

## SURA YA TATU

Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men usually had. He did not inherit a barn from his father. There was no barn to inherit. The story was told in Umuofia, of how his father, Unoka, had gone to consult the Oracle of the Hills and the Caves to find out why he always had a miserable harvest.

The Oracle was called Agbala, and people came from far and near to

Okonkwo hakuwa na mwanzo maishani ambao vijana wengi walikuwa nao. Hakurithi ghala kutoka kwa baba yake. Hakukuwa na ghala la kurithi. Hadithi ilisimuliwa huko Umuofia, jinsi baba yake, Unoka, alivyoenda kushauriana na Oracle ya Milima na Mapango ili kujua kwa nini alikuwa na mavuno mabaya kila wakati.

Oracle iliitwa Agbala, na watu walikuja kutoka mbali na karibu ili

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consult it. They came when misfortune dogged their steps or when they had a dispute with their neighbours. They came to discover what the future held for them or to consult the spirits of their departed fathers.

The way into the shrine was a round hole at the side of a hill, just a little bigger than the round opening into a henhouse.

Worshippers and those who came to seek knowledge from the god crawled on their belly through the hole and found themselves in a dark, endless space in the presence of Agbala. No one had ever beheld Agbala, except his priestess. But no one who had ever crawled into his awful shrine had come out without the fear of his power. His priestess stood by the sacred fire which she built in the heart of the cave and proclaimed the will of the god. The fire did not burn with a flame. The glowing logs only served to light up vaguely the dark figure of the priestess.

Sometimes a man came to consult the spirit of his dead father or

kushauriana nayo. Walikuja wakati msiba ulipoziba hatua zao au walipokuwa na mzozo na majirani zao. Walikuja kugundua ni nini wakati ujao kwao au kushauriana na roho za baba zao waliokufa.

Njia ya kuingia kwenye kaburi ilikuwa shimo la duara kando ya kilima, kubwa kidogo tu kuliko ufunguzi wa pande zote ndani ya banda la kuku. Waabudu na wale waliokuja kutafuta elimu kutoka kwa mungu huyo walitambaa kwa matumbo yao kupitia shimo na wakajikuta katika nafasi ya giza isiyo na mwisho mbele ya Agbala. Hakuna mtu aliyewahi kumuona Agbala, isipokuwa kuhani wake wa kike. Lakini hakuna mtu ambaye amewahi kutambaa kwenye kaburi lake la kutisha aliyetoka bila hofu ya uwezo wake. Kuhani wake alisimama karibu na moto mtakatifu ambao aliujenga katikati ya pango na kutangaza mapenzi ya mungu. Moto haukuwaka na mwali. Magogo ya kung'aa yalitumikia tu kuangaza bila kufafanua sura ya giza ya kuhani wa kike.

Nyakati fulani mtu alikuja kutafuta shauri kwa roho ya baba

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relative. It was said that when such a spirit appeared, the man saw it vaguely in the darkness, but never heard its voice. Some people even said that they had heard the spirits flying and flapping their wings against the roof of the cave.

Many years ago when Okonkwo was still a boy his father, Unoka, had gone to consult Agbala. The priestess in those days was a woman called Chika. She was full of the power of her god, and she was greatly feared. Unoka stood before her and began his story.

"Every year," he said sadly, "before I put any crop in the earth, I sacrifice a cock to Ani, the owner of all land. It is the law of our fathers. I also kill a cock at the shrine of Ifejioku, the god of yams. I clear the bush and set fire to it when it is dry. I sow the yams when the first rain has fallen, and stake them when the young tendrils appear. I weed" -- "Hold your peace!" screamed the priestess, her voice terrible as it echoed through the dark void.

yake aliyekufa au jamaa yake wa ukoo. Ilisemekana kwamba roho kama hiyo ilipotokea, mtu huyo aliiona bila kufafanua gizani, lakini hakisikia sauti yake. Watu wengine hata walisema kwamba walikuwa wamesikia roho zikiruka na kupiga mbawa zao kwenye paa la pangò.

Miaka mingi iliyopita wakati Okonkwo alipokuwa bado mvulana baba yake, Unoka, alikuwa ameenda kushauriana na Agbala. Padre wa siku hizo alikuwa mwanamke aliyetitwa Chika. Alikuwa amejaa nguvu za mungu wake, naye aliogopwa sana. Unoka alisimama mbele yake na kuanza hadithi yake.

