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Okonkwo was well known throughout the nine villages and even beyond. His fame rested on solid personal achievements. As a young man of eighteen he had brought honour to his village by throwing Amalinze the Cat. Amalinze was the great wrestler who for seven years was unbeaten, from Umuofia to Mbaino. He was called the Cat because his back would never touch the earth. It was this man that Okonkwo threw in a fight which the old men agreed was one of the fiercest since the founder of their town engaged a spirit of the wild for seven days and seven nights.

Okonkwo alijulikana sana katika vijiji hivyo tisa na hata kwingineko. Umaarufu wake ulitegemea mafanikio madhubuti ya kibinafsi. Akiwa kijana wa miaka kumi na nane alileta heshima kijijini kwake kwa kumrusha Paka Amalinze. Amalinze ndiye aliyekuwa mwanamieleka mkubwa ambaye kwa miaka saba alikuwa hapigwe, kutoka Umuofia hadi Mbaino. Aliitwa Paka kwa sababu mgongo wake haungegusa ardhi kamwe. Ni mwanamume huyu Okonkwo alipiga pambano ambalo wazee walikubali kuwa ni moja kati ya wakali zaidi tangu mwanzilishi wa mji wao ajishughulishe na pepo

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wa porini kwa siku saba mchana
na usiku.

The drums beat and the flutes sang and the spectators held their breath. Amalinze was a wily craftsman, but Okonkwo was as slippery as a fish in water. Every nerve and every muscle stood out on their arms, on their backs and their thighs, and one almost heard them stretching to breaking point. In the end Okonkwo threw the Cat.

That was many years ago, twenty years or more, and during this time Okonkwo's fame had grown like a bush-fire in the harmattan. He was tall and huge, and his bushy eyebrows and wide nose gave him a very severe look. He breathed heavily, and it was said that, when he slept, his wives and children in their houses could hear him breathe. When he walked, his heels hardly touched the ground and he seemed to walk on springs, as if he was going to pounce on somebody. And he did pounce on people quite often. He had a slight stammer and whenever he was angry and could not get his words out quickly enough, he would use

Ngoma zilipigwa na filimbi zikaimba na watazamaji wakashusha pumzi. Amalinze alikuwa fundi mjanja, lakini Okonkwo alikuwa na utelezi kama samaki aliye majini. Kila mishipa na kila msuli ulisimama kwenye mikono yao, migongoni mwao na mapaja yao, na karibu mmoja akawasikia wakinyoosha hadi kuvunjika. Mwishowe Okonkwo alimrusha Paka.

Hiyo ilikuwa miaka mingi iliyopita, miaka ishirini au zaidi, na wakati huo umaarufu wa Okonkwo ulikuwa kama moto wa kichaka kwenye harmattan. Alikuwa mrefu na mkubwa, na nyusi zake zenye kichaka na pua pana zilimpa sura mbaya sana. Alipumua kwa nguvu, na ilisemekana kwamba, alipokuwa amelala, wake zake na watoto katika nyumba zao walimsikia akipumua. Alipotembea, visigino vyake havikugusa ardhi na alionekana kutembea kwenye chemchemi, kana kwamba angemrukia mtu. Na mara nyingi alishambulia watu. Alikuwa na kigugumizi kidogo na kila

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his fists. He had no patience with unsuccessful men. He had had no patience with his father.

Unoka, for that was his father's name, had died ten years ago. In his day he was lazy and improvident and was quite incapable of thinking about tomorrow. If any money came his way, and it seldom did, he immediately bought gourds of palm-wine, called round his neighbours and made merry. He always said that whenever he saw a dead man's mouth he saw the folly of not eating what one had in one's lifetime. Unoka was, of course, a debtor, and he owed every neighbour some money, from a few cowries to quite substantial amounts.

He was tall but very thin and had a slight stoop. He wore a haggard and mournful look except when he was drinking or playing on his flute. He was very good on his flute, and his happiest moments were the two or three moons after the harvest when the village musicians brought down their

alipokuwa na hasira na hakuweza kutoa maneno yake haraka vya kutosha, alikuwa akitumia ngumi. Hakuwa na subira na wanaume ambao hawakufanikiwa. Hakuwa na subira na baba yake.

Unoka, kwa kuwa hilo lilikuwa jina la baba yake, alikufa miaka kumi iliyopita. Katika siku zake alikuwa mvivu na asiyejua mambo na hakuwa na uwezo wa kufikiria kesho. Ikiwa pesa yoyote ilipatikana, na mara chache ilifanyika, mara moja alinunua mabuyu ya mvinyo, akawaita jirani zake na kufanya sherehe. Siku zote alisema kila akiona mdomo wa maiti aliona ujinga wa kutokula kile alichonacho maishani. Unoka, bila shaka, alikuwa mdaiwa, na alikuwa na deni la kila jirani pesa, kutoka kwa ng'ombe chache hadi kiasi kikubwa kabisa.

