

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

It was in the second year of Okonkwo's exile that his friend, Obierika, came to visit him.

He brought with him two young men, each of them carrying a heavy bag on his head. Okonkwo helped them put down their loads. It was clear that the bags were full of cowries.

Okonkwo was very happy to receive his friend. His wives and children were very happy too, and so were his cousins and their wives when he sent for them and told them who his guest was.

"You must take him to salute our father," said one of the cousins.

"Yes," replied Okonkwo. "We are going directly." But before they went he whispered something to his first wife. She nodded, and soon the children were chasing one of their cocks.

Ilikuwa katika mwaka wa pili wa uhamisho wa Okonkwo ambapo rafiki yake, Obierika, alikuja kumtembelea.

Alikuwa na vijana wawili, kila mmoja akiwa amebeba begi zito kichwani. Okonkwo aliwasaidia kuweka chini mizigo yao. Ilikuwa wazi kwamba mifuko ilikuwa imejaa ng'ombe.

Okonkwo alifurahi sana kumpokea rafiki yake. Wake zake na watoto pia walifurahi sana, na pia binamu zake na wake zao alipowaita na kuwaambia mgeni wake alikuwa nani.

"Lazima umpeleke kumsalimia baba yetu," alisema binamu mmoja.

"Ndiyo," alijibu Okonkwo.

"Tunaenda moja kwa moja."

Lakini kabla hawajaenda alimnong'oneza jambo mke wake wa kwanza. Aliitikia kwa kichwa, na mara watoto walikuwa wakimfukuza joo wao mmoja.

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Uchendu had been told by one of his grandchildren that three strangers had come to Okonkwo's house. He was therefore waiting to receive them. He held out his hands to them when they came into his obi, and after they had shaken hands he asked Okonkwo who they were.

"This is Obierika, my great friend. I have already spoken to you about him." "Yes," said the old man, turning to Obierika. "My son has told me about you, and I am happy you have come to see us. I knew your father, Iweka. He was a great man. He had many friends here and came to see them quite often. Those were good days when a man had friends in distant clans. Your generation does not know that. You stay at home, afraid of your next-door neighbour. Even a man's motherland is strange to him nowadays." He looked at Okonkwo. "I am an old man and I like to talk. That is all I am good for now." He got up painfully, went into an inner room and came back with a kola nut.

Uchendu alikuwa ameambiwa na mmoja wa wajukuu zake kwamba watu watatu wasiowajua walikuwa wamekuja nyumbani kwa Okonkwo. Kwa hiyo alikuwa anangoja kuwapokea. Aliwanyooshea mikono walipoingia kwenye obi yake, na baada ya kupeana mikono akamuuliza Okonkwo ni akina nani.

"Huyu ni Obierika, rafiki yangu mkubwa. Tayari nimeshazungumza nawe kuhusu yeye." "Ndiyo," mzee alisema, akimgeukia Obierika. "Mwanangu umenieleza habari zako, na nimefurahi umekuja kutuona, nilimfahamu baba yako Iweka, alikuwa mtu mkubwa sana, alikuwa na marafiki wengi hapa na alikuja kuwaona mara kwa mara, hizo zilikuwa siku nzuri. wakati mtu alikuwa na marafiki katika koo za mbali. Kizazi chako hakijui hilo. Unakaa nyumbani, unaogopa jirani yako. Hata nchi ya mama ya mtu ni ajabu kwake siku hizi." Akamtazama Okonkwo. "Mimi ni mzee na napenda kuzungumza. Hiyo ndiyo yote ninayofaa kwa sasa." Aliinuka kwa uchungu, akaingia ndani ya chumba cha ndani na kurudi na kola nut.

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"Who are the young men with you?" he asked as he sat down again on his goatskin. Okonkwo told him.

"Ah," he said. "Welcome, my sons." He presented the kola nut to them, and when they had seen it and thanked him, he broke it and they ate.

"Go into that room," he said to Okonkwo, pointing with his finger. "You will find a pot of wine there."

Okonkwo brought the wine and they began to drink. It was a day old, and very strong.

