

SURA YA TISA

For the first time in three nights, Okonkwo slept. He woke up once in the middle of the night and his mind went back to the past three days without making him feel uneasy. He began to wonder why he had felt uneasy at all. It was like a man wondering in broad daylight why a dream had appeared so terrible to him at night. He stretched himself and scratched his thigh where a

Kwa mara ya kwanza baada ya siku tatu, Okonkwo alilala. Alizinduka mara moja usiku wa manane na akili yake ikarudi nyuma kwa siku tatu zilizopita bila kumfanya akose raha. Alianza kujiuliza kwanini amekosa amani hata kidogo. Ilikuwa ni kama mtu anayeshangaa mchana kweupe kwa nini ndoto imemtokea usiku sana. Alijinyoosha na kujikuna paja ambapo mbu alimng'ata

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mosquito had bitten him as he slept. Another one was wailing near his right ear. He slapped the ear and hoped he had killed it. Why do they always go for one's ears? When he was a child his mother had told him a story about it. But it was as silly as all women's stories. Mosquito, she had said, had asked Ear to marry him, whereupon Ear fell on the floor in uncontrollable laughter. "How much longer do you think you will live?" she asked. "You are already a skeleton." Mosquito went away humiliated, and any time he passed her way he told Ear that he was still alive.

Okonkwo turned on his side and went back to sleep. He was roused in the morning by someone banging on his door. "Who is that?" he growled. He knew it must be Ekwefi.

Of his three wives Ekwefi was the only one who would have the audacity to bang on his door. "Ezinma is dying," came her voice, and all the tragedy and sorrow of her life were packed in those words. Okonkwo sprang from his bed, pushed back the bolt on his door

alipokuwa amelala. Mwingine alikuwa akilia karibu na sikio lake la kulia. Alipiga sikio na kutumaini kuwa ameuwa. Kwa nini wao daima kwenda kwa masikio ya mtu? Alipokuwa mtoto mama yake alimwambia hadithi kuhusu hilo. Lakini ilikuwa ni ujinga kama hadithi zote za wanawake. Mbu, alisema, alimwomba Sikio amuo, ambapo Sikio lilianguka sakafuni kwa kicheko kisichoweza kudhibitiwa. "Unafikiri utaishi hadi lini?" Aliuliza. "Wewe tayari ni mifupa." Mbu alienda zake kwa unyonge, na wakati wowote alipopita njia yake alimwambia Sikio kuwa bado yuko hai.

Okonkwo akageuka upande wake na kurudi kulala. Aliamshwa asubuhi na mtu akigonga mlango wake. "Ni nani huyo?" alifoka. Alijua ni lazima Ekwefi.

Kati ya wake zake watatu Ekwefi ndiye pekee ambaye angekuwa na ujasiri wa kugonga mlango wake. "Ezinma anakufa," sauti yake ilisikika, na misiba na huzuni zote za maisha yake zilijaa maneno hayo. Okonkwo aliruka kutoka kitandani mwake, akarudisha boli kwenye

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and ran into Ekwefi's hut.

Ezinma lay shivering on a mat beside a huge fire that her mother had kept burning all night.

"It is iba," said Okonkwo as he took his machete and went into the bush to collect the leaves and grasses and barks of trees that went into making the medicine for iba.

Ekwefi knelt beside the sick child, occasionally feeling with her palm the wet, burning forehead.

Ezinma was an only child and the centre of her mother's world. Very often it was Ezinma who decided what food her mother should prepare. Ekwefi even gave her such delicacies as eggs, which children were rarely allowed to eat because such food tempted them to steal. One day as Ezinma was eating an egg Okonkwo had come in unexpectedly from his hut. He was greatly shocked and swore to beat Ekwefi if she dared to give the child eggs again. But it was impossible to refuse Ezinma anything. After her father's rebuke she developed an even keener appetite for eggs. And she enjoyed

mlango wake na kukimbilia kwenye kibanda cha Ekwefi. Ezinma alilala akitetemeka kwenye mkeka kando ya moto mkubwa ambao mama yake alikuwa akiendelea kuwaka usiku kucha.

"Ni iba," Okonkwo alisema huku akichukua panga lake na kuingia porini kukusanya majani na nyasi na magome ya miti ambayo yaliingia kutengeneza dawa ya iba.

Ekwefi alipiga magoti kando ya mtoto mgonjwa, mara kwa mara akihisi kwa kiganja chake paji la uso lililolowa na kuwaka. Ezinma alikuwa mtoto pekee na kitovu cha ulimwengu wa mama yake. Mara nyingi ilikuwa Ezinma ambaye aliamua chakula ambacho mama yake anapaswa kuandaa. Ekwefi hata alimpa vyakula vitamu kama mayai, ambavyo watoto hawakuruhusiwa kula kwa sababu vyakula hivyo viliwashawishi kuiba. Siku moja Ezinma alipokuwa akila yai Okonkwo aliingia bila kutarajia kutoka kwenye kibanda chake. Alishtuka sana na kuapa kumpiga Ekwefi ikiwa angethubutu kumpa mtoto mayai tena. Lakini haikuwezekana kukataa chochote katika Ezinma. Baada ya

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above all the secrecy in which she now ate them. Her mother always took her into their bedroom and shut the door.

