

## SURA YA NNE

"Looking at a king's mouth," said an old man, "one would think he never sucked at his mother's breast." He was talking about Okonkwo, who had risen so suddenly from great poverty and misfortune to be one of the lords of the clan. The old man bore no ill will towards Okonkwo. Indeed he respected him for his industry and success. But he was struck, as most people were, by Okonkwo's brusqueness in dealing with less successful men. Only a week ago a man had contradicted him at a kindred meeting which they held to discuss the next ancestral feast. Without looking at the man Okonkwo had said: "This meeting is for men." The man who had contradicted him had no titles. That was why he had called him a woman. Okonkwo knew how to kill a man's spirit.

"Kuangalia kinywa cha mfalme," mzee mmoja alisema, "mtu angefikiri hakuwahi kunyonya matiti ya mama yake." Alikuwa akimzungumzia Okonkwo, ambaye aliinuka ghafla kutoka katika umaskini mkubwa na bahati mbaya na kuwa mmoja wa mabwana wa ukoo huo. Mzee huyo hakuwa na nia mbaya kuelekea Okonkwo. Hakika alimheshimu kwa tasnia na mafanikio yake. Lakini alishangazwa, kama watu wengi, na unyama wa Okonkwo katika kushughulika na wanaume waliofanikiwa kidogo. Wiki moja tu iliyopita mtu mmoja alikuwa amempinga kwenye mkutano wa jamaa ambao walifanya kujadili karamu iliyofuata ya mababu. Bila kumtazama mtu Okonkwo alikuwa amesema: "Mkutano huu ni wa wanaume." Mtu ambaye alikuwa amepingana naye hakuwa na vyeo.

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Ndio maana alimuita mwanamke.  
Okonkwo alijua kuua roho ya mtu.

Everybody at the kindred meeting took sides with Osugo when Okonkwo called him a woman. The oldest man present said sternly that those whose palm-kernels were cracked for them by a benevolent spirit should not forget to be humble. Okonkwo said he was sorry for what he had said, and the meeting continued.

But it was really not true that Okonkwo's palm-kernels had been cracked for him by a benevolent spirit. He had cracked them himself. Anyone who knew his grim struggle against poverty and misfortune could not say he had been lucky. If ever a man deserved his success, that man was Okonkwo. At an early age he had achieved fame as the greatest wrestler in all the land. That was not luck. At the most one could say that his chi or personal god was good. But the Ibo people have a proverb that when a man says yes his chi says yes also. Okonkwo said yes very strongly, so his chi agreed. And not only his chi but his clan too, because it

Kila mtu kwenye mkutano wa jamaa aliunga mkono Osugo wakati Okonkwo alipomwita mwanamke. Mzee aliyekuwepo alisema kwa ukali kwamba wale ambao punje zao za mitende zilipasuliwa kwa ajili yao na roho ya wema wasisahau kuwa wanyenyekevu. Okonkwo alisema anasikitika kwa alichosema, na mkutano ukaendelea.

Lakini haikuwa kweli kwamba matende ya Okonkwo yalikuwa yamepasuka kwa ajili yake na roho ya ukarimu. Alikuwa amezipasua mwenyewe. Yeyote aliyejua mapambano yake mabaya dhidi ya umaskini na bahati mbaya hakuweza kusema alikuwa na bahati. Ikiwa mtu alistahili mafanikio yake, mtu huyo alikuwa Okonkwo. Akiwa na umri mdogo alikuwa amepata umaarufu kama mwanamieleka mkubwa zaidi katika nchi yote. Hiyo haikuwa bahati. Kwa kiasi kikubwa mtu angeweza kusema kwamba chi yake au mungu wa kibinafsi alikuwa mwema. Lakini watu wa Ibo wana methali kwamba mwanamume anaposema ndiyo,

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judged a man by the work of his hands. That was why Okonkwo had been Chosen by the nine villages to carry a message of war to their enemies unless they agreed to give up a young man and a virgin to atone for the murder of Udo's wife. And such was the deep fear that their enemies had for Umuofia that they treated Okonkwo like a king and brought him a virgin who was given to Udo as wife, and the lad Ikemefuna.