"Yes," said Uchendu after a long silence. "People travelled more in those days.

There is not a single clan in these parts that I do not know very well. Aninta, Umuazu, Ikeocha, Elumelu, Abame--I know them all."

"Have you heard," asked Obierika, "that Abame is no more?" "How is that?" asked Uchendu and Okonkwo together.

"Abame has been wiped out," said Obierika. "It is a strange and terrible story. If I had not seen the

"Vijana walio nao ni akina nani?" aliuliza huku akikaa tena juu ya ngozi yake ya mbuzi. Okonkwo alimwambia.

"Ah," alisema. "Karibu, wanangu." Akawaletela ile kola, na walipoiona na kumshukuru, akaimenga, wakala.

"Nenda kwenye kile chumba," alimwambia Okonkwo, akionyesha kidole. "Utapata sufuria ya divai huko."

Okonkwo alileta mvinyo na wakaanza kunywa. Ilikuwa siku ya zamani, na yenye nguvu sana.

"Ndiyo," alisema Uchendu baada ya kimya kirefu. "Watu walisafiri zaidi siku hizo.

Hakuna hata ukoo mmoja katika sehemu hizi ambao siufahamu vizuri. Aninta, Umuazu, Ikeocha, Elumelu, Abame--nawajua wote."

"Umesikia," aliuliza Obierika, "kwamba Abame hayupo tena?" "Vipi hivyo?" aliuliza Uchendu na Okonkwo kwa pamoja.

"Abame amefutiliwa mbali," alisema Obierika. "Ni hadithi ya ajabu na ya kutisha. Kama

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few survivors with my own eyes and heard their story with my own ears, I would not have believed. Was it not on an Eke day that they fled into Umuofia?" he asked his two companions, and they nodded their heads.

"Three moons ago," said Obierika, "on an Eke market day a little band of fugitives came into our town. Most of them were sons of our land whose mothers had been buried with us. But there were some too who came because they had friends in our town, and others who could think of nowhere else open to escape. And so they fled into Umuofia with a woeful story." He drank his palm-wine, and Okonkwo filled his horn again. He continued: "During the last planting season a white man had appeared in their clan." "An albino," suggested Okonkwo.

"He was not an albino. He was quite different." He sipped his wine. "And he was riding an iron horse. The first people who saw

nisingaliwaona wale wachache walionusurika kwa macho yangu na kusikia hadithi yao kwa masikio yangu, nisingeamini. Si siku ya Eke walikimbilia Umuofia?" Aliwauliza wenzake wawili, nao wakatingisha vichwa vyao.

"Miezi mitatu iliyopita," Obierika alisema, "siku ya soko la Eke kikundi kidogo cha wakimbizi walikuja katika mji wetu. Wengi wao walikuwa wana wa ardhi yetu ambao mama zao walikuwa wamezikwa pamoja nasi. Lakini kuna wengine pia ambao walikuja kwa sababu walikuwa na marafiki katika mji wetu, na wengine ambao hawakuweza kufikiria mahali popote pengine pa kutoroka. Na hivyo wakakimbilia Umuofia na hadithi ya kusikitisha." Alikunywa divai yake ya mtende, na Okonkwo akajaza tena pembe yake. Aliendelea: "Wakati wa msimu wa kupanda uliopita mtu mweupe alionekana katika ukoo wao." "Albino," alipendekeza Okonkwo.

"Hakuwa albino. Alikuwa tofauti kabisa." Alipiga mvinyo wake. "Na yeye alikuwa amepanda farasi wa chuma. Watu wa kwanza

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him ran away, but he stood beckoning to them. In the end the fearless ones went near and even touched him. The elders consulted their Oracle and it told them that the strange man would break their clan and spread destruction among them." Obierika again drank a little of his wine. "And so they killed the white man and tied his iron horse to their sacred tree because it looked as if it would run away to call the man's friends. I forgot to tell you another thing which the Oracle said. It said that other white men were on their way. They were locusts, it said, and that first man was their harbinger sent to explore the terrain. And so they killed him."