Ezinma did not call her mother Nne like all children. She called her by her name, Ekwefi, as her father and other grownup people did. The relationship between them was not only that of mother and child. There was something in it like the companionship of equals, which was strengthened by such little conspiracies as eating eggs in the bedroom.

Ekwefi had suffered a good deal in her life. She had borne ten children and nine of them had died in infancy, usually before the age of three. As she buried one child after another her sorrow gave way to despair and then to grim resignation. The birth of her children, which should be a woman's crowning glory, became for Ekwefi mere physical agony devoid of promise. The naming ceremony after seven market weeks became an empty ritual. Her deepening despair found expression in the names she gave

kukemewa na babake alianza kuwa na hamu kubwa ya kula mayai. Na alifurahia juu ya usiri wote ambao sasa alikula nao. Mama yake kila mara alimpeleka chumbani kwao na kufunga mlango.

Ezinma hakumwita mama yake Nne kama watoto wote. Alimwita kwa jina lake, Ekwefi, kama babake na watu wengine wazima walivyofanya. Uhusiano kati yao haukuwa wa mama na mtoto tu. Kulikuwa na kitu ndani yake kama ushirika wa watu sawa, ambao uliimarishwa na njama ndogo kama vile kula mayai kwenye chumba cha kulala.

Ekwefi alikuwa ameteseka sana maishani mwake. Alikuwa amezaa watoto kumi na tisa kati yao walikufa wakiwa wachanga, kwa kawaida kabla ya umri wa miaka mitatu. Alipozika mtoto mmoja baada ya mwingine huzuni yake ilibadilika na kukata tamaa na kujiuzulu. Kuzaliwa kwake watoto, ambao unapaswa kuwa taji la utukufu wa mwanamke, wakawa kwa Ekwefi maumivu ya kimwili tu yasiyo na ahadi. Sherehe ya kumtaja baada ya wiki saba za soko ikawa tambiko tupu. Kukata tamaa kwake kulizidi

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her children. One of them was a pathetic cry, Onwumbiko-- "Death, I implore you." But Death took no notice,- Onwumbiko died in his fifteenth month. The next child was a girl, Ozoemena-- "May it not happen again." She died in her eleventh month, and two others after her. Ekwefi then became defiant and called her next child Onwuma-- "Death may please himself." And he did.

After the death of Ekwefi's second child, Okonkwo had gone to a medicine man, who was also a diviner of the Afa Oracle, to enquire what was amiss. This man told him that the child was an ogbanje, one of those wicked children who, when they died, entered their mothers' wombs to be born again.

"When your wife becomes pregnant again," he said, "let her not sleep in her hut. Let her go and stay with her people. In that way she will elude her wicked tormentor and break its evil cycle of birth and death."

kuonyeshwa katika majina aliyowapa watoto wake. Mmoja wao alikuwa kilio cha kusikitisha, Onwumbiko-- "Kifo, nakuomba." Lakini Kifo hakikutambua,- Onwumbiko alikufa katika mwezi wake wa kumi na tano. Mtoto aliyefuata alikuwa msichana, Ozoemena-- "Isitokee tena." Alikufa katika mwezi wake wa kumi na moja, na wengine wawili baada yake. Ekwefi alikaidi na kumwita mtoto wake wa pili Onwuma-- "Kifo kinaweza kumpendeza mwenyewe." Na alifanya hivyo. Baada ya kifo cha mtoto wa pili wa Ekwefi, Okonkwo alikuwa ameenda kwa mganga, ambaye pia alikuwa mganga wa Afa Oracle, ili kuuliza ni nini kilikuwa kibaya. Mtu huyu alimwambia kwamba mtoto huyo alikuwa ogbanje, mmoja wa wale watoto waovu ambao, walipokufa, waliingia matumbo ya mama zao ili kuzaliwa tena. "Mkeo atakaposhika mimba tena," alisema, "usilale ndani ya kibanda chake. Mwache aende akae na watu wake. Kwa njia hiyo atamkwepa mtesaji wake mwovu na kuvunja mzunguko wake mbaya wa kuzaliwa na kufa."

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Ekwefi did as she was asked. As soon as she became pregnant she went to live with her old mother in another village. It was there that her third child was born and circumcised on the eighth day.

She did not return to Okonkwo's compound until three days before the naming ceremony. The child was called Onwumbiko.

