

## SURA YA ISHIRINI NA NNE

Okonkwo and his fellow prisoners were set free as soon as the fine was paid. The District Commissioner spoke to them again about the great queen, and about peace and good government. But the men did not listen. They just sat and looked at him and at his interpreter. In the end they were given back their bags and sheathed machetes and told to go home. They rose and left the courthouse.

Okonkwo na wafungwa wenzake waliachiliwa huru punde tu faini hiyo ilipolipwa. Mkuu wa Wilaya alizungumza nao tena kuhusu malkia mkuu, na kuhusu amani na serikali nzuri. Lakini wanaume hao hawakusikiliza. Walikaa tu na kumtazama na kumtazama mkalimani wake. Mwishowe walirudishiwa mabegi yao na kukatwa mapanga na kuambiwa waende nyumbani. Wakainuka na

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They neither spoke to anyone nor among themselves. The courthouse, like the church, was built a little way outside the village. The footpath that linked them was a very busy one because it also led to the stream, beyond the court. It was open and sandy. Footpaths were open and sandy in the dry season. But when the rains came the bush grew thick on either side and closed in on the path. It was now dry season. As they made their way to the village the six men met women and children going to the stream with their waterpots. But the men wore such heavy and fearsome looks that the women and children did not say "nno" or "welcome" to them, but edged out of the way to let them pass. In the village little groups of men joined them until they became a sizable company. They walked silently. As each of the six men got to his compound, he turned in, taking some of the crowd with him. The village was astir in a silent, suppressed way.

kutoka nje ya mahakama.  
Hawakuzungumza na mtu yeyote wala kati yao wenyewe.  
Mahakama, kama kanisa, ilijengwa nje kidogo ya kijiji. Njia ya watembea kwa miguu iliyowaunganisha ilikuwa na shughuli nyingi kwa sababu pia iliongoza kwenye mkondo, zaidi ya mahakama. Ilikuwa wazi na mchanga. Njia za miguu zilikuwa wazi na zenye mchanga wakati wa kiangazi. Lakini mvua ziliponyesha kichaka kilikua kinene kila upande na kuziba njia. Sasa ilikuwa ni kiangazi. Walipokuwa wakielekea kijijini wale wanaume sita walikutana na wanawake na watoto wakienda kwenye kijito wakiwa na mitungi yao ya maji. Lakini wanaume walivaa sura nzito na ya kutisha hivi kwamba wanawake na watoto hawakusema "nno" au "karibu" kwao, lakini walitoka nje ya njia kuwaruhusu wapite. Katika kijiji vikundi vidogo vya wanaume vilijiunga nao hadi wakawa kampuni kubwa. Walitembea kimya kimya. Kila mmoja wa wale watu sita walipofika kwenye boma lake, akaingia na kuchukua baadhi ya watu pamoja naye. kijiji alikuwa astir katika kimya, kukandamizwa njia.

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Ezinma had prepared some food for her father as soon as news spread that the six men would be released. She took it to him in his obi. He ate absent-mindedly. He had no appetite, he only ate to please her. His male relations and friends had gathered in his obi, and Obierika was urging him to eat. Nobody else spoke, but they noticed the long stripes on Okonkwo's back where the warder's whip had cut into his flesh.

The village crier was abroad again in the night. He beat his iron gong and announced that another meeting would be held in the morning. Everyone knew that Umuofia was at last going to speak its mind about the things that were happening.

Okonkwo slept very little that night. The bitterness in his heart was now mixed with a kind of childlike excitement, before he had gone to bed he had brought down his war dress, which he had not touched since his return from exile.

Ezinma alikuwa amemuandalia baba yake chakula mara tu habari zilipoenea kwamba wanaume hao sita wangeachiliwa. Alimpelekea kwenye obi yake. Alikula hayupo. Hakuwa na hamu ya kula, alikula tu ili kumfurahisha. Mahusiano yake ya kiume na marafiki walikuwa wamekusanyika katika obi yake, na Obierika alikuwa akimhimiza kula. Hakuna mtu mwingine aliyezungumza, lakini waliona michirizi mirefu mgongoni mwa Okonkwo ambapo mjeledi wa askari ulikuwa umekakwa kwenye nyama yake.

