

SURA YA KUMI NA SABA

The missionaries spent their first four or five nights in the marketplace, and went into the village in the morning to preach the gospel. They asked who the king of the village was, but the villagers told them that there was no king. "We have men of high title and the chief priests and the elders," they said.

It was not very easy getting the men of high title and the elders

Wamisionari walitumia usiku wao wa kwanza nne au tano sokoni, na wakaenda kijijini asubuhi kuhubiri injili. Waliuliza mfalme wa kijiji ni nani, lakini wanakijiji wakawaambia kwamba hakuna mfalme. "Tunao watu wenye vyeo vya juu na makuhani wakuu na wazee," wakasema.

Haikuwa rahisi sana kuwakutanisha wanaume wenye

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together after the excitement of the first day. But the arrivees persevered, and in the end they were received by them. They asked for a plot of land to build on, An evil forest was where the clan buried all those who died of the really evil diseases, like leprosy and smallpox. It was also the dumping ground for highly potent fetishes of great medicine men when they died. An evil forest was, therefore, alive with sinister forces and powers of darkness. It was such a forest that, the rulers of Mbanta gave to the missionaries. They did not really want them near to the clan, and so they made them that offer which nobody in his right senses would accept.

"They want a piece of land to build their shrine," said Uchendu to his peers when they consulted among themselves. "We shall give them a piece of land." He paused, and there was a murmur of surprise and disagreement. "Let us give them a portion of the Evil Forest. They boast about victory over death. Let us give them a real battlefield in which to show their victory." They laughed and agreed, and sent for the missionaries, whom they had

vyeo vya juu na wazee pamoja baada ya msisimko wa siku ya kwanza. Lakini waliofika walivumilia, na mwishowe wakapokelewa nao. Wakaomba kiwanja cha kujenga, Msitu mbaya ndipo ukoo ulipowazika wale wote waliokufa kwa magonjwa mabaya kabisa, kama ukoma na ndui. Ilikuwa pia mahali pa kutupwa kwa miungu yenye nguvu ya waganga wakuu walipokufa. Kwa hivyo, msitu mbaya ulikuwa na nguvu mbaya na nguvu za giza. Ulikuwa ni msitu ambao, watawala wa Mbanta waliwapa wamisionari. Kwa kweli hawakuwataka wawe karibu na ukoo, na hivyo wakawatolea toleo ambalo hakuna mtu katika akili zake sahihi angekubali. "Wanataka kipande cha ardhi kwa ajili ya kujenga madhabahu yao," alisema Uchendu kwa wenzake waliposhauriana wao kwa wao. "Tutawapa kipande cha ardhi." Alinyamaza, na kulikuwa na manung'uniko ya mshangao na kutokubaliana. "Hebu tuwape sehemu ya Msitu Mwovu. Wanajivunia ushindi juu ya kifo. Hebu tuwape uwanja wa vita halisi ambao wataonyesha ushindi wao." Walicheka na kukubaliana, na kuwatuma kuwaita wamisionari,

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asked to leave them for a while so that they might "whisper together." They offered them as much of the Evil Forest as they cared to take. And to their greatest amazement the missionaries thanked them and burst into song.

"They do not understand," said some of the elders. "But they will understand when they go to their plot of land tomorrow morning." And they dispersed.

The next morning the crazy men actually began to clear a part of the forest and to build their house. The inhabitants of Mbanta expected them all to be dead within four days. The first day passed and the second and third and fourth, and none of them died. Everyone was puzzled. And then it became known that the white man's fetish had unbelievable power. It was said that he wore glasses on his eyes so that he could see and talk to evil spirits. Not long after, he won his first three converts.

Although Nwoye had been attracted to the new faith from the very first day, he kept it secret. He

ambao walikuwa wameomba wawaache kwa muda ili "wanongone pamoja." Waliwapa kiasi cha Msitu Mwovu kama walivyojali kuchukua. Na kwa mshangao wao mkubwa wamisionari waliwashukuru na kuanza kuimba. "Hawaelewi," baadhi ya wazee walisema. "Lakini wataelewa watakapokwenda kwenye shamba lao kesho asubuhi." Na wakatawanyika.

Asubuhi iliyofuata wale vichaa walianza kusafisha sehemu ya msitu na kujenga nyumba yao. Wakaaji wa Mbanta walitarajia wote wangekufa ndani ya siku nne. Siku ya kwanza ikapita na ya pili na ya tatu na ya nne, na hakuna hata mmoja wao aliyekufa. Kila mtu alishangaa. Na ndipo ikajulikana kuwa uchawi wa mzungu ulikuwa na nguvu za ajabu. Ilisemekana kwamba alivaa miwani machoni ili aweze kuona na kuzungumza na pepo wachafu. Muda mfupi baadaye, alishinda waongofu wake watatu wa kwanza.