Onwumbiko was not given proper burial when he died. Okonkwo had called in another medicine man who was famous in the clan for his great knowledge about ogbanje children. His name was Okagbue Uyanwa. Okagbue was a very striking figure, tall, with a full beard and a bald head. He was light in complexion and his eyes were red and fiery. He always gnashed his teeth as he listened to those who came to consult him. He asked Okonkwo a few questions about the dead child. All the neighbours and relations who had come to mourn gathered round them.

"On what market-day was it born?" he asked. "Oye," replied

Ekwefi alifanya kama alivyoulizwa. Mara tu alipopata ujauzito alienda kuishi na mama yake mzee katika kijiji kingine. Hapo ndipo mtoto wake wa tatu alizaliwa na kutahiriwa siku ya nane.

Hakurejea katika boma la Okonkwo hadi siku tatu kabla ya sherehe ya kumtaja. Mtoto huyo alitwa Onwumbiko.

Onwumbiko hakuzikwa ipasavyo alipofariki. Okonkwo alikuwa amempigia simu mganga mwingine ambaye alikuwa maarufu katika ukoo huo kwa ujuzi wake mkubwa kuhusu watoto wa ogbanje. Jina lake lilikuwa Okagbue Uyanwa. Okagbue alikuwa na umbo la kuvutia sana, mrefu, mwenye ndevu nyingi na kichwa chenye upara. Alikuwa mwepesi wa ngozi na macho yake yalikuwa mekundu na ya moto. Kila mara alikenua meno huku akiwasikiliza wale waliokuja kumshauri. Alimuuliza Okonkwo maswali machache kuhusu mtoto aliyekufa. Majirani na jamaa wote waliokuja kuomboleza wakakusanyika karibu nao.

"Siku gani ya soko ilizaliwa?" Aliuliza. "Oye," alijibu Okonkwo.

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Okonkwo.

"And it died this morning?"

Okonkwo said yes, and only then realised for the first time that the child had died on the same market-day as it had been born. The neighbours and relations also saw the coincidence and said among themselves that it was very significant.

"Where do you sleep with your wife, in your obi or in her own hut?" asked the medicine man.

"In her hut."

"In future call her into your obi."

The medicine man then ordered that there should be no mourning for the dead child. He brought out a sharp razor from the goatskin bag slung from his left shoulder and began to mutilate the child. Then he took it away to bury in the Evil Forest, holding it by the ankle and dragging it on the ground behind him. After such treatment it would think twice before coming again, unless it was one of the stubborn ones who returned, carrying the stamp of their mutilation--a missing finger or perhaps a dark line where the medicine man's razor had cut them.

"Na alikufa asubuhi ya leo?"

Okonkwo alisema ndiyo, na ndipo alipogundua kwa mara ya kwanza kwamba mtoto alikufa siku ile ile ya soko aliyozaliwa. Majirani na uhusiano pia waliona bahati mbaya na wakasema kati yao kuwa ni muhimu sana.

"Unalala wapi na mkeo, kwenye obi yako au kwenye kibanda chake?" aliuliza mganga.

"Katika kibanda chake."

"Katika siku zijazo mwite kwenye obi yako."

Kisha mganga akaamuru kwamba kusiwe na maombolezo kwa ajili ya mtoto aliyekufa. Akatoa wembe mkali kutoka kwenye mfuko wa ngozi ya mbuzi uliotundikwa kwenye bega lake la kushoto na kuanza kumkatakata mtoto. Kisha akaichukua kwenda kuizika kwenye Msitu Mwovu, akiishikilia kwa kifundo cha mguu na kuiburuta chini nyuma yake.

Baada ya matibabu hayo ingefikiri mara mbili kabla ya kuja tena, isipokuwa ni mmoja wa wale wenye ukaidi ambao walirudi, wakiwa wamebeba mhuri wa kukatwa kwao - kidole kilichopotea au labda mstari wa giza ambapo wembe wa mganga

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ulikuwa umewakata.

By the time Onwumbiko died Ekwefi had become a very bitter woman. Her husband's first wife had already had three sons, all strong and healthy. When she had borne her third son in succession, Okonkwo had slaughtered a goat for her, as was the custom. Ekwefi had nothing but good wishes for her. But she had grown so bitter about her own chi that she could not rejoice with others over their good fortune. And so, on the day that Nwoye's mother celebrated the birth of her three sons with feasting and music, Ekwefi was the only person in the happy company who went about with a cloud on her brow. Her husband's wife took this for malevolence, as husbands' wives were wont to. How could she know that Ekwefi's bitterness did not flow outwards to others but inwards into her own soul,- that she did not blame others for their good fortune but her own evil chi who denied her any?