"Kila mwaka," alisema kwa huzuni, "kabla sijaweka mazao yoyote ardhini, ninamtolea jogoo Ani, mmiliki wa ardhi yote. Ni sheria ya baba zetu. Pia ninaua jogoo kwenye hekalu la Ifejioku. , mungu wa viazi vikuu. Nakisafisha kichaka na kukichoma moto kikikauka. Ninapanda viazi vikuu wakati mvua ya kwanza inaponyesha, na kuviweka kwenye miti michanga yanapotokea. Napalilia" -- "Nyamaza! " akapiga kelele

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"You have offended neither the gods nor your fathers. And when a man is at peace with his gods and his ancestors, his harvest will be good or bad according to the strength of his arm. You, Unoka, are known in all the clan for the weakness of your machete and your hoe. When your neighbours go out with their axe to cut down virgin forests, you sow your yams on exhausted farms that take no labour to clear. They cross seven rivers to make their farms,- you stay at home and offer sacrifices to a reluctant soil. Go home and work like a man."

Unoka was an ill-fated man. He had a bad chi or personal god, and evil fortune followed him to the grave, or rather to his death, for he had no grave. He died of the swelling which was an abomination to the earth goddess. When a man was afflicted with swelling in the stomach and the limbs he was not allowed to die in the house. He was carried to the Evil Forest and left there to die. There was the story of a very

kuhani wa kike, sauti yake ya kutisha kama aliunga mkono katika utupu giza. "Hamkumkosea miungu wala baba zenu. Na mtu anapokuwa na amani na miungu yake na babu zake, mavuno yake yatakuwa mazuri au mabaya kwa kadiri ya uweza wa mkono wake. Wewe Unoka unajulikana katika ukoo wote. kwa udhaifu wa panga lako na jembe lako, majirani zako wakitoka na shoka kukata misitu ya bikira, unapanda viazi vikuu kwenye mashamba yaliyochoka ambayo hayana kazi ya kuyafyeka, wanavuka mito saba kufanya mashamba yao, wewe kaa. nyumbani na kutoa dhabihu kwenye udongo unaositasita. Nenda nyumbani ukafanye kazi kama mwanamume."

Unoka alikuwa mtu wa hali mbaya. Alikuwa na chi mbaya au mungu wa kibinafsi, na bahati mbaya ilimfuata hadi kaburini, au tuseme hadi kifo chake, kwa kuwa hakuwa na kaburi. Alikufa kwa uvimbe ambao ulikuwa chukizo kwa mungu wa kike wa dunia. Mwanaume alipopatwa na uvimbe tumboni na viungo vya mwili haruhusiwi kufia ndani ya nyumba. Alibebwa hadi kwenye Msitu Mwovu na kuachwa hapo

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stubborn man who staggered back to his house and had to be carried again to the forest and tied to a tree. The sickness was an abomination to the earth, and so the victim could not be buried in her bowels. He died and rotted away above the earth, and was not given the first or the second burial. Such was Unoka's fate. When they carried him away, he took with him his flute.

With a father like Unoka, Okonkwo did not have the start in life which many young men had. He neither inherited a barn nor a title, nor even a young wife. But in spite of these disadvantages, he had begun even in his father's lifetime to lay the foundations of a prosperous future. It was slow and painful. But he threw himself into it like one possessed. And indeed he was possessed by the fear of his father's contemptible life and shameful death.

There was a wealthy man in Okonkwo's village who had three huge barns, nine wives and thirty children. His name was Nwakibie and he had taken the highest but

kufa. Kulikuwa na hadithi ya mtu mkaidi sana ambaye alijikongoja kurudi nyumbani kwake na ikabidi abebwe tena msituni na kufungwa kwenye mti. Ugonjwa huo ulikuwa chukizo kwa dunia, na kwa hivyo mwathirika hangeweza kuzikwa kwenye matumbo yake. Alikufa na kuoza juu ya dunia, na hakupewa mazishi ya kwanza au ya pili. Hiyo ndiyo ilikuwa hatima ya Unoka. Walipomchukua, alichukua pamoja naye filimbi yake.

