

EMEKA, A GOOD PERSON
As it Was in the Beginning And Is Now
By
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PREFACE

If we look at the literature people read in Igboland today, we will see that European novels are numerous. But if we look at Igbo novels, there will not be many. I think one thing that helped bring this about is that we still do not have many Igbo novels. This is what moved me to write this small novel. It belongs to all Igbos and all those who are interested in the Igbo language.

"Emeka, A Good Person" is a work of fiction. Things that happened to Emeka were its starting point. It is neither a folktale nor a real happening. So it is a story that both adults and children will enjoy reading. Those who will benefit the most are adults, students in grades 5 and 6, and those in Colleges where Igbo language is learned. What they will enjoy is that in it, people speak Igbo language the way people who were born in Igboland speak it. Various Igbo proverbs are used, and various words are used in it as Igbo adults use them in speaking.

We tried to write all Igbo words in this book as they are pronounced and used in speech. Thus, reading it will be simple and interesting. In writing it, we used language that any Igbo would understand. This was possible because the writer has lived in various parts of Igboland.

All questions and lessons for students are at the end, so they will not hamper anyone in reading this story quickly and experiencing its pleasure. All the questions will greatly benefit students.

All European names in this book were written as Igbos pronounce them. It is not my desire to say that this book is the best; rather it was my desire to write a story for Igbos.

All names in this book are fictional. I had no particular person's name in mind. Read so you can know about "Emeka, A Good Person."

Mmuotulimanya J. Okafo

CHAPTER I WHO CHUKWUEMEKA OKORO WAS

Chukwuemeka Okoro was from Efulu, in Awka. He was born in 1931. His parents also came from Efulu. They were farmers. Before his father began to farm, he was one of the porters of the white people when they first came to Igboland. He used to carry a white man they called Otikpo from Awka to Igbodo in western Nigeria. They used to call porter work "akpaka work."

His father also worked for companies, carrying loads at the banks of the Onitsha river. While doing these two kinds of work, he learned many things. He also received various things like iron pots, a European flute, blankets, boxes, wine pots, and various cloths. One big thing he learned was that education was very important. He was not educated, so various things he thought he would have received from Otikpo and from the companies escaped him.

When he reached home, he used what he received and what he learned to do good things. The he-goat says that traveling is good--that's why he went to his mother's place and learned to raise his mouth. He was in Onitsha during the 1918 influenza epidemic. The illness he had at that time caused a very bad cough. When he fell ill, he returned to his village, because there is nothing that a person goes home with better than his life.

When the cough was better, he began to farm. Afterward, he married a woman from a place near his village called Ududo. His wife bore two children at first; they died. It was in 1931 that she bore their first son. This made them very happy; they named the child Chukwuemeka, because of the good thing they had been seeking by divination but was brought by the Lord. It was at that time that he brought out everything he had received both from the porter work and the company work, and he and his household took them and lived a life of enjoyment.

The name of Chukwuemeka's father was Okoro Eze-Mba. His mother was Mgbọ Mba. They loved their child very much. But Okoro loved him the most. The name he gave him was Emeka. This man and his wife were spirit-worshippers at the time; therefore, they raised their child like his

father and gave him the European flute that he got when he did the porter work. He said to him, "My son, take the flute and play it, and when you grow up I will tell you what the strong man and the python did before he got the venom. From that time on, Emeka could be seen playing his flute, tootie tootie tootie too. He did not forget that his father said that he would tell him about the flute.

Emeka was quite a small person. He did not grow very fast. His body was not in good condition. His hair was like cocoyam fibers. His hands and feet were skinny. His lips were also very thin. If one looked at him closely, his spirit would be filled with compassion. He was not very active, but one would not say that he was completely inactive. If you looked into his eyes, they twinkled like stars, especially when he was angry. Indeed he was a bit frail when he was a child, but his bones were strong. There was nothing his peers could do better than he when it came to things done with the hands and feet. The only reason he was a bit frail at that time was that there was a time when a big thing happened in their household: his parents separated. They no longer lived together.

But that event was not a quarrel. I will not discuss that because if the winetapper told what he saw while up in the palm tree, he would reveal the secrets of the spirits. At that time he and his father had their hands full in working to look after their house. Emeka had plenty of good sense. He was intelligent like an adult.

Early one morning, he woke up, greeted his father and spoke his praise name. His father answered him gladly. When he saw that his father was in good spirits, he asked him to tell him what it was he said that he would tell him concerning his flute on the day he gave it to him. When Okoro heard this, he was happy. He shouted, "Oh, oh! The *agba* (leafy green vegetable) has produced what was expected of it! The ancestors indeed said truly that a thing is not lacking in the heart if it existed from the beginning. I have reincarnated while still alive. My son who resembles his father, I will tell you that when you have grown up." Emeka laughed, nodded, and started to go about his duties. What made his father happy to say a thing like this was that his child was very small when he gave him that flute. He did not know anything at that time. Okoro didn't know that his son remembered that, so when he realized that Emeka was starting to become wise in childhood, he was happy. It was then that he

knew that his son would be wise as he (Okoro) and his lineage were. What Okoro had in mind was that his son would not suffer needlessly, as he did when he did the porter work and the stevedore work, because of lack of education. His only desire was that Emeka should start school when he reached that age.

CHAPTER 2 EMEKA GOES TO SCHOOL

A foolish person says that if something does not happen to him seven times he will not learn from his mistakes. Emeka's father said that it was enough for something to happen to him twice. So, when his son's hand reached over his head to his ear (was tall enough) he told him that he would start school. Emeka was happy about this. He (Okoro) had high hopes because he knew that his son had the intelligence to learn quickly. But something happened that did not make Emeka and his father happy. When Igbo and Okoro's brothers heard that he was planning to send his son to school, they shouted, "The goat is giving birth on the tether! He who knows everything about the world, who told him that a man's first son should go to school?" They then called a family meeting, and went to Okoro's house. Okoro greeted them, and addressed them with polite titles.

He gave them kola and pepper paste and said, "My brothers meeting this morning, ah, ah! I did not hear a sound from above or below." They laughed and said that nothing had happened, rather that it was said that it was the family that cuts up the bad goat. The oldest among them then took the kola and blessed it, saying,

"Let our ancestors, eat kola.

Let the Lord eat kola.

Let whatever does something for us eat kola.

Let the morning take evil away.

Let the sun give us good things.

My brothers, may you live.

May Okoro and his household live.

The one who says that something that existed from the beginning
will not continue to exist,

Let him see what faces him.

If one who bore a child says that his child will not bury him if he
dies, let our land take a look at him."

The brothers replied, "amen! amen! amen!" They then chewed the kola and thanked Okoro well.

The one who blessed the kola then took his seat and told Okoro that they had come to his house. That an important thing had happened, a big blow had been struck. That seeing and not speaking was bad for adults, and speaking and not hearing was bad for children. That they had heard that he was preparing to send his son, Emeka, to school, and that they had decided to come and ask him if he knew that a man's first son should not go to church or school. That if he went, there would be no one to bury his father according to custom; because the church people would not let him go and bury his father according to the ways of those who believed in spirits. He also said that they did not want his son to go to school. But if he stubbornly sent him, no one among them would bury him if he died.

This astonished Okoro. In his heart, he knew what he would say; but how he should say it was a big problem for him. He opened his mouth and closed it again. He gulped and swallowed, and told them that he was grateful for the advice they had given him. He also said that it showed that if one's family members did not know a thing, his friends would show him. He looked around at them and said that there was something that made the cocoyam squeal. He then told them how he had been a porter and how he had worked on the shores of the Onitsha river.

He told them everything that his companions who were educated and could speak English had received in those two places, but he lost all those things completely because of not being educated. He told them that it was because of this that he had decided that any child of his must go to school. If he died and his corpse was abandoned, it would not grieve his spirit as long as his children went to school and became educated.

Then his brothers said a few words to him and returned to their homes. But when they were leaving, they told him that they spoken out about what they had observed and that the child will support his head with whichever hand he wants. They left. Okoro then laughed and said that if one told a person something he knew nothing about, it would be as though he were chopping firewood in the forest of the spirits. He called his son and told him to get ready, that he was going to start school the next day. The child was very happy because it was something he very much wanted.

His father bought him everything that was necessary for school that day.

Mgbo was not happy because she was thinking of the things Emeka's going to school would bring to them. So she went and told her father what was going to happen. This hurt her father very much because he was the chief priest of their land's deity that was called Ududonka of the river. He then scolded a lot and said that what bothered him was that Ududonka of the river would kill them if it knew that Okoro and his household were going to become Christians. He went with Mgbo to the house of his son-in-law, Okoro, and the two of them talked about Emeka's going to school. The man tried as hard as he could to keep his grandson, Emeka, from going to school, but he was unsuccessful. So he went home in sadness.

Okoro was determined, because one who knows where he is going does not stumble on the ground. He said to Emeka, "My son, it is your life that I am fighting for. It is your future that I am trying to strengthen. Please, whenever you go either to school or to church, listen attentively to what the teachers are teaching you. Start today to know that life is in the ears. Have you heard, my son?" He replied, "Yes, my father."

Emeka went out and told all the neighboring children that he was going to start going to school. The occupation of Emeka and those children used to be that of hunting rats, lizards and squirrels, and playing various children's games. When he told them his story, they broke out into laughter, saying, "Emeka, our comrade, you are lost like the seasoning in the soup pot. Do you really believe that you will join those who forsake the yam and forsake the cocoyam and go to school, just like that? They pointed out to him that he should understand that everything that was done and learned about all the customs that his father observed would be lost to him if his father died.

He answered them humbly that everything they said was true; but his father had told him how he would benefit from going to school, so he and his father thought that there was nothing to prevent him from going to school. He also told them various things his father had told him about school. They told him that their eyes and ears did not convince them of what he said. They laughed loudly at him and ran off.

CHAPTER 3 EMEKA IN SCHOOL

The first day of school arrived. Emeka's father got him ready and gave him everything that he needed. He then took his European flute and put it in his pocket and went to school. He went with a certain person from their compound, who had been going to school before, went together. Okoro had asked that person to show him the way. They reached the school in good time. That child took him to their teacher and told him that he was a new student. The teacher was happy, patted Emeka and replied to his greeting. He took Emeka's right hand, placed it across his head and saw that it reached his ear. He took them all into the school. That was how Emeka began his schooling.

He suffered greatly because of his going to school. There was no school in his town, so he attended school in another town. It was seven miles from their house to the school. This meant that he was traveling fourteen miles every day. He traveled that distance from the time he started school until he finished the sixth grade. Another thing was that it was not his mother's desire for him to go to school. Every day, instead of his mother telling him to go and bathe and eat before going to school, as did other students whose school was far away, what she told him was "Emeka, sweep the compound. Sweep the house. Warm up the food. Go and put the goats into their enclosure. Go fetch water and bathe for school."

He stayed there and saw that he completed all of these things before he went to school every day. This meant that he did not get to school on time. Every day he suffered for not getting to school on time. Sometimes he was flogged. Sometimes he did work. Other times he fetched water.

One day, the teacher took those who were late, flogged him and broke the thumb of his right hand. His hand swelled up all the way to his shoulder. Emeka collapsed on the ground in a heap. Perspiration ran all over his body. Soon the perspiration dried up and his body became completely cold. He was shivering and feverish. He was unable to cry. He lay on the ground shivering. Tears ran out of his eyes.