Wakati Onwumbiko anakufa Ekwefi alikuwa amekuwa mwanamke mwenye uchungu sana. Mke wa kwanza wa mumewe tayari alikuwa na wana watatu, wote wenye nguvu na afya njema. Alipozaa mwanawe wa tatu mfululizo, Okonkwo alikuwa amemchinjia mbuzi, kama ilivyokuwa desturi. Ekwefi hakuwa na lolote ila kumtakia heri. Lakini alikuwa na uchungu sana juu ya chi yake mwenyewe kwamba hakuweza kufurahi na wengine juu ya bahati yao nzuri. Na kwa hivyo, siku ambayo mama Nwoye alisherehekea kuzaliwa kwa wanawe watatu kwa karamu na muziki, Ekwefi alikuwa mtu pekee katika kampuni hiyo ya furaha ambaye alienda huku na huko na wingu kwenye paji la uso wake. Mke wa mume wake alilichukulia jambo hili kuwa ni dhuluma, kama wake za waume walivyozea. Angewezaje kujua kwamba uchungu wa Ekwefi haukutoka nje kwa wengine bali ndani ndani ya nafsi yake mwenyewe,- kwamba hakuwalaumu wengine kwa bahati yao nzuri bali chi yake mbaya iliyomnyima chochote?

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At last Ezinma was born, and although ailing she seemed determined to live. At first Ekwefi accepted her, as she had accepted others--with listless resignation. But when she lived on to her fourth, fifth and sixth years, love returned once more to her mother, and, with love, anxiety. She determined to nurse her child to health, and she put all her being into it. She was rewarded by occasional spells of health during which Ezinma bubbled with energy like fresh palm-wine. At such times she seemed beyond danger. But all of a sudden she would go down again. Everybody knew she was an ogbanje. These sudden bouts of sickness and health were typical of her kind. But she had lived so long that perhaps she had decided to stay. Some of them did become tired of their evil rounds of birth and death, or took pity on their mothers, and stayed. Ekwefi believed deep inside her that Ezinma had come to stay. She believed because it was that faith alone that gave her own life any kind of meaning. And this faith had been strengthened when a year or so ago a medicine man had dug up Ezinma's iyi-uwa. Everyone

Hatimaye Ezinma alizaliwa, na ingawa alikuwa mgonjwa alionekana kuazimia kuishi. Mwanzoni Ekwefi alimkubali, kama alivyowakubali wengine--na kujiuzulu bila sababu. Lakini alipoishi hadi miaka yake ya nne, tano na sita, upendo ulirudi tena kwa mama yake, na, kwa upendo, wasiwasi. Aliazimia kumnyonyesha mtoto wake ili apate afya njema, na aliweka maisha yake yote ndani yake. Alithawabishwa na vipindi vya afya vya mara kwa mara ambapo Ezinma ilibubujika kwa nguvu kama vile divai mpya ya mawese. Kwa nyakati kama hizo alionekana zaidi ya hatari. Lakini ghafla angeshuka tena. Kila mtu alijua kuwa yeye ni mbabe. Hali hizi za ghafla za ugonjwa na afya zilikuwa za aina yake. Lakini alikuwa ameishi muda mrefu sana hivi kwamba labda aliamua kubaki. Baadhi yao walichoshwa na duru zao mbaya za kuzaliwa na kufa, au wakawahurumia mama zao, na wakabaki. Ekwefi aliamini ndani kabisa kwamba Ezinma amekuja kukaa. Aliamini kwa sababu ni imani hiyo pekee iliyoyapa maisha yake maana yoyote. Na imani hii ilikuwa imeimarishwa wakati mwaka

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knew then that she would live because her bond with the world of ogbanje had been broken. Ekwefi was reassured. But such was her anxiety for her daughter that she could not rid herself completely of her fear. And although she believed that the iyi-uwa which had been dug up was genuine, she could not ignore the fact that some really evil children sometimes misled people into digging up a specious one.

But Ezinma's iyi-uwa had looked real enough. It was a smooth pebble wrapped in a dirty rag. The man who dug it up was the same Okagbue who was famous in all the clan for his knowledge in these matters. Ezinma had not wanted to cooperate with him at first. But that was only to be expected. No ogbanje would yield her secrets easily, and most of them never did because they died too young - before they could be asked questions.

"Where did you bury your iyi-uwa?" Okagbue had asked

mmoja au zaidi uliopita mganga mmoja alipochimba iyi-uwa ya Ezinma. Kila mtu alijua kwamba angeishi kwa sababu uhusiano wake na ulimwengu wa ogbanje ulikuwa umevunjika. Ekwefi alitulizwa. Lakini vile alikuwa na wasiwasi juu ya binti yake kwamba hakuweza kuondoa mwenyewe kabisa hofu yake. Na ingawa aliamini kwamba iyi-uwa ambayo ilikuwa imechimbwa ilikuwa ya kweli, hakuweza kupuuza ukweli kwamba baadhi ya watoto waovu kweli wakati fulani waliwapotosha watu kuchimba moja ya pekee.