Kilio cha kijiji kilikuwa nje ya nchi tena usiku. Alipiga chuma chake na akatangaza kwamba mkutano mwingine ungefanywa asubuhi. Kila mtu alijua kwamba Umuofia hatimaye angezungumza mawazo yake kuhusu mambo yaliyokuwa yakitokea.

Okonkwo alilala kidogo sana usiku huo. Uchungu moyoni mwake sasa ulikuwa umechanganyikana na aina fulani ya msisimko wa kitoto, kabla hajalala alishusha vazi lake la vita, ambalo tangu arudi kutoka

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He had shaken out his smoked raffia skirt and examined his tall feather head-gear and his shield. They were all satisfactory, he had thought.

As he lay on his bamboo bed he thought about the treatment he had received in the white man's court, and he swore vengeance. If Umuofia decided on war, all would be well. But If they chose to be cowards he would go out and avenge all himself. He thought about wars in the past. The noblest, he thought, was the war against Isike.

In those days Okudo was still alive. Okudo sang a war song in a way that no other man could. He was not a fighter, but his voice turned every man into a lion.

"Worthy men are no more," Okonkwo sighed as he remembered those days. "Isike will never forget how we slaughtered them in that war. We killed twelve of their men and they killed only two of ours. Before the end of the

uhamishoni hakuligusa. Alikuwa ametikisa sketi yake ya rafi ya kuvuta sigara na kukagua gia yake ndefu ya manyoya na ngao yake. Zote zilikuwa za kuridhisha, alifikiria.

Akiwa amejilaza kwenye kitanda chake cha mianzi alifikiria jinsi alivyotendewa katika mahakama ya wazungu, akaapa kulipiza kisasi. Ikiwa Umuofia angeamua juu ya vita, kila kitu kingekuwa sawa. Lakini kama wangechagua kuwa waoga angetoka na kulipiza kisasi yeye mwenyewe. Alifikiria juu ya vita vya zamani. Alifikiri kwamba vita bora zaidi ni vita dhidi ya Isike.

Siku hizo Okudo alikuwa angali hai. Okudo aliimba wimbo wa vita kwa njia ambayo hakuna mtu mwingine angeweza. Hakuwa mpiganaji, lakini sauti yake ilimgeuza kila mtu kuwa simba.

"Wanaume wanaostahili hawapo tena," Okonkwo alipumua huku akikumbuka siku hizo. "Isike hatasahau jinsi tulivyowachinja katika vita hivyo. Tuliwaua watu wao kumi na wawili na wakaua wetu wawili tu. Kabla ya mwisho

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fourth market week they were  
suing for peace. Those were days  
when men were men."

As he thought of these things he  
heard the sound of the iron gong in  
the distance. He listened carefully,  
and could just hear the crier's  
voice. But it was very faint. He  
turned on his bed and his back hurt  
him. He ground his teeth. The crier  
was drawing nearer and nearer  
until he passed by Okonkwo's  
compound.

"The greatest obstacle in  
Umuofia," Okonkwo thought  
bitterly, "is that coward,  
Egonwanne. His sweet tongue can  
change fire into cold ash. When he  
speaks he moves our men to  
impotence. If they had ignored his  
womanish wisdom five years ago,  
we would not have come to this."  
He ground his teeth. "Tomorrow  
he will tell them that our fathers  
never fought a 'war of blame.' If  
they listen to him I shall leave  
them and plan my own revenge."

wa juma la nne la soko walikuwa  
wakidai amani. Hizo zilikuwa  
siku ambazo wanaume walikuwa  
wanaume."