The students who suffered with him then were afraid and they ran away. The children from Efulu who were there began to cry. They lifted

Emeka and he fell to the ground. The teacher who had flogged him did not know what to do. He knelt down, took him by both hands and lifted him up. He fell down, his fever returned, making his body hot enough to cook yams in an instant. The teacher had no more strength. He sat down heavily on the ground, held his head in his hands and cried, "Oh my God! Oh my father! Oh, I am lost! Oh, Emeka has killed me! Emeka, my child, please get up. Oh, get up for me! What do you want me to do for you? Please get up my child. Whatever you tell me to give you I will give you."

While these things were happening, one child ran and called the headmaster, who ran to see what had happened. He was very upset. He touched the child and shouted, "Oh, oh! What is this? God please have mercy on your children." The teacher was shouting and throwing himself on the ground. He ran and fell down before the headmaster and said to him, "My master, look at me. I am lost. Emeka, my child, don't let this happen. I am lost. What shall I tell my God? I am dead."

The headmaster had compassion. He sent messengers and they went and brought him his bicycle. They carried Emeka on it to the dispensary that was near their school. The dispenser then gave him various kinds of medicine. He also told the teachers that the children who had come with them to the dispensary should go home, that Emeka would be all right very soon. He told them that what caused the thing to overcome him like that was that the child had no food in his stomach. Also, perhaps he had run too long when he was coming to school. That it was those things that worked together to cause him to have a high fever and chills when he was beaten. When they got ready to leave, Emeka opened his eyes and looked at them for a minute. They then said they were sorry and told him to carry on. He acknowledged them with his eyes, and they left.

After school was out, the headmaster and the teacher and a few students took the bicycle, went to the dispensary and carried Emeka to his house. The dispenser had given them medicine to put on his finger that had been broken. When they entered Okoro's house, Igbo was cooking lunch. She looked and saw her son on the bicycle, ran out and shouted and asked them if the bicycle had run over him. Okoro was not at home at the time. They then told the woman what had happened to her son.

They apologized to her, gave Emeka money to buy something to please him,

then greeted them and left. About fifteen minutes after they left, Okoro came home. His wife then related to him what had happened, and told him that she also said in the beginning that Ududonka of the river, their land's deity, would not be happy that Emeka was going to school. He should see now that they had not gone far and already had bad luck. She also said that one did not have to tell a deaf person that the market was on fire; that if someone who knew more than his ancestors saw with both of his eyes, he would agree that what happened to Emeka was only the beginning.

This hurt Okoro a lot. He asked Emeka how it happened. Emeka told him how he was late to school and why he failed to get there on time, and that a certain teacher flogged him and he fell down. He also told his father that his mother had not given him any breakfast that day, and how he ran himself to death on his way to school because his mother had not allowed him to go to school on time. Okoro then comforted his son, telling him to keep on trying. He also comforted him every day until his finger healed. Okoro's brothers humiliated him because of what happened to his son. It also brought on big quarrels between him and Mgbo.

A consolation for Okoro and his son was that the teachers and students and other church people came to see Emeka every day. They brought him many gifts and various nice things. This made Emeka bear his illness happily for a few days, and then he recovered. He and his father did not listen to what his mother and the others were saying about Ududonka of the river. In order that Emeka should not suffer further, his father sent him to live with a teacher. He lived in his house until he had completed the sixth grade.

The good thing about Emeka's going to school was that he was learning a lot and passing all his examinations. All those who taught him loved him very much. It was not only because he was intelligent, but because his behavior and his dealings with his fellow students were excellent. This is why any time he was in need, one would be sure to see people putting themselves out to help him. For example, when he was in fifth grade a certain girl who was in the same grade took her schoolbox, which was made of metal, and placed it on the road. Later Emeka went to show their teacher what he had written. At that time he was looking over his book and seeing what had been written for him in his book. He didn't see the box, struck his foot on the edge of it and hurt his toe. He then fell

down and began to cry. Blood streamed out. The girl who owned the box began to laugh, because she had done it purposely. But she didn't know that he was hurt so badly. While she was laughing, Emeka got very angry. He got up, took blood that was gushing from his toe and rubbed it on the girl's dress. Then she started a fight with him, because she thought she could beat up Emeka. Meanwhile, all those in Emeka's row, both male and female, fought with the girl angrily.

Their teacher then made them sit down and be quiet. He settled their quarrel and also gave punishment to Emeka and the girl for fighting. After school, the other children joined Emeka in doing his punishment work. When they were leaving, the girl began to cry, because the work given her as the guilty one was very heavy. Also, no one helped her in her work. Emeka felt sorry when she cried, so he asked his friends to go and help her do her punishment work. Their teacher saw them while they were working. He asked Emeka and the others why they were helping her work, and they told him. He exclaimed, "Oh! Emeka! That's good!" He then told them to go home, and they all went gladly. Because of what Emeka did, those children did not hold any grudges against the others.

While Emeka was in third grade he could read and write in both Igbo and English. He was also the only one of his brothers who was going to school. At first, when someone brought his brothers a tax paper they bought yam, and chickens, took meat and fish and cooked delicious soup, then went to another town and called on an educated person and gave him those things. They also gave him money, and he agreed to read the tax paper for them and told them what the District Officer said they had to pay for each one, and what they all had to produce. But when the child was able to read and write, it was he whom they called, and he read them that paper. They then started giving him the things they were giving to the people of the other town who used to read for them.

Okoro and his son told them that they didn't want them to give Emeka those things, because it was like something a person who traveled would return and show his brothers: that that was why Emeka went to school. Then they knew that Okoro was citing a proverb to them about when they tried to keep Emeka from going to school. They thanked him and his son and told him that they agreed that a well-traveled person surpassed a gray-haired person in knowledge.

That child was also the one who wrote and read their letters for all the people of his household. All the children who laughed at him when he began to go to school respected him, saying that they wished they were like him. Some of them came and asked him to teach them the alphabet. He bore no grudge. He was very happy that he could be teaching his friends, so he taught them at home as much as he could. He didn't remind them that he remembered the when they laughed loudly at him, calling him "one who forsakes the yam and forsakes the cocoyam and goes to school! kpomi! kpomi! kpomi! kpomi! kpomi!" When he reached grade 6 those children were looking at him the way the chicken looks at a biscuit on top of the wall. When a white person from their church came to preach the word of God in Efulu, he and the church teacher were the ones who interpreted. They were saying, "Have you seen, Emeka has become an interpreter, he and the white person are like father and son. He has made it."

CHAPTER 4

EMEKA GETS WHITE-COLLAR WORK

Those who were in 6th grade passed their examinations well in the year that Emeka and the others were in the sixth grade. He was among the ten people who passed very well among the 76 who took the sixth grade examination in their school that year. This made him and his father very happy. But one problem they had was that Okoro did not have the money to send his son to high school. Another was that the child was very small to do white-collar work. They did not know what they were going to do.

One day, Okoro and his son took a keg of wine and went to the home of the teacher who had taught Emeka and the others in the sixth grade. After they had drunk the wine, Okoro thanked the teacher and saluted him with "May you not die, one who keeps the town in good order." The teacher returned the "may you not die" greeting. Okoro then told him that the reason he came was to thank him for the way he had taught their children so well during the past year, especially his son, Emeka. He told him that he wanted him to advise him as to what work his son, Emeka, could do now that he had finished sixth grade and he had no money to go to high school, and he had thought of everything possible, but could not think of anything he could do; and Emeka was smaller than a rat. Except for that, he might go and look for white-collar work.

The teacher scratched his head and thanked him. He thought a while and told him that he himself had been thinking hard about his children who were unable to go to high school; however, they should go home and the next day Emeka should return to see him; that they would see if there were people to whom they could write, to take him on to do white-collar work. They thanked him and left. At daybreak, Emeka was already at the teacher's house. He and the teacher wrote to three groups who were hiring people, asking that they take on Emeka to do white-collar work. After one week, they had not received any letters. After three weeks, one supervisor answered their letter and told the teacher to bring the boy for him to see. The teacher took him.

The supervisor was a white man. He talked with them about Emeka. The boy answered correctly all the questions the white man asked him. His English too was excellent. The white man told the teacher that he was sorry for the boy because he wouldn't be able to do the job he wanted to give him. But because he liked the boy very much he would take him and send him to a ^{trade} (junior high) school where he would stay for one year and learn about the work he would be doing. The reason he said that was that before he finished a year in that school, he would grow and be able to do the white-collar job that he wanted. He then asked them if they would be able to pay sixteen pounds for that one year he would be in (junior high) ^{trade} school. The teacher agreed, promising that he would see to it ~~that~~ they made efforts to obtain it. He then told them to go home and he would write them a letter about it at the proper time. They went home and told Okoro how they had fared. He thanked them, and thanked God who had guided them on their journey. Okoro started from that time on to find the money to pay that fee.

In three weeks, the letter from the white man had already arrived. The letter told them everything needed to go to that ^{trade} (junior high) school and when school would start. When everything Emeka needed had been bought, he went and started to attend that ^{trade} junior high school. Nothing like this had ever been heard of in all of Efulu. Everyone said that God had elevated Okoro and his household since his son had gone to ^{trade} junior high school, and that it was they who now knew what the white man was saying. As for Okoro himself, he was extremely happy. His face showed only smiles. His mouth was filled with praises for God and prayers for his son's progress.

Whenever a war is over, people carry home the loot, share the spoils of war, and cowards start to tell stories about what happened to them. Now, people saw that benefits would be derived from Emeka's going to school. Mgbo boasted. If anyone even coughed, she would say to him, "Have you heard that my son has gone to ^{high} school? What suffering my husband and I have endured in the schooling of that child. When next year comes and he starts to do white-collar work, we will know if we can fetch water and drink one day." She was doing this all the time, boasting that her son was in ^{high} school. But she was the one who had said that if Emeka went to school, Ududonka of the river would exterminate her and her household.

Emeka was a good child. He was very learned, but sometimes bad luck he dogged him.

He did well in all the examinations he took that year, but one and a half months before school was out, his father, Okoro, died. Something like this had never happened before in Efulu. There were outcries everywhere. People were telling their own stories. Some said that things had not yet started, that it was the "alpha and omega," Ududonka of the river, who had killed him, because of what he did in sending his son to school. Some said that Okannagha (one who knows more than his father) had seen, that they would know who would bury him according to custom since his son was a Christian; that they spoke (to Okoro) when things were at their best but the spirits closed his ears and did not allow Okoro to listen to what they said to him and now the *jo-tonsi* (bad animal) had been caught in the trap. Mgbo did not know what to do. She was in tears. People sent telegrams and told Emeka what had happened. He then cried very much. When the headmaster of their high school heard how unhappy that had made him and how he was crying himself sick, he joined the others in comforting him. He then took him aside and asked him how much work he had to do.

Emeka humbly told him that it was the volume of work he had to do that made him cry so much, that it was not only about his father's death. He then explained to him everything that took place when they had prepared for him to start school. The headmaster felt compassion. He said to him, "My child, be comforted. That is the way of the world." He then called a few of the high school people and told them to accompany

him to go and see the body of his father before he was buried, and perform all the burial rites. When they went, he gave them money to buy things for a prominent person's funeral, and told them that they should go according to the customs of that town. He also told them that that would show the Efulu people that everything was in the hands of God and that he was the one who took care of orphans. Emeka tearfully knelt down and thanked his headmasters. They then went to Efulu.