Alikuwa mrefu lakini mwembamba sana na alikuwa ameinama kidogo. Alivaa sura ya unyonge na ya huzuni isipokuwa alipokuwa akinywa pombe au kucheza filimbi yake. Alikuwa mzuri sana kwenye filimbi yake, na nyakati zake za furaha zaidi zilikuwa miezi miwili au mitatu

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instruments, hung above the fireplace. Unoka would play with them, his face beaming with blessedness and peace. Sometimes another village would ask Unoka's band and their dancing egwugwu to come and stay with them and teach them their tunes. They would go to such hosts for as long as three or four markets, making music and feasting. Unoka loved the good hire and the good fellowship, and he loved this season of the year, when the rains had stopped and the sun rose every morning with dazzling beauty. And it was not too hot either, because the cold and dry harmattan wind was blowing down from the north. Some years the harmattan was very severe and a dense haze hung on the atmosphere. Old men and children would then sit round log fires, warming their bodies. Unoka loved it all, and he loved the first kites that returned with the dry season, and the children who sang songs of welcome to them. He would remember his own childhood, how he had often wandered around looking for a kite sailing leisurely against the blue sky. As soon as he found one he would sing with his whole

baada ya mavuno wakati wanamuziki wa kijiji waliteremsha vyombo vyao, vilivyoning'inia juu ya mahali pa moto. Unoka angecheza nao, uso wake uking'aa kwa baraka na amani. Wakati mwingine kijiji kingine kingeomba bendi ya Unoka na egwugwu yao ya kucheza kuja kukaa nao na kuwafundisha nyimbo zao. Wangeenda kwa waandaji kama hao kwa muda mrefu kama masoko matatu au manne, wakitengeneza muziki na karamu. Unoka alipenda ujira mzuri na ushirika mzuri, na alipenda msimu huu wa mwaka, wakati mvua ilikuwa imesimama na jua lilichomoza kila asubuhi na uzuri wa kupendeza. Na hapakuwa na joto sana pia, kwa sababu upepo baridi na kavu wa harmattan ulikuwa ukivuma kutoka kaskazini. Miaka kadhaa harmattan ilikuwa kali sana na ukungu mnene ulining'inia kwenye angahewa. Wazee na watoto wangekaa mioto ya mbao ya pande zote, wakipasha moto miili yao. Unoka alipenda yote, na alipenda kite za kwanza zilizorudi na msimu wa kiangazi, na watoto ambao waliimba nyimbo za kuwakaribisha. Angekumbuka utoto wake mwenyewe, jinsi mara

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being, welcoming it back from its long, long journey, and asking it if it had brought home any lengths of cloth.

That was years ago, when he was young. Unoka, the grown-up, was a failure. He was poor and his wife and children had barely enough to eat. People laughed at him because he was a loafer, and they swore never to lend him any more money because he never paid back. But Unoka was such a man that he always succeeded in borrowing more, and piling up his debts.

One day a neighbour called Okoye came in to see him. He was reclining on a mud bed in his hut playing on the flute. He immediately rose and shook hands with Okoye, who then unrolled the goatskin which he carried under his arm, and sat down. Unoka went into an inner room and soon returned with a small wooden disc containing a kola nut, some alligator pepper and a lump of white chalk.

nyingi alikuwa akitangatanga akitaifuta kite akisafiri kwa raha dhidi ya anga ya buluu. Mara tu alipopata moja angeimba kwa nafsi yake yote, akiikaribisha kutoka kwa safari yake ndefu, na kuiuliza ikiwa imeleta nyumbani urefu wowote wa nguo.

Hiyo ilikuwa miaka iliyopita, alipokuwa mdogo. Unoka, mtu mzima, alishindwa. Alikuwa maskini na mke wake na watoto walikuwa na chakula cha kutosha. Watu walimcheka kwa sababu yeye ni mkate, na waliapa kutomkopesha tena pesa kwa sababu hakulipa tena. Lakini Unoka alikuwa mtu ambaye alifanikiwa kila wakati kukopa zaidi, na kukusanya deni lake.

Siku moja jirani anayeitwa Okoye aliingia kumuona. Alikuwa amejiegemeza kwenye kitanda cha udongo kwenye kibanda chake akicheza filimbi. Mara akainuka na kupeana mkono na Okoye, ambaye kisha akaifungua ile ngozi ya mbuzi aliyoibeba chini ya mkono wake, na kuketi. Unoka aliingia ndani ya chumba cha ndani na mara akarudi na diski ndogo ya mbao iliyokuwa na kola, pilipili ya mamba na bongwe la

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chaki nyeupe.

"I have kola," he announced when he sat down, and passed the disc over to his guest.

"Thank you. He who brings kola brings life. But I think you ought to break it," replied Okoye, passing back the disc.

