

SURA YA ISHIRINI

Seven years was a long time to be away from one's clan. A man's place was not always there, waiting for him. As soon as he left, someone else rose and filled it. The clan was like a lizard, if it lost its tail it soon grew another.

Okonkwo knew these things. He knew that he had lost his place

Miaka saba ilikuwa muda mrefu wa kuwa mbali na ukoo wa mtu. Mahali pa mtu hakuwepo kila wakati, akimngojea. Alipoondoka tu, mtu mwingine aliinuka na kuijaza. Ukoo huo ulikuwa kama mjusi, ukipoteza mkia mara ulikua mwingine.

Okonkwo alijua mambo haya. Alijua kwamba alikuwa

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among the nine masked spirits who administered justice in the clan. He had lost the chance to lead his warlike clan against the new religion, which, he was told, had gained ground. He had lost the years in which he might have taken the highest titles in the clan. But some of these losses were not irreparable. He was determined that his return should be marked by his people. He would return with a flourish, and regain the seven wasted years.

Even in his first year in exile he had begun to plan for his return. The first thing he would do would be to rebuild his compound on a more magnificent scale. He would build a bigger barn than he had had before and he would build huts for two new wives. Then he would show his wealth by initiating his sons into the ozo society. Only the really great men in the clan were able to do this. Okonkwo saw clearly the high esteem in which he would be held, and he saw himself taking the highest title in the land.

amepoteza nafasi yake kati ya roho tisa waliojifunika vinyago ambao walisimamia haki katika ukoo huo. Alikuwa amepoteza nafasi ya kuongoza ukoo wake wenye kupenda vita dhidi ya dini hiyo mpya, ambayo, aliambiwa, ilikuwa imepata msingi. Alikuwa amepoteza miaka ambayo angeweza kuchukua vyeo vya juu zaidi katika ukoo. Lakini baadhi ya hasara hizi hazikuweza kurekebisha. Alikuwa amedhamiria kwamba kurudi kwake kutawekwa alama na watu wake. Angerudi na kushamiri, na kurejesha miaka saba iliyopotea.

Hata katika mwaka wake wa kwanza uhamishoni alikuwa ameanza kupanga kurudi kwake. Jambo la kwanza ambalo angefanya lingekuwa kujenga upya kiwanja chake kwa kiwango kizuri zaidi. Angejenga ghala kubwa kuliko alivyokuwa hapo awali na angejenga vibanda kwa wake wawili wapya. Kisha angeonyesha utajiri wake kwa kuwaanzisha wanawe katika jamii ya ozo. Ni watu mashuhuri tu katika ukoo walioweza kufanya hivi. Okonkwo aliona wazi heshima kubwa ambayo angechukuliwa, na alijiona

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akichukua cheo cha juu zaidi
katika ardhi.

As the years of exile passed one by one it seemed to him that his chi might now be making amends for the past disaster. His yams grew abundantly, not only in his motherland but also in Umuofia, where his friend gave them out year by year to sharecroppers. Then the tragedy of his first son had occurred. At first it appeared as if it might prove too great for his spirit. But it was a resilient spirit, and in the end Okonkwo overcame his sorrow. He had five other sons and he would bring them up in the way of the clan.

He sent for the five sons and they came and sat in his obi. The youngest of them was four years old.

"You have all seen the great abomination of your brother. Now he is no longer my son or your brother. I will only have a son who is a man, who will hold his head up among my people. If any one of you prefers to be a woman, let

Miaka ya uhamishoni ilipopita moja baada ya nyingine ilionekana kwake kwamba huenda chi yake sasa anafanya marekebisho kwa ajili ya maafa yaliyopita. Viazi vikuu vyake vilikua kwa wingi, si tu katika nchi ya mama yake bali pia Umuofia, ambapo rafiki yake alivitoa mwaka baada ya mwaka ili washiriki mazao. Kisha msiba wa mtoto wake wa kwanza ukatokea. Mwanzoni ilionekana kana kwamba inaweza kuwa kubwa sana kwa roho yake. Lakini ilikuwa roho ya ustahimilivu, na mwisho Okonkwo alishinda huzuni yake. Alikuwa na wana wengine watano naye angewalea katika njia ya ukoo.