Lakini iyi-uwa ya Ezinma ilikuwa inaonekana ya kutosha. Ilikuwa ni kokoto laini iliyofunikwa kwa kitambaa chafu. Mtu aliyeichimba ni Okagbue yuleyule ambaye alikuwa maarufu katika ukoo wote kwa ujuzi wake katika mambo haya. Ezinma hakutaka kushirikiana naye mwanzoni. Lakini hilo lilitarajiwa tu. Hakuna ogbanje ambaye angetoa siri zake kwa urahisi, na wengi wao hawakufanya hivyo kwa sababu walikufa wakiwa wadogo sana - kabla ya kuulizwa maswali. "Ulizikia wapi iyi-uwa yako?" Okagbue alikuwa amemuuliza

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Ezinma. She was nine then and was just recovering from a serious illness.

"What is iyi-uwa?" she asked in return.

"You know what it is. You buried it in the ground somewhere so that you can die and return again to torment your mother."

Ezinma looked at her mother, whose eyes, sad and pleading, were fixed on her. "Answer the question at once," roared Okonkwo, who stood beside her. All the family were there and some of the neighbours too.

"Leave her to me," the medicine man told Okonkwo in a cool, confident voice. He turned again to Ezinma. "Where did you bury your iyi-uwa?"

"Where they bury children," she replied, and the quiet spectators murmured to themselves.

"Come along then and show me the spot," said the medicine man. The crowd set out with Ezinma leading the way and Okagbue following closely behind her. Okonkwo came next and Ekwefi followed him. When she came to the main road, Ezinma turned left as if she was going to the stream.

Ezinma. Alikuwa na umri wa miaka tisa wakati huo na alikuwa tu akipata nafuu kutokana na ugonjwa mbaya.

"Iyi-uwa ni nini?" Aliuliza kwa malipo.

"Unajua ni nini. Ulizika ardhini mahali fulani ili ufe na urudi tena kumtesa mama yako."

Ezinma alimtazama mama yake, ambaye macho yake, ya huzuni na ya kusihi, yalikuwa yakimtazama. "Jibu swali mara moja," Okonkwo alinguruma, aliyesimama kando yake. Familia yote ilikuwepo na baadhi ya majirani pia.

"Niachie mimi," yule mganga alimwambia Okonkwo kwa sauti tulivu ya kujiamini. Akamgeukia tena Ezinma. "Ulizikia wapi iyi-uwa yako?"

"Wanawazika watoto wapi," alijibu, na watazamaji wa utulivu walinung'unika wenyewe.

"Njoo basi unionyeshe mahali," alisema mganga.

Umati ulianza huku Ezinma akitangulia na Okagbue akimfuata kwa karibu. Okonkwo akafuata na Ekwefi akamfuata. Alipofika kwenye barabara kuu, Ezinma aligeuka kushoto kana kwamba anaenda kwenye mkondo.

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"But you said it was where they bury children?" asked the medicine man. "No," said Ezinma, whose feeling of importance was manifest in her sprightly walk. She sometimes broke into a run and stopped again suddenly. The crowd followed her silently. Women and children returning from the stream with pots of water on their heads wondered what was happening until they saw Okagbue and guessed that it must be something to do with ogbanje. And they all knew Ekwefi and her daughter very well.

When she got to the big udala tree Ezinma turned left into the bush, and the crowd followed her. Because of her size she made her way through trees and creepers more quickly than her followers. The bush was alive with the tread of feet on dry leaves and sticks and the moving aside of tree branches. Ezinma went deeper and deeper and the crowd went with her. Then she suddenly turned round and began to walk back to the road. Everybody stood to let her pass and then filed after her.

"Lakini ulisema ni wapi wanazika watoto?" aliuliza mganga.

"Hapana," alisema Ezinma, ambaye hisia yake ya umuhimu ilikuwa wazi katika kutembea kwake kwa ustadi. Wakati fulani alikimbia na kusimama tena ghafla. Umati ulimfuata kimyakimya. Wanawake na watoto waliokuwa wakirudi kutoka kwenye kijito hicho wakiwa na vyungu vya maji vichwani mwao walishangaa ni nini kilikuwa kikitendeka hadi walipomwona Okagbue na kukisia kwamba lazima ni jambo la kufanya na ogbanje. Na wote walikuwa wakimfahamu sana Ekwefi na bintiye.

Alipofika kwenye mti mkubwa wa udala Ezinma alikunja kushoto kwenye kichaka, na umati ukamfuata. Kwa sababu ya saizi yake, alipitia miti na wadudu kwa haraka zaidi kuliko wafuasi wake. Kichaka kilikuwa hai kwa kukanyaga kwa miguu kwenye majani makavu na vijiti na kusonga kando kwa matawi ya miti. Ezinma alienda zaidi na zaidi na umati ukaenda pamoja naye. Kisha ghafla akageuka na kuanza kutembea kurudi barabarani. Kila mtu alisimama kumruhusu kupita na kisha kumfuata.