Emeka and the others did their work that day. When he joined the crowd, people saw him and cries broke out. His mother cried, "Emeka, my son, your education has killed us! Speaking but not listening has killed me!" The boy then cried a lot and said that what hurt him the most was that his father had worked but had not reaped the benefits of his work. His high school companions and his father's friends came and lifted him from the place where he had fallen on his father's body and comforted him. His brothers then took him to the back of the house and told him that it was not crying that was important. That if he knew what should be done to his father, he should tell them; that they had said at first that he should not go to school but should stay in the town and learn what his companions were learning; that he and his father did not agree and now it has come down on us; that the water that remained in the shard stayed there for the dog. They did not let him speak and began to enumerate to him the things he must do before they would agree to bury his father for him. The way they dealt with him caused the boy to start to cry again. When his mother heard everything they had enumerated, she was exhausted. She cried that there was no money left in their house; that they had had to sell everything they had to send their son to high school. The woman quietly cried very much.

Her eyes began to swell. When Emeka heard his mother's weeping, he was sorry for her and went to join her in mourning. Afterward he comforted his mother and told her not to cry, that God's will had been done. They then brought out the money they had come home with and did everything necessary to bury a person. They buried Okoro according to tradition. The boy gave his father a better funeral than other people were giving. It was amazing to all his brothers and all the people of Efulu. It surprised them the way the boy brought money to do big things like that, especially that he used cement to build a monument at his father's grave.

They said that no one could tell what the boy would do; that Okoro had gone away but Okoro had been replaced. Emeka and the others then returned and the school closed for the end of the year. The white man then took him and gave him a white-collar job. Now, Emeka had become a white-collar worker. The place they sent him to do that job was very far away. The name of the place was Ndokị.

CHAPTER 5 EMEKA HAS A JOB

Emeka didn't know the place where he would be working and he had never in his life heard the name of that town. He didn't know how he was going to get there. His heart was very heavy. He didn't know what to do. So he went all around the ^{trade} high school asking the students who had come from various towns in Nigeria if they knew the town called Ndokị. Many of them told him that they did not know where it was. The day after he asked the questions, someone came into the house where he lived at the school and asked the residents if it was there that the person who was going to Ndokị lived. Emeka interrupted him and announced, "My friend, it is I. What has happened? Do you know where it is?"

He said yes, that he knew; that he had heard that there was someone going to Ndokị and decided to come and find out who it was, because he was from Ndokị. Emeka was delighted. He greeted the Ndokị person and said to him, "My brother, please cut me a piece of fish because you have returned from Oru." [proverb: give me more information] They sat down in Emeka's house. That person then told him everything he knew about Ndokị. From what his friend told him, he found out that from their house to that town was 203 miles. Many things he heard about that town pleased him. But there were also some things that he regretted very much. When they finished ^{trade} high school, they went on vacation for six weeks.

During the vacation he told his family where he was being sent to work, and bought things that he needed to go to that town. The fact that the town was very far off worried his family a lot, because Emeka was not old enough to go to a faraway place. They then encouraged and comforted him and told him that he should go and that nothing would happen to him. They told him that he should persevere in his work when he arrived, that

they would pray for him, and that the spirit who gave him palm kernel would also give him a stone with which to strike it.

When the time came to start work, Emeka prepared well and went to Ndokí. He traveled for a little more than two days before arriving. When he got there, he went to greet the supervisor there and informed him that he had arrived. The supervisor welcomed him. He took him and showed him the house where he would live, and showed him various places where they would work. The place where he was going to live pleased him greatly. He was happy that the supervisor had received him well.

The supervisor went and rounded up a few children to help Emeka carry his things into the house and arrange everything well; his house then looked fine. The children who had helped him then went home. He went out into the yard and looked the place over. The house given to him was a corrugated iron-roofed house with three rooms. Its walls were made of cement blocks. The ceiling had been covered well. A mixture of yellow and green paint had been applied on all the walls of the house.

Dark red paint which was deep, like something one had put oil into, was used to decorate all the corners. All the windows and doors in the house were large and beautiful. They had been painted red. This made the house very attractive to the eye and really beautiful. Emeka looked around and saw that many flowers had been planted around that house. The flowers were filled with beautiful blossoms. That is how all the nearby houses looked as well. All of the houses there had been built in a row. Well-mowed bahama grass had been planted all over the lawns there. There were many flowering trees. Small paths had been made leading into the yards there. The breeze blowing there was refreshing. One who saw how that place had been beautified would not yearn at all to return to his father's house.

When he had seen all these things, he was delighted. He grinned from ear to ear. He nodded and said, "Lord of life, I thank you. May the good things also existing in Olu which is in Iza, not escape me. Father, please, may these good things be beneficial. They are very pleasing." He entered the house joyfully and rested.

The next morning, Emeka prepared well to go to his job. All the

workers received him smilingly and with pleasure, and greeted him. The workers were mostly mature adults. Only Emeka and two others were the young men in the group. They then started to work. Their work went well.

They were happy also because they all liked each other. They got along with each other as though they were brothers. Because of the way they took pleasure in working well, their supervisor paid them a monthly salary that satisfied them, giving them bonuses and money to help in various ways. It was in this way that the Lord took Emeka to a place 203 miles away, put him in good fortune, then took salt and put it in his mouth.

One small difficulty he had when he first arrived concerned the Ndoki language. They spoke Igbo as the people in Emeka's place did. But their dialect was different. There were also words they had that other Igbos did not have. Things like "tete," which was "father," "kukuhi," which was "fever," and so on. It took three months for him to start to understand their dialect well. An example of the way it gave him difficulty was that one day, he had a guest. The guest was one of his relatives. He had come from a distant place to see Emeka. When he came, more than 20 days of the month had gone by. The food Emeka had for that month was almost all gone. The money he had left for food was only a few shillings. But he was pleased that the man had come because the two of them had not seen each other for a long time. They exchanged greetings and embraced each other and Emeka gave him kola. After they had eaten the kola, Emeka told him to wait for him while he went and ran around, that it is said that a fool does not know that his brother is an honored guest, and he then went out.

He took the few shillings that were left among his things and went to buy something with which to entertain his brother. That day was not a market day for the people of that place. Nor was there a market being held nearby on that day. So he went to a place where people sometimes brought out things they wanted to sell. There he saw a woman going along carrying a basket of yarns and one large fish and half a jar (=1 gal.) of palm wine. He called her and the woman came. He helped her put her load down and begged her to please sell him those things, that he had an unexpected guest and he had nothing to give him. The woman told him that she did not understand what he was saying.

Neither of them could understand the Igbo of the other. She then told Emeka to put on her load, that she was in a hurry to get to her destination. Emeka thought about what to do; he forgot and shouted saying that not understanding Ndoki Igbo had caused him to be "if you don't clear the land you do not plant yams." He started to gesticulate, begging her like a deaf and dumb person to sell him those things. He took out money and showed it to her. He refused to put those things on her head, because he did not know another place where he could get them. Also, he did not understand the woman's language, if he asked her to show him where he could buy such things. When she saw that he did not want to put on her load and he kept on begging her, she became angry because she did not understand what he was saying. Other thoughts came to her mind, because of the way he calmed down and begged her. It is said that when it comes to eating crunchily, the child's mind goes to the crab. Those who are traveling at night know that one sees flies awake at night. When her mind went to things Emeka had not thought about, she started to shout, telling people to come and see the young child who was still sucking breast, staying there on the highway in the hot afternoon sun, asking her something she could not make head or tail of. Several people gathered around.

The woman then told them how the two of them had met and what Emeka had done and what she thought about his begging. So they told Emeka to tell his side of the story. He started to tell what happened. But none of them understood what he was saying. They then told him to keep quiet and agreed with what their sister said; they took Emeka and said that they would take him to the house of their chief. While they were going to the chief's house they met a certain person there who worked in the same place as Emeka. He saw him and shouted and asked his people what had happened. They told him. He then reported to Emeka what they had said and asked him what had happened.

He then explained how he had a guest, how he had been looking for something to buy, how he had seen the woman and what he had asked her. The man was very angry because of the way those people had treated Emeka. He firmly told them what Emeka had said and scolded them, telling them that they should not do something like this again, that it would give them a bad name. When they understood what happened, they were very sorry, especially the woman. They asked Emeka and the man to forgive them. The woman brought him the yam and fish and wine that had caused

the trouble, and took only six shillings and sixpence from him. Emeka thanked them very much for the way they had treated him in the end. He then thanked the man who had saved him very much. They all went home laughingly and goodheartedly. You can imagine how Emeka's brother felt when he reached the house and told him what had happened. Nevertheless, they took it as a story.

Okoro's son was fortunate in his work. Before two years when he would have gone on his first two-month vacation, he was promoted to a higher position on the job. It was the position of supervisor in one of the departments. The reason the white man gave him this important position was that he knew his work well. He was very humble. He was always smiling, and was good to look at. The managers of their office liked him more than the others. They almost embraced him and went close to him as though he were a young girl. But best of all was that he did not drag his feet in delivering messages. He did not tire of his work. His life was nothing but work; sharp understanding entered the marrow of his bones. These good qualities helped him in his work. His supervisors were promoting him every time like carpenters raise roofs.

It was not only in the office that Emeka was strong. Every time work was over, he returned to his house and did various tasks. Many of them were those that brought in money. His daytime resting plus his nighttime sleep were not as much as five hours. Any time the month ended, the money he received was very much and made him fearful. This made him go and put his money in a bank. The Ndokj people loved him because of his industriousness and his goodness. They used to bring him many gifts. The good elders there came to his house and called him "son of the land." He gave them snuff and wine. They always enjoyed him.

CHAPTER 6 TWO-MONTH VACATION

When Emeka's two-month vacation time came, the white man wrote him a letter. He then prepared everything for going home. The white man used an automobile to take for him everything needed for going home. On that day that he left on vacation, he brought him a beautiful motorcycle, with two tailpipes. He gave him that, saying that it was something he could use to get around on his vacation, and he could also use it in going to

work when he returned to his job, because he had joined the supervisors in their work. Emeka thanked him very much.

The white man who brought those things carried them to the Efulu church, and put them there. This was because the car could not reach the quarter Emeka had come from. Emeka then led the white man on foot to his house. His village people gathered, shouting and hugging him and saying, "You have returned." They also greeted the white man, "Good morning, sir." There was dancing and joy everywhere because of his return. His mother and siblings were the happiest. The white man greeted his mother and gave her money and beautiful cloths. He also gave his siblings dresses and shorts, then went back, entered his car and left.

The thing that surprised his people very much was how Emeka had grown. At first he had been a frail child. But now, he had grown tall and was heavy. When he brought out his motorcycle they all gathered to look at it. All the people of his age-group, the ones who had derided him when he was going to school, were staring at him like goats. They did not know what to say or what to do. It was when Emeka brought out the things he had come home with that they started to fear him and they knew that it was not only that he had surpassed them in being a fine young man, but that he surpassed them in every other way that a person could surpass his companions. Some went and worked for him and he paid them a salary. They called him "our master." He also went around on his motorcycle, enjoying life. First, he started to repair everything that needed repair in their compound. He built a small house where his mother and siblings could live. He built it with a zinc roof.