The elders of the clan had decided that Ikemefuna should be in Okonkwo's care for a while. But no one thought It would be as long as three years. They seemed to forget all about him as soon as they had taken the decision.

At first Ikemefuna was very much afraid. Once or twice he tried to run away, but he did not know where to begin. He thought of his mother and his three-year-old sister and wept bitterly. Nwoye's mother was very kind to him and

chi yake pia husema ndiyo. Okonkwo alisema ndio kwa nguvu sana, kwa hivyo chi yake akakubali. Na si chi yake tu bali na ukoo wake pia, kwa sababu ilimhukumu mtu kwa kazi ya mikono yake. Ndio maana Okonkwo alikuwa amechaguliwa na vijiji hivyo tisa kupeleka ujumbe wa vita kwa maadui zao isipokuwa walikubali kutoa kijana na bikira ili kulipia mauaji ya mke wa Udo. Na hiyo ndiyo ilikuwa hofu kuu ambayo maadui zao walikuwa nayo kwa Umuofia kwamba walimtendea Okonkwo kama mfalme na kumletea bikira ambaye alipewa Udo kama mke, na mvulana Ikemefuna.

Wazee wa ukoo huo walikuwa wameamua kwamba Ikemefuna awe chini ya uangalizi wa Okonkwo kwa muda. Lakini hakuna mtu aliyefikiria Ingekuwa kwa muda mrefu kama miaka mitatu. Walionekana kusahau yote juu yake mara tu walipochukua uamuzi.

Mwanzoni Ikemefuna aliogopa sana. Mara moja au mbili alijaribu kukimbia, lakini hakujua wapi pa kuanzia. Alimfikiria mama yake na dada yake mwenye umri wa miaka mitatu na kulia kwa uchungu. Mama yake Nwoye

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treated him as one of her own children. But all he said was: "When shall I go home?" When Okonkwo heard that he would not eat any food he came into the hut with a big stick in his hand and stood over him while he swallowed his yams, trembling. A few moments later he went behind the hut and began to vomit painfully. Nwoye's mother went to him and placed her hands on his chest and on his back. He was ill for three market weeks, and when he recovered he seemed to have overcome his great fear and sadness.

He was by nature a very lively boy and he gradually became popular in Okonkwo's household, especially with the children. Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, who was two years younger, became quite inseparable from him because he seemed to know everything. He could fashion out flutes from bamboo stems and even from the elephant grass. He knew the names of all the birds and could set clever traps for the little bush rodents. And he knew which trees made the strongest bows.

alikuwa mwema sana kwake na alimtendea kama mmoja wa watoto wake. Lakini yote aliyosema ni: "Nitaenda lini nyumbani?" Okonkwo aliposikia kwamba hatakula chakula chochote aliingia ndani ya kibanda kile akiwa na fimbo kubwa mkononi na kusimama juu yake huku akimeza viazi vikuu huku akitetemeka. Muda mchache alienda nyuma ya kibanda na kuanza kutapika kwa uchungu. Mama Nwoye alimwendea na kumwekea mikono kifuani na mgongoni. Alikuwa mgonjwa kwa wiki tatu za soko, na alipopata nafuu alionekana kuwa ameshinda hofu na huzuni yake kuu.

Kwa asili alikuwa mvulana mchangamfu sana na polepole akawa maarufu katika kaya ya Okonkwo, hasa kwa watoto. Mtoto wa Okonkwo, Nwoye, ambaye alikuwa mdogo kwa miaka miwili, hakuweza kutenganishwa naye kwa sababu alionekana kujua kila kitu. Angeweza kutengeneza filimbi kutoka kwa mashina ya mianzi na hata kwenye nyasi za tembo. Alijua majina ya ndege wote na angeweza kutega mitego ya werevu kwa ajili ya panya hao

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wadogo wa msituni. Na alijua ni miti gani iliyotengeneza pinde zenye nguvu zaidi.

