

SEHEMU YA PILI

SURA YA KUMI NA NNE

Okonkwo was well received by his mother's kinsmen in Mbanta. The old man who received him was his mother's younger brother, who was now the eldest surviving member of that family. His name was Uchendu, and it was he who had received Okonkwo's mother twenty and ten years before when she had been brought home from Umuofia to be buried with her people. Okonkwo was only a boy then and Uchendu still remembered him crying the traditional farewell: "Mother, mother, mother is going."

That was many years ago. Today Okonkwo was not bringing his mother home to be buried with her people. He was taking his family of three wives and their children to seek refuge in his motherland. As soon as Uchendu saw him with his

Okonkwo alipokelewa vyema na ndugu wa mama yake huko Mbanta. Mzee aliyempokea alikuwa ni mdogo wa mama yake ambaye sasa ndiye aliyekuwa mzee wa familia ile. Jina lake lilikuwa Uchendu, na ndiye aliyekuwa amempokea mama Okonkwo miaka ishirini na kumi kabla alipoletwa nyumbani kutoka Umuofia kuzikwa pamoja na watu wake. Okonkwo alikuwa mvulana tu wakati huo na Uchendu bado alimkumbuka akilia kwaheri ya jadi: "Mama, mama, mama anaenda."

Hiyo ilikuwa miaka mingi iliyopita. Leo Okonkwo hakuwa akimleta mamake nyumbani ili azikwe pamoja na watu wake. Alikuwa akichukua familia yake ya wake watatu na watoto wao kutafuta kimbilio katika nchi ya

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sad and weary company he guessed what had happened, and asked no questions. It was not until the following day that Okonkwo told him the full story. The old man listened silently to the end and then said with some relief: "It is a female ochu." And he arranged the requisite rites and sacrifices.

Okonkwo was given a plot of ground on which to build his compound, and two or three pieces of land on which to farm during the coming planting season. With the help of his mother's kinsmen he built himself an obi and three huts for his wives. He then installed his personal god and the symbols of his departed fathers. Each of Uchendu's five sons contributed three hundred seed-yams to enable their cousin to plant a farm, for as soon as the first rain came farming would begin.

At last the rain came. It was sudden and tremendous. For two or three moons the sun had been gathering strength till it seemed to breathe a breath of fire on the earth. All the grass had long been

mama yake. Mara tu Uchendu alipomwona akiwa na kundi lake la huzuni na uchovu alikisia kilichotokea, na hakuuliza maswali. Haikuwa hadi siku iliyofuata ambapo Okonkwo alimweleza habari kamili. Mzee alisikiza kimya hadi mwisho kisha akasema kwa raha: "Ni ochu wa kike." Na alipanga taratibu na dhabihu zinazohitajika.

Okonkwo alipewa kiwanja ambacho angejenga shamba lake, na vipande viwili au vitatu vya ardhi ambapo alime wakati wa msimu ujao wa kupanda. Kwa msaada wa ndugu wa mama yake alijijengea obi na vibanda vitatu kwa ajili ya wake zake. Kisha akaweka mungu wake binafsi na alama za baba zake waliokufa. Kila mmoja wa wana watano wa Uchendu alichangia mbegu mia tatu ili kumwezesha binamu yao kupanda shamba, kwani mara tu mvua ya kwanza ilipofika kilimo kingeanza.

Hatimaye mvua ilikuja. Ilikuwa ghafla na kubwa. Kwa miezi miwili au mitatu jua lilikuwa likikusanya nguvu hadi likaonekana kupumua pumzi ya moto duniani. Nyasi zote zilikuwa

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scorched brown, and the sands felt like live coals to the feet.

Evergreen trees wore a dusty coat of brown. The birds were silenced in the forests, and the world lay panting under the live, vibrating heat. And then came the clap of thunder. It was an angry, metallic and thirsty clap, unlike the deep and liquid rumbling of the rainy season. A mighty wind arose and filled the air with dust.

Palm trees swayed as the wind combed their leaves into flying crests like strange and fantastic coiffure.