Aliwaita wale wana watano na wakaja na kuketi katika obi yake. Mdogo wao alikuwa na umri wa miaka minne.

"Nyinyi nyote mmeliona chukizo kubwa la ndugu yenu. Sasa yeye si mwanangu tena wala si ndugu yenu, nitakuwa na mtoto wa kiume tu ambaye atakiinua kichwa chake kati ya watu wangu. Mtu wa kwenu akipenda zaidi. kuwa

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him follow Nwoye now while I am alive so that I can curse him. If you turn against me when I am dead I will visit you and break your neck."

Okonkwo was very lucky in his daughters. He never stopped regretting that Ezinma was a girl. Of all his children she alone understood his every mood. A bond of sympathy had grown between them as the years had passed.

Ezinma grew up in her father's exile and became one of the most beautiful girls in Mbanta. She was called Crystal of Beauty, as her mother had been called in her youth. The young ailing girl who had caused her mother so much heartache had been transformed, almost overnight, into a healthy, buoyant maiden. She had, it was true, her moments of depression when she would snap at everybody like an angry dog. These moods descended on her suddenly and for no apparent reason. But they were very rare and short-lived. As long as they lasted, she could bear no other person but her father.

mwanamke, amfuate Nwoye sasa nikiwa hai ili nimlaani, ukinigeukia nikiwa nimekufa nitakutembelea na kukuvunja shingo."

Okonkwo alikuwa na bahati sana katika binti zake. Hakuacha kujuta kwamba Ezinma alikuwa msichana. Kati ya watoto wake wote yeye peke yake ndiye aliyelewa kila hali yake. Kifungo cha huruma kilikuwa kimeongezeka kati yao kadri miaka ilivyosonga.

Ezinma alikulia katika uhamisho wa baba yake na akawa mmoja wa wasichana warembo zaidi huko Mbanta. Aliitwa Crystal of Beauty, kama mama yake alivyoitwa katika ujana wake. Msichana mdogo aliyekuwa mgonjwa ambaye alikuwa amemsababishia mama yake maumivu makali sana ya moyo alikuwa amegeuzwa, karibu usiku mmoja, na kuwa msichana mwenye afya njema na mchangamfu. Alikuwa, ni kweli, nyakati zake za unyogovu wakati angempiga kila mtu kama mbwa mwenye hasira. Hisia hizi zilimjia ghafla na bila sababu yoyote. Lakini walikuwa wachache sana na wa muda mfupi. Kadiri

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Many young men and prosperous middle-aged men of Mbanta came to marry her. But she refused them all, because her father had called her one evening and said to her: "There are many good and prosperous people here, but I shall be happy if you marry in Umuofia when we return home."

That was all he had said. But Ezinma had seen clearly all the thought and hidden meaning behind the few words. And she had agreed.

"Your half-sister, Obiageli, will not understand me," Okonkwo said. "But you can explain to her."

Although they were almost the same age, Ezinma wielded a strong influence over her half-sister. She explained to her why they should not marry yet, and she agreed also. And so the two of them refused every offer of marriage in Mbanta.

"I wish she were a boy," Okonkwo thought within himself. She understood things so perfectly. Who else among his children

walivyodumu, hangeweza kuzaa mtu mwingine ila baba yake.

Vijana wengi na wanaume waliofanikiwa wa makamo wa Mbanta walikuja kumwoa. Lakini alikataa zote, kwa sababu baba yake alimuita jioni moja na kumwambia: "Kuna watu wengi wema na wenye ustawi hapa, lakini nitafurahi ikiwa utaolewa huko Umuofia tutakaporudi nyumbani."

Hiyo ndiyo yote aliyosema. Lakini Ezinma alikuwa ameona wazi mawazo yote na maana iliyofichwa nyuma ya maneno machache. Na alikuwa amekubali.

