



LEPU, THE BEAUTIFUL YET SHARP FISH: STORIES AND FASCINATING FACTS FROM THE WATERS OF BUNAKEN

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Amid the vibrant coral reefs of Bunaken swims a strikingly beautiful fish. Its body is striped red and white, its long fins fan out like delicate lace, and every movement resembles a slow, graceful dance through the water. Its name is the lionfish, or as it's known locally, Lepu.

Lepu (lionfish) is one of the most easily recognized fish due to its vivid colors and distinctive shape. But behind its beauty lies a defense: venomous spines that protect it from predators.

Though it appears elegant, the lionfish is a resilient fighter—highly adapted to survive. In the waters of Bunaken, Lepu dwells among coral and rocky crevices, usually alone and active at night.

In the children's storybook series: *Stories from the North*, a collaboration between Pelindo and the North Sulawesi Literacy Association, a young Lepu is swept away by a strong ocean current. Tossed and exhausted, it finally finds shelter behind the large body of an old coelacanth named Kola, who is known as the "king of the sea" by the tiny marine creatures of Bunaken.

At first afraid, Lepu gradually realizes that Kola is wise and kind. The two begin to share stories—about the changing ocean, the drifting plastic waste, and their hopes for a cleaner sea.

From fear grew respect. And from protection grew friendship.

This story carries a message: in the ocean, as on land, differences are no reason for division—and every creature has a role to play in caring for their shared home.

Lepu is not just a beautiful fish with sharp spines. It is part of a living ocean story, now living on in the imaginations and hearts of Indonesian children—thanks to Pelindo's commitment to introducing the sea through education and imagination.