When the rain finally came, it was in large, solid drops of frozen water which the people called "the nuts of the water of heaven." They were hard and painful on the body as they fell, yet young people ran about happily picking up the cold nuts and throwing them into their mouths to melt.

The earth quickly came to life and the birds in the forests fluttered around and chirped merrily. A

zimechomwa kwa muda mrefu, na mchanga ulihisi kama makaa ya moto kwa miguu. Miti ya kijani kibichi ilivaa koti yenye vumbi la kahawia. Ndege walinyamazishwa msituni, na ulimwengu ukalala chini ya joto la moja kwa moja, linalotetemeka. Na kisha akaja makofi ya radi. Yalikuwa ni makofi ya hasira, metali na kiu, tofauti na sauti ya kina na ya majimaji ya msimu wa mvua. Upepo mkali ulitokea na kuijaza hewa vumbi.

Miti ya mitende iliyumbayumba huku upepo ukichanganya majani yake hadi kwenye sehemu zinazoruka kama tunguli za ajabu na za ajabu.

Mvua ilipokuja hatimaye, ilikuwa katika matone makubwa, imara ya maji yaliyogandishwa ambayo watu waliita "njugu za maji ya mbinguni." Walikuwa wagumu na wenye uchungu mwilini walipokuwa wakianguka, bado vijana walikimbia huku na huko kwa furaha wakiokota kokwa zile baridi na kuzitupa midomoni mwao ili kuyeyuka.

Dunia ilipata uhai upesi na ndege msituni walizunguka-zunguka na kulia kwa furaha. Harufu

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vague scent of life and green vegetation was diffused in the air. As the rain began to fall more soberly and in smaller liquid drops, children sought for shelter, and all were happy, refreshed and thankful.

Okonkwo and his family worked very hard to plant a new farm. But it was like beginning life anew without the vigour and enthusiasm of youth, like learning to become left-handed in old age. Work no longer had for him the pleasure it used to have, and when there was no work to do he sat in a silent half-sleep.

His life had been ruled by a great passion--to become one of the lords of the clan. That had been his life-spring. And he had all but achieved it. Then everything had been broken. He had been cast out of his clan like a fish onto a dry, sandy beach, panting. Clearly his personal god or chi was not made for great things. A man could not rise beyond the destiny of his chi. The saying of the elders was not true--that if a man said yea his chi also affirmed. Here was a man whose chi said nay despite his own affirmation.

isiyoeleweka ya maisha na mimea ya kijani ilitawanyika hewani. Mvua ilipoanza kunyesha kwa kiasi na katika matone madogo ya kioevu, watoto walitafuta makao, na wote walikuwa na furaha, kuburudishwa na kushukuru.

Okonkwo na familia yake walijitahidi sana kupanda shamba jipya. Lakini ilikuwa kama kuanza maisha upya bila nguvu na shauku ya ujana, kama vile kujifunza kutumia mkono wa kushoto katika uzee. Kazi haikuwa na raha iliyokuwa nayo tena, na wakati hakuna kazi ya kufanya alikaa kimya nusu ya usingizi.

Maisha yake yalikuwa yametawaliwa na shauku kubwa--kuwa mmoja wa mabwana wa ukoo. Hiyo ndiyo ilikuwa chemchemi ya maisha yake. Na alikuwa amefanikiwa yote. Kisha kila kitu kilikuwa kimevunjwa. Alikuwa ametupwa nje ya ukoo wake kama samaki kwenye ufuo mkavu wa mchanga, akihema. Ni wazi mungu wake binafsi au chi hakuumbwa kwa mambo makuu. Mwanamume hakuweza kuinuka zaidi ya hatima ya chi yake. Msemo wa wazee haukuwa wa kweli--kwamba mtu akisema

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ndiyo chi yake pia alithibitisha.
Hapa kulikuwa na mtu ambaye chi
alisema lay licha ya uthibitisho
wake mwenyewe.

The old man, Uchendu, saw
clearly that Okonkwo had yielded
to despair and he was greatly
troubled. He would speak to him
after the isa-ifi ceremony.