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"If you bring us all this way for nothing I shall beat sense into you," Okonkwo threatened.

"I have told you to let her alone. I know how to deal with them," said Okagbue.

Ezinma led the way back to the road, looked left and right and turned right. And so they arrived home again.

"Where did you bury your iyi-uwa?" asked Okagbue when Ezinma finally stopped outside her father's obi. Okagbue's voice was unchanged. It was quiet and confident.

"It is near that orange tree," Ezinma said.

"And why did you not say so, you wicked daughter of Akalogoli?" Okonkwo swore furiously. The medicine man ignored him.

"Come and show me the exact spot," he said quietly to Ezinma.

"It is here," she said when they got to the tree.

"Point at the spot with your finger," said Okagbue.

"It is here," said Ezinma touching the ground with her finger.

Okonkwo stood by, rumbling like thunder in the rainy season.

"Bring me a hoe," said Okagbue.

"Tkiwa utatuletea njia hii bila malipo, nitakupa akili," Okonkwo alitishia.

"Nimekuambia umuache. Ninajua jinsi ya kukabiliana nao," Okagbue alisema.

Ezinma aliongoza njia ya kurudi barabarani, akatazama kushoto na kulia na akageuka kulia. Na kwa hivyo walifika nyumbani tena.

"Ulizikia wapi iyi-uwa yako?" aliuliza Okagbue wakati Ezinma hatimaye alisimama nje ya obi ya baba yake. Sauti ya Okagbue ilikuwa haijabadilika. Ilikuwa kimya na kujiamini.

"Tko karibu na ule mti wa michungwa," Ezinma alisema.

"Na kwanini hukusema hivyo, wewe binti mbaya wa Akalogoli?" Okonkwo aliapa kwa hasira. Mganga akampuuza.

"Njoo unionyeshe mahali kamili," alimwambia Ezinma kimya kimya.

"Ni hapa," alisema walipofika kwenye mti.

"Elekeza mahali hapo kwa kidole chako," Okagbue alisema.

"Ni hapa," Ezinma alisema akigusa ardhi kwa kidole chake. Okonkwo alisimama kando, akinguruma kama ngurumo katika msimu wa mvua.

"Niletee jembe," Okagbue

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'When Ekwefi brought the hoe, he had already put aside his goatskin bag and his big cloth and was in his underwear, a long and thin strip of cloth wound round the waist like a belt and then passed between the legs to be fastened to the belt behind. He immediately set to work digging a pit where Ezinma had indicated. The neighbours sat around watching the pit becoming deeper and deeper. The dark top soil soon gave way to the bright red earth with which women scrubbed the floors and walls of huts. Okagbue worked tirelessly and in silence, his back shining with perspiration. Okonkwo stood by the pit. He asked Okagbue to come up and rest while he took a hand. But Okagbue said he was not tired yet.

Ekwefi went into her hut to cook yams. Her husband had brought out more yams than usual because the medicine man had to be fed. Ezinma went with her and helped in preparing the vegetables. "There is too much green vegetable," she said.

alisema.

'Ekwefi alipoleta jembe, tayari alikuwa ameweka kando begi lake la mbuzi na kitambaa chake kikubwa na akiwa amevalia nguo yake ya ndani, kitambaa kirefu na chembamba kikiwa kimejifunga kiunoni kama mkanda na kisha kupita katikati ya miguu ili kufungwa. ukanda nyuma. Mara moja alianza kazi ya kuchimba shimo ambalo Ezinma alikuwa ameonyesha. Majirani walikaa pembeni wakitazama shimo lile likizidi kuwa chini zaidi. Udongo wa juu wa giza hivi karibuni uliacha ardhi nyekundu yenye kung'aa ambayo wanawake walisugua sakafu na kuta za vibanda. Okagbue alifanya kazi bila kuchoka na kimya, mgongo wake ukiangaza kwa jasho. Okonkwo alisimama kando ya shimo. Alimwomba Okagbue aje juu na kupumzika huku akishika mkono. Lakini Okagbue alisema bado hajachoka. Ekwefi aliingia ndani ya kibanda chake kupika viazi vikuu. Mumewe alikuwa ametoa viazi vikuu vingi kuliko kawaida kwa sababu mganga alipaswa kulishwa. Ezinma akaenda naye na kusaidia katika kuandaa mboga. "Kuna mboga nyingi za kijani,"

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"Don't you see the pot is full of yams?" Ekwefi asked. "And you know how leaves become smaller after cooking."

"Yes," said Ezinma, "that was why the snake-lizard killed his mother." "Very true," said Ekwefi.