"Dada yako wa kambo, Obiageli, hatanielewa," Okonkwo alisema. "Lakini unaweza kuelezea kwake."

Ingawa walikuwa karibu umri sawa, Ezinma alikuwa na ushawishi mkubwa juu ya dada yake wa kambo. Alimweleza kwa nini hawakupaswa kuoana bado, naye akakubali pia. Na kwa hivyo wawili hao walikataa kila ofa ya ndoa huko Mbanta.

"Laiti angekuwa mvulana," Okonkwo aliwaza moyoni mwake. Alielewa mambo kikamilifu. Ni nani mwingine kati ya watoto

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could have read his thoughts so well? With two beautiful grown-up daughters his return to Umuofia would attract considerable attention. His future sons-in-law would be men of authority in the clan. The poor and unknown would not dare to come forth.

Umuofia had indeed changed during the seven years Okonkwo had been in exile. The church had come and led many astray. Not only the low-born and the outcast but sometimes a worthy man had joined it. Such a man was Ogbuefi Ugonna, who had taken two titles, and who like a madman had cut the anklet of his titles and cast it away to join the Christians. The white missionary was very proud of him and he was one of the first men in Umuofia to receive the sacrament of Holy Communion, or Holy Feast as it was called in Ibo. Ogbuefi Ugonna had thought of the Feast in terms of eating and drinking, only more holy than the village variety. He had therefore put his drinking-horn into his goatskin bag for the occasion.

wake angeweza kusoma mawazo yake vizuri hivyo? Akiwa na mabinti wawili warembo waliokomaa kurudi kwake Umuofia kungevutia sana. Wakwe wake wa baadaye wangukuwa watu wenye mamlaka katika ukoo huo. Maskini na wasiojulikana wasingethubutu kuja.

Umuofia kweli alikuwa amebadilika wakati wa miaka saba Okonkwo alikuwa uhamishoni. Kanisa lilikuwa limekuja na kuwapoteza wengi. Sio tu watu wa chini na waliotengwa lakini wakati mwingine mtu anayestahili alikuwa amejiunga nayo. Mtu kama huyo alikuwa Ogbuefi Ugonna, ambaye alikuwa ametwaa vyeo viwili, na ambaye kama mwendawazimu alikata goti la vyeo vyake na kukitupa ili kujiunga na Wakristo. Mmisionari yule mweupe alijivunia sana naye na alikuwa mmoja wa watu wa kwanza katika Umuofia kupokea sakramenti ya Ushirika Mtakatifu, au Sikukuu Takatifu kama ilivyoitwa huko Ibo. Ogbuefi Ugonna alikuwa amefikiria kuhusu Sikukuu katika suala la kula na kunywa, takatifu zaidi kuliko aina za kijiji. Kwa hiyo alikuwa ameweka pembe yake ya

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kunywea katika mfuko wake wa ngozi ya mbuzi kwa ajili ya tukio hilo.

But apart from the church, the white men had also brought a government. They had built a court where the District Commissioner judged cases in ignorance. He had court messengers who brought men to him for trial.

Many of these messengers came from Umuru on the bank of the Great River, where the white men first came many years before and where they had built the centre of their religion and trade and government.

These court messengers were greatly hated in Umuofia because they were foreigners and also arrogant and high-handed. They were called kotma, and because of their ash-coloured shorts they earned the additional name of Ashy Buttocks. They guarded the prison, which was full of men who had offended against the white man's law. Some of these prisoners had thrown away their twins and some had molested the Christians. They were beaten in the prison by the kotma and made

Lakini mbali na kanisa, wazungu hao pia walikuwa wameleta serikali. Walikuwa wamejenga mahakama ambapo Mkuu wa Wilaya alihukumu kesi kwa kutojua. Alikuwa na wajumbe wa mahakama ambao walileta watu kwake kwa ajili ya kesi.