The youngest of Uchendu's five
sons, Amikwu, was marrying a
new wife. The bride-price had
been paid and all but the last
ceremony had been performed.
Amikwu and his people had taken
palm-wine to the bride's kinsmen
about two moons before
Okonkwo's arrival in Mbanta. And
so it was time for the final
ceremony of confession.

The daughters of the family were
all there, some of them having
come a long way from their homes
in distant villages. Uchendu's
eldest daughter had come from
Obodo, nearly half a day's journey
away. The daughters of Uehuiona
were also there. It was a full
gathering of umuada, in the same
way as they would meet if a death
occurred. There were twenty-two
of them.

Mdogo wa wana watano wa
Uchendu, Amikwu, alikuwa akioa
mke mpya. Mahari ilikuwa
imelipwa na sherehe zote
isipokuwa ile ya mwisho ilikuwa
imefanywa. Amikwu na watu
wake walikuwa wamepeleka
mvinyo wa mitende kwa jamaa za
bibu harusi karibu miezi miwili
kabla ya kuwasili kwa Okonkwo
huko Mbanta. Na kwa hivyo
ilikuwa wakati wa sherehe ya
mwisho ya kukiri.

Mabinti wa familia hiyo walikuwa
wote, baadhi yao walikuwa
wametoka mbali na makazi yao
katika vijiji vya mbali. Binti
mkubwa wa Uchendu alikuwa
ametoka Obodo, karibu nusu ya
safari ya siku. Mabinti wa
Uehuiona pia walikuwepo.
Ulikuwa ni mkusanyiko kamili wa
umuada, sawa na wangekutana
ikiwa kifo kitatokea. Kulikuwa na
ishirini na mbili kati yao.

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They sat in a big circle on the ground and the young bride in the centre with a hen in her right hand. Uchendu before her, holding the ancestral staff of the family. The men stood outside the circle, watching. Their wives also. It was evening and the sun was setting. Uchendu's eldest daughter, Njide, asked her, "Remember that if you do not answer truthfully you will suffer or even die at childbirth," she began. "How man men have lain with you since my brother first expressed his desire to marry you?"

"None," she answered simply.

"Answer truthfully," urged the other women. "None?" asked Njide. "None," she answered. "Swear on this staff of my fathers," said Uchendu. "I swear," said the bride.

Uchendu took the hen from her, slit its throat with a sharp knife and allowed some of the blood to fall on the ancestral staff. From that day Amikwu took the young bride and she became his wife. The daughters of the clan did not return to their homes immediately but spent two more

Walikaa kwenye duara kubwa chini na bi harusi mchanga katikati na kuku katika mkono wake wa kulia. Uchendu mbele yake, akiwa ameshikilia fimbo ya mababu wa familia hiyo. Wanaume walisimama nje ya duara, wakitazama. Wake zao pia. Ilikuwa jioni na jua lilikuwa linazama. Binti mkubwa wa Uchendu, Njide, alimuuliza, "Kumbuka usipojibu ukweli utateseka au hata kufa wakati wa kujifungua," alianza. "Vipi wanaume wamelala na wewe tangu kaka yangu atoe hamu ya kukuoa?"

"Hakuna," alijibu kwa urahisi.

"Jibu kwa ukweli," wakahimiza wanawake wengine. "Hakuna?" aliuliza Njide. "Hakuna," yeye akajibu.

"Apisheni hii fimbo ya baba zangu," alisema Uchendu.

"Naapa," bibi harusi alisema.

Uchendu akamchukua kuku kutoka kwake, akamkata koo lake kwa kisu kikali na kuruhusu baadhi ya damu kumwagilia fimbo ya mababu.

Tangu siku hiyo Amikwu alimchukua yule bibi mdogo na akawa mke wake. Mabinti wa ukoo huo hawakurudi nyumbani

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days with their kinsmen.