Those two months were not a time of rest for him. Indeed, the things he used it to do, both in his father's compound and in the village, were numerous. What everyone then was doffing his hat about was how he was able to gather the people of his town to build seven wide roads within the seven quarters of Efulu. When he was coming back, he had not thought that he would do such great work. He never thought that roads were important to his townspeople. No one blamed him because if one looked at his age, one saw that he was still a child. His age-mates who stayed at home had not paid the annual tax. They did not know how to harvest palmnuts. The only thing they knew was that at the start of a day they filled their stomachs with cassava fufu, dusted off their buttocks,

gathered sticks and knives to go and hunt squirrels and rabbits. They returned in the evening and took their musical instruments and beat their drums rata-tat-tat and went to the moonlight play.

When a person does not know a thing, necessity shows him. It was the motorcycle that showed Emeka what his town needed. When he returned with his motorcycle, he could not find a road where he could ride it. He then parked it at the house of the church teacher who lived in their town. He pondered what he would do to be able to take it home to his father's house. He thought that he must build a road. When he thought of this, he knew that others who lived in other quarters needed a road as much as he did. Also, he knew that he was not going to be able to build any road without the help of the townspeople. One evening he went to the home of their chief and told him that it was very necessary for them to see that roads were put in all of their quarters. He also told the chief that this was what the wise people in all the towns were doing. He also said that it was a disgrace that a town like Efulu did not have roads between its various quarters, and that any town that did not have roads was a bush village.

The chief listened to him well. They discussed about how they would call the townspeople and tell them a thing like this. They then appointed a day to see the townspeople about it. But the chief told him that it was he, Emeka, who should tell the townspeople when they gathered, because it was he who knew how to build the road. Emeka then agreed that he would do it. The chief sounded the drum for his people and told them the day he wanted to see them in his *abi*, that there was an important matter to discuss. The appointed day came. The people of Efulu gathered in the *abi* of their chief. Emeka dressed like the people of his town and went to the chief's *abi*. They all sat down. The chief came out and greeted them all. They greeted him according to their custom. He gave them kola. They broke the kola and ate. He then got up and said to them, "Friends, good day to you," and they chorused, "Ihaa." He called them "Maazi, maszinu." They called him Ezeqsudo. He then told them that it was true that he had invited them, but it was not he who would speak to them. He told them that he had heard the thing and it made him happy, and he then invited them; that the one who would tell them about it was Emeka Okoro, who they knew had returned on vacation from his white-collar work; that everything the boy would tell them, he supported; that it is

said that a traveler had more knowledge than one who stayed at home. He brought Emeka out before them and said to him, "A bird that knows what he cried at first, let him cry again so that everyone can hear." He greeted his people, went to his seat and sat down.

Emeka then greeted his people well. They also greeted him and focused on him. He then began to tell them how roads were very important to them. The way he spoke, and the way his demeanor was while he was speaking pleased many of them very much. All of his words sounded good to them. It was only a few rascally youths who said that his words were not good, that he wanted them to build roads for him where he could ride his motorcycle. But in the end they agreed that they would build seven roads between the seven quarters of Efulu. They also agreed that it would be their chief and Emeka who would supervise them when they were building the roads. They then named the day they would start the work. Emeka and the chief then thanked them. They all went home. While they were going, they talked only of matters concerning Emeka and his father, Okoro. Now they began to realize the benefit that Okoro's sending his son to school would bring, to both Okoro's household and all of Efulu.

Building the roads was no small thing. It is true that they all had agreed that they were doing something good, but the work and trouble involved in it was too much for them. The first problem in it was knowing where the roads should pass through. Another was being able to supervise the Efulu people as they began the work, because many of them were stubborn and ignorant. No one agreed with what the other person said. Nor did anyone allow his own things to be used, or benefit another person even if money was faded [counterfeit] (mkpuru ego isi kworo). The chief and Okoro's son knew these things, so the two of them met together and discussed how they could oversee the work so it would go well.

The first thing that faced them was to know where the road should go, because they knew that no one among their people would agree that the road should go through their land. What caused this was that they believed that one on whose land the road was built would see all of his land die from the traffic of humans and spirits and animals. This meant that the land of that person would not produce crops at all. Another thing was that that person's land would not be much because taking out is not putting in. In order to defeat this, they called the elders of their town, two people

plus themselves to go and examine all their land and decide where all the roads should go. They made a rule that anyone not agreeing that the road should pass through his land should be excluded from the events of all their lands. Also, the position of that person in the village would be worse than that of a slave who had been bought.

They consulted about how they would supervise the people doing the work, so that stubbornness and altercations would not break out when they started the work. They decided on these two things: that they would share the work; and, anyone not coming to work would be fined. If someone came to work but did not work hard, they would fine him also. They said that they would divide the roadwork into five parts and divide those who would do the work into five groups. One group would build one fifth of the five roads. A person not coming to work would pay them two pounds and two shillings. A person coming to work but not working hard or being stubborn in any way would pay them five shillings.

There were also some things they decided they would do to please the young men who would do the work. They said that any elderly person in Efulu who was unable to work would buy the workers one pot of wine. If one did not do this he would bring them five shillings. The elderly in their area numbered more than ninety. This meant that if the young men finished work on the road for the day, they would go and drink more than ninety pots of wine. This was a very good idea, because any work a young person of Efulu would do that involved wine, you knew he would finish in the twinkling of an eye.

They were people who thought that rather than wine be left in the pot, it should be left in the stomach. Another good thing they decided on was to invite musicians. They said that they would beat drums for all the musicians in their land and tell them that they should round up their instruments and come, making music for the workers every day they came to work. The musicians they had were these: flutists, drummers, pipers, [onje enine], two gong strikers, and those who played a chief drum. When they decided on all these things in their meeting, they were very pleased. They concluded that day, and set the road work for Ekenaato (3 Eke days from then). While they were dispersing, they told the chief to tell Ogbuekwe, the town crier, to strike the gong for their town and tell them the day appointed for work and other things they had decided about ~~that~~ it.

The chief agreed and said that an unborn child knew that. They all then greeted each other with "mazi, mazi," and went home. They all were very happy when they left, but the happiest one was Okoro's son. He felt in his heart as though he had accomplished all the work he had to do in the world. He thanked God, saying that it was He who had prepared the way in the great forest.

The chief then reached his house and told the gong striker to go and strike the gong for their people and tell them everything they had said in their meeting. The gong striker then picked up his gong and set out. He then struck his gong; kpo-kpo-kpo-kpo-kpo-kpo-kpo m! kpo-kpo-kpo m! kpo-kpo-kpo m! He took a deep breath and shouted,

"Our people, O-o-o-o-o-o -----!

Children and adults O-o-o!

The chief told me to tell you O-o-o!

That we will do road work three Eke days from now O-o-o!

Two pounds and two shillings from anyone who does not come O-o-o!

One who incurs a fine and a stubborn one, two shillings O-o-o!

Any elderly person, one pot of wine O-o-o!

One who does not cooperate, five shillings O-o-o-o!

Musicians and their instruments O-o-o-o!

Whoever hears should tell his friends O-o-o-o!!"

kpo kpo m kpo kpo m kpo kpo m.

In this way he shouted his message all over Efulu. Everyone heard what he said. The way they imposed fines pleased everyone. They all then started to get ready for the appointed day.

CHAPTER 7 BUILDING EMEKA'S ROAD

It was not long before the third Eke day arrived. At dawn, all the musicians played a bit on their instruments. They announced to Efulu's young men that they should come out, that the day had arrived. They saluted them in various ways, calling their names one by one, telling everyone to bring his tools and come out, that something important was going to take place. Every young man who heard the instruments of all the musicians, and who heard that his name was called, carried his tools, tied his cloth around his waist, answered, and ran to the house of their chief.

Before six-thirty had sounded, one did not know what to do with the young men [there was a huge swarm of them] at the house of the Efulu chief. No one failed to come to that work except the old and the sick. There was noise everywhere. People were climbing over each other.

The flutists and the pipers picked up their instruments, put them to their mouths and started to blow. The drummer was drumming his best. The dancers displayed their dances showing what they had learned. All their hearts flew up like the wings of ostriches. Their intention was to show them the work so they could do it vigorously. Emeka and Ezeqsudo and the elders were very happy at the way their people had answered their call.

The chief then stood where he normally stood to speak to them; he smiled, waved his right hand to them, raised his voice and said to them:

"Efulu agree!" They chorused, "i yo-o!"

"Great town agree!" They chorused, "i yo-o!"

"My young men agree!" "i yo-o!"

"Things are strong!" "We do it o-o-o!"

He then told them that dawn had broken. That on that day they would demonstrate that they were a great town. He thanked them for the way they all came for that work, and told them that he trusted that the way it was held in their hearts they would accomplish all the work they had on that day as easily as a person smokes tobacco. They all laughed and waved their tools in the air. He then encouraged them strongly and told them that the elders would do well by them by giving them something they could fill their stomachs with. They then rejoiced. He then told Emeka to come and tell them how to do the work. Emeka came out and greeted them well. They greeted him and called him various great praise names. He then told them how they should do the work, and divided them into five groups as they had decided. He told everyone what they should work at and how they should do it.

They then forged ahead and went to work. Emeka and the teacher and two other elders joined them and went to supervise them. They all worked hard with all their hearts. Stubbornness, commotion and deceitfulness did not occur at all. The musicians went around taking their instruments and called them praise names and encouraged them. They united in doing their

work well. They were also singing and chorusing, and they were happy as larks [salt]. One of their songs was this:

Young men of Efulu;

Clear the Efulu road and go ahead,

Clear the Efulu road

Ezeosudo Efulu;

Clear the Efulu road and go ahead,

Clear the Efulu road.

Emeka, young man of the town;

Clear the Efulu road and go ahead,

Clear the Efulu road;

Adults of Efulu;

Clear the Efulu road and go ahead,

Clear the Efulu road.

White man's road goes to Efulu;

Clear the Efulu road and go ahead,

Clear the Efulu road

Emeka's motorcycle,

Clear the Efulu road and go ahead,

Clear the Efulu road.

Those who like good things;

Clear the Efulu road and go ahead,

Clear the Efulu road.

We thank the Lord;

Clear the Efulu road and go ahead,

Clear the Efulu road.

When it was four o'clock in the afternoon, the people of the five groups had finished all the work they had been told to do on that day. The leaders had supervised them well. No one had to be beaten. No one had to be stepped on. They then beat their drums and returned to the chief's house. The elders then brought them many pots of wine. Their wives brought food to them there. They filled their stomachs before they drank the wine. They drank the wine in peace, joy and playfulness. Emeka had shown them how to share, so that no quarreling would ensue.