Even Okonkwo himself became very fond of the boy - inwardly of course. Okonkwo never showed any emotion openly, unless it be the emotion of anger. To show affection was a sign of weakness, - the only thing worth demonstrating was strength. He therefore treated Ikemefuna as he treated everybody else - with a heavy hand. But there was no doubt that he liked the boy. Sometimes when he went to big village meetings or communal ancestral feasts he allowed Ikemefuna to accompany him, like a son, carrying his stool and his goatskin bag. And, indeed, Ikemefuna called him father.

Ikemefuna came to Umuofia at the end of the carefree season between harvest and planting. In fact he recovered from his illness only a few days before the Week of Peace began. And that was also the year Okonkwo broke the peace, and was punished, as was

Hata Okonkwo mwenyewe alimpenda sana mvulana huyo - ndani bila shaka. Okonkwo hakuwahi kuonyesha hisia yoyote waziwazi, isipokuwa iwe ni hisia ya hasira. Kuonyesha mapenzi ilikuwa ni ishara ya udhaifu, jambo pekee lililostabili kuonyeshwa lilikuwa nguvu. Kwa hiyo alimtendea Ikemefuna kama alivyomtendea kila mtu - kwa mkono mzito. Lakini hakukuwa na shaka kwamba alimpenda mvulana huyo. Wakati fulani alipoenda kwenye mikutano mikubwa ya kijiji au karamu za jumuiya za mababu aliruhusu Ikemefuna kuandamana naye, kama mtoto, akiwa amebeba kinyesi chake na mfuko wake wa ngozi ya mbuzi. Na, kwa hakika, Ikemefuna alimwita baba.

Ikemefuna ilikuja Umuofia mwishoni mwa msimu usio na wasiwasi kati ya kuvuna na kupanda. Kwa kweli alipona ugonjwa wake siku chache tu kabla ya Wiki ya Amani kuanza. Na huo ndio pia mwaka ambao Okonkwo alivunja amani, na

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the custom, by Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess.

Okonkwo was provoked to justifiable anger by his youngest wife, who went to plait her hair at her friend's house and did not return early enough to cook the afternoon meal. Okonkwo did not know at first that she was not at home. After waiting in vain for her dish he went to her hut to see what she was doing. There was nobody in the hut and the fireplace was cold.

"Where is Ojiugo?" he asked his second wife, who came out of her hut to draw water from a gigantic pot in the shade of a small tree in the middle of the compound.

"She has gone to plait her hair."

Okonkwo bit his lips as anger welled up within him.

"Where are her children? Did she take them?" he asked with unusual coolness and restraint.

"They are here," answered his first

kuadhibiwa, kama ilivyokuwa desturi, na Ezeani, kuhani wa mungu mke wa dunia.

Okonkwo alikasirishwa na mke wake mdogo, ambaye alienda kusuka nywele zake nyumbani kwa rafiki yake na hakurudi mapema vya kutosha kupika chakula cha mchana. Okonkwo hakujua mwanzoni kwamba hakuwepo nyumbani. Baada ya kungoja sahani yake bila mafanikio alikwenda kwenye kibanda chake ili kuona anachofanya. Hakukuwa na mtu ndani ya kibanda na mahali pa moto palikuwa baridi.

"Ojiugo yuko wapi?" Alimuuliza mke wake wa pili aliyetoka kwenye kibanda chake kuteka maji kwenye chungu kikubwa kilichokuwa kwenye kivuli cha mti mdogo uliokuwa katikati ya boma hilo.

"Ameenda kusuka nywele zake."

Okonkwo aliuma midomo yake huku hasira zikimpenda.

"Watoto wake wako wapi? Amewapeleka?" Aliuliza kwa ubaridi na kujizuia kusiko kawaida.

"Wapo hapa," akajibu mke wake

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wife, Nwoye's mother. Okonkwo bent down and looked into her hut. Ojiugo's children were eating with the children of his first wife.

"Did she ask you to feed them before she went?"

"Yes," lied Nwoye's mother, trying to minimise Ojiugo's thoughtlessness.

