

Poetry Series

# **Ngetich Kiptoo**

## **- poems -**

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# Ngetich Kiptoo(1981)

Ngetich Kiptoo was born on 15th August 1981 in Nakuru, Kenya. From an early age he had a big interest in books of all kind.

Inevitably he studied Literature and English when he went to Moi University and is now teaching English and Literature in Mombasa, Kenya.

# A Song Of Anguish

I don't want to see the sea,  
To have its cool breeze graze my tormented soul  
I hate the laughter at the beach,  
The ambivalent exuberance  
For it only deepens my anguish, grays everything

The memory of your smooth skin, your pearly face,  
Threatens to crack my being, my wholeness  
Your throaty laughter, your lingering smile,  
Heightens my despair, weakens my will to live  
The memory of you trails me like a shadow,  
The whirling waves seem to mock me  
How we laughed.....  
How we gazed into the horizon

I thought our love was like the ocean- boundless,  
I thought it was like hunger- ever present  
I crave your mouth, your voice, your hair,  
I can only wish you had not deserted me  
Within me, I feel little drops of anguish collecting,  
It's like the smoke that roams looking for a home  
I can see it drifting into me, choking my lost heart.  
My hands are on my neck – breathless  
I can feel your silhouette fluttering beside me,  
I can see you fading into the empty distance

Oh, why did you have to chastise me?  
I wander the earth perplexed,  
Asking; Will you come back?  
Will you leave me here, perishing?  
Will you ever come back?  
And save me from oblivion.

Ngetich Kiptoo

# A Song To Africa

Let me sing to you  
my dear African brothers and sisters  
my brothers and sisters now on dhows and dinghies  
or whatever vessel you use  
on the more-often-than-not fatal odyssey  
to the Canary Islands, the gateway  
to easy life, easy money  
I wish you well my siblings□  
I really do  
for I have heard what you have endured  
long dusty days without a drop of water  
as you trudged across the Sahara  
Stretches upon stretches of sand  
That tested your will to live  
I have seen how you're repulsed once you arrive there  
As if you were maggots or rodents  
Don't let your hope die for hope is good  
And a good thing never perishes  
For we will rise again someday

Let me sing to you  
My dear African brothers and sisters in Darfur  
I cannot begin to imagine what you are going through  
As the so-called-diplomats meet in New York  
To determine your fate  
As they drink and laugh over your demise  
A question you should ask them is;  
Do you care  
What should we do to deserve your help  
Are we too insignificant to be seen or heard  
We are poor yes, we are homeless yes  
We are Africans yes, we are powerless yes  
But did we choose to be this way  
Did we apply to be born in Darfur  
Did we desire to live like animals, to die like flies  
To be just numbers in your statistical analysis  
Are we not human beings like you  
Ask them though I know they will not listen, as usual  
We will rise again someday, I am sure.

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# A Walk Around The Country

I took a walk around the country  
I saw many things;  
kids full of songs, life, energy  
youths drained of energy  
aging so fast, yet so young  
elders full of energy  
wanting to hold to power forever  
but what I will never forget  
is a eleven-year old bride  
betrothed to a sixty-year old man  
I saw her face, her anxious face  
I heard her mothers murmured advice  
that she should not question her husband  
she should not talk back  
she should not look directly at his eyes  
she should bear his beatings like a woman  
that she was now a woman, no longer a child  
that brutal thrashings were part of his love  
that her body was his not hers  
I wondered  
why should they kill her so young  
what had she done to deserve death so early  
I saw the gleam on the old man's face  
it was like a footballer after scoring a goal  
hope I can be able to talk another walk  
around the country  
I will definitely visit her  
to see how she has fared on  
after these five years

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# Am I In Love

Am I in love?  
Tell me  
Are you the one making me sick?  
Am I in love or not  
There is this thing in my throat  
Or rather near my throat  
That can't go away till I see you  
Tell me

Ngetich Kiptoo

# Beach

It's sunset  
Am on the beach barefoot  
The sky's rich, brilliant and varied  
Like you

The water's blue, cresting  
It dips and rushes towards me  
Soothing my burning being

I feel like resting  
But I can't  
What can I do but pant?