After that happened, they named another day when they would do the road work, and went home. Joy filled the hearts of everyone in town that day that they began to build their road. Nothing was talked about there except things concerning the road and Okoro's son. To show his pleasure

about the progress he was causing his people to make, when the others had finished the wine and were going home singing, the chief called Emeka into his house. He gave him three large white kolanuts and told him to put them in his pocket, that when kola reaches the house, it tells who brought it. He entered his house and brought out a bottle of hot wine called "njenje" and gave it to him, and told him to pour as much as he was able to drink. He also gave him a tumbler that the Germans had given him a long time ago. He then took it, filled it with hot wine and drank. The chief did the same. Emeka did not drink to the point of drunkenness because he knew the type of wine it was. He thanked the chief very much. The chief thanked him so much because of all his good thoughts, and the way he was able to supervise the work very well. He asked him to continue coming on time on the day their work would take place, because it was he who was the artistic earthworm in that work. Emeka thanked him and told him not to worry about that. That it was he himself, more than anyone else, for whom the work was important, because he knew the benefits it would bring when they finished it. He also knew what a shame it would be if the work lagged behind. They then shook hands and Emeka went home.

It was not long until the day they had appointed for the work arrived. They all came out and finished all the work remaining on the road. There was no quarreling or falling-out that occurred in that work. From that day on, the people of Emeka's quarter had a European road that had been well built. They celebrated the opening of the road. In that celebration they had various spectacles. One of the spectacles was Emeka's motorcycle coming from his quarter, going around their church and returning. In the evening of the day of celebration, all the people of the land went to the chief's house to answer the chief's invitation to drink wine. During the wine-drinking, the chief was on his throne. It was Emeka whom he made chairman. When he wanted to refuse, the chief laughingly scolded him and told him to go and sit down. He should not think that he, the chief, would sit in the head chair because the chief was not chief in his house [on that day]. Another thing was that a person need cut off only one head to be known as a decapitator. Emeka then sat down in the main chair. Everyone else sat down. They then ate, drank and discussed various things about how they would improve their community.

The people of that land told Emeka and the chief that it was in their hands that they placed the finding out and telling them any way they could

improve their town and make it known like the other towns around them. Their chief and Emeka agreed with everything they were told.

Chukwuemeka, Okoro's son, spoke some words to encourage them. The chief also thanked them for the way they had answered his call, both for the work they did and for the wine-drinking to which he invited them, as it is said that a strong man who calls and is answered, cooks food and sees people eating it. The chief ended his words and thanked them; they departed.

CHAPTER 8 THE END OF THE VACATION

The people of our land say that anything one talks about is already gone [time flies]. When Emeka's vacation had passed in no time [without difficulty], he began to prepare to return to his job. The white man wrote him and told him the day he would bring his car to his house and take him and all his things and return to his Ndokj workplace. His mother was happy because of all the work he did during his vacation; especially because of the house he built for them. But there was something left that she thought her son should do to make her heart completely happy [to its very bottom]. So she called her son to have a talk with him one evening. When he entered his mother's house, Mgbọ said to him, "Emeka, my son, I am well pleased with you. I had great hopes and expectations for you, because the plant produces the same thing that was planted. Also, the heart that loves children does not lack children. The heart of a village is not a small one in Efulu. Also, your father was not a fool when he was alive. It is these things that I remember and when I see how you are progressing now, my heart becomes salt and white man's salt [sugar]. My son, however, there is one thing you should try to do to make my happiness complete."

Emeka said, "Mother, what is it?" The woman took a deep breath, smiled and said, "My son, you heard the proverb I quoted earlier that the heart that loves children does not lack children. Please, my son, try to find someone to bring, so you and she can find out if you will produce children small and large at your father's compound as your father did.

That boy was very intelligent. It is true that marrying was not on

his mind at that time, but he gave his mother an excuse that satisfied her. He told her that what she told him was very pleasing to him. It showed that she was thinking about his welfare. He thanked her very much and told her that he would start to look around to see if there was someone he might find who would please him. His mother then told him that there were people she knew were not married, that they were very beautiful and well-behaved. He told her to forget about them, that he would be the one to look on his own as people nowadays were doing. Also, that it must be someone well educated whom he would marry. Mgbọ then said to him, "All right, my son, please may God and the elders bless you so you may find one whose beauty is in the heart and in the behavior, not the facial beauty which is like bitterleaf root in the heart." Emeka then thanked her and went and started to tie up the things he would take back to Ndọki.

The next day, the white man he worked for appeared promptly with his car. He stopped his car at the Efulu church, looking for the place where Emeka kept his belongings. He saw nothing. He then parked the car and wanted to go on foot to his house. Their church teacher then came out and greeted the white man, "Good morning, sir." He greeted him. He asked him in English where he was going. He told him that it was Emeka Okoro's house. He then asked him why he did not want to go there by car. The white man started, looked at him, and asked him who he was. He told him that he was the Efulu church teacher. He then told him that the reason was that the road leading to their quarter was not good for driving. The teacher laughed at him and said that as it is today is not what it was yesterday. He then told him that the people of that quarter had a beautiful automobile road. He showed the white man the new road and told him that it was his friend, Emeka, who had that road built. The white man was very happy. He praised the road and praised Emeka and the people of his quarter who built it. He entered his car, drove it to the road, and stepped into the door of the Okoro compound. The people of Emeka's house and their townspeople who lived nearby came out and greeted him. He told his fellow-worker that they had done a great work in being able to build a beautiful road like theirs. He also thanked him and told him that he had heard that it was he who was the wonderful initiator of the road work. Emeka then thanked his master and told him that the work was something that came from the hand of God, that it was he who led them so they could complete it well. He also told the white man that what pleased him about it was that there were no quarrels or disputes or incidents that occurred

while they were building it. They then rejoiced, laughed, and thanked God.

They then put his luggage into the car. While they were carrying all those things, Emeka's mother came to him, saying, "Young man, what shall I cook for your master that he will like?" He laughed at her and said that she wouldn't be able to cook for him, that people trained in cooking did the cooking for him. She also asked, "What are we going to give him? You remember everything he gave us when he brought you? Would it really be good for us to leave him empty-handed?" He replied, "Don't worry, mother. One who has become a friend of 'mammywater' knows how they do things. I've bought something to give him and things for him to eat, and things he can use on his return home among his furnishings. I'll do it in both our names." His mother laughed, brightened her face and said, "O my son, you've done well. It is a person's knowledge that makes him answer to the name of strong man." As they whispered together, a child sneaked out, ran and told Ezeosudo that Emeka's white man had come to get him. So the chief sent a message that Emeka should bring his white master to his house. When he received this message, Emeka was happy. He nodded and said that he and their chief had become salt and oil (very close).

When they finished packing the car, he told his master that their chief wanted them to go to his house. He nodded and agreed. The white man asked him how the chief knew who he was. He told him that he had told the chief many things about him. So they went to the chief's house, by car and motorcycle, because the tarred road had reached the entrance to the path to the chief's compound. As soon as they set foot in his compound, Ezeosudo sounded the explosive gun seven times, to welcome the white man. He met them at the entrance to the path of his compound, shook hands with the white man and greeted him, "Good morning, sir." When they had finished the greetings, he led them into his house.

The first thing he gave him was seven large Hausa kola nuts. Emeka took one and put it in his shirt pocket because it was he to whom the kola was handed. He also picked up five of the best ones, gave them to the white man and told him to put them in his shirt pocket, that when kola nut reaches the house it tells where it came from. He laughed and took it, put it in his pocket, and complimented those people's kolanuts for their very large size. Emeka took the remaining nut and gave it to the chief, telling him to do the proper thing for us because a chief's kola is in his hands.

The chief then blessed the kola saying:

"Great man above, you have seen.

Look at the good things that have accompanied this child and his master to our village; please, let those things continue.

Let morning take bad things out, and bring good things in for us.

If someone says that good things are not good, if he picks up a good thing in the road, let it him lose it.

White man and Emeka, you will live long and grow old.

Your work will follow you to old age.

If one comes to a person's house, let him not kill him, so that when he leaves he will not grow a hunchback.

Our children, you will live long.

I myself will also live long for you."

After he had invoked these things, his people who were there and Emeka responded "jhaal jhaal jhaal" The white man laughingly nodded his head because Emeka had told him how his people blessed kola. He finished blessing it, broke it (kolanut), and they ate.

The white man joined them in eating because they all first washed their hands; the kolanuts also had been washed well. The chief entered the house and brought out to them one bottle of hot wine brandy, and five bottles of beer. They then drank one bottle of beer each. The chief also told the white man to put the remaining bottles in his car, which he would use as a gift [to put his hand in his pocket] when he reached home. They had not finished what they wanted to say when the chief's wife, who was more beautiful than all the others, came out carrying one large, wide plate filled with various gifts, placed it in front of her husband, and called his name. She also greeted the white man, "Morning, sir." The white man stood up and greeted her as the people of his country did.

This wife of the chief was very beautiful. She was light-skinned. Her name was Ochadimma. If you looked at her, her eyes were heavy-lidded [partially-closed look]. Her neck was like an antelope's, with similar markings. Her hair was just like that of mmqmiwqta. She had grown tall and was a good-sized woman, walking slowly like (nduru=dove?). Her voice sounded like that of the ~~wse~~ (bow-shaped, one-stringed instrument). The white man looked at her, shrugged his shoulders

and said that he hadn't seen someone so beautiful in the land of the blacks. The chief told Emeka to take the gifts and give them to his master. That he should tell him that it was to show him that the good behavior, guidance, graciousness and love which he had given to Emeka pleased him and all the people of his village very much. That he should continue what he was doing, that if a person was doing well, he was told to hold on. But if someone does not do well, he is forgotten (discussion about him dies at breakfast). He took the things, gave them to his master, and told him everything the chief said.

Then the white man, with gladness and respect, stood up and thanked the chief and Emeka and the chief's wife. His words of thanks were these: "Chief, it is with happiness, joy and respect that I bring you many thanks. I also thank you, the chief's wife, you and Emeka. The reason I thank you, chief, is that you and I have never done anything together. There has never been any way you could know me except for the stories about me that you heard from your son here. You didn't say that you should investigate to see if everything he told you about me were true or not; rather you believed them all and brought gifts that I didn't deserve and gave them to me. I said that I didn't deserve them because there was nothing I saw or did for this boy except that I took him as a worker. If anyone, it is I who ought to thank you, because in Emeka I found in a low place what I had been looking for in a high place. I say this because what I look for in any work I am involved in is productivity, humility, honesty, common sense in the right way, seeking the betterment of oneself and others, a good heart and industriousness. All these things I found in Emeka.

"I'm not going to tell everything I saw in him because one does not praise a strong man to his face. Thank you very much, chief. They say that a human being sees something and praises it. All these things you gave me I ask God to return to you twofold. May he bless you and all your people and make you rule in fear of Him. May your government and your lineage be long-lasting. Wife of the chief, I appreciate the way you were able to arrange all these things the way our white women do."

When he said this, they laughed. The woman was embarrassed; she lowered her head in respect with a little smile. He went on, "Emeka, I also thank you. It was you who were the intermediary (palm tree climbing-rope) between me and your people. The reason I thank you is that

it is not all people who tell the good things people have done to them. But you came to your land and honored me, from the good things you said about me. I can't say many words about you now; but I heard it said that if you thank a person for his deed, he will be glad, and will do it again. People of the town, and chief, wife and Emeka, I thank you. We will go; they say that if rain does not spoil the day there is still plenty of time left. So let it be. On hunting day one comes and chases the cane rat in the alleyway." They all then accompanied them and went out, and they returned to Emeka's house.

The things that were on that plate were: chicken and partridge eggs, soft palmtree, ripe bananas, peanuts (okokpa=type of nut?), melon seed, onions and tomatoes.