"He gave his mother seven baskets of vegetables to cook and in the end there were only three. And so he killed her," said Ezinma.

"That is not the end of the story."

"Oho," said Ezinma. "I remember now. He brought another seven baskets and cooked them himself. And there were again only three. So he killed himself too."

Outside the obi Okagbue and Okonkwo were digging the pit to find where Ezinma had buried her iyi-uwa. Neighbours sat around, watching. The pit was now so deep that they no longer saw the digger. They only saw the red earth he threw up mounting higher and higher. Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, stood near the edge of the pit because he wanted to take in all that happened.

alisema.

"Huoni chungu kimejaa viazi vikuu?" Ekwefi aliuliza. "Na unajua jinsi majani yanakuwa madogo baada ya kupika."

"Ndiyo," Ezinma alisema, "ndio maana mjusi-nyoka alimuua mama yake." "Kweli sana," alisema Ekwefi.

"Alimpa mama yake vikapu saba vya mboga kupika na mwisho vilikuwa vitatu tu. Na hivyo akamuua," alisema Ezinma.

"Huo sio mwisho wa hadithi."

"Ah," Ezinma alisema.

"Nakumbuka sasa. Akaleta vikapu vingine saba akavipika mwenyewe. Na vilikuwa vitatu tu. Kwa hiyo akajiua pia."

Nje ya obi Okagbue na Okonkwo walikuwa wakichimba shimo kutafuta mahali Ezinma alikuwa amemzika iyi-uwa yake. Majirani walikaa karibu, wakitazama. Shimo sasa lilikuwa refu sana hata hawakumwona tena mchimbaji. Waliona tu ardhi nyekundu aliyoirusha ikipanda juu na juu zaidi. Mwana wa Okonkwo, Nwoye, alisimama karibu na ukingo wa shimo hilo kwa sababu alitaka kufahamu yote yaliyotokea.

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Okagbue had again taken over the digging from Okonkwo. He worked, as usual, in silence. The neighbours and Okonkwo's wives were now talking. The children had lost interest and were playing.

Suddenly Okagbue sprang to the surface with the agility of a leopard. "It is very near now," he said. "I have felt it."

There was immediate excitement and those who were sitting jumped to their feet. "Call your wife and child," he said to Okonkwo. But Ekwefi and Ezinma had heard the noise and run out to see what it was.

Okagbue went back into the pit, which was now surrounded by spectators. After a few more hefts of earth he struck the iyi-uwa. He raised it carefully with the hoe and threw it to the surface. Some women ran away in fear when it was thrown. But they soon returned and everyone was gazing at the rag from a reasonable distance. Okagbue emerged and without saying a word or even looking at the spectators he went to his goatskin bag, took out two leaves and began to chew them.

Okagbue alikuwa amechukua tena kazi ya kuchimba kutoka kwa Okonkwo. Alifanya kazi, kama kawaida, kwa ukimya. Majirani na wake za Okonkwo walikuwa wanazungumza sasa. Watoto walikuwa wamepoteza hamu na walikuwa wakicheza.

Ghafla Okagbue aliruka juu kwa uso kwa wepesi wa chui. "Ni karibu sana sasa," alisema. "Nimehisi."

Kulikuwa na msisimko wa mara moja na wale waliokuwa wameketi waliruka kwa miguu yao. "Mpigie simu mkeo na mtoto," alimwambia Okonkwo. Lakini Ekwefi na Ezinma walikuwa wamesikia kelele na kukimbia nje kuangalia ni nini. Okagbue alirudi ndani ya shimo, ambalo sasa lilikuwa limezingirwa na watazamaji. Baada ya majembe machache zaidi ya ardhi alipiga iyi-uwa. Aliinua kwa uangalifu kwa jembe na kuirusha juu juu. Baadhi ya wanawake walikimbia kwa hofu ilipotupwa. Lakini hivi karibuni walirudi na kila mtu alikuwa akitazama kitambaa kutoka kwa umbali mzuri. Okagbue aliibuka na bila kusema neno wala hata kuwatazama watazamaji alienda kwenye begi lake la ngozi ya mbuzi, akatoa

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When he had swallowed them, he took up the rag with his left hand and began to untie it. And then the smooth, shiny pebble fell out. He picked it up.

"Is this yours?" he asked Ezinma. "Yes," she replied. All the women shouted with joy because Ekwefi's troubles were at last ended.

All this had happened more than a year ago and Ezinma had not been ill since. And then suddenly she had begun to shiver in the night. Ekwefi brought her to the fireplace, spread her mat on the floor and built a fire. But she had got worse and worse. As she knelt by her, feeling with her palm the wet, burning forehead, she prayed a thousand times. Although her husband's wives were saying that it was nothing more than iba, she did not hear them.