Okonkwo knew she was not speaking the truth. He walked back to his obi to await Ojiugo's return. And when she returned he beat her very heavily. In his anger he had forgotten that it was the Week of Peace. His first two wives ran out in great alarm pleading with him that it was the sacred week.

But Okonkwo was not the man to stop beating somebody half-way through, not even for fear of a goddess.

Okonkwo's neighbours heard his wife crying and sent their voices over the compound walls to ask what was the matter. Some of them came over to see for

wa kwanza, mama yake Nwoye. Okonkwo aliinama chini na kutazama ndani ya kibanda chake. Watoto wa Ojiugo walikuwa wakila na watoto wa mke wake wa kwanza.

"Je, yeye aliuliza wewe kuwalisha kabla ya kwenda?"

"Ndiyo," mama yake Nwoye alidanganya, akijaribu kupunguza kutofikiri kwa Ojiugo.

Okonkwo alijua kuwa hasemi ukweli. Alirudi kwa obi yake kusubiri kurudi kwa Ojiugo. Na aliporudi alimpiga sana. Kwa hasira yake alikuwa amesahau kuwa ilikuwa ni Wiki ya Amani. Wake zake wawili wa kwanza walikimbia kwa hofu kuu wakimsihi kwamba ilikuwa wiki takatifu.

Lakini Okonkwo hakuwa mtu wa kuacha kumpiga mtu katikati ya njia, hata kwa kuogopa mungu wa kike.

Majirani wa Okonkwo walimsikia mkewe akilia na kutuma sauti zao kwenye kuta za kiwanja kuuliza ni nini kilichokuwa. Baadhi yao walikuja kujionea. Haikusikika

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themselves. It was unheard of to beat somebody during the sacred week.

Before it was dusk Ezeani, who was the priest of the earth goddess, Ani, called on Okonkwo in his obi. Okonkwo brought out kola nut and placed it before the priest, "Take away your kola nut. I shall not eat in the house of a man who has no respect for our gods and ancestors."

Okonkwo tried to explain to him what his wife had done, but Ezeani seemed to pay no attention. He held a short staff in his hand which he brought down on the floor to emphasise his points.

"Listen to me," he said when Okonkwo had spoken. "You are not a stranger in Umuofia. You know as well as I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbour. We live in peace with our fellows to honour our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow. You have committed a great evil." He brought down his staff

kumpiga mtu wakati wa juma takatifu.

Kabla haijafika jioni Ezeani, ambaye alikuwa kuhani wa mungu mke wa dunia, Ani, alimwita Okonkwo katika obi yake. Okonkwo akatoa kola nut na kuiweka mbele ya kuhani, "Ondoa kola nut yako. Sitakula katika nyumba ya mtu ambaye hana heshima kwa miungu na babu zetu."

Okonkwo alijaribu kumuelezea mke wake alichokifanya, lakini Ezeani alionekana kutojali. Alishika fimbo fupi mkononi ambayo aliishusha chini chini ili kulisitiza hoja zake.

"Nisikilizeni," alisema Okonkwo alipokuwa amesema. "Wewe si mgeni huko Umuofia. Unajua vilevile mimi nafanya hivyo wazee wetu walivyoagiza kwamba kabla ya kupanda mazao yoyote ardhini tuzingatia wiki ambayo mtu hatasema neno kali kwa jirani yake. Tunaishi kwa amani na wenzetu kumuenzi mungu wetu mkuu wa dunia bila baraka yake mazao yetu hayatamea. Umefanya uovu mkubwa." Alishusha wafanyakazi wake chini sana.



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heavily on the floor. "Your wife was at fault, but even if you came into your obi and found her lover on top of her, you would still have committed a great evil to beat her." His staff came down again. "The evil you have done can ruin the whole clan. The earth goddess whom you have insulted may refuse to give us her increase, and we shall all perish." His tone now changed from anger to command. "You will bring to the shrine of Ani tomorrow one she-goat, one hen, a length of cloth and a hundred cowries." He rose and left the hut.