Ingawa Nwoye alikuwa amevutiwa na imani hiyo mpya tangu siku ya kwanza, aliweka

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dared not go too near the missionaries for fear of his father. But whenever they came to preach in the open marketplace or the village play ground, Nwoye was there. And he was already beginning to know some of the simple stories they told.

"We have now built a church," said Mr. Kiaga, the interpreter, who was now in charge of the infant congregation. The white man had gone back to Umuofia, where he built his headquarters and from where he paid regular visits to Mr. Kiaga's congregation at Mbanta.

"We have now built a church," said Mr. Kiaga, "and we want you all to come in every seventh day to worship the true God." On the following Sunday, Nwoye passed and repassed the little red-earth and thatch building without summoning enough courage to enter. He heard the voice of singing and although it came from a handful of men it was loud and confident. Their church stood on a circular clearing that looked like the open mouth of the Evil Forest. Was it waiting to snap its teeth together? After passing and re-

siri. Hakuthubutu kuwakaribia sana wamishonari kwa kumwogopa baba yake. Lakini kila walipokuja kuhubiri sokoni au uwanja wa michezo wa kijijini, Nwoye alikuwapo. Na tayari alikuwa ameanza kujua baadhi ya hadithi rahisi walizosimulia.

"Sasa tumejenga kanisa," akasema Bw. Kiaga, mkalimani, ambaye sasa alikuwa msimamizi wa kutaniko hilo changa. Mzungu huyo alikuwa amerudi Umuofia, ambako alijenga makao yake makuu na kutoka huko alitembelea mara kwa mara kutaniko la Bw. Kiaga huko Mbanta.

"Sasa tumejenga kanisa," alisema Bw. Kiaga, "na tunataka ninyi nyote mje kila siku ya saba kumwabudu Mungu wa kweli." Jumapili iliyofuata, Nwoye alipita na kulipita lile jengo dogo la ardhi nyekundu na nyasi bila kuwa na ujasiri wa kutosha kuingia. Alisikia sauti ya kuimba na ingawa ilitoka kwa wanaume wachache ilikuwa kubwa na yenye kujiamini. Kanisa lao lilisimama kwenye uwazi wa duara ambao ulionekana kama mdomo wazi wa Msitu Mwovu. Je, ilikuwa inangoja kung'oa meno yake

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passing by the church, Nwoye returned home.

It was well known among the people of Mbanta that their gods and ancestors were sometimes long-suffering and would deliberately allow a man to go on defying them. But even in such cases they set their limit at seven market weeks or twenty-eight days. Beyond that limit no man was suffered to go. And so excitement mounted in the village as the seventh week approached since the impudent missionaries built their church in the Evil Forest. The villagers were so certain about the doom that awaited these men that one or two converts thought it wise to suspend their allegiance to the new faith.

At last the day came by which all the missionaries should have died. But they were still alive, building a new red-earth and thatch house for their teacher, Mr. Kiaga. That week they won a handful more converts. And for the first time they had a woman. Her name was Nneka, the wife of Amadi, who

pamoja? Baada ya kupita na kurudi tena kanisani, Nwoye alirudi nyumbani.

Ilijulikana sana miongoni mwa watu wa Mbanta kwamba miungu na mababu zao nyakati fulani walikuwa wastahimilivu na wagemruhusu mtu kwa makusudi aendelee kuwakaidi. Lakini hata katika hali kama hizi huweka kikomo chao katika wiki saba za soko au siku ishirini na nane. Zaidi ya kikomo hicho hakuna mtu aliyeruhusiwa kwenda. Na msisimko mkubwa ukaongezeka katika kijiji hicho juma la saba lilipokaribia tangu wamisionari hao wakorofi walipojenga kanisa lao katika Msitu Mwovu.

Wanakijiji walikuwa na hakika sana juu ya maangamizi ambayo yangewangoja wanaume hao hivi kwamba mwongofu mmoja au wawili waliona ni jambo la hekima kusimamisha utii wao kwa imani mpya.

Hatimaye siku ilifika ambayo wamishenari wote walipaswa kufa. Lakini bado walikuwa hai, wakimjengea mwalimu wao bwana Kiaga nyumba mpya ya ardhi nyekundu na nyasi. Wiki hiyo walishinda waongofu wachache zaidi. Na kwa mara ya kwanza walikuwa na mwanamke.

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was a prosperous farmer. She was very heavy with child.

Nneka had had four previous pregnancies and child-births. But each time she had borne twins, and they had been immediately thrown away. Her husband and his family were already becoming highly critical of such a woman and were not unduly perturbed when they found she had fled to join the Christians. It was a good riddance.