Akiwa anawaza mambo hayo  
alisikia sauti ya chuma kwa mbali.  
Alisikiliza kwa makini, na aliweza  
tu kusikia sauti ya mlio. Lakini  
ilikuwa dhaifu sana. Aligeukia  
kitanda chake na mgongo wake  
kumuuma. Akasaga meno. Mlio  
wa kilio alikuwa akikaribia zaidi  
na zaidi hadi akapita karibu na  
boma la Okonkwo.

"Kizuizi kikubwa zaidi katika  
Umuofia," Okonkwo aliwaza kwa  
uchungu, "ni yule mwoga,  
Egonwanne. Ulimi wake mtamu  
unaweza kubadilisha moto kuwa  
majivu baridi. Anapozungumza  
huwahamisha wanaume wetu  
kwenye upungufu wa nguvu za  
kiume. Kama wangepuza hekima  
yake ya kike miaka mitano  
iliyopita. tusingefika kwa hili."  
Akasaga meno. "Kesho  
atawaambia kwamba baba zetu  
hawakuwahi kupigana 'vita vya  
lawama.' Wakimsikiliza  
nitawaacha na kupanga kulipiza  
kisasi kwangu."

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The crier's voice had once more become faint, and the distance had taken the harsh edge off his iron gong. Okonkwo turned from one side to the other and derived a kind of pleasure from the pain his back gave him. "Let Egonwanne talk about a 'war of blame' tomorrow and I shall show him my back and head." He ground his teeth.

The marketplace began to fill as soon as the sun rose. Obierika was waiting in his obi when Okonkwo came along and called him. He hung his goatskin bag and his sheathed machete on his shoulder and went out to join him. Obierika's hut was close to the road and he saw every man who passed to the marketplace. He had exchanged greetings with many who had already passed that morning.

When Okonkwo and Obierika got to the meeting place there were already so many people that if one threw up a grain of sand it would not find its way to the earth again. And many more people were coming from every quarter of the

Sauti ya mlilo kwa mara nyingine tena kuwa na kukata tamaa, na umbali alikuwa kuchukua makali makali kutoka gongo yake ya chuma. Okonkwo aligeuka kutoka upande mmoja hadi mwingine na kupata aina ya raha kutokana na maumivu ya mgongo wake. "Hebu Egonwanne azungumze kuhusu 'vita vya lawama' kesho na nitamuonyesha mgongo na kichwa changu." Akasaga meno.

Soko lilianza kujaa mara tu jua lilipochomoza. Obierika alikuwa akingoja kwenye obi yake wakati Okonkwo alipokuja na kumwita. Alitundika begi lake la ngozi ya mbuzi na panga lake begani na kutoka nje kwenda kuungana naye. Kibanda cha Obierika kilikuwa karibu na barabara na alimuona kila mwanaume aliyepita sokoni. Alikuwa amepeana salamu na wengi ambao tayari walikuwa wamepita asubuhi hiyo.

Okonkwo na Obierika walipofika kwenye eneo la mkutano tayari kulikuwa na watu wengi kiasi kwamba mtu akitupa chembe ya mchanga asingepata tena njia ya ardhi. Na watu wengi zaidi walikuwa wakija kutoka kila robo

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nine villages. It warmed Okonkwo's heart to see such strength of numbers. But he was looking for one man in particular, the man whose tongue he dreaded and despised so much.

"Can you see him?" he asked Obierika. "Who?"

"Egonwanne," he said, his eyes roving from one corner of the huge marketplace to the other. Most of the men sat on wooden stools they had brought with them.

"No," said Obierika, casting his eyes over the crowd. "Yes, there he is, under the silk-cotton tree. Are you afraid he would convince us not to fight?"

"No," said Obierika, casting his eyes over the crowd. "Yes, there he is, under the silk-cotton tree. Are you afraid he would convince us not to fight?"

They spoke at the top of their voices because everybody was talking, and it was like the sound of a great market.