Wengi wa wajumbe hawa walitoka Umuru kwenye ukingo wa Mto Mkuu, ambapo wazungu walikuja kwa mara ya kwanza miaka mingi kabla na ambapo walikuwa wamejenga kitovu cha dini yao na biashara na serikali.

Wajumbe hawa wa mahakama walichukiwa sana huko Umuofia kwa sababu walikuwa wageni na pia ni wajeuri na wenye msimamo wa hali ya juu. Waliitwa kotma, na kwa sababu ya kaptura zao za rangi ya majivu walipata jina la ziada la Ashy Buttocks. Walilinda gereza lililojaa watu walioivunja sheria ya wazungu. Baadhi ya wafungwa hawa walikuwa wamewatupa mapacha wao na wengine waliwanyanya Wakristo. Walipigwa gerezani na kotma na kufanya kazi kila

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to work every morning clearing the government compound and fetching wood for the white Commissioner and the court messengers. Some of these prisoners were men of title who should be above such mean occupation.

They were grieved by the indignity and mourned for their neglected farms. As they cut grass in the morning the younger men sang in time with the strokes of their machetes: "Kotma of the ashy buttocks, He is fit to be a slave. The white man has no sense, He is fit to be a slave."

The court messengers did not like to be called Ashy-Buttocks, and they beat the men. But the song spread in Umuofia.

Okonkwo's head was bowed in sadness as Obierika told him these things.

"Perhaps I have been away too long," Okonkwo said, almost to himself. "But I cannot understand these things you tell me. What is it that has happened to our people? Why have they lost the power to fight?"

asubuhi kusafisha kiwanja cha serikali na kuchota kuni kwa Kamishna wa Kizungu na wajumbe wa mahakama. Baadhi ya wafungwa hao walikuwa watu wenye vyeo ambao walipaswa kuwa juu ya kazi hiyo mbaya. Walihuzunishwa na unyonge na kuomboleza kwa ajili ya mashamba yao yaliyotelekezwa. Walipokuwa wakikata nyasi asubuhi wale vijana waliimba kwa wakati kwa mapigo ya mapanga yao: "Kotma ya matako ashy, Anafaa kuwa mtumwa. Mzungu hana akili, Anafaa kuwa mtumwa."

Wajumbe wa mahakama hawakupenda kuitwa Ashy-Buttocks, na waliwapiga wanaume. Lakini wimbo huo ulienea Umuofia. Kichwa cha Okonkwo kiliinama kwa huzuni huku Obierika akimwambia mambo haya.

"Labda nimeondoka kwa muda mrefu sana," Okonkwo alisema, karibu na nafsi yake. "Lakini sielewi mambo haya unayoniambia. Ni nini kimetokea kwa watu wetu? Kwa nini wamepoteza nguvu za kupigana?"

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"Have you not heard how the white man wiped out Abame?" asked Obierika. "I have heard," said Okonkwo. "But I have also heard that Abame people were weak and foolish. Why did they not fight back? Had they no guns and machetes? We would be cowards to compare ourselves with the men of Abame. Their fathers had never dared to stand before our ancestors. We must fight these men and drive them from the land."

"It is already too late," said Obierika sadly. "Our own men and our sons have joined the ranks of the stranger. They have joined his religion and they help to uphold his government. If we should try to drive out the white men in Umuofia we should find it easy. There are only two of them. But what of our own people who are following their way and have been given power? They would go to Umuru and bring the soldiers, and we would be like Abame." He paused for a long time and then said: "I told you on my last visit to Mbanta how they hanged Aneto."

"Hujasikia jinsi mzungu alivyomfuta Abame?" aliuliza Obierika. "Nimesikia," Okonkwo alisema. "Lakini pia nimesikia kwamba watu wa Abame walikuwa dhaifu na wapumbavu. Kwa nini hawakupigana? Wangekuwa hawana bunduki na mapanga? Tungekuwa waoga kujilinganisha na watu wa Abame. Baba zao hawakuthubutu kamwe kusimama mbele yetu. Ni lazima tupigane na watu hawa na kuwafukuza kutoka katika nchi hii."