Akiwa na baba kama Unoka, Okonkwo hakuwa na mwanzo maishani ambao vijana wengi walikuwa nao. Hakurithi ghala wala cheo, wala hata mke mdogo. Lakini pamoja na hasara hizo, alikuwa ameanza hata enzi za uhai wa baba yake kuweka misingi ya mustakabali wenye mafanikio. Ilikuwa polepole na yenye uchungu. Lakini alijitupa humo kama mtu mwenye pepo. Na hakika aliingiwa na khofu ya maisha ya baba yake ya dharau na kifo cha aibu.

Kulikuwa na mtu tajiri katika kijiji cha Okonkwo ambaye alikuwa na ghala kubwa tatu, wake tisa na watoto thelathini. Jina lake lilikuwa Nwakibie na alikuwa

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one title which a man could take in the clan. It was for this man that Okonkwo worked to earn his first seed yams.

He took a pot of palm-wine and a cock to Nwakibie. Two elderly neighbours were sent for, and Nwakibie's two grown-up sons were also present in his obi. He presented a kola nut and an alligator pepper, which were passed round for all to see and then returned to him. He broke the nut saying: We shall all live. We pray for life, children, a good harvest and happiness. You will have what is good for you and I will have what is good for me. Let the kite perch and let the eagle perch too. If one says no to the other, let his wing break."

After the kola nut had been eaten Okonkwo brought his palm-wine from the corner of the hut where it had been placed and stood it in the centre of the group. He addressed Nwakibie, calling him "Our father."

"Nna ayi," he said. "I have brought

amechukua cheo cha juu zaidi lakini kimoja ambacho mtu angeweza kuchukua katika ukoo huo. Ilikuwa kwa mtu huyu ambapo Okonkwo alifanya kazi ili kupata viazi vikuu vya kwanza vya mbegu.

Alichukua chungu cha mvinyo na jogoo kwa Nwakibie. Majirani wawili wazee walitumwa, na wana wawili wa Nwakibie waliokua pia walikuwepo kwenye obi yake. Aliwasilisha kola na pilipili ya mamba, ambazo zilipitishwa pande zote ili wote wazione na kisha kurudi kwake. Aliivunja nati akisema: Sote tutaishi. Tunaomba kwa ajili ya maisha, watoto, mavuno mazuri na furaha. Utakuwa na lililo jema kwako na mimi nitapata lililo jema kwangu. Wacha sangara wa kite na wacha tai pia. Ikiwa mmoja atakataa kwa mwingine, basi bawa lake na lipasuke."

Baada ya kola kuliwa Okonkwo alileta divai yake ya mtende kutoka kwenye kona ya kibanda ambapo ilikuwa imewekwa na kuisimamisha katikati ya kundi. Aliongea Nwakibie huku akimwita "Baba yetu."

"Nna ayi," alisema. "Nimekuletea

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you this little kola. As our people say, a man who pays respect to the great paves the way for his own greatness. I have come to pay you my respects and also to ask a favour. But let us drink the wine first."

Everybody thanked Okonkwo and the neighbours brought out their drinking horns from the goatskin bags they carried. Nwakibie brought down his own horn, which was fastened to the rafters. The younger of his sons, who was also the youngest man in the group, moved to the centre, raised the pot on his left knee and began to pour out the wine.

The first cup went to Okonkwo, who must taste his wine before anyone else. Then the group drank, beginning with the eldest man. When everyone had drunk two or three horns, Nwakibie sent for his wives. Some of them were not at home and only four came in.

"Is Anasi not in?" he asked them. They said she was coming. Anasi was the first wife and the others

kola hii ndogo. Kama watu wetu wanavyosema, mtu anayeheshimu mkuu hutengeneza njia ya ukuu wake mwenyewe. Nimekuja kukupa heshima yangu na pia kuomba upendeleo. Lakini tunywe mvinyo kwanza."

Kila mtu alimshukuru Okonkwo na majirani wakatoa pembe zao za kunywa kutoka kwenye mifuko ya ngozi ya mbuzi waliyobeba. Nwakibie alishusha pembe yake mwenyewe, iliyofungwa kwenye viguzo. Mdogo wa wanawe ambaye pia ndiye aliyekuwa mdogo katika kundi hilo, alisogea hadi katikati, akainua chungu kwenye goti lake la kushoto na kuanza kumimina mvinyo.

Kikombe cha kwanza kilienda kwa Okonkwo, ambaye lazima aonje divai yake kabla ya mtu mwingine yeyote. Kisha kundi likanywa, kuanzia na yule mkubwa. Kila mtu alipokwisha kunywa pembe mbili au tatu, Nwakibie alituma watu kuwaita wake zake. Baadhi yao hawakuwapo nyumbani na waliingia wanne tu.

