I know this poem was written by you, and all the work was done by you. I have admired you from afar and now I find you even more worthy than your legend.

Tuah:

You love me?

***Black out***

### **Scene X** *On Gunung Ledang*

Gusti:

Hurry Tuah, you are so slow. We have to get to the summit of Mt. Ledang before nightfall or the weretigers will get you.

Tuah:

My knee is giving me a little trouble. *(he stops to write something)*

Gusti:

What are you doing now? Recording your throwing your famous Keris Taming Sari into Sungai Duyung river?

Tuah:

No, writing a letter to the Sultan. I've heard of a beautiful Chinese princess—niece of Hang Li Po—he might be interested in her...

Gusti:

*(she pulls him by the ear)* Still acting as the master's go-between? Come along, or I'll ...  
*(Fade out)*

**The End**