"What did the white man say before they killed him?" asked Uchendu. "He said nothing," answered one of Obierika's companions.

"He said something, only they did not understand him," said Obierika. "He seemed to speak through his nose."

"One of the men told me," said Obierika's other companion, "that

waliomwona walikimbia, lakini alisimama akiwapungia. Mwishowe wale wasio na hofu walikaribia na hata kumgusa. Wazee walishauri Oracle yao na kuwaambia kuwa ajabu. mwanadamu angevunja ukoo wao na kueneza uharibifu kati yao." Obierika alikunywa tena mvinyo wake kidogo. "Na hivyo wakamuua yule mzungu na kumfunga farasi wake wa chuma kwenye mti wao mtakatifu kwa sababu ilionekana kana kwamba ingekimbia kuwaita marafiki wa mtu huyo. Nilisahau kukuambia jambo lingine ambalo Oracle ilisema. Ilisema kwamba wazungu wengine Walikuwa njiani. Walikuwa nzige, ikasema, na mtu huyo wa kwanza ndiye aliyekuwa bashiri wao aliyetumwa kuipeleleza hiyo nchi. Na hivyo wakamuua."

"Mzungu alisema nini kabla ya kumuua?" aliuliza Uchendu. "Hakusema chochote," alijibu mmoja wa masahaba wa Obierika.

"Alisema kitu, lakini hawakumuelewa," alisema Obierika. "Alionekana kuongea kupitia pua yake." "Mmoja wa watu hao aliniambia," mwandamani mwingine wa

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he repeated over and over again a word that resembled Mbaino. Perhaps he had been going to Mbaino and had lost his way."

"Anyway," resumed Obierika, "they killed him and tied up his iron horse. This was before the planting season began. For a long time nothing happened. The rains had come and yams had been sown. The iron horse was still tied to the sacred silk-cotton tree. And then one morning three white men led by a band of ordinary men like us came to the clan. They saw the iron horse and went away again. Most of the men and women of Abame had gone to their farms. Only a few of them saw these white men and their followers. For many market weeks nothing else happened. They have a big market in Abame on every other Afo day and, as you know, the whole clan gathers there. That was the day it happened. The three white men and a very large number of other men surrounded the market. They must have used a powerful medicine to make themselves invisible until the market was full. And they began to shoot. Everybody was killed, except the old and the sick who were at home

Obierika alisema, "kwamba alirudia tena na tena neno lililofanana na Mbaino. Labda alikuwa akienda Mbaino na alikuwa amepotea njia."
"Hata hivyo," aliendelea tena Obierika, "walimuua na kumfunga farasi wake wa chuma. Hii ilikuwa kabla ya msimu wa kupanda. Kwa muda mrefu hakuna kilichotokea. Mvua ilikuwa imekuja na viazi vikuu vilikuwa vimepandwa. Farasi wa chuma alikuwa bado amefungwa kwenye Na kisha asubuhi moja wanaume watatu weupe wakiongozwa na kundi la watu wa kawaida kama sisi walikuja kwenye ukoo. Walimwona farasi wa chuma na wakaenda zao tena. Wengi wa wanaume na wanawake wa Abame walikuwa wamekwenda zao. Ni wachache tu kati yao waliowaona wazungu hawa na wafuasi wao. Kwa wiki nyingi za soko hakuna kitu kingine kilichotokea. Wana soko kubwa huko Abame kila siku nyingine za Afo na, kama unavyojua, ukoo wote hukusanyika hapo. siku ilipotokea wale wazungu watatu na watu wengine wengi sana walizunguka soko hilo. Lazima wangetumia dawa ya nguvu ya kujifanya wasionekane mpaka

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and a handful of men and women whose chi were wide awake and brought them out of that market." He paused.

"Their clan is now completely empty. Even the sacred fish in their mysterious lake have fled and the lake has turned the colour of blood. A great evil has come upon their land as the Oracle had warned."