"Anasi si ndani?" aliwauliza. Walisema anakuja. Anasi alikuwa mke wa kwanza na wengine

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could not drink before her, and so they stood waiting.

Anasi was a middle-aged woman, tall and strongly built. There was authority in her bearing and she looked every inch the ruler of the womenfolk in a large and prosperous family. She wore the anklet of her husband's titles, which the first wife alone could wear.

She walked up to her husband and accepted the horn from him. She then went down on one knee, drank a little and handed back the horn. She rose, called him by his name and went back to her hut. The other wives drank in the same way, in their proper order, and went away.

The men then continued their drinking and talking. Ogbuefi Idigo was talking about the palm-wine tapper, Obiako, who suddenly gave up his trade.

"Some people say the Oracle warned him that he would fall off a palm tree and kill himself," said Akukalia.

hawakuweza kunywa kabla yake, na hivyo walisimama kusubiri.

Anasi alikuwa mwanamke wa makamo, mrefu na mwenye umbile la nguvu. Kulikuwa na mamlaka katika kuzaa kwake na alionekana kila inchi kama mtawala wa watu wa kike katika familia kubwa na yenye ufanisi. Alivaa kifundo cha mguu cha vyeo vya mumewe, ambavyo mke wa kwanza pekee ndiye angeweza kuvaa.

Alimwendea mumewe na kumkubalia honi. Kisha akapiga goti moja, akanywa kidogo na kurudisha pembe. Aliinuka, akamwita kwa jina lake na kurudi kwenye kibanda chake. Wake wengine wakanywa vivyo hivyo, kwa utaratibu wao, wakaenda zao. Kisha wanaume hao waliendelea kunywa na kuzungumza. Ogbuefi Idigo alikuwa akizungumzia kuhusu mpiga mvinyo wa mawese, Obiako, ambaye aliacha kazi yake ghafla.

"Baadhi ya watu wanasema Oracle alimuonya kwamba angeanguka kwenye mtende na kujiua," Akukalia alisema.



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"Obiako has always been a strange one," said Nwakibie. "I have heard that many years ago, when his father had not been dead very long, he had gone to consult the Oracle. The Oracle said to him, 'Your dead father wants you to sacrifice a goat to him.' Do you know what he told the Oracle? He said, 'Ask my dead father if he ever had a fowl when he was alive.' Everybody laughed heartily except Okonkwo, who laughed uneasily because, as the saying goes, an old woman is always uneasy when dry bones are mentioned in a proverb. Okonkwo remembered his own father.

At last the young man who was pouring out the wine held up half a horn of the thick, white dregs and said, "What we are eating is finished."

"We have seen it," the others replied. "Who will drink the dregs?" he asked. "Whoever has a job in hand," said Idigo, looking at Nwakibie's elder son Igwelo with a malicious twinkle in his eye.

"Obiako daima amekuwa mtu wa ajabu," alisema Nwakibie. "Nimesikia kwamba miaka mingi iliyopita, wakati baba yake hakuwa amekufa muda mrefu sana, alikuwa amekwenda kushauriana na Oracle. Oracle akamwambia, 'Baba yako aliyekufa anataka umchinjie mbuzi.' Je! unajua alimwambia nini yule Oracle? Alisema, 'Muulize baba yangu aliyekufa kama aliwahi kuwa na ndege alipokuwa hai.' Kila mtu alicheka kimoyomoyo isipokuwa Okonkwo, ambaye alicheka bila raha kwa sababu, kama msemu unavyosema, mwanamke mzee huwa na wasiwasi wakati mifupa mikavu inatajwa katika methali. Okonkwo alimkumbuka baba yake mwenyewe.

Hatimaye yule kijana aliyekuwa anamimina mvinyo aliinua nusu pembe ya sira nene nyeupe na kusema, "Tunachokula kimekamilika."

"Tumeona," wengine walijibu. "Nani atakunywa sira?" Aliuliza. "Yeyote mwenye kazi mkononi," alisema Idigo huku akimwangelia mtoto mkubwa wa Nwakibie Igwelo huku akipepesa macho ya nia mbaya.

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Everybody agreed that Igwelo should drink the dregs. He accepted the half-full horn from his brother and drank it. As Idigo had said, Igwelo had a job in hand because he had married his first wife a month or two before. The thick dregs of palm-wine were supposed to be good for men who were going in to their wives.