Okonkwo did as the priest said. He also took with him a pot of palm-wine. Inwardly, he was repentant. But he was not the man to go about telling his neighbours that he was in error. And so people said he had no respect for the gods of the clan. His enemies said his good fortune had gone to his head. They called him the little bird nza who so far forgot himself after a heavy meal that he challenged his chi.

No work was done during the Week of Peace. People called on

"Mkeo alikuwa na makosa, lakini hata ukiingia kwenye obi yako na kumkuta mpenzi wake juu yake, bado utakuwa umefanya uovu mkubwa kumpiga." Wafanyakazi wake walishuka tena. "Uovu uliufanya unaweza kuharibu ukoo wote. Yule mungu wa kike uliyemtukana anaweza kukataa kutupatia maongeo yake, na sisi sote tutaangamia." Sauti yake sasa ilibadilika kutoka kwa hasira hadi amri. "Utaleta kwenye madhabahu ya Ani kesho mbuzi jike mmoja, kuku mmoja, urefu wa nguo na ng'ombe mia moja." Alinyanyuka na kuondoka kwenye kibanda.

Okonkwo alifanya kama kasisi alivyosema. Pia alichukua chungu cha mvinyo ya mawese. Kwa ndani, alitubu. Lakini hakuwa mtu wa kwenda kuwaambia jirani zake kwamba alikuwa amekosea. Na hivyo watu walisema hakuwa na heshima kwa miungu ya ukoo. Maadui zake walisema bahati yake imemwendea kichwani. Walimwita ndege mdogo nza ambaye hadi sasa alijisahau baada ya chakula kizito ambacho alipinga chi yake.

Hakuna kazi iliyofanywa wakati wa Wiki ya Amani. Watu

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their neighbours and drank palm-wine. This year they talked of nothing else but the nso-ani which Okonkwo had committed. It was the first time for many years that a man had broken the sacred peace. Even the oldest men could only remember one or two other occasions somewhere in the dim past.

Ogbuefi Ezeudu, who was the oldest man in the village, was telling two other men who came to visit him that the punishment for breaking the Peace of Ani had become very mild in their clan.

"It has not always been so," he said. "My father told me that he had been told that in the past a man who broke the peace was dragged on the ground through the village until he died. But after a while this custom was stopped because it spoiled the peace which it was meant to preserve."

"Somebody told me yesterday," said one of the younger men, "that in some clans it is an abomination for a man to die during the Week

walitembelea majirani zao na kunywa divai ya mawese. Mwaka huu hawakuzungumza kitu kingine isipokuwa nso-ani ambayo Okonkwo alikuwa amefanya. Ilikuwa ni mara ya kwanza kwa miaka mingi kwamba mtu alikuwa amevunja amani takatifu. Hata wanaume wazee waliweza kukumbuka tukio moja au mbili tu mahali fulani katika siku za nyuma.

Ogbuefi Ezeudu, ambaye alikuwa mzee kuliko wote kijijini hapo, alikuwa akiwaambia wanaume wengine wawili waliokuja kumtembelea kwamba adhabu ya kuvunja Amani ya Ani imekuwa ndogo sana katika ukoo wao.

"Si mara zote imekuwa hivyo," alisema. "Baba aliniambia kuwa aliwahi kuambiwa kuwa siku za nyuma mtu mmoja aliyevunja amani aliburuzwa chini kijijini hadi akafa, lakini baada ya muda desturi hii ilisitishwa kwa sababu iliharibu amani ambayo ilikusudiwa. kuhifadhi."

"Kuna mtu aliniambia jana," alisema mmoja wa wale vijana, "kwamba katika baadhi ya koo ni chukizo kwa mtu kufa katika Wiki

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"It is indeed true," said Ogbuefi Ezeudu. "They have that custom in Obodoani. If a man dies at this time he is not buried but cast into the Evil Forest. It is a bad custom which these people observe because they lack understanding. They throw away large numbers of men and women without burial. And what is the result? Their clan is full of the evil spirits of these unburied dead, hungry to do harm to the living."