"I shall wait till he has spoken," Okonkwo thought. "Then I shall

ya vijiji tisa. Moyo wa Okonkwo ulichangamsha kuona nguvu za idadi kama hiyo. Lakini alikuwa anatafuta mtu mmoja hasa, mtu ambaye ulimi wake aliugopa na kuudharau sana.

"Unaweza kumwona?" Aliuliza Obierika. "WHO?"

"Egonwanne," alisema, macho yake yakitazama kutoka kona moja ya soko kubwa hadi nyingine. Wanaume wengi waliketi kwenye viti vya mbao walivyokuja navyo.

"Hapana," Obierika alisema, akitupa macho yake juu ya umati. "Ndiyo, yuko chini ya mti wa pamba-hariri. Je, unaogopa angetushawishi tusipigane?"

"Hapana," Obierika alisema, akitupa macho yake juu ya umati. "Ndiyo, yuko chini ya mti wa pamba-hariri. Je, unaogopa angetushawishi tusipigane?"

Walizungumza kwa sauti ya juu kwa sababu kila mtu alikuwa akiongea, na ilikuwa kama sauti ya soko kubwa.

"Nitasubiri hadi azungumze," Okonkwo aliwaza. "Kisha

peak."

nitasema."

"But how do you know he will speak against war?" Obierika asked after a while. "Because I know he is a coward," said Okonkwo. Obierika did not hear the rest of what he said because at that moment somebody touched his shoulder from behind and he turned round to shake hands and exchange greetings with five or six friends. Okonkwo did not turn round even though he knew the voices. He was in no mood to exchange greetings. But one of the men touched him and asked about the people of his compound.

"Lakini unajua kwamba atazungumza dhidi ya vita?" Obierika aliuliza baada ya muda. "Kwa sababu najua yeye ni mwoga," Okonkwo alisema. Obierika hakisikia alichokisema kwa sababu wakati huo mtu alimgusa bega kwa nyuma na akageuka na kupeana mikono na kubadilishana salamu na marafiki watano au sita. Okonkwo hakugeuka japo alizijua sauti zile. Hakuwa katika hali ya kubadilishana salamu. Lakini mmoja wa wale watu akamgusa na kuuliza kuhusu watu wa boma lake.

"They are well," he replied without interest.

The first man to speak to Umuofia that morning was Okika, one of the six who had been imprisoned. Okika was a great man and an orator. But he did not have the booming voice which a first speaker must use to establish silence in the assembly of the clan. Onyeka had such a voice, and so he was asked to salute Umuofia before Okika began to speak.

"Wako vizuri," alijibu bila riba.

Mtu wa kwanza kuzungumza na Umuofia asubuhi hiyo alikuwa Okika, mmoja wa wale sita waliokuwa wamefungwa. Okika alikuwa mtu mashuhuri na mzungumzaji. Lakini hakuwa na sauti kubwa ambayo mzungumzaji wa kwanza lazima aitumie kuweka kimya katika mkutano wa ukoo. Onyeka alikuwa na sauti ya namna hiyo, na hivyo akatakiwa kumsalimia Umuofia kabla Okika hajaanza



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## kuzungumza.

"Umuofia kwenu!" he bellowed, raising his left arm and pushing the air with his open hand.

"Yaa!" roared Umuofia.

"Umuofia kwenu!" he bellowed again, and again and again, facing a new direction each time. And the crowd answered, "Yaa!"

There was immediate silence as though cold water had been poured on a roaring flame.

Okika sprang to his feet and also saluted his clansmen four times. Then he began to speak: "You all know why we are here, when we ought to be building our barns or mending our huts, when we should be putting our compounds in order. My father used to say to me: 'Whenever you see a toad jumping in broad daylight, then know that something is after its life.' When I saw you all pouring into this meeting from all the quarters of our clan so early in the morning, I knew that something was after our life." He paused for a brief moment and then began again: "All our gods are weeping. Idemili

"Umuofia kwenu!" alipiga kelele, akiinua mkono wake wa kushoto na kusukuma hewa kwa mkono wake wazi.