"Tayari tumechelewa," Obierika alisema kwa huzuni. "Watu wetu na wana wetu wameingia kwenye safu ya mgeni. Wamejiunga na dini yake na wanasaidia kuisimamia serikali yake. Tukijaribu kuwafukuza wazungu huko Umuofia tuone ni rahisi. Wapo wawili tu. Lakini vipi kuhusu watu wetu ambao wanafuata njia yao na wamepewa mamlaka? Wangeenda Umuru na kuleta askari, na sisi tungekuwa kama Abame." Alinyamaza kwa muda mrefu kisha akasema: "Nilikuambia katika ziara yangu ya mwisho huko Mbanta jinsi walivyomnyonga Aneto."

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"What has happened to that piece of land in dispute?" asked Okonkwo.

"The white man's court has decided that it should belong to Nnama's family, who had given much money to the white man's messengers and interpreter."

"Does the white man understand our custom about land?"

"How can he when he does not even speak our tongue? But he says that our customs are bad, and our own brothers who have taken up his religion also say that our customs are bad. How do you think we can fight when our own brothers have turned against us? The white man is very clever. He came quietly and peaceably with his religion. We were amused at his foolishness and allowed him to stay. Now he has won our brothers, and our clan can no longer act like one. He has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart."

"How did they get hold of Ancto to hang him?" asked Okonkwo.

"When he killed Oduche in the fight over the land, he fled to Aninta to escape the wrath of the

"Ni nini kimetokea kwa kipande hicho cha ardhi chenye mgogoro?" aliuliza Okonkwo.

"Mahakama ya mzungu imeamua kuwa iwe ya familia ya Nnama, ambayo ilitoa pesa nyingi kwa wajumbe na mkalimani wa mzungu."

"Je, mzungu anaelewa desturi yetu kuhusu ardhi?"

"Inakuwaje wakati hata haongei ndimi zetu? Lakini anasema mila zetu ni mbaya, na ndugu zetu waliochukua dini yake nao wanasema kwamba mila zetu ni mbaya. Unafikiri tunawezaje kupigana wakati wa kwetu. ndugu wametugeuka?Mzungu ni mwerevu sana.Alikuja kimya kimya na kwa amani na dini yake.Tulifurahishwa na upumbavu wake tukamruhusu akae.Sasa amewashinda ndugu zetu, na ukoo wetu hauwezi tena kufanya kitu kimoja. . Ameweka kisu kwenye vitu vilivyotuunganisha na tumesambaratika."

"Walimpataje Ancto ili wamnyonga?" aliuliza Okonkwo.

"Alipomuua Oduche katika pambano la ardhi, alikimbilia Aninta ili kuepuka ghadhabu ya

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earth. This was about eight days after the fight, because Oduche had not died immediately from his wounds. It was on the seventh day that he died. But everybody knew that he was going to die and Aneto got his belongings together in readiness to flee. But the Christians had told the white man about the accident, and he sent his kotma to catch Aneto. He was imprisoned with all the leaders of his family. In the end Oduche died and Aneto was taken to Umuru and hanged. The other people were released, but even now they have not found the mouth with which to tell of their suffering."

The two men sat in silence for a long while afterwards.

dunia. Hii ilikuwa takriban siku nane baada ya mapigano, kwa sababu Oduche hakuwa amekufa mara moja kutokana na majeraha yake. Ilikuwa siku ya saba ambayo alikufa. Lakini kila mtu alijua kuwa atakufa na Aneto alikusanya vitu vyake tayari kukimbia. Lakini wakristo walikuwa wamemweleza mzungu juu ya ajali hiyo, akatuma kotma yake kumkamata Aneto. Akafungwa jela zote. viongozi wa familia yake. Mwishowe Oduche alikufa na Aneto alipelekwa Umuru na kunyongwa. Watu wengine waliachiliwa, lakini hata sasa hawajapata mdomo wa kusimulia mateso yao."

Wale watu wawili walikaa kimya kwa muda mrefu baadaye.

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