When they reached Emeka's house, he and his mother gave him several gifts of various kinds. The best of all was a very heavy ram that had been bought for more than three pounds and ten shillings. They took everything and put it in the car and thanked everyone there. They also took Emeka's motorcycle and put it in the car; they then got in the car and drove away and returned to Ndoki. After they had gone, stories about Emeka and the type of person he was were told in that land for a long time. No one forgot it.

CHAPTER 9 EMEKA STARTS HIS WORK AGAIN

They spent three hours and thirty minutes on the road before they reached Ndoki. The reason they arrived at that time was that the white man drove very fast, because they stayed thirty minutes on the Abayi Nchokoro road, where a car accident had occurred. It was a place where the roads intertwine. A lorry from Ohanso on which was written "If one does not do what he is able to do," came from Ohanso going to Aba. It and another car on which was written "He flies," which came from Aba and was going to Akwete, collided head-on at that junction. What one saw there was not good to talk about. Four people died on the spot. No one lingered alive. Blood was flooding out of their bodies. More than sixteen people were wounded. Only eight people among those in the two cars were not wounded at all. When they reached that place, the white man stopped their car. He and Emeka got out and joined the crowd gathered

there to help in carrying out the people, and helping them by putting them in the car which was to take them to the hospital in Aba.

As they were doing this, the police came from Aba and wrote down how it all happened. When they had finished carrying off the wounded and had gone to Aba, the people of Abayi Nchokoro brought the white man and Emeka water and they washed off the blood from their bodies and their clothes. The police thanked them, and they got into their car and left.

As soon as their car stopped in front of Emeka's house and he got out, all of his fellow-workers came running, calling his name, calling him "Chuks! Chuks! Chuks!" Some of them hugged him, others shook his hand. They all happily asked him how the people at home were doing, and welcomed him back. It was the workers who helped to carry his things out of the car and joined him in arranging things in his house. After this, he went and greeted all of his friends who did not know that he had returned and those who were unable to come and welcome him. His return satisfied them like food, because it was he who made all of them happy because of his good behavior, and the amusing conversation he had with them. He also gave several of them things he had brought from home. He gave all the workers ground nuts and melon seeds he had brought from home. They contributed money and went and bought wine that evening, and they all drank to welcome him. Their compound was very lively that day.

At dawn, they all went to their jobs. Emeka saw that much progress had been made in their work. He then went to work with renewed vigor, and made more progress.

One Saturday, a certain young woman teacher came to Emeka's house to visit him. The young woman was very beautiful. She had reached a good height. She was not very heavy; rather, she was a bit slim. Her eyelids covered her eyes like those of an elephant. Her eyes were like those of a cat. Her nose was like a gong (pointed). Her lips were thin. No one who saw her on the road would fail to turn back and look at her again. The girl spoiled the heads of all the young men who saw her. They then followed her the way flies follow cows. When she came to his house, he received her well, greeted her as a well-brought-up young man should. The young woman was pleased at the way he received her. They had not stayed together for long before Emeka then asked her to tell him who she was

because he did not know who she was. She laughed and told him that it was true that they had never met to talk to each other, but they had passed each other on the road when they were going to work. After she said this, she stood up, and so did Emeka. She then told him that her name was Nwanne Uka, from Ndokí. She also said that she was a teacher in the Qhankú Ndokí school; that her father was one of the Ndokí chiefs, those who have a say (in the community). Emeka then told her that he was Chukwuemeka Okoro; what people called him most was Emeka; his father's name was Mba Okoro, that he was from Efulu which was in the Awka District, that she had seen what he worked at. They then laughed like government workers, shook hands and sat down.

They talked a long time. But all that talk was not useful at all. The first thing was that Emeka did not know who she was. Shame and fear did not allow the woman to tell what she had in mind in coming to see him. Their situation on that day was the situation of people of the same gender. This will make us sure to understand that Nwanne was like a dog sneaking out to eat an egg. The story that comes that will tell itself. When it reached evening, Nwanne said goodbye and left. Emeka had no thoughts at all that warned him well concerning women. What shows us this is the advice his father gave him when he was going to enter the high school he went to.

The advice was this, "Emeka my son, I know that tomorrow, now, you are leaving my house and going out to go to high school. This means that we have started, on our part, your mother and I, to regard you as a chick whose mother has trained it. My son, please my good son, don't forget all the advice I gave you from the time you started to understand things. Know that it is you who will run this household. Especially, no one knows what God will use you to do in this town. Because of this, my son, be careful all your life. Persevere in pursuing good things. Be avoiding bad things in all ways. My son, what I will not fail to remind you of is things concerning women. Everyone who pursues women pursues his downfall. One who is not led into trouble by things concerning women will live long ~~stay~~ in this world. That person will be a strong man who keeps his word. That person will go on all his journeys and arrive home safely. That person will have respect everywhere, among both men and women. Puzzlement (scratching the face in chagrin) will not afflict him at any time. A common saying among women is that "bring bring" is good from

the man's pocket. They do not follow one who does not look for them. They do not follow one who does not give them things.

"As I am saying this, I don't tell you to go out into the street and start to fight with them. If I use the he-goat as an example, I do not tell you the he-goat should carry his mother. Anyone who has sense will go to the road and get what he wants. The reason I remind you of these things is not that I don't know that you have sense and that you are a good fellow, but that I have known the abominations women did to some men when we were doing porter work and company work. Persevere, my boy, God will lead you in all your ways. Do not forget me and your mother."

In his heart, Emeka took everyone as a fellow human being. He treated children the same way he treated adults; both men and women. There was something Nwanne had in mind in coming to his house. She did not see a way to tell it to him on that day because Emeka did not look at her the way other young men looked at her. When she went home, she was not happy. She was going like a spirit (masquerade?) not receiving money in the road. Her heart was cold. She was murmuring on the way back. These were a few of the things she said: "You have seen now! This fellow, is he really a human being? Is it true that a man does not look at the children he has? An Ndokji person would not behave like that. When I reach home, I will know what the amj (a kind of crop) and his strength will do. His strength, is it not for a short time?"

She reached home, went to the Ohanso market and bought a large, heavy snapper (azu-asa) which cost eight naira. She also bought a bundle of chewing-sticks, seven kola nuts, kola pepper, bar soap, chicken eggs, three cups of pepper, and one gallon of oil, and carried them to Emeka on Saturday, which was one week after the day she went the first time. There was a child she gave those things to, for him to take to Emeka's house. She told that child that she, Nwanne Uka, would come that evening, and told him where those things came from, and what followed them. When the child told Emeka what he had been told about, Emeka was speechless. He opened his mouth and closed it, saying, "Oh my God! until I see her."

CHAPTER 10
EMEKA AND NWANNE UKA

At six o'clock in the evening, Nwanne showed up at Emeka's house. Emeka greeted her. They entered the house and sat down. He hardly let her sit down before he asked her, "Nwanne, please, what are these things you have brought to my house?" She then laughed and told him that he owned all of them, that they were things she used to show that she thanked him. This kind of reply did not satisfy him. He had no words to thank her. He did not know what else to say. He did not feel right to take them because the things she bought were numerous. He looked up and said to her, "Nwanne, please tell me why you bought all these things. I know that we had never seen each other except for the other day. Is it for that that you would bring these things? Nine heads of (ujiri) and one unit of money are not useful [proverb]. I also know that a thing is not done for nothing. Nwanne told him that he should take the things and keep them, that there was nothing in it, that it was a sincere gift. She begged him to take all those things into the house and stop talking about them, to come and tell stories, that there was something more important to her. Emeka agreed, did as she told him, and thanked her as well as he could.

They then began to converse. There was nothing a mouth can say that that girl's mouth did not say on that day. She tried as hard as she could to make Emeka see her as she was, then to know how beautiful she was. But his heart was not humbled to look at her in that way. After a while she called Emeka's name. He answered her. She told him that she liked him very much. She said that the reason she spoke to him that way was that it is said that if one comes right out with it she gives birth to a child; that it is not difficult for a person's things to become someone else's things (through delay). Especially she said that her love was not a different matter, that it was a situation that no one else would marry her if not Emeka.

She began to enumerate all the people who had come with talk of marrying her, and she had refused. On the day she first saw him she joyfully thanked God, because he used his hand to bring her a husband who would marry her. She said that if he did not marry her, she would hang herself.

Emeka then took a deep breath and exhaled. He said to himself that he had not seen a woman take the initiative to ask a man please to marry her. He then told Nwanne that what she had said to him pleased him very much, because she was very beautiful to him, and also was educated; but there were many things that would make it impossible. Some of those things were that his village was very far away from Ndoki; because of it there were not two workers who would support their proposal. He was a poor person, and because of this he could not marry the daughter of a wealthy person, let alone the daughter of a Ndoki chief. Their village was a village of dry soil, so she would not be able to live there if they returned to his family home. He was not yet ready to marry, because he still did not have money, and in addition their boss had said that he would go to a higher trade school to learn more about their work.

And he wanted to marry a woman who went to college after he had finished college, but she, Nwanne, had not gone to any college. There were also several other replies he gave her to confuse her, which will not be discussed here.

Nwanne then picked up all these things he gave her as replies and refuted them completely. It was as though they were the words of a child in her opinion. She began to promise Emeka various things she would do for him if he would agree. Some were that she would give Emeka half of the money he would use to pay the bride price at her father's house; that she would love him with all her heart until death. There was nothing that women did for men that she would not do for him. That she would give him some money to go to college; that she would persevere in going to college so that when the two of them came out of college, they would go to the church at once and marry.

When she finished speaking, Emeka said that if it was like that, she should carry off all those things, that he would not, on account of shame before a friend, swallow a cough (phlegm); that he would not agree to something he could not follow through on. Nwanne then fell to the floor and began to weep, rubbing herself and her dress on the sand, and saying things that would melt the heart. Emeka then felt sympathetic. He begged her to please get up so they could settle the thing calmly. It was not that it was something that could not be done. He went and raised her up, sat her on his lap and soothed her. The girl slowly dried her tears and told

him that the reason she had cried was on account of the love she had for him; that he should please agree. When she asked him this question, Emeka remembered everything his father had told him when he was alive. He told her it was all right, that she should go home so he could think about the matter. She then greeted him and went home.

Chukwuemeka had never before seen anything like this. He looked upward, shook his head, and said that his fathers had never told him anything like this, that this woman had become to him like one who clears the land and does not plant yams. He then called one of his fellow workers and showed him everything that was brought to him and also told him everything about Nwanne. The man then advised him well. He said to him, "My friend, Emeka, all these things surprise me a lot. You know that all these things cost about five pounds. Since I started to walk and run, I have not seen anything like this. These things show the great love this girl has for you. Do you think that one who wants to eat a person to death will first carry to him everything her parents use to exist? My friend, you have very good luck. You know that since her father is a chief, she can bring you from her father's house the things you can use to become a well-known person. Your god is awake. Has good fortune like this come to me? Do not let the good luck that your god is stuffing in your mouth escape you. I have known who you are (what you are like). You will start now to run from her, and she will then go home. Do not abandon her."

He told more than seven people about it. They all answered him as the first one did. His mind then began to change. He remembered what his mother said to him when he was on vacation, concerning getting married. He thought to himself that it was good, that he would agree; that if it turned out badly, he knew that it was where a person fell down that his god pushed him down. He went home and slowly started to consume the things Nwanne had brought him. He did not know that Nwanne had put into all those things some medicine that caused men to love their girlfriends very much. He then took them all and ate them up. The medicine then slowly entered his body.