One morning Okonkwo's cousin, Amikwu, was passing by the church on his way from the neighbouring village, when he saw Nwoye among the Christians. He was greatly surprised, and when he got home he went straight to Okonkwo's hut and told him what he had seen. The women began to talk excitedly, but Okonkwo sat unmoved.

It was late afternoon before Nwoye returned. He went into the obi and saluted his father, but he did not answer. Nwoye turned round to walk into the inner

Jina lake lilikuwa Nneka, mke wa Amadi, ambaye alikuwa mkulima aliyefanikiwa. Alikuwa mzito sana na mtoto.

Nneka alikuwa amepata mimba nne za awali na kuzaa watoto. Lakini kila wakati alikuwa amezaa mapacha, na walikuwa wametupwa mara moja. Mume wake na familia yake tayari walikuwa wakimchambua sana mwanamke kama huyo na hawakufadhaika isivyofaa walipopata kwamba alikuwa amekimbia kujiunga na Wakristo. Ilikuwa ni riwaya nzuri.

Asubuhi moja binamu ya Okonkwo, Amikwu, alikuwa akipita karibu na kanisa akitoka katika kijiji jirani, alipomwona Nwoye miongoni mwa Wakristo. Alishangaa sana, na alipofika nyumbani alienda moja kwa moja kwenye kibanda cha Okonkwo na kumweleza alichokiona. Wanawake hao walianza kuzungumza kwa furaha, lakini Okonkwo alikaa bila kutikisika.

Ilikuwa alasiri kabla ya Nwoye kurejea. Aliingia ndani ya obi na kumsalimia baba yake, lakini hakujibu. Nwoye aligeuka na kuingia ndani ya chumba cha

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compound when his father, suddenly overcome with fury, sprang to his feet and gripped him by the neck.

"Where have you been?" he stammered.

Nwoye struggled to free himself from the choking grip.

"Answer me," roared Okonkwo, "before I kill you!" He seized a heavy stick that lay on the dwarf wall and hit him two or three savage blows.

"Answer me!" he roared again. Nwoye stood looking at him and did not say a word. The women were screaming outside, afraid to go in.

"Leave that boy at once!" said a voice in the outer compound. It was Okonkwo's uncle, Uchendu. "Are you mad?"

Okonkwo did not answer. But he left hold of Nwoye, who walked away and never returned.

He went back to the church and told Mr. Kiaga that he had decided to go to Umuofia where the white missionary had set up a school to teach young Christians to read and write.

ndani wakati baba yake, akiwa na hasira ya ghafla, alisimama kwa miguu yake na kumshika shingo.

"Ulikuwa wapi?" akagugumia. Nwoye alijitahidi kujinasua kutoka kwenye mshiko wa kukaba.

"Nijibu," Okonkwo alinguruma, "kabla sijakuu!" Alikamata fimbo nzito iliyokuwa kwenye ukuta wa kibeti na kumpiga makofi mawili matatu.

"Nijibu!" akaunguruma tena. Nwoye alisimama akimtazama na hakusema neno. Wanawake walikuwa wakipiga kelele nje, wakiogopa kuingia.

"Muache huyo kijana mara moja!" ilisema sauti katika eneo la nje. Alikuwa ni mjomba wa Okonkwo, Uchendu. "Unawazimu?" Okonkwo hakujibu. Lakini alimwacha Nwoye, ambaye aliondoka na hakurudi tena.

Alirudi kanisani na kumwambia bwana Kiaga kwamba ameamua kwenda Umuofia ambako mmishenari wa kizungu alikuwa ameanzisha shule ya kuwafundisha vijana wa Kikristo kusoma na kuandika.

Mr. Kiaga's joy was very great. "Blessed is he who forsakes his father and his mother for my sake," he intoned. "Those that hear my words are my father and my mother."

Nwoye did not fully understand. But he was happy to leave his father. He would return later to his mother and his brothers and sisters and convert them to the new faith.

As Okonkwo sat in his hut that night, gazing into a log fire, he thought over the matter. A sudden fury rose within him and he felt a strong desire to take up his machete, go to the church and wipe out the entire vile and miscreant gang. But on further thought he told himself that Nwoye was not worth fighting for. Why, he cried in his heart, should he, Okonkwo, of all people, be cursed with such a son? He saw clearly in it the finger of his personal god or chi. For how else could he explain his great misfortune and exile and now his despicable son's behaviour? Now that he had time to think of it, his son's crime stood out in its stark enormity. To abandon the gods of one's father and go about with a

Furaha ya bwana Kiaga ilikuwa kubwa sana. "Heri amwachaye baba yake na mama yake kwa ajili yangu," akasema kwa sauti. "Wale wanaosikia maneno yangu ni baba yangu na mama yangu."