After the Week of Peace every man and his family began to clear the bush to make new farms. The cut bush was left to dry and fire was then set to it. As the smoke rose into the sky kites appeared from different directions and hovered over the burning field in silent valediction. The rainy season was approaching when they would go away until the dry season returned.

Okonkwo spent the next few days preparing his seed-yams. He looked at each yam carefully to see whether it was good for sowing. Sometimes he decided

"Hakika ni kweli," Ogbuefi Ezeudu alisema. "Wana desturi hiyo huko Obodoani. Mwanaume akifa wakati huu hamziki bali anatupwa kwenye Msitu Mwovu. Ni desturi mbaya wanayoifanya watu hawa kwa kukosa ufahamu. Wanatupilia mbali idadi kubwa ya wanaume na wanawake bila kuzikwa. Na matokeo yake ni nini? Ukoo wao umejaa pepo wachafu wa hawa wafu wasiozikwa, wenye njaa ya kuwadhuru walio hai."

Baada ya Wiki ya Amani kila mtu na familia yake walianza kufyeka kichaka ili kutengeneza mashamba mapya. Kichaka kilichokatwa kiliachwa kikauke na moto ukawashwa juu yake. Wakati moshi ukipanda angani, ndege zilionekana kutoka pande tofauti na kuelea juu ya uwanja uliokuwa ukiwaka kwa furaha ya kimya. Msimu wa mvua ulikuwa unakaribia ambapo wangeondoka hadi kiangazi kirudi.

Okonkwo alitumia siku chache zilizofuata akitayarisha viazi vikuu vyake. Alitazama kila kiazi kwa makini ili kuona kama kilikuwa kizuri kwa kupanda. Wakati fulani

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that a yam was too big to be sown as one seed and he split it deftly along its length with his sharp knife. His eldest son, Nwoye, and Ikemefuna helped him by fetching the yams in long baskets from the barn and in counting the prepared seeds in groups of four hundred. Sometimes Okonkwo gave them a few yams each to prepare. But he always found fault with their effort, and he said so with much threatening.

"Do you think you are cutting up yams for cooking?" he asked Nwoye. "If you split another yam of this size, I shall break your jaw. You think you are still a child. I began to own a farm at your age. And you," he said to Ikemefuna, "do you not grow yams where you come from?"

Inwardly Okonkwo knew that the boys were still too young to understand fully the difficult art of preparing seed-yams. But he thought that one could not begin too early. Yam stood for manliness, and he who could feed

aliamua kwamba viazi vikuu ni kubwa sana haviwezi kupandwa kama mbegu moja na akakigawanya kwa ustadi kwa urefu wake kwa kisu chake kikali. Mwana wake mkubwa, Nwoye, na Ikemefuna walimsaidia kwa kuchota viazi vikuu kwenye vikapu virefu ghalani na kuhesabu mbegu zilizotayarishwa katika vikundi vya mia nne. Wakati fulani Okonkwo aliwapa viazi vikuu vichache kila mmoja kutayarisha. Lakini sikuzote aliona kosa katika jitihada zao, na alisema hivyo kwa vitisho vingi.

"Unafikiri unakata viazi vikuu vya kupikia?" Aliuliza Nwoye. "Ukipasua viazi vikuu vingine vya ukubwa huu, nitakuvunja taya. Unafikiri wewe bado mtoto. Nilianza kumiliki shamba katika umri wako. Na wewe," alimwambia Ikemefuna, "hulimi viazi vikuu mahali ambapo unatoka?"

Kwa ndani Okonkwo alijua kwamba wavulana walikuwa bado wachanga sana kuelewa kikamilifu ufundi mgumu wa kuandaa viazi vikuu vya mbegu. Lakini alifikiri kwamba mtu hawezi kuanza mapema sana. Viazi vikuu

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his family on yams from one harvest to another was a very great man indeed. Okonkwo wanted his son to be a great farmer and a great man. He would stamp out the disquieting signs of laziness which he thought he already saw in him.