There was a long silence. Uchendu ground his teeth together audibly. Then he burst out: "Never kill a man who says nothing. Those men of Abame were fools. What did they know about the man?" He ground his teeth again and told a story to illustrate his point. "Mother Kite once sent her daughter to bring food. She went, and brought back a duckling. 'You have done very well,' said Mother Kite to her daughter, 'but tell me, what did the mother of this duckling say when you swooped and carried its child away?'

'It said nothing,' replied the young kite. 'It just walked away.'

soko lilipojaa. Wakaanza kufyatua risasi. Kila mtu aliuawa isipokuwa mzee. na wagonjwa waliokuwa nyumbani na wachache wa wanaume na wanawake ambao ch nilikuwa macho na kuwatoa nje ya soko hilo." Akanyamaza.

"Ukoo wao sasa ni tupu kabisa. Hata samaki watakatifu katika ziwa lao la ajabu wamekimbia na ziwa limegeuka rangi ya damu. Uovu mkubwa umekuja juu ya nchi yao kama Oracle alikuwa ameonya."

Kulikuwa na ukimya wa muda mrefu. Uchendu alisaga meno yake kwa sauti. Kisha akapasuka: "Usiue kamwe mtu ambaye hasemi chochote. Wale watu wa Abame walikuwa wapumbavu. Walijua nini kuhusu mtu huyo?" Akasaga meno tena na kusimulia hadithi ili kudhihirisha hoja yake. "Mama Kite aliwahi kumtuma bintiye kuleta chakula. Alikwenda na kurudi na bata. 'Umefanya vizuri sana,' Mama Kite alimwambia binti yake, 'lakini niambie, mama wa bata huyu alisema nini wakati wewe. akaruka na kumchukua mtoto wake?'

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'You must return the duckling,' said Mother Kite. 'There is something ominous behind the silence.' And so Daughter Kite returned the duckling and took a chick instead. 'What did the mother of this chick do?' asked the old kite. 'It cried and raved and cursed me,' said the young kite. 'Then we can eat the chick,' said her mother. 'There is nothing to fear from someone who shouts.' Those men of Abame were fools."

"They were fools," said Okonkwo after a pause. "They had been warned that danger was ahead. They should have armed themselves with their guns and their machetes even when they went to market."

"They have paid for their foolishness," said Obierika, "But I am greatly afraid. We have heard stories about white men who made the powerful guns and the strong drinks and took slaves away across the seas, but no one thought the stories were true."

"There is no story that is not true," said Uchendu. "The world has no end, and what is good among one people is an abomination with

'Lazima umrudishe bata,' alisema Mama Kite. 'Kuna jambo la kutisha nyuma ya ukimya.' Na hivyo Binti Kite akarudisha bata na kuchukua kifaranga badala yake. 'Mama wa kifaranga huyu alifanya nini?' aliuliza mzee kite. 'Ni kilio na raved na kulaani yangu,' alisema kite vijana. 'Basi tunaweza kula kifaranga,' alisema mama yake. 'Hakuna cha kuogopa kutoka kwa mtu anayepiga kelele.' Wale watu wa Abame walikuwa wapumbavu."

"Walikuwa wapumbavu," Okonkwo alisema baada ya kutulia. "Walikuwa wameonywa kuwa hatari ilikuwa mbele. Walipaswa kujihami kwa bunduki zao na mapanga hata walipoenda sokoni."

"Wamelipia upumbavu wao," alisema Obierika, "Lakini ninaogopa sana. Tumesikia hadithi kuhusu wazungu ambao walitengeneza bunduki zenye nguvu na vileo vikali na kuwachukua watumwa kuvuka bahari, lakini hakuna mtu aliyefikiria hadithi hizo zilikuwa kweli."

"Hakuna hadithi ambayo si ya kweli," alisema Uchendu. "Dunia haina mwisho, na lililo jema miongoni mwa watu ni chukizo

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others. We have albinos among us. Do you not think that they came to our clan by mistake, that they have strayed from their way to a land where everybody is like them?"

Okonkwo's first wife soon finished her cooking and set before their guests a big meal of pounded yams and bitter-leaf soup. Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, brought in a pot of sweet wine tapped from the raffia palm.