"Yaa!" aliunguruma Umuofia.

"Umuofia kwenu!" alipiga kelele tena, na tena na tena, akikabili uelekeo mpya kila wakati. Na umati ukajibu, "Yaa!"

Kukawa kimya mara moja kana kwamba maji baridi yalikuwa yamemwagwa juu ya moto unaounguruma.

Okika alisimama na kuwasalimu watu wa ukoo wake mara nne. Kisha akaanza kusema: "Nyinyi nyote mnajua kwa nini tuko hapa, wakati tulipaswa kujenga ghala zetu au kurekebisha vibanda vyetu, wakati tunapaswa kuweka misombo yetu kwa utaratibu. Baba yangu alikuwa akiniambia: 'Wakati wowote unapooni. chura akiruka mchana kweupe, basi ujue kuna kitu kinafuata maisha yake.' Nilipowaona ninyi nyote mkimiminika katika mkutano huu kutoka pande zote za ukoo wetu asubuhi na mapema, nilijua kwamba kuna jambo fulani lilikuwa baada ya maisha yetu."

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is weeping, Ogwugwu is weeping, Agbala is weeping, and all the others. Our dead fathers are weeping because of the shameful sacrilege they are suffering and the abomination we have all seen with our eyes." He stopped again to steady his trembling voice.

"This is a great gathering. No clan can boast of greater numbers or greater valour. But are we all here? I ask you: Are all the sons of Umuofia with us here?" A deep murmur swept through the crowd.

"They are not," he said. "They have broken the clan and gone their several ways. We who are here this morning have remained true to our fathers, but our brothers have deserted us and joined a stranger to soil their fatherland. If we fight the stranger we shall hit our brothers and perhaps shed the blood of a clansman. But we must do it. Our fathers never dreamed of such a thing, they never killed their brothers. But a white man never came to them. So we must do what

Alinyamaza kwa muda mfupi kisha akaanza tena: "Miungu yetu yote inalia. Idemili analia, Ogwugwu analia, Agbala analia, na wengine wote. Baba zetu waliokufa wanalia kwa sababu ya kufuru ya aibu wanayoteseka na machukizo ambayo sote tumeyaona kwa macho yetu." Alisimama tena ili kuimarisha sauti yake ya kutetemeka.

"Huu ni mkusanyiko mkubwa. Hakuna ukoo unaoweza kujivunia idadi kubwa zaidi au ushujaa mkubwa zaidi. Lakini je, sote tuko hapa? Ninawauliza: Je, wana wa Umuofia wote tuko pamoja nasi hapa?" Manung'uniko mazito yalipita katikati ya umati.

"Hawako," alisema. "Wamevunja ukoo na kwenda njia zao kadhaa. Sisi tulio hapa asubuhi hii tumebaki waaminifu kwa baba zetu, lakini ndugu zetu wametuaacha na kuungana na mgeni kuichafua nchi yao. Tukipigana na mgeni tutawapiga ndugu zetu. na pengine kumwaga damu ya mtu wa ukoo. Lakini lazima tufanye hivyo. Baba zetu hawakuwahi kuota kitu kama hicho, hawakuwahi kuwaua ndugu zao. Lakini mzungu hajawahi

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our fathers would never have done. Eneke the bird was asked why he was always on the wing and he replied: 'Men have learned to shoot without missing their mark and I have learned to fly without perching on a twig.' We must root out this evil. And if our brothers take the side of evil we must root them out too. And we must do it now. We must bale this water now that it is only ankle-deep..."

kufika kwao. Hivyo ni lazima tufanye yale ambayo baba zetu wasingeweza kuyafanya. Eneke ndege huyo aliulizwa kwa nini alikuwa kwenye bawa kila mara na akajibu: 'Wanaume wamejifunza kupiga risasi bila kukosa alama yao na nimejifunza kuruka bila kurandaranda kwenye tawi.' Ni lazima tuondoe uovu huu. Na ikiwa ndugu zetu watachukua upande wa uovu lazima tuwang'oe pia. Na ni lazima tufanye hivyo sasa. Ni lazima tuyamwagilie maji haya sasa kwa kuwa yanaingia kwenye kifundo cha mguu tu..."