"I will not have a son who cannot hold up his head in the gathering of the clan. I would sooner strangle him with my own hands. And if you stand staring at me like that," he swore, "Amadiora will break your head for you!"

Some days later, when the land had been moistened by two or three heavy rains, Okonkwo and his family went to the farm with baskets of seed-yams, their hoes and machetes, and the planting began. They made single mounds of earth in straight lines all over the field and sowed the yams in them.

Yam, the king of crops, was a very exacting king. For three or four moons it demanded hard work and constant attention from cockcrow till the chickens went back to

vilisimama kwa uanaume, na yule ambaye angeweza kulisha familia yake kwa viazi vikuu kutoka kwa mavuno moja hadi nyingine alikuwa mtu mkuu sana. Okonkwo alitaka mwanawe awe mkulima mkubwa na mtu mkuu. Angeweza kuondoa dalili za uvivu ambazo alidhani tayari alizona ndani yake.

"Sitakuwa na mtoto wa kiume ambaye hawezi kuinua kichwa chake kwenye mkusanyiko wa ukoo. Ningemnyonga haraka kwa mikono yangu mwenyewe. Na ukisimama ukinitazama hivyo," aliapa, "Amadiora atakuvunja kichwa. kwa ajili yako!"

Siku kadhaa baadaye, shamba lilipokuwa limelowa na mvua kubwa mbili au tatu, Okonkwo na familia yake walienda shambani wakiwa na vikapu vya viazi vikuu, majembe na mapanga, na upanzi ukaanza. Walitengeneza vilima moja vya udongo kwa mistari iliyonyooka kwenye shamba lote na kupanda viazi vikuu humo.

Yam, mfalme wa mazao, alikuwa mfalme mkali sana. Kwa miezi mitatu au minne ilihitaji bidii na uangalifu wa mara kwa mara kutoka kwa jogoo hadi kuku

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roost. The young tendrils were protected from earth-heat with rings of sisal leaves. As the rains became heavier the women planted maize, melons and beans between the yam mounds. The yams were then staked, first with little sticks and later with tall and big tree branches. The women weeded the farm three times at definite periods in the life of the yams, neither early nor late.

And now the rains had really come, so heavy and persistent that even the village rain-maker no longer claimed to be able to intervene. He could not stop the rain now, just as he would not attempt to start it in the heart of the dry season, without serious danger to his own health. The personal dynamism required to counter the forces of these extremes of weather would be far too great for the human frame.

And so nature was not interfered with in the middle of the rainy season. Sometimes it poured down in such thick sheets of water that earth and sky seemed merged in

waliporudi kutaga. Mikunjo michanga ililindwa kutokana na joto la ardhini kwa pete za majani ya mlonge. Mvua ilipozidi kunyesha wanawake walipanda mahindi, matikiti na maharage kati ya vilima vya viazi vikuu. Kisha viazi vikuu viliwekwa kwenye mti, kwanza kwa vijiti vidogo na baadaye matawi ya miti mirefu na mikubwa. Wanawake walipalilia shamba mara tatu katika vipindi maalum vya maisha ya viazi vikuu, si mapema wala kuchelewa.

Na sasa mvua ilikuwa imenyesha kweli kweli, nzito na yenye kuendelea kiasi kwamba hata mtengeneza mvua kijijini hakudai tena kuwa na uwezo wa kuingilia kati. Hakuweza kuzuia mvua sasa, kama vile asingejaribu kuianzisha katikati ya msimu wa kiangazi, bila hatari kubwa kwa afya yake mwenyewe. Nguvu ya kibinafsi inayohitajika ili kukabiliana na nguvu za hali hii ya hewa kali ingekuwa kubwa sana kwa umbo la mwanadamu.

Na hivyo asili haikuingiliwa katikati ya msimu wa mvua. Wakati mwingine maji yalimwagika kwenye karatasi nene hivi kwamba dunia na anga

## Mambo Husambaratika

one grey wetness. It was then uncertain whether the low rumbling of Amadiora's thunder came from above or below. At such times, in each of the countless thatched huts of Umuofia, children sat around their mother's cooking fire telling stories, or with their father in his obi warming themselves from a log fire, roasting and eating maize. It was a brief resting period between the exacting and arduous planting season and the equally exacting but light-hearted month of harvests.