"You are a big man now," Obierika said to Nwoye. "Your friend Anene asked me to greet you."

"Is he well?" asked Nwoye. "We are all well," said Obierika.

Ezinma brought them a bowl of water with which to wash their hands. After that they began to eat and to drink the wine.

"When did you set out from home?" asked Okonkwo.

"We had meant to set out from my house before cockcrow," said Obierika. "But Nweke did not appear until it was quite light. Never make an early morning appointment with a man who has just married a new wife." They all laughed.

kwa watu wengine. Sisi tuna albino miongoni mwetu. Hufikirii kuwa walikuja kwa ukoo wetu kimakosa, kwamba wamepotea njia na kuelekea nchi ambayo kila mtu ni kama wao?"

Mke wa kwanza wa Okonkwo alimaliza kupika na kuwaandalia wageni wao mlo mkubwa wa viazi vikuu vilivyopondwa na supu ya majani machungu. Mwana wa Okonkwo, Nwoye, alileta chungu cha divai tamu iliyochongwa kutoka kwenye kiganja cha raffia.

"Wewe ni mtu mkubwa sasa,"

Obierika alimwambia Nwoye.

"Rafiki yako Anene aliniomba nikusalimie."

"Je, yuko vizuri?" aliuliza Nwoye.

"Sote tuko sawa," Obierika alisema.

Ezinma aliwaletea bakuli la maji la kunawa mikono. Kisha wakaanza kula na kunywa divai.

"Ulitoka lini kutoka nyumbani?" aliuliza Okonkwo.

"Tulikusudia kuondoka nyumbani kwangu kabla ya jogoo kuwika," alisema Obierika. "Lakini Nweke hakutokea hadi kulipopambazuka. Usiwahi kufanya miadi ya asubuhi na mwanamume ambaye ameoa mke mpya." Wote wakacheka.

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"Has Nweke married a wife?" asked Okonkwo.

"He has married Okadigbo's second daughter," said Obierika.

"That is very good," said Okonkwo. "I do not blame you for not hearing the cock crow." When they had eaten, Obierika pointed at the two heavy bags.

"That is the money from your yams," he said. "I sold the big ones as soon as you left. Later on I sold some of the seed-yams and gave out others to sharecroppers. I shall do that every year until you return. But I thought you would need the money now and so I brought it. Who knows what may happen tomorrow? Perhaps green men will come to our clan and shoot us."

"God will not permit it," said Okonkwo. "I do not know how to thank you." "I can tell you," said Obierika. "Kill one of your sons for me."

"That will not be enough," said Okonkwo. "Then kill yourself," said Obierika.

"Forgive me," said Okonkwo, smiling. "I shall not talk about

"Nweke ameo a mke?" aliuliza Okonkwo.

"Ameo binti wa pili wa Okadigbo," alisema Obierika.

"Hiyo ni nzuri sana," Okonkwo alisema. "Sikulaumu kwa kutosikia jogoo akiwika." Walipokwisha kula, Obierika alielekeza kwenye ile mifuko miwili mizito.

"Hizo ni pesa kutoka kwa viazi vikuu vyako," alisema. "Niliuza zile kubwa mara tu unapoondoka. Baadaye niliua baadhi ya viazi vikuu na kutoa vingine kwa wakulima wa mazao. Nitafanya hivyo kila mwaka hadi utakaporudi. Lakini nilifikiri ungehitaji pesa sasa hivi na kadhalika. Nimeileta. Ni nani ajuaye kitakachotokea kesho? Labda watu wa kijani kibichi watakuja kwa ukoo wetu na kutupiga risasi."

"Mungu hataruhusu," Okonkwo alisema. "Sijui jinsi ya kukushukuru." "Naweza kukuambia," alisema Obierika. "Uue mmoja wa wana wako kwa ajili yangu."

"Hiyo haitatosha," Okonkwo alisema. "Basi jiue," Obierika alisema.

"Nisamehe," Okonkwo alisema, akitabasamu. "Sitazungumza juu