When Nwanne was returning on the road that day, she was happy. She said to herself that people say that Emeka does not succumb, that he does not look at any woman, that he was already gone, it remains for him to come back. That she would see if he he would not eventually one day take

the mouth he used to eat yam and cocoyam and kiss her on the soles of the feet she used to walk with.

It was not long before her medicine entered Emeka's body. He thought of nothing but how he would see Nwanne and tell her that he had agreed to marry her. On the next Sunday, Nwanne got up and said that she would go and see if the trap she had set in Emeka's house had caught an animal. She then entered Emeka's house and gave him a few gifts she had brought him. He entered his house and carried in various things to eat, both food and tasty bread and Stout beer mixed with tango (sweet soft drink like Fanta). Nwanne then ate all these things. She was happy because her trap held a big animal. The worst thing was that Emeka gave her those things and begged her please not to be angry that he did not have something better to give her. He told her various things to let her know that he agreed to what she had told him that previous day. They then rejoiced, and she left. That was what happened to Emeka and his money.

CHAPTER 11 EMEKA AND NWANNE LIVE HIGH

From that day forward, Emeka thought of nothing but Nwanne Uka. All the conversation he had with people concerned only how Nwanne loved him, and the various good things he told them that she did for him. Another thing he told them was that he would marry her, because when he was returning from his vacation his mother had told him that he should try hard to marry, and that Nwanne was the type of person his mother would like. The way that girl was spoiling his head, he forgot to write his mother a letter, even to tell her that he had found someone to marry.

Nwanne Uka, for her own part, on the day she left Emeka's house and went home, was very happy. It seemed to her as though she had everything she needed for life in this world. The thing that caused that joy was that she knew that she would get a lot out of Emeka. From that day on, she was at Emeka's house every day. Any time she knew that they had finished work, she showed up. They bought rice, meat, fish, canned meat and fish, chicken eggs and various tasty things, cooked and ate them up. They also drank intoxicating beverages, both Igbo wine and white people's wine. Every day after eating and drinking, they played the gramophone and danced until dark. It was not only these things. Any type of clothing or

costume that came out at that time Emeka made sure to see that he bought them all for her--both clothing and other things. Every time that Nwanne dressed up and came out, it looked as though her husband was minting money; but she had no husband. At the end of every month, Emeka gave her three pounds to buy the things she wanted. The only thing Nwanne did for him was when she had consumed all those things, she went and stroked his body, hugging and kissing him. That was the only thing Emeka was getting. They behaved this way until all the money Emeka had was gone. He then began to be indebted to people.

When that became too much, all of Emeka's behavior changed. His work performance also changed. He did not go near his fellow-workers because he thought they were saying bad things about him and his girlfriend. Another thing was that he was ashamed about the debts he owed. He did not do his work well because any time he was at work, he was thinking about the girl. And soon, things concerning her brought quarrels to him and his fellow-workers.

At first, all of his fellow-workers loved him because he was such a good person, and worked so hard. But now he had changed into a slacker. So they all met together and decided to go to his house and have a word with him, to see if he would change back to being a good person. One of them said that they should go to him by surprise, that if he knew they were coming, he would hide from them, because he did not want to see people. All the others agreed. When Sunday evening came, they all went together to Emeka's house. It was during the week of that mission that Nwanne had told him to go and borrow twenty pounds from someone, to buy a certain large radio. Because of that, when the people entered, Emeka and his girlfriend were jumping around his house, where they were dancing to the radio music. When they entered his house, Emeka was startled and ran to sit down on a chair. Nwanne stood glaring at them like a person who had been caught stealing. They then sat down. One of them said that rashes had broken out on the female cow [proverb]; that this was not just hearsay.

They stayed and Emeka did not know what to do. He then went and brought kola and gave it to them and greeted them as uninvited guests. At that time his girlfriend had sat down on a chair. Their leader then told him to turn off the radio for a while. He did so. The leader then lifted the

kola and blessed it saying, "Lord, look at this kola. One who brings kola brings life. Where there is a slacker problem, let it not touch us (our bodies). Knowing something and then not knowing it, please fly away on high. Whoever says that the child her fellow-woman gives birth to will not be useful to her mother, please, when she bears her own child, let its foolishness have no limits. Our friends, we will live long! One whose companion tries to save his life, let him receive it well. They all chorused ofo-o o! (ha-a! He split the kola and shared it with the others. They ate. The girl was the only one who refused to eat the kola.

The leader then stood up and greeted everyone there. He told them that it was true that he was the oldest and the supervisor of their work, but he was going to stand up and tell Emeka why they came to his house. [As the oldest it was his prerogative to remain seated.] Emeka shrank and looked at him with shame. He knew in his heart that it was something concerning his girlfriend that they had come to tell him. He (the supervisor) told him that the matter was something they would have told him alone, but since Nwanne was there, it was all right with them. He told him that the reason they came was that the way he was behaving and doing his work was not the way he was at first. After watching for a while they had decided that they would come and tell him that he should start to behave as he did at first. That what they regretted very much was that he was not going to work as he should. What was the worst thing of them all was the debts he owed. That they knew that if he added together the debts he owed, it would amount to more than six hundred pounds. They knew that the time he changed was when he began to say that he was planning to marry Nwanne Uka. But since that time he had done nothing toward marrying in the house of that girl's father which would show that he was marrying her. That meant that it was not marriage he was carrying out, but that they were lovers. He then told him that if he really wanted to marry her, he should write his family a letter that they should come and fulfill the marriage traditions, and if he did that, they his fellow-workers would help him. And if he did not want to marry her, he should quietly leave her, that Nwanne Uka would push him into something out of his usual way [feces he was not excreting].

All the others then started to contribute to the matter. They advised him for a long time; then reminded him how he used to have good behavior at first, and how he had money at that time, how the people of

his town counted on him and how their white boss liked him at first. They leaked out to him that the white man was preparing to terminate his employment if he did not change his bad behavior. When they had given him all that advice, he remembered all the words his father used to tell him when he was a child. He then sighed and thanked them for the good thing they had done for him. They then left.

But all the time they were speaking, Nwanne kept on crying herself to death. Emeka then lifted her up, comforted her, and told her that they would go and do the necessary things on the very next Sunday, and she would then come back to live in his house and become his wife. Nwanne sighed and went home. She was angry because Emeka's co-workers had thrown sand into her gari. What they said about her boyfriend coming to her father's house to carry out the traditions for marrying her did not please her, because she had never in her heart wanted Emeka to marry her. What she wanted was to consume his wealth and make him destitute (unable to lick oil). If she saw a way she could make him lack money to take a car to her father's house, and also to have him fired from his job, it would please her more than everything else. Emeka was not the first person she had treated that way. The white man, because of that girl, had fired something like four people before Emeka came to work there. That was why those workers had given Emeka that advice in her presence, not minding her at all. When she went home she started to think about what she would do. Then, she decided that she would do nothing until she saw that Emeka's heart had changed in regard to her. It was then that she would show him what the spirits used the rat's ears to do.

It is said that the fool does not know when he enters the forest. When they all left Emeka's house, he went and lay down on his bed and began to think about his circumstances. He did not think about how he could get rid of his girlfriend. Rather he was thinking about how he and his girlfriend and his fellow-workers could patch things up. He then said that he would go and call two of the workers to accompany him to go for the traditional marriage discussions at the home of Maazi Uka. He had no money to use to marry the girl. His hope was that after they decided on the bride price, he would borrow money from his fellow-workers to do it; then he could repay them gradually.

One who is told something and appears to be pleased about it, is he

not a slave to appearances? He then went and called the two workers to go and speak for the girl in the house of Nwanne's people. The girl's father received them well, because he and the girl's mother were actively looking for someone to come and marry her; because she was giving them big trouble, bringing them lots of problems and quarrels. But when they started to talk, the girl told them they not to say anything at all, that she would think about it and decide if she would live in Emeka's house. They then went home. When a thing like this happened, a small thought entered Emeka's heart. But this did not keep Nwanne from continuing to come to his house at times. What she was coming to his house for now was spying.

CHAPTER 12

NWANNE SHOWS HIM WHAT THE SPIRITS USED THE RAT'S EARS TO DO

One day, the girl came to Emeka's house. He asked her what she thought about the matter they had come to her father's house about. Nwanne told him not to trouble himself, that within the week she would tell him what she thought. Emeka's heart began to beat fast. He started to think that Nwanne would make him out to be someone who is brought out and then abandoned. From then on he was unable to buy the things they used to use for enjoying life because he had no money, and no one who would agree to lend him any. The worst thing of all that happened to him within that week was that the white man wrote him a letter and said that he had suspended him for three months, because he was no longer doing his work well. And that if he stayed those three months and went back, and could not do the work as well as he did at first, he would be sacked finally. When he read that letter, he did not know himself. He thought every way possible of what he could do, but he could not think of anything. He then took the letter and went to their supervisor's house and showed it to him. He was in tears. He begged him to go with him to beg the white man not to suspend him for three months, because if that happened, he would die of hunger. The supervisor then told him that he would not go with him because they had told him that something like this would happen, but he did not listen to them. He also told him that he should go to his girlfriend and ask her to accompany him. Also, if they went and the white man did not agree, he should go and let the girl start feed him, because friendship means that one brings and the other brings and the days will go along. He could not bear that. He then cried a lot, fell on his knees and begged him to accompany him. When he cried, the man remembered the

type of good person Emeka used to be. He pitied him. He then comforted him and said that he (Emeka) should have known that the first thing was to be careful; the next thing was what he (the supervisor) had pointed out to him earlier. He told him that what he should know was that if nothing happened to a person he would not learn anything. That when he left he would go to the white man's house and beg him to see if he would show him mercy, and the next day Emeka should come to find out how things went. Emeka thanked him and left.

When Emeka reached his house he did not understand what he saw. There was not one thing left in his house at all. While he had been at the house of the supervisor, Nwanne had gone secretly and taken everything in the house and run off. All those who saw her when she packed all those things did not say anything to her, because they did not know that Emeka was unaware of what she was doing. They thought that was the way she used to go to Emeka's house right from the start. The girl wrote a letter before she ran off and put it on the one chair left in his house. She wrote in the letter that the place to which she carried off these things was Agwama. The letter she wrote him was very insulting. The reason she left it was so that Emeka would lose the things in the house while looking for things outside. (proverbial--throw him off the track?) This was true because she did not write in the letter the place to which she was actually going. The letter she wrote him was this:

"Ulo Ikpere Mmiri 2. Ndoki
20/9/53.

Dear Emeka, of the yam-roasting group,

This is to tell you that since I was able to walk and run I have never seen anyone so foolish as you. How could you look at me and say that you would marry me? This showed me that you are not afraid of someone who is your superior. Please go and find foolish people and your poor mates and marry them. If it is I you are wanting, your eye does not reach where I am, let alone your hand.

All your things I carried off were to make up for the shame on account of your insults to me. If you don't like it, you can come to look for me at Agwama where I have gone. If you come, you should be prepared, because it is said that if one is looking for a thing, it is looking for him.

Nwanne Uka."