Okonkwo returned from the bush carrying on his left shoulder a large bundle of grasses and leaves, roots and barks of medicinal trees and shrubs. He went into Ekwefi's hut, put down his load and sat down.

majani mawili na kuanza kuyatafuna. Alipozimeza, akachukua kitambaa kwa mkono wake wa kushoto na kuanza kukifungua. Na kisha kokoto laini, inayong'aa ikaanguka nje. Akaiokota.

"Hii ni yako?" Aliuliza Ezinma. "Ndiyo," alijibu. Wanawake wote walipiga kelele za furaha kwa sababu matatizo ya Ekwefi yalikuwa mwishowe.

Haya yote yalitokea zaidi ya mwaka mmoja uliopita na Ezinma hakuwa mgonjwa tangu wakati huo. Na kisha ghafla alikuwa ameanza kutetemeka usiku. Ekwefi alimleta mahali pa moto, akatandaza mkeka wake sakafuni na kuwasha moto. Lakini alizidi kuwa mbaya na mbaya zaidi. Alipopiga magoti kando yake, akihisi kwa kiganja chake paji la uso lililolowa na kuungua, alisali mara elfu. Ingawa wake za mumewe walikuwa wakisema kuwa haikuwa kitu zaidi ya iba, yeye hakuwasikia.

Okonkwo alirudi kutoka msituni akiwa amebeba kwenye bega lake la kushoto rundo kubwa la nyasi na majani, mizizi na magome ya miti ya dawa na vichaka. Aliingia kwenye kibanda cha Ekwefi, akaweka mzigo wake na kuketi.

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"Get me a pot," he said, "and leave the child alone."

Ekwefi went to bring the pot and Okonkwo selected the best from his bundle, in their due proportions, and cut them up. He put them in the pot and Ekwefi poured in some water.

"Is that enough?" she asked when she had poured in about half of the water in the bowl.

"A little more... I said a little. Are you deaf?" Okonkwo roared at her.

She set the pot on the fire and Okonkwo took up his machete to return to his obi. "You must watch the pot carefully," he said as he went, "and don't allow it to boil over. If it does its power will be gone." He went away to his hut and Ekwefi began to tend the medicine pot almost as if it was itself a sick child. Her eyes went constantly from Ezinma to the boiling pot and back to Ezinma.

Okonkwo returned when he felt the medicine had cooked long enough. He looked it over and said it was done.

"Bring me a low stool for

"Nipatie sufuria," alisema, "na kumwacha mtoto peke yake." Ekwefi alikwenda kuleta chungu na Okonkwo akachagua bora zaidi kutoka kwa bando lake, kwa uwiano wake, na kukatwa. Akaviweka kwenye sufuria na Ekwefi akamimina maji.

"Inatosha?" Aliuliza baada ya kumwaga karibu nusu ya maji kwenye bakuli.

"Zaidi kidogo ... nilisema kidogo. Je! wewe ni kiziwi?" Okonkwo alimfokea.

Aliweka sufuria juu ya moto na Okonkwo akachukua panga lake kurudi kwenye obi yake. "Lazima uangalie sufuria kwa uangalifu," alisema huku akienda, "na usiruhusu ichemke. Ikitokea nguvu zake zitatoweka." Alienda mpaka kwenye kibanda chake na Ekwefi akaanza kuhudumia sufuria ya dawa kana kwamba ni mtoto mgonjwa. Macho yake yaliendelea kutoka Ezinma hadi kwenye sufuria inayochemka na kurudi Ezinma.

Okonkwo alirudi alipohisi dawa imeiva vya kutosha. Akaitazama na kusema imekamilika.

"Niletee kinyesi kidogo kwa Ezinma," alisema, "na mkeka

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Ezinma," he said, "and a thick mat."

He took down the pot from the fire and placed it in front of the stool. He then roused Ezinma and placed her on the stool, astride the steaming pot. The thick mat was thrown over both. Ezinma struggled to escape from the choking and overpowering steam, but she was held down. She started to cry.

When the mat was at last removed she was drenched in perspiration. Ekwe fi mopped her with a piece of cloth and she lay down on a dry mat and was soon asleep.

mnene."

Akaishusha ile sufuria kutoka kwenye moto na kuiweka mbele ya kile kinyesi. Kisha akaamsha Ezinma na kumweka kwenye kinyesi, akipita kwenye chungu cha mvuke. mkeka mnene ulitupwa juu ya wote wawili. Ezinma alijitahidi kutoroka kutoka kwa mvuke uliokuwa ukimsonga na kumzidi nguvu, lakini alishikiliwa. Alianza kulia. Wakati mkeka ulipotolewa mwishowe alikuwa amelowa jasho. Ekwe fi alimkanda na kipande cha kitambaa na akajilaza kwenye mkeka mkavu na muda si mrefu akalala.

Chinua Achebe