Ikemefuna had begun to feel like a member of Okonkwo's family. He still thought about his mother and his three-year-old sister, and he had moments of sadness and depression. But he and Nwoye had become so deeply attached to each other that such moments became less frequent and less poignant. Ikemefuna had an endless stock of folk tales. Even those which Nwoye knew already were told with a new freshness and the local flavour of a different clan. Nwoye remembered this period very vividly till the end of his life. He even remembered how he had

zilionekana kuunganishwa katika unyevu mmoja wa kijivu. Wakati huo haikuwa hakika kama sauti ndogo ya ngurumo ya Amadiora ilitoka juu au chini. Nyakati kama hizo, katika kila kibanda kisichohesabika cha Umuofia, watoto waliketi karibu na moto wa kupikia wa mama yao wakisimulia hadithi, au pamoja na baba yao katika obi yake wakiota moto wa magogo, wakichoma na kula mahindi. Kilikuwa ni kipindi kifupi cha kupumzika kati ya msimu mkali na mgumu wa upandaji na ule mwezi wa mavuno uliokuwa mgumu lakini wenye moyo mwepesi.

Ikemefuna alikuwa ameanza kuhisi kama mtu wa familia ya Okonkwo. Bado alifikiria juu ya mama yake na dada yake mwenye umri wa miaka mitatu, naye alikuwa na nyakati za huzuni na kushuka moyo. Lakini yeye na Nwoye walikuwa wameshikamana sana hivi kwamba pindi kama hizo hazikuwa za mara kwa mara na zisizoumiza sana. Ikemefuna ilikuwa na hadithi nyingi za watu. Hata wale ambao Nwoye alijua tayari waliambiwa kwa uchangamfu na ladha ya kienyeji ya ukoo tofauti. Nwoye alikumbuka sana kipindi hiki hadi

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laughed when Ikemefuna told him that the proper name for a corn cob with only a few scattered grains was eze-agadi-nwayi, or the teeth of an old woman. Nwoye's mind had gone immediately to Nwayieke, who lived near the udala tree. She had about three teeth and was always smoking her pipe.

Gradually the rains became lighter and less frequent, and earth and sky once again became separate. The rain fell in thin, slanting showers through sunshine and quiet breeze. Children no longer stayed indoors but ran about singing: "The rain is falling, the sun is shining, Alone Nnadi is cooking and eating."

Nwoye always wondered who Nnadi was and why he should live all by himself, cooking and eating. In the end he decided that Nnadi must live in that land of Ikemefuna's favourite story where the ant holds his court in splendour and the sands dance forever.

mwisho wa maisha yake. Hata alikumbuka jinsi alivyochekeka Ikemefuna alipomwambia kwamba jina linalofaa la masega ya mahindi yenye nafaka chache tu zilizotawanywa lilikuwa eze-agadi-nwayi, au meno ya mwanamke mzee. Akili ya Nwoye ilikuwa imemwendea mara moja Nwayieke, aliyekuwa akiishi karibu na mti wa udala. Alikuwa na meno kama matatu na kila mara alikuwa akivuta bomba lake.

Hatua kwa hatua mvua ilipungua na kupungua mara kwa mara, na ardhi na anga zikatengana tena. Mvua ilinyesha kwenye manyunyuni nyembamba na yenye mtelezo kupitia jua na upepo tulivu. Watoto hawakubaki tena ndani ya nyumba lakini walikimbia kuhusu kuimba: "Mvua inanyesha, jua linawaka, Pekee Nnadi anapika na kula."

Nwoye kila mara alijiuliza Nnadi ni nani na kwa nini aishi peke yake, akipika na kula. Mwishowe aliamua kwamba Nnadi lazima aishi katika nchi hiyo ya hadithi inayopendwa na Ikemefuna ambapo chungu hushikilia uwanja wake kwa uzuri na mchanga hucheza milele.