After the wine had been drunk Okonkwo laid his difficulties before Nwakibie.

"I have come to you for help," he said. "Perhaps you can already guess what it is. I have cleared a farm but have no yams to sow. I know what it is to ask a man to trust another with his yams, especially these days when young men are afraid of hard work. I am not afraid of work. The lizard that jumped from the high iroko tree to the ground said he would praise himself if no one else did. I began to fend for myself at an age when most people still suck at their mothers' breasts. If you give me some yam seeds I shall not fail you."

Nwakibie cleared his throat. "It pleases me to see a young man

Kila mtu alikubali kwamba Igwelo anywe sira hizo. Aliipokea ile pembe nusu-jazi kutoka kwa kaka yake na kuinywa. Kama Idigo alivyosema, Igwelo alikuwa na kazi mkononi kwa sababu alikuwa ameo mke wake wa kwanza mwezi mmoja au miwili kabla. Siri nene za mvinyo zilipaswa kuwa nzuri kwa wanaume waliokuwa wakiingia kwa wake zao.

Baada ya mvinyo kulewa Okonkwo aliweka matatizo yake mbele ya Nwakibie.

"Nimekuja kwako kwa msaada," alisema. "Labda unaweza kukisia ni nini. Nimefyeka shamba lakini sina viazi vikuu vya kupanda, najua ni nini kumtaka mwanaume kumwamini mwenzake na viazi vikuu vyake hasa siku hizi ambapo vijana wanaogopa kazi ngumu. Siogopi kazi. Mjusi aliyeruka juu ya mti wa iroko hadi chini alisema atajisifu ikiwa hakuna mtu mwingine. Nilianza kujitunza katika umri ambao watu wengi bado wananyonya matiti ya mama zao. Ukinipa mbegu za viazi vikuu sitakupungukia."

Nwakibie akasafisha koo lake.

"Nimefurahi kuona kijana wa aina

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like you these days when our youth has gone so soft. Many young men have come to me to ask for yams but I have refused because I knew they would just dump them in the earth and leave them to be choked by weeds. When I say no to them they think I am hard hearted. But it is not so. Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching. I have learned to be stingy with my yams. But I can trust you. I know it as I look at you. As our fathers said, you can tell a ripe corn by its look. I shall give you twice four hundred yams. Go ahead and prepare your farm."

Okonkwo thanked him again and again and went home feeling happy. He knew that Nwakibie would not refuse him, but he had not expected he would be so generous. He had not hoped to get more than four hundred seeds. He would now have to make a bigger farm. He hoped to get another four hundred yams from one of his father's friends at Isiuzo.

Share-cropping was a very slow

yako siku hizi wakati vijana wamekwenda laini sana, vijana wengi wamekuja kuniomba viazi vikuu lakini nimekataa kwa kuwa nilijua wangevitupa tu ardhini na kuwaacha. kusongwa na magugu. Ninaposema hapana wanadhani nina moyo mgumu. Lakini sivyo. Eneke ndege anasema kwa vile wanaume wamejifunza kupiga risasi bila kukosa, amejifunza kuruka bila kuwika. Nimejifunza kuwa bahili na viazi vikuu vyangu. Lakini ninaweza kukuamini. Najua ninavyokutazama. Kama baba zetu walivyosema, unaweza kusema nafaka mbivu kwa mwonekano wake. Nitakupa viazi mia nne mara mbili. Njoo uandae. shamba lako."

Okonkwo alimshukuru tena na tena na kwenda nyumbani akiwa na furaha. Alijua kwamba Nwakibie hatamkataa, lakini hakutarajia angekuwa mkarimu kiasi hicho. Hakuwa na matumaini ya kupata mbegu zaidi ya mia nne. Sasa angelazimika kutengeneza shamba kubwa zaidi. Alitarajia kupata viazi vikuu vingine mia nne kutoka kwa mmoja wa marafiki wa babake huko Isiuzo.

Kupanda kwa hisa ilikuwa njia ya

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way of building up a barn of one's own. After all the toil one only got a third of the harvest. But for a young man whose father had no yams, there was no other way. And what made it worse in Okonkwo's case was that he had to support his mother and two sisters from his meagre harvest. And supporting his mother also meant supporting his father. She could not be expected to cook and eat while her husband starved. And so at a very early age when he was striving desperately to build a barn through share-cropping Okonkwo was also fending for his father's house. It was like pouring grains of corn into a bag full of holes. His mother and sisters worked hard enough, but they grew women's crops, like coco-yams, beans and cassava. Yam, the king of crops, was a man's crop.