On the second day Uchendu called together his sons and daughters and his nephew, Okonkwo. The men brought their goatskin mats, with which they sat on the floor, and the women sat on a sisal mat spread on a raised bank of earth. Uchendu pulled gently at his grey beard and gnashed his teeth. Then he began to speak, quietly and deliberately, picking his words with great care: "It is Okonkwo that I primarily wish to speak to," he began. "But I want all of you to note what I am going to say. I am an old man and you are all children. I know more about the world than any of you. If there is any one among you who thinks he knows more let him speak up." He paused, but no one spoke.

"Why is Okonkwo with us today? This is not his clan. We are only his mother's kinsmen. He does not belong here. He is an exile, condemned for seven years to live in a strange land. And so he is bowed with grief. But there is just

kwao mara moja bali walikaa siku mbili zaidi na jamaa zao. Siku ya pili Uchendu aliwaita pamoja wanawe na binti zake na mpwa wake, Okonkwo. Wanaume walileta mikeka yao ya ngozi ya mbuzi, ambayo waliketi nayo sakafuni, na wanawake walikaa kwenye mkeka wa mkonge uliowekwa kwenye ukingo wa ardhi ulioinuliwa. Uchendu alivuta ndevu zake kwa upole na kusaga meno. Kisha akaanza kusema, kimya na kwa makusudi, akichukua maneno yake kwa uangalifu mkubwa: "Ni Okonkwo ambaye kimsingi ninataka kuzungumza naye," alianza. "Lakini nataka ninyi nyote mzingatie nitakachosema, mimi ni mzee na nyinyi nyote ni watoto, najua sana dunia kuliko yeyote kati yenu. Kama kuna yeyote miongoni mwenu anayejiona anajua zaidi. mwacheni aseme." Alinyamaza, lakini hakuna aliyezungumza.

"Kwa nini Okonkwo yuko nasi leo hii sio ukoo wake, sisi ni ndugu wa mama yake tu. Hafai kuwa hapa. Ni mkimbizi, aliyehukumiwa miaka saba ya kuishi katika nchi ya ajabu. Na hivyo ameinama kwa huzuni.

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one question I would like to ask him. Can you tell me, Okonkwo, why it is that one of the commonest names we give our children is Nneka, or "Mother is Supreme?" We all know that a man is the head of the family and his wives do his bidding. A child belongs to its father and his family and not to its mother and her family. A man belongs to his fatherland and not to his motherland. And yet we say Nneka - 'Mother is Supreme.' Why is that?"

There was silence. "I want Okonkwo to answer me," said Uchendu. "I do not know the answer," Okonkwo replied. "You do not know the answer? So you see that you are a child. You have many wives and many children--more children than I have. You are a great man in your clan. But you are still a child, my child. Listen to me and I shall tell you. But there is one more question I shall ask you. Why is it that when a woman dies she is taken home to be buried with her own kinsmen? She is not buried with her husband's kinsmen. Why is that? Your mother was brought

Lakini kuna swali moja tu ningependa kumuuliza, unaweza kuniambia Okonkwo, kwa nini ni kwamba moja ya majina ya kawaida tunayowapa watoto wetu ni Nneka, au "Mama ndiye Mkuu?" Sote tunajua kuwa mwanaume. ni mkuu wa familia na wake zake wanafanya matakwa yake. Mtoto ni wa baba yake na familia yake na si wa mama yake na familia yake. Mtu ni wa nchi ya baba yake na sio nchi ya mama yake. Na bado tunasema Nneka - 'Mama ndiye Mkuu.' Kwanini hivyo?"

Kulikuwa kimya. "Nataka Okonkwo anijibu," alisema Uchendu. "Sijui jibu," Okonkwo alijibu.

"Hujui jibu? Kwa hiyo unaona wewe ni mtoto. Una wake wengi na watoto wengi - watoto wengi kuliko mimi. Wewe ni mtu mkubwa katika ukoo wako. Lakini bado wewe ni mtoto, mtoto wangu. .Nisikilizeni nikuambie. Lakini kuna swali moja zaidi nitakuuliza. Kwanini mwanamke akifa anapelekwa nyumbani kuzikwa na jamaa zake? hakuzikwa pamoja na ndugu wa mumewe. Kwa nini mama yako aliletwa nyumbani kwangu

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home to me and buried with my people. Why was that?" Okonkwo shook his head.

