



## A story of an ungrateful child

### (II) **Malin Kundang**

(Indonesia)

Near the mouth of the Batang Arau River there once was a large fishing village. Its harbour was crowded with large ships and sailing vessels from all corners of the world.

Among the many fishing families, there lived a poor fisherman and his wife and son. Their only child was so spoiled that he was called Malin Kundang. Malin was the boy's name but Kundang meant spoiled.

Malin Kundang was a naughty child. One day when he was playing too roughly, he fell and wounded his forehead. It left a scar that clearly marked the boy. Even when he was grown into a young man, the scar could plainly be seen.

When Malin Kundang was a young man, he was so well-built and strong that his father was able to secure a place for him with a sea captain. "Dear sir, if you need a crewman, please take my son with you. You may bring him up and consider him as your own son. I hope he can learn much from you, sir, and perhaps one day he can become a captain like yourself."

The ship's captain was willing to take Malin Kundang aboard, and Malin Kundang was excited by the opportunity to see other countries.

It was hard for Malin Kundang's parents to see him off at the port. They watched until the ship disappeared from sight. Then they returned to their little hut, only hoping that one day they would see their beloved son again.



Day after day, week after week, year after year passed, Malin Kundang worked diligently and learned a great deal. He made a fortune for himself.

He became a rich sea captain, with a large ship of his own. He married the daughter of a wealthy merchant. He completely forgot his own village and his loving parents who still waited for his return.

Years passed and his parents grew older and older. His father died, but his old mother still waited. She hoped to see her son once more.

Eventually Malin Kundang did begin to think of his old village and so he decided to visit it. He had never told his wife of his village for fear she would not like a man of such poor birth.

When his large ship arrived in the harbour of Batang Arau the villagers all rushed to see the wonderful sight. "Who could be the owner of the rich ship?" they asked each other.

Then one old man in the crowd saw the scar on the forehead of the ship's captain. "It could only be Malin Kundang," he thought. He hurried to tell Malin Kundang's mother that her son had arrived as a rich merchant. How happy she was to hear the news of her son's homecoming after all these years.

Before long the news had spread throughout the entire village. But keeping her longing to herself for a while more, Malin Kundang's mother quickly prepared Malin Kundang's favourite food. Then she and her neighbour hurried to the port to greet her son.

There was the marvellous ship, and on its deck a most handsome man in such expensive clothing. Malin Kundang's mother was so proud to see her rich son.

Arriving near the ship, she called out, "Malin Kundang! My dear son! At last you have come home! Malin Kundang, my son! I have been longing and waiting for you all these years. Here is your mother, dear son!" She was full of happiness, for she had seen the scar on the rich merchant's forehead and knew that this really was her own son.

But when Malin Kundang saw this old woman in poor clothing calling to him, he was too ashamed to answer. Turning away, he ordered his crewmen to remove her from the shore.

"But Malin Kundang," called his mother. "Just look at me. You must recognize your own mother. I am bringing your favourite food. Remember when you were a child?" She held up the food.

But Malin Kundang still turned away. He would not admit before his wife and crewmen that this poor old woman was his own mother.

Still his mother called out to him, "Malin Kundang, how can you forget me? I am your own mother! Look at me carefully, Malin Kundang! You must have missed me."

Malin Kundang was too ashamed of her. With no compassion whatsoever, he told her, "Shameless old woman. I do not have a dirty and poor mother like this. My mother is dead. Don't ever claim yourself as my mother." And his men dragged her off.



His mother could only call after him, “Malin Kundang, you are a wicked child! You won’t accept your own mother. You are an ungrateful child, ashamed to admit your own mother who brought you up.” She went home in sorrow, with a broken heart.

The following day, Malin Kundang ordered his crew to leave and set sail from his old village. But once they reached the middle of the sea, the wind came up and began to throw Malin Kundang’s ship left and right. Lightning and thunder took over the sky. The clouds were pitch dark. The sounds were deafening.

Malin Kundang realized his offense toward his mother. He knew that God and nature were punishing him for his bad deed. He began to pray and cry for forgiveness. But it was too late. The waves became more and more fierce. At last his ship was swallowed by a wave and it sank from sight.