"No, it is for you, I think," and they argued like this for a few moments before Unoka accepted the honour of breaking the kola. Okoye, meanwhile, took the lump of chalk, drew some lines on the floor, and then painted his big toe.

As he broke the kola, Unoka prayed to their ancestors for life and health, and for protection against their enemies. When they had eaten they talked about many things: about the heavy rains which were drowning the yams, about the next ancestral feast and about the impending war with the village of Mbaino. Unoka was never happy when it came to wars. He was in fact a coward and could not bear the sight of blood. And so he changed the subject and talked about music, and his face beamed. He could hear in his mind's ear the

"Nina kola," alitangaza alipoketi, na kumpa mgeni wake diski.

"Asante. Anayeleta kola huleta uhai. Lakini nadhani unapaswa kuivunja," alijibu Okoye, akirudisha diski.

"Hapana, ni kwa ajili yako, nadhani," na walibishana hivi kwa muda mfupi kabla ya Unoka kukubali heshima ya kuvunja kola. Okoye, wakati huo huo, alichukua bonge la chaki, akachora mistari kwenye sakafu, na kisha akapaka kidole chake kikubwa cha mguu.

Alipovunja kola, Unoka aliwaomba babu zao uzima na afya, na ulinzi dhidi ya adui zao. Walipokwisha kula walizungumza mambo mengi: kuhusu mvua kubwa iliyokuwa ikinyesha viazi vikuu, kuhusu karamu iliyofuata ya mababu na kuhusu vita iliyokuwa inakuja dhidi ya kijiji cha Mbaino. Unoka hakuwa na furaha wakati wa vita. Kwa kweli alikuwa mwoga na hakuweza kustahimili macho ya damu. Na kwa hivyo alibadilisha mada na kuongea juu ya muziki, na uso wake ukaangaza. Aliweza kusikia

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blood-stirring and intricate rhythms of the ekwe and the udu and the ogene, and he could hear his own flute weaving in and out of them, decorating them with a colourful and plaintive tune. The total effect was gay and brisk, but if one picked out the flute as it went up and down and then broke up into short snatches, one saw that there was sorrow and grief there.

Okoye was also a musician. He played on the ogene. But he was not a failure like Unoka. He had a large barn full of yams and he had three wives. And now he was going to take the Idemili title, the third highest in the land. It was a very expensive ceremony and he was gathering all his resources together. That was in fact the reason why he had come to see Unoka. He cleared his throat and began: "Thank you for the kola. You may have heard of the title I intend to take shortly."

Having spoken plainly so far, Okoye said the next half a dozen sentences in proverbs. Among the Ibo the art of conversation is

katika sikio la akili yake midundo ya damu na tata ya ekwe na udu na ogene, na aliweza kusikia filimbi yake ikifuma ndani na nje, akiipamba kwa sauti ya rangi na ya kawaida. Athari ya jumla ilikuwa ya shoga na ya haraka, lakini ikiwa mtu aliokota filimbi wakati inakwenda juu na chini na kisha ikagawanyika katika vipande vifupi, mtu aliona kuwa kuna huzuni na huzuni huko.

Okoye pia alikuwa mwanamuziki. Alicheza kwenye ogene. Lakini hakuwa mtu wa kushindwa kama Unoka. Alikuwa na ghala kubwa lililojaa viazi vikuu na alikuwa na wake watatu. Na sasa alikuwa anaenda kutwaa cheo cha Idemili, cha tatu kwa juu zaidi nchini. Ilikuwa sherehe ya gharama sana na alikuwa akikusanya rasilimali zake zote pamoja. Hiyo ndiyo ilikuwa sababu ya yeye kuja kumuona Unoka. Alisafisha koo lake na kuanza: "Asante kwa kola. Huenda umesikia kuhusu jina ninalokusudia kuchukua hivi karibuni."

Baada ya kuzungumza kwa uwazi hadi sasa, Okoye alisema nusu dazeni inayofuata ya sentensi katika methali. Miongoni mwa

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regarded very highly, and proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten. Okoye was a great talker and he spoke for a long time, skirting round the subject and then hitting it finally. In short, he was asking Unoka to return the two hundred cowries he had borrowed from him more than two years before. As soon as Unoka understood what his friend was driving at, he burst out laughing. He laughed loud and long and his voice rang out clear as the ogene, and tears stood in his eyes. His visitor was amazed, and sat speechless. At the end, Unoka was able to give an answer between fresh outbursts of mirth.