The year that Okonkwo took eight hundred seed-yams from Nwakibie was the worst year in living memory. Nothing happened at its proper time,- it was either

polepole sana ya kujenga ghala la mtu mwenyewe. Baada ya taabu zote mtu alipata tu theluthi moja ya mavuno. Lakini kwa kijana ambaye baba yake hakuwa na viazi vikuu, hakukuwa na njia nyingine. Na kilichoifanya kuwa mbaya zaidi katika kesi ya Okonkwo ni kwamba alilazimika kusaidia mama yake na dada zake wawili kutokana na mavuno yake machache. Na kumuunga mkono mama yake pia kulimaanisha kumuunga mkono baba yake. Hangeweza kutarajiwa kupika na kula huku mumewe akiwa na njaa. Na kwa hivyo katika umri mdogo sana alipokuwa akijitahidi sana kujenga ghala kupitia kilimo cha hisa Okonkwo pia alikuwa akiitunza nyumba ya babake. Ilikuwa ni kama kumwaga nafaka kwenye mfuko uliojaa mashimo. Mama na dada zake walifanya kazi kwa bidii vya kutosha, lakini walilima mazao ya wanawake, kama vile koko, maharage na mihogo. Viazi vikuu, mfalme wa mazao, lilikuwa zao la mtu.

Mwaka ambao Okonkwo alichukua mianzi mia nane ya mbegu kutoka kwa Nwakibie ulikuwa mwaka mbaya zaidi katika kumbukumbu hai. Hakuna

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too early or too late. It seemed as if the world had gone mad. The first rains were late, and, when they came, lasted only a brief moment. The blazing sun returned, more fierce than it had ever been known, and scorched all the green that had appeared with the rains. The earth burned like hot coals and roasted all the yams that had been sown. Like all good farmers, Okonkwo had begun to sow with the first rains. He had sown four hundred seeds when the rains dried up and the heat returned. He watched the sky all day for signs of rain clouds and lay awake all night. In the morning he went back to his farm and saw the withering tendrils. He had tried to protect them from the smouldering earth by making rings of thick sisal leaves around them. But by the end of the day the sisal rings were burned dry and grey. He changed them every day, and prayed that the rain might fall in the night. But the drought continued for eight market weeks and the yams were killed.

kilichotokea kwa wakati wake, - ilikuwa mapema sana au kuchelewa sana. Ilionekana kana kwamba ulimwengu ulikuwa na wazimu. Mvua za kwanza zilichelewa, na zilipokuja, zilidumu kwa muda mfupi tu. Jua kali lilirudi, kali zaidi kuliko lilivyowahi kujulikana, na kuunguza kijani kibichi kilichotokea na mvua. Dunia iliwaka kama makaa ya moto na kuchoma viazi vikuu vyote vilivyokuwa vimepandwa. Kama wakulima wote wazuri, Okonkwo alikuwa ameanza kupanda na mvua za kwanza. Alikuwa amepanda mbegu mia nne wakati mvua ilipokauka na joto lilirudi. Alitazama anga mchana kutwa kwa dalili za mawingu ya mvua na akakesha usiku kucha. Asubuhi alirudi shambani kwake na akaona miche iliyokauka. Alikuwa amejaribu kuwalinda kutokana na udongo unaofuka moshi kwa kutengeneza pete za majani mazito ya mlonge kuwazunguka. Lakini mwisho wa siku pete za mlonge zilichomwa zikiwa zimekauka na kuwa za kijivu. Alizibadilisha kila siku, na akaomba mvua inyeshe usiku. Lakini ukame uliendelea kwa wiki nane za soko na viazi vikuu viluawa.

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Some farmers had not planted their yams yet. They were the lazy easy-going ones who always put off clearing their farms as long as they could. This year they were the wise ones. They sympathised with their neighbours with much shaking of the head, but inwardly they were happy for what they took to be their own foresight.

Okonkwo planted what was left of his seed-yams when the rains finally returned. He had one consolation. The yams he had sown before the drought were his own, the harvest of the previous year. He still had the eight hundred from Nwakibie and the four hundred from his father's friend. So he would make a fresh start.