"He does not know that either," said Uchendu, "and yet he is full of sorrow because he has come to live in his motherland for a few years." He laughed a mirthless laughter, and turned to his sons and daughters. "What about you? Can you answer my question?" They all shook their heads.

"Then listen to me," he said and cleared his throat. "It's true that a child belongs to its father. But when a father beats his child, it seeks sympathy in its mother's hut. A man belongs to his fatherland when things are good and life is sweet. But when there is sorrow and bitterness he finds refuge in his motherland. Your mother is there to protect you. She is buried there. And that is why we say that mother is supreme. Is it right that you, Okonkwo, should bring to your mother a heavy face and refuse to be comforted? Be careful or you may displease the dead. Your duty is to comfort your wives and children and take them back to your fatherland after seven years. But if you allow sorrow to weigh you down and kill you they

na kuzikwa pamoja na watu wangu. Kwa nini ilikuwa hivyo?" Okonkwo akatikisa kichwa.

"Hajui hilo pia," alisema Uchendu, "na bado ana huzuni kwa sababu amekuja kuishi katika nchi yake kwa miaka michache." Alicheka kicheko kisicho na furaha, na kuwageukia wanawe na binti zake. "Vipi kuhusu wewe? Unaweza kujibu swali langu?"

"Basi nisikilize," alisema na kusafisha koo lake. "Ni kweli mtoto ni wa baba yake. Lakini baba anapompiga mtoto wake anatafuta huruma kwenye kibanda cha mama yake. Mtu ni wa nchi ya baba yake wakati mambo ni mazuri na maisha ni matamu. Lakini yanapotokea huzuni na uchungu yeye hutoka nje. anapata hifadhi katika nchi ya mama yake. Mama yako yuko kwa ajili ya kukulinda, amezikwa huko. Na ndiyo maana tunasema kuwa mama ni mkuu. Je, ni sawa wewe Okonkwo umletee mama yako sura nzito na kukataa kuwa kufarijiwa? Jihadharini la sivyo mkawachukiza waliokufa. Wajibu wenu ni kuwafariji wake zenu na watoto wenu na kuwarudisha katika nchi ya baba zenu baada ya

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will all die in exile." He paused for a long while. "These are now your kinsmen." He waved at his sons and daughters.

"You think you are the greatest sufferer in the world? Do you know that men are sometimes banished for life? Do you know that men sometimes lose all their yams and even their children? I had six wives once. I have none now except that young girl who knows not her right from her left. Do you know how many children I have buried-- children I begot in my youth and strength? Twenty-two. I did not hang myself, and I am still alive. If you think you are the greatest sufferer in the world ask my daughter, Akueni, how many twins she has borne and thrown away. Have you not heard the song they sing when a woman dies?

"For whom is it well, for whom is it well? There is no one for whom it is well.' "I have no more to say to you."

miaka saba. Lakini ukiruhusu huzuni ikuelemea na kukuua wote watafia uhamishoni. "Alinyamaza kwa muda mrefu. "Hawa sasa ni jamaa zako." Aliwapungia wanawe na binti zake.

"Unafikiri wewe ndiye mgonjwa mkubwa zaidi duniani? Unajua kwamba wakati fulani wanaume hufukuzwa maisha? Unajua kwamba wakati fulani wanaume hupoteza viazi vikuu vyote na hata watoto wao? Mimi nilikuwa na wake sita mara moja. Sina hata mmoja kwa sasa isipokuwa ni hivyo. msichana mdogo asiyejua kulia kwake kutoka kushoto kwake. Je! unajua ni watoto wangapi niliowazika - watoto niliowazaa katika ujana na nguvu zangu? Ishirini na mbili. Sikujinyonga, na bado niko hai. wewe ndiye msumbufu zaidi duniani muulize binti Akueni amezaa mapacha wangapi na kuwatupa. Hujasikia wimbo wanaoimba mwanamke akifa?

"Ni vizuri kwa nani, ni vizuri kwa nani? Hakuna mtu ambaye ni sawa kwake." "Sina la kukuambia zaidi."