When Emeka finished reading this, he felt weak. He sank heavily to the floor. His breath left him. It was not in him to cry, because the things lost from his house were numerous. Some of them were: radio, gramophone, four boxes and their contents; various kinds of plates and spoons, cloth and many other such things.

He stayed about an hour there where he had sunk to the floor before he came to himself, and cried out. Some people then gathered and saw the amazing conditions in his house. It distressed them very much. They had sympathy for him. They went with him to various places looking for Nwanne. They went to Aguama as she had written Emeka in the letter. There was no place where they had heard a thing about her, or seen her. In this way, Nwanne showed Emeka what the fire used the rat's ear to do.

After they had finished searching for her, but there was no place where they had heard a thing about her, Emeka returned to the house and sat down with a heavy heart. What made him feel hot in front and cold in back was that after a while, the supervisor came to his house and told him that he had gone to the white man's house and begged him as he had promised him, but he had refused. He said he had no pity at all. That what he had said was said, and he would not change his mind.

This story made the world seem confusing to Emeka. His life was no longer sweet. What he longed for was that his god should take him. He no longer cared to cry. He did not like to be silent. And he tried hard to tell the supervisor what his girlfriend had done to him. The man consoled him as best he could, and then left.

Now, Emeka Okoro had reached rock bottom. The one who had pushed him down was Nwanne Uka. There was nothing at all he had in his house, not even ordinary food. The only thing in the house he could use to get money was his motorcycle and three pairs of trousers, two agbadas, two pairs of shoes, and one five-gallon iron pot. After one seeks a place to support his hands but cannot find it, one places it on ones knees. Emeka then sold out all these things to get money to buy food. Then the man used his tongue to count his teeth. He remembered all the admonitions his father and others had given him. He cried in his heart, and agreed that he had done something foolish. He went back home and locked himself in for more than seven days. Some people were unable to tell where he was.

Some thought that all those things that happened to him had spoiled his brain. But it was not like that. He stayed in his house mourning his fate.

One day, the supervisor came to find out how he was getting along and saw that his door was locked. Tears came to his eyes. He and Emeka cried a long time. He then told Emeka to have patience, that that was how things were for a man, that the bedbug told her children to have patience, that what was hot would eventually be cold. Emeka then told him that the worst thing for him was that he had nothing to eat. The man then left, went to the white man's house, and told him about Emeka's situation. The white man then went with him to see how it was. When he (Emeka) saw them, he cried a lot. The white man was filled with pity. He and the supervisor comforted him.

Since he was so full of pity, he told him not to cry, that everything would be all right. He told him that starting the next day he should return to work. He then put his hand in his pocket and took three pounds and gave them to him to buy something to eat. Emeka thanked him and bowed down to him. Emeka made them a promise that if God helped him, he would not allow anything like that to happen to him again. They then went home.

He took the money and bought clothing to wear to work, and also bought some food. The next day, he returned to his job. People were glad when they saw that he had started to work again. After a few months had passed, Emeka had gotten some money and had begun to live the good life as he was doing before. Always he was praying that his god would let him meet Nwanne on the road some day so that he could look her in the eye and show her that he was the man whom she had ruined. He was asking everyone he saw on the road if they had heard anything about that girl. But no one knew where she was.

CHAPTER 13 NWANNE'S STORY COMES OUT

It was six months to the day after Nwanne had carried off all Emeka's possessions that Emeka heard about her again. He did not only hear about her but he saw her. But the way he saw her is not something one can describe. However, this is the story. One day, Emeka left his workplace to go home. He came out onto the highway they used and saw

some women going to market shouting and shaking their heads. He then got off his bicycle and asked them why they were shouting like that. They told him that it was not something they could find words to describe, that he should run ahead and he would see for himself what had happened.

He then got back on his bicycle and pedaled fast. He reached a place where something like a large forest had been cleared and saw many people there shouting. Some were crying, some were talking about what had happened. He peered ahead and saw, where the people gathered, a large automobile carrying palm fronds all over it. He got off his bicycle again and asked the people who were talking what had happened there. It was a case of a person's deeds making him suffer. It is on the road a person uses to go and come that one day he is caught. The people told Emeka that the automobile he saw ahead with people gathered around it carried the bodies of two people, a man and a woman. That it was said that the woman left the house of her boyfriend, took everything the man had and ran off to a far-off town. While she was staying there, she met a man who was in an important government job, went home with him, and the two of them lived together. She then began to consume the man's things, trying to use them all up as she had done to the first man. One day, the man went to work. The woman then stole all the money the man had left in his wallet in the house and put it in her box in preparation for running away with it. She was putting on the dress she was going to wear for running away when the man returned and asked her where she was going. She said nowhere. She became fearful because of what she had done. The man saw how she was trembling and knew that she was doing something bad.

Immediately, his mind went to the money he had put in his wallet. He ran and looked at it, but he saw no money in it. He started to look for the money. When he asked the woman about the money, she said that she had not seen any money. The man spoke strong words, she started to cry and said that she was going to leave, that her boyfriend had accused her of stealing the money. It was a very large sum of money. It was one bag of money and forty-five pounds. Because of it, the man did not listen to her crying. The worst thing was that the money was money belonging to his workplace which they had given to the man to deposit in the bank. Therefore, the man looked everywhere for the money. He then saw the box the woman had brought out which she was angrily going to leave with because he had accused her of thievery; he told her to bring it so he could

see what was inside of it. The woman refused. Then he snatched the box from her, opened it, and saw the money in it. He was very angry. He then put her in his automobile to take her to the police and tell them that she was a thief.

He then drove the car out fast, because he was extremely angry. When he reached the place where the road was intersected, he was unable to control the automobile. It carried them into the woods and crashed into a huge tree trunk there. When people arrived there, the man and his girlfriend had died. They then told him that it was the bodies of those two people that were carried in that automobile the people were surrounding.

Emeka then asked them the names of those people. They told him that they did not know. He then rode his bicycle up to the place. He looked and saw the body of the man, but he did not know him. He then went and looked at the body of the woman. His body then trembled because he recognized the body. It was the corpse of Nwanne Uka. Emeka then saw in the corpse the one he was preparing to take revenge on. He did not take revenge on her. The things involved in consuming men to death had killed Nwanne. What Emeka told her corpse was this: "May God take you according to your behavior." He then mounted his bicycle and left.

CHAPTER 14 EMEKA GOES TO EUROPE

Nwanne's death removed all the regressive thoughts in his heart. When all the bad things befell him, he was thinking how he would take revenge on Nwanne for everything she did to him. But now, the one he was preparing to fight had died. He then took his weapon of war and threw it into the forest; removed thoughts of it from his heart, and then took all of his thoughts and applied them to his work as he had done at the beginning. But indeed he was not rejoicing over the death of the woman, because the way she died was something that everyone was sorry about. Also, it is said there is no enmity at death. If one looked he could see that the situations of the two of them were not something Emeka would enjoy thinking about now that she was dead. The main thing about it was that it removed his burden of thought.

Not long afterward, Emeka began to work again as he was doing at

first and people began to like him again as at first. Most important, the white man look him again as his own son. Not long afterward, he sent him to Europe to advance his learning. Before he went to Europe, he first went home and told his people how he was getting along. He also told his mother about his experience with Nwanne.

Ezeosudo called together all the people of his town and told them that Emeka was preparing to go to Europe to study. That it was true that it was the white man who was sending him, but they should contribute a bit of money to give him and wish him well. They all agreed with what he said. They all then contributed three bags of money, gave them to Emeka and told him to go well, that God and all the spirits of their place would lead him out and bring him back safely. They also blessed him in various ways. He then thanked them very much, and promised them that he would persevere in obtaining what he was going for, and would also persevere in doing good things there, which would show that he came from a good town. He also gave their chief special thanks, because it was he who made possible their giving him that money. After he had finished thanking everyone and his kith and kin, he returned to Ndoki.

It was from there that he went to Europe. Things went well for him there. All the things that worried people in Europe did not affect him. The white man who sent him was giving him sufficient money. What Nwanne did to him and other things that happened to him in Ndoki had taught him sense. Therefore he had a complete sense of everything a man needed. He did not use up all the money sent to him there. He put some of it in the bank. He stayed there four years and had two higher degrees called "B.A." and "M.A." When the time came for his return to Nigeria, he wrote a letter to his family. They rejoiced, contributed money, and prepared to go to meet him at Enugu where his plane would land, and escort him home and hold celebrations to welcome him.

The day Emeka returned from Europe was a great day. The Efulu people wrote letters to all the surrounding towns to come and join them in meeting their son, and join them in holding the welcome celebrations. People filled the compounds and roads on that day. Everybody came out with their dances. There was excitement everywhere. Large amounts of food were cooked in his father's house, where the celebrations were held. Some people went to meet him at Enugu and escorted him home from there.

When they got back to his father's house, they started to shoot guns into the ground, and explosive containers. Various dancers filled their compound. The people who came there were as numerous as the sands of the earth. His mother was filled with joy on that day. Applause broke out when Ezeosudo joyfully came out dancing, also blowing his qzq horn, because someone from his land had gone to Europe and returned. Many people also gave him money and various other things to praise him for his dancing.

After they did the various dances, the Efulu people sang songs of praise for Emeka and gave him many different gifts to celebrate his return. In the few words Emeka spoke, he thanked everyone who had come there, and also thanked the Efulu people for all the honor they had given him, and thanked Ezeosudo, and most of all, he thanked the white man who sent him to get that higher education. He promised them all that he would persevere with the help of God in making his education benefit him and everyone. Emeka was the first one from Efulu who went to Europe and had the "B.A." and "M.A." degrees.

CHAPTER 15 EMEKA BECOMES A MINISTER

Emeka rested for two weeks after he returned from Europe and then went back to the white man who had trained him and started again to work for him. When he began work, he was made a supervisor along with the white man. The white man's position was only slightly above his. The salary he was paid for that work was too large for words. The pleasure car he used to go to work in was beautiful, better than that of anyone who lived around Aba at that time. Any time his pleasure car went by, people gathered shouting by the road waving to him, saying, "E e! Aba e! E e! Aba!" Indeed, there is no other way to describe his situation except to say that his personal god had elevated him greatly.

Being in this high position where Emeka was did not make him forget that if one compared his whole town with Europe, all his country still remained in darkness, because there were no people with higher education. Therefore, when he got a lot of money, including what he had placed in the bank in Europe, he went to his hometown, took that money and sent out four young men to go and study higher education in big schools called

universities. He alone trained those people. After he did this, all the people of his town loved him even more. They conferred on him the big title in their town. The name of the title they gave him was "The chief people are pleased with."

When good fortune comes to a person it comes down like rain. Emeka's became a flood that he could not hold back. Two years after his return a selection was made of those who would go to the House of Assembly where laws were made to govern the whole country. Emeka was at work; his people met, wrote him a letter telling him to return, that they had chosen him to go and represent them at that Assembly.

He then went back. Nobody vied with him for the Assembly position of their people. They all supported his going to that Assembly for them. He did not spend any money to campaign for that position. Nor was there any night travel or bribing involved in it. His going to that Assembly caused the government people to accomplish various things for the people of his town, including those he caused his people to use their hands to accomplish by themselves. Soon his town developed a lot and became a large and beautiful town. To cap it all, in that Assembly Emeka was made a Minister who saw to the welfare of the citizens and the happiness of all the people. Emeka was the man of the day.

THE END