Nwoye hakuelewa kabisa. Lakini alifurahi kumuacha baba yake. Baadaye angerudi kwa mama yake na kaka na dada zake na kuwaongoa kwenye imani mpya.

Okonkwo alipokuwa ameketi kwenye kibanda chake usiku huo, akitazama moto wa magogo, alifikiria jambo hilo. Ghadhabu ya ghafla ilipanda ndani yake na akahisi hamu kubwa ya kuchukua panga lake, kwenda kanisani na kuliangamiza genge lote mbovu na la upotovu. Lakini akiwaza zaidi alijiambia kuwa Nwoye hafai kumpigania. Kwa nini, alilia moyoni mwake, je, Okonkwo, kati ya watu wote, alanyiwe na mwana kama huyo? Aliona wazi ndani yake kidole cha mungu wake binafsi au chi. Kwani ni jinsi gani angeweza kueleza msiba wake mkuu na uhamisho wake na sasa tabia ya mtoto wake ya kudharauliwa? Sasa kwa kuwa alikuwa na muda wa kufikiria jambo hilo, uhalifu wa mwanawe

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lot of effeminate men clucking like old hens was the very depth of abomination. Suppose when he died all his male children decided to follow Nwoye's steps and abandon their ancestors?

Okonkwo felt a cold shudder run through him at the terrible prospect, like the prospect of annihilation. He saw himself and his fathers crowding round their ancestral shrine waiting in vain for worship and sacrifice and finding nothing but ashes of bygone days, and his children the while praying to the white man's god. If such a thing were ever to happen, he, Okonkwo, would wipe them off the face of the earth.

Okonkwo was popularly called the "Roaring Flame." As he looked into the log fire he recalled the name. He was a flaming fire. How then could he have begotten a son like Nwoye, degenerate and effeminate? Perhaps he was not his son. No! he could not be. His wife had played him false. He would teach her! But Nwoye

ulijitokeza wazi katika ukubwa wake mkubwa. Kuiacha miungu ya baba yako na kwenda huku na huko na wanaume wengi wa kike wakibinya kama kuku wazee lilikuwa ni chukizo kubwa sana. Tuseme alipofariki watoto wake wote wa kiume waliamua kufuata nyayo za Nwoye na kuwatelekeza babu zao? Okonkwo alihisi mtetemeko wa baridi ukipita ndani yake kwa matarajio ya kutisha, kama matarajio ya kuangamizwa. Alijiona yeye na baba zake wakisongamana kuzunguka madhabahu ya mababu zao wakingoja ibada na dhabihu bure bila kupata chochote ila majivu ya siku zilizopita, na watoto wake huku wakimwomba mungu wa wazungu. Ikiwa jambo kama hilo lingewahi kutokea, yeye, Okonkwo, angevifuta kutoka kwenye uso wa dunia.

Okonkwo alikuwa maarufu kwa jina la "Mwali Unaounguruma." Alipotazama kwenye moto wa magogo akakumbuka jina. Alikuwa moto mkali. Je, angeweza kupata mtoto wa kiume kama Nwoye, aliyedhoofika na kuwa wa kike? Labda hakuwa mtoto wake. Hapana! hakuweza kuwa. Mkewe

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resembled his grandfather, Unoka, who was Okonkwo's father. He pushed the thought out of his mind. He, Okonkwo, was called a flaming fire. How could he have begotten a woman for a son? At Nwoye's age Okonkwo had already become famous throughout Umuofia for his wrestling and his fearlessness.

He sighed heavily, and as if in sympathy the smouldering log also sighed. And immediately Okonkwo's eyes were opened and he saw the whole matter clearly. Living fire begets cold, impotent ash. He sighed again, deeply.

alikuwa amemchezea uongo. Angemfundisha! Lakini Nwoye alifanana na babu yake, Unoka, ambaye alikuwa babake Okonkwo. Aliliondoa wazo hilo akilini mwake. Yeye, Okonkwo, alitwa moto unaowaka. Angeweza kumzaa mwanamke kwa mwana? Katika umri wa Nwoye Okonkwo tayari alikuwa amepata umaarufu kote Umuofia kwa mieleka yake na kutoogopa.

Alipumua sana, na kana kwamba kwa huruma gogo lililofuka pia lilipumua. Na mara macho ya Okonkwo yakafumbuliwa na kuliona jambo zima waziwazi. Moto hai huzaa majivu baridi, yasiyo na nguvu. Akashusha pumzi tena kwa kina.