At this point there was a sudden stir in the crowd and every eye was turned in one direction. There was a sharp bend in the road that led from the marketplace to the white man's court, and to the stream beyond it. And so no one had seen the approach of the five court messengers until they had come round the bend, a few paces from the edge of the crowd. Okonkwo was sitting at the edge.

Wakati huu kulikuwa na ghasia ya ghafla katika umati wa watu na kila jicho lilielekezwa upande mmoja. Kulikuwa na kona kali ya barabara iliyokuwa inatoka sokoni hadi kwenye mahakama ya wazungu, na kwenye mkondo wa maji kupita hapo. Na hivyo hakuna mtu ambaye alikuwa ameona mbinu ya wajumbe watano wa mahakama mpaka walipofika pande zote, hatua chache kutoka kwenye ukingo wa umati. Okonkwo alikuwa amekaa pembeni.

He sprang to his feet as soon as he

Aliruka kwa miguu yake mara

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saw who it was. He confronted the head messenger, trembling with hate, unable to utter a word. The man was fearless and stood his ground, his four men lined up behind him.

In that brief moment the world seemed to stand still, waiting. There was utter silence. The men of Umuofia were merged into the mute backcloth of trees and giant creepers, waiting.

The spell was broken by the head messenger. "Let me pass!" he ordered. "What do you want here?"

"The white man whose power you know too well has ordered this meeting to stop."

In a flash Okonkwo drew his machete. The messenger crouched to avoid the blow. It was useless. Okonkwo's machete descended twice and the man's head lay beside his uniformed body.

The waiting backcloth jumped into tumultuous life and the meeting was stopped. Okonkwo stood looking at the dead man. He knew that Umuofia would not go to war.

baada ya kuona ni nani.  
Alimkabili mjumbe mkuu,  
akitetemeka kwa chuki, hakuweza  
kusema neno lolote. Yule mtu  
hakuwa na woga akasimama  
imara, watu wake wanne  
wakajipanga nyuma yake.  
Katika wakati huo mfupi  
ulimwengu ulionekana kusimama,  
ukingoja. Kukawa kimya kabisa.  
Watu wa Umuofia  
waliunganishwa kwenye nguo ya  
nyuma bubu ya miti na wanyama  
watambaa wakubwa, wakingoja.  
Spell ilivunjwa na mjumbe mkuu.  
"Ngoja nipite!" aliamuru.  
"Unataka nini hapa?"

"Yule mzungu ambaye nguvu  
zake unazijua sana ameamuru  
mkutano usitishwe."

Kwa haraka Okonkwo akachomoa  
panga lake. Mjumbe aliinama  
kukwepa pigo. Ilikuwa haina  
maana. Bastora ya Okonkwo  
ilishuka mara mbili na kichwa cha  
mtu huyo kikalala kando ya mwili  
wake uliovalia sare.

Nguo ya nyuma ya kusubiri  
iliruka katika maisha ya ghasia na  
mkutano ukasimamishwa.  
Okonkwo alisimama akimtazama  
mtu aliyekufa. Alijua kwamba

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He knew because they had let the other messengers escape. They had broken into tumult instead of action. He discerned fright in that tumult. He heard voices asking: "Why did he do it?"

Umuofia hataingia vitani. Alijua kwa sababu walikuwa wamewaacha wale wajumbe wengine watoroke. Walikuwa wameingia katika ghasia badala ya vitendo. Aligundua hofu katika ghasia hizo. Alisikia sauti zikiuliza: "Kwa nini alifanya hivyo?"

He wiped his machete on the sand and went away.

Akajifuta panga kwenye mchanga na kwenda zake.

*Chinua Achebe*