"Look at that wall," he said, pointing at the far wall of his hut, which was rubbed with red earth so that it shone. "Look at those lines of chalk," and Okoye saw groups of short perpendicular lines drawn in chalk. There were five groups, and the smallest group had ten lines. Unoka had a sense of the dramatic and so he allowed a pause, in which he took a pinch of snuff and sneezed noisily, and

Waibo sanaa ya mazungumzo hutazamwa sana, na methali ni mafuta ya mawese ambayo kwayo maneno huliwa. Okoye alikuwa mzungumzaji mzuri na alizungumza kwa muda mrefu, akizunguka mada na kisha akaipiga hatimaye. Kwa ufupi, alikuwa akiomba Unoka amrudishie ng'ombe mia mbili alizomwazima zaidi ya miaka miwili iliyopita. Unoka alipoelewa tu rafiki yake anaendesha nini, aliangua kicheko. Alicheka kwa nguvu na kwa muda mrefu na sauti yake ilisikika vizuri kama ogene, na machozi yakasimama machoni pake. Mgeni wake alistaajabu, akakaa kimya. Mwishowe, Unoka aliweza kutoa jibu kati ya milipuko mpya ya furaha.

"Angalia ukuta huo," alisema huku akiuonyesha ukuta wa mbali wa kibanda chake kilichopakwa udongo mwekundu ili kung'aa. "Angalia mistari hiyo ya chaki," na Okoye aliona vikundi vya mistari mifupi ya pembeni iliyochorwa kwa chaki. Kulikuwa na vikundi vitano, na kundi dogo zaidi lilikuwa na mistari kumi. Unoka alikuwa na hisia ya ajabu na hivyo akaruhusu pause, ambapo

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then he continued: "Each group there represents a debt to someone, and each stroke is one hundred cowries. You see, I owe that man a thousand cowries. But he has not come to wake me up in the morning for it. I shall pay you, but not today. Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under them. I shall pay my big debts first." And he took another pinch of snuff, as if that was paying the big debts first. Okoye rolled his goatskin and departed.

When Unoka died he had taken no title at all and he was heavily in debt. Any wonder then that his son Okonkwo was ashamed of him? Fortunately, among these people a man was judged according to his worth and not according to the worth of his father. Okonkwo was clearly cut out for great things. He was still young but he had won fame as the greatest wrestler in the nine villages. He was a wealthy farmer and had two barns full of yams, and had just married his third wife. To crown it all he had taken two titles and had shown incredible prowess in two inter-tribal wars. And so although

alichukua bana ya ugoro na kupiga chafya kwa kelele, kisha akaendelea: "Kila kundi hapo linawakilisha deni kwa mtu, na kila mpigo ni ng'ombe mia moja. ona huyo mtu nina deni la ng'ombe elfu moja, lakini hajaja kuniamsha asubuhi kwa ajili yake, nitakulipa, lakini si leo. wale wanaopiga magoti chini yao. Nitalipa deni langu kubwa kwanza." Na akachukua ugoro mwingine, kana kwamba ni kulipa deni kubwa kwanza. Okoye alikunja ngozi yake ya mbuzi na kuondoka.

Unoka alipofariki hakuwa amechukua cheo kabisa na alikuwa na deni kubwa. Ajabu basi kwamba mwanawe Okonkwo alimuonea aibu? Kwa bahati nzuri, miongoni mwa watu hawa mtu alihukumiwa kulingana na thamani yake na si kulingana na thamani ya baba yake. Okonkwo alionekana wazi kwa mambo makubwa. Alikuwa bado mchanga lakini alikuwa ameshinda umaarufu kama mpambanaji mkuu katika vijiji tisa. Alikuwa mkulima tajiri na alikuwa na ghala mbili zilizojaa viazi vikuu, na alikuwa ametoka kuoa mke wake wa tatu. Ili kutwaa taji hilo alikuwa

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Okonkwo was still young, he was already one of the greatest men of his time. Age was respected among his people, but achievement was revered. As the elders said, if a child washed his hands he could eat with kings. Okonkwo had clearly washed his hands and so he ate with kings and elders. And that was how he came to look after the doomed lad who was sacrificed to the village of Umuofia by their neighbours to avoid war and bloodshed. The ill-fated lad was called Ikemefuna.

ametwaa mataji mawili na alikuwa ameonyesha umahiri wa ajabu katika vita viwili baina ya makabila. Na kwa hivyo ingawa Okonkwo alikuwa bado mchanga, tayari alikuwa mmoja wa wanaume wakuu wa wakati wake. Umri uliheshimiwa kati ya watu wake, lakini mafanikio yaliheshimiwa. Kama wazee walivyosema, mtoto akiosha mikono yake anaweza kula pamoja na wafalme. Okonkwo alikuwa amenawa mikono yake waziwazi na hivyo alikula pamoja na wafalme na wazee. Na hivyo ndivyo alivyokuja kumwangelia yule kijana aliyehukumiwa ambaye alitolewa kafara kwenye kijiji cha Umuofia na majirani zao ili kuepusha vita na umwagaji damu. Kijana huyo mbaya aliitwa Ikemefuna.