But the year had gone mad. Rain fell as it had never fallen before. For days and nights together it poured down in violent torrents, and washed away the yam heaps. Trees were uprooted and deep gorges appeared everywhere. Then the rain became less violent. But it went from day to day without a

Baadhi ya wakulima walikuwa hawajapanda viazi vikuu vyao bado. Walikuwa ni wale wavivu wa kwenda rahisi ambao kila mara waliacha kusafisha mashamba yao kwa kadri walivyoweza. Mwaka huu walikuwa wenye busara. Waliwahurumia majirani zao huku wakitingisha kichwa sana, lakini moyoni walikuwa na furaha kwa kile walichokichukulia kuwa ni uwezo wao wa kuona mbele.

Okonkwo alipanda mbegu zake zilizobaki wakati mvua iliporejea. Alikuwa na faraja moja. Viazi vikuu alivyokuwa amepanda kabla ya ukame vilikuwa vyake mwenyewe, mavuno ya mwaka uliopita. Bado alikuwa na mia nane kutoka kwa Nwakibie na mia nne kutoka kwa rafiki wa baba yake. Kwa hiyo angeanza upya.

Lakini mwaka ulikuwa umeenda wazimu. Mvua ilinyesha jinsi haikuwahi kunyesha hapo awali. Kwa siku na usiku pamoja ilimwagika katika vijito vikali, na kuosha lundo la viazi vikuu. Miti iling'olewa na mabonde ya kina yalionekana kila mahali. Kisha mvua ilipungua kwa nguvu. Lakini

## Mambo Husambaratika

pause. The spell of sunshine which always came in the middle of the wet season did not appear. The yams put on luxuriant green leaves, but every farmer knew that without sunshine the tubers would not grow.

That year the harvest was sad, like a funeral, and many farmers wept as they dug up the miserable and rotting yams. One man tied his cloth to a tree branch and hanged himself.

Okonkwo remembered that tragic year with a cold shiver throughout the rest of his life. It always surprised him when he thought of it later that he did not sink under the load of despair. He knew that he was a fierce fighter, but that year-had been enough to break the heart of a lion.

"Since I survived that year," he always said, "I shall survive anything." He put it down to his inflexible will.

His father, Unoka, who was then

iliendelea siku hadi siku bila pause. Uchawi wa jua ambao ulikuja kila wakati katikati ya msimu wa mvua haukuonekana. Viazi vikuu viliweka majani ya kijani kibichi, lakini kila mkulima alijua kwamba bila jua mizizi haitakua.

Mwaka huo mavuno yalikuwa ya huzuni, kama mazishi, na wakulima wengi walilia walipokuwa wakichimba viazi vikuu vilivyooza. Mtu mmoja alifunga kitambaa chake kwenye tawi la mti na kujinyonga.

Okonkwo alikumbuka mwaka huo wa kutisha na kutetemeka kwa baridi katika maisha yake yote. Kila mara ilimshangaza alipofikiria baadaye kwamba hakuzama chini ya mzigo wa kukata tamaa. Alijua kwamba alikuwa mpiganaji mkali, lakini mwaka huo ulikuwa wa kutosha kuvunja moyo wa simba.

"Kwa kuwa nilinusurika mwaka huo," alisema kila wakati, "nitapona chochote." Aliiweka chini kwa mapenzi yake yasiyobadilika.

Baba yake, Unoka, ambaye wakati

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an ailing man, had said to him during that terrible harvest month: "Do not despair. I know you will not despair. You have a manly and a proud heart. A proud heart can survive a general failure because such failure does not prick its pride. It is more difficult and more bitter when a man fails alone."

Unoka was like that in his last days. His love of talk had grown with age and sickness. It tried Okonkwo's patience beyond words.

huo alikuwa mgonjwa, alikuwa amemwambia wakati wa mwezi huo mbaya wa mavuno: "Usikate tamaa. Najua hutakata tamaa. Una moyo wa kiume na wa kiburi. Moyo wa kiburi unaweza kuishi kwa jemadari. kushindwa kwa sababu kushindwa vile hakutoi kiburi chake. Ni vigumu zaidi na chungu zaidi wakati mtu anashindwa peke yake."

Unoka alikuwa hivyo katika siku zake za mwisho. Upendo wake wa kuzungumza uliongezeka kwa umri na ugonjwa. Ilijaribu uvumilivu wa Okonkwo kupita maneno.