I look at the sand  
It's pure, unsoiled as ever  
Beneath me I feel its ebbing warmth

Your profile hovers around  
In me loneliness abounds

Unto me you have been a lavender  
Without you am going under

How can I hold onto these feelings?  
How can I share them with you?  
How can I quantify my hankering?

I dip into the ocean  
It receives me, wholly

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# Bewitched

Why are doing this to me?  
I see you everywhere  
I feel you in everything I do  
Why are you torturing me?  
I can't sleep  
I can't concentrate  
I hate your feet  
I hate them for bringing you to me

Sometimes I feel it's not real  
For I have known you for only two weeks  
Yet I feel choked without you  
This is sorcery am sure  
And I have to look for charms  
To overcome your charms.

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# Feelings

Who knows what I feel but me  
I laugh, dryly  
To veil the angst beneath  
I know the feeling

I know how it rises  
From the pit of my stomach

It rises apprehensively up my gut  
Sauntering acidly by my heart  
Ragingly it jigs up  
With a fury  
I now can taste it in my mouth  
It's awful  
But I can't spit it out  
For it lies deep  
Too deep for a deep sigh  
To sigh it away

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# Ferry

I hope  
I am not a ferry  
Just to help you cross the channel  
Only to be left  
Docked and rusting  
Alone  
Rocking away in oblivion

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# First Love

I know that the first love  
It is the deepest  
It is the finest  
Is the essence of life  
I know how it tears  
The heart apart  
When it ends  
We are torn apart  
Our souls are clenched  
We are afraid  
Forever  
We never trust  
How I wish I knew  
Somebody who could repair  
Our broken hearts  
Someone who could restore  
Us to our innocence  
But we all know  
That is only a wish  
For that is equal to asking  
For someone who could repair  
Broken eggs

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# Grey

I'm on a pendulum, swinging  
I'm white, then black, but now am grey  
I know you, I don't know you  
I am with you, lonely  
I am alone, yearning your delicate scent

It's grey all over  
I'm hurt, I'm happy  
Laughing, grieving  
I feel wrenched  
Sense has been yanked from me

I'm wondering;  
Do I know you?  
Do I know me?

I think I understand you  
I know I don't know you

I curse the day I saw you  
I bless my first sight of you

I am the fish washed ashore- suffocating  
A rabbit ensnared- resigned

My words are empty you say  
My concern- insincere

I ought to jump in glee  
I'm tousled, wasting away  
The night's long, the day short

I ought to write the happiest poem  
But am writing the saddest  
I ought to say for instance:  
You laughed and I laughed too  
I smiled, you smiled back  
You sighed deeply; I heaved a sigh- sometimes

I try to reach out  
You recoil- anxious  
That's why I am sad, you too are sad,  
All the time

It's grey  
Do you know what you want?

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# Her Wish

When I die, she told me  
I would like to lie surrounded  
By pious and loved souls

I hate oblivion, she said  
I don't want to lie isolated  
As if I never existed  
I don't want to be hid away  
As if I were scourged

But remember, she goes on  
Nobody need not mourn me  
I want no tears  
To wet my peaceful abode  
I need no sorrow  
To blemish my happiness

Plant pines  
For the birds to perch on  
I want to hear their songs

I want prayers to reach me  
As you meditate near me  
I want to hear your laughter  
As you glimpse through our mirth

Lastly, she says as if in a dream  
My epitaph ought to read;  
She laughed when she could  
She loved even when she shouldn't

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# I Had My Palms Read

The medicine woman,  
She told me to lift my left thumb  
Then she laughed  
Looked me over  
Shook her head  
'One woman, ' she said  
As a matter of fact  
I shook my head  
Then laughed  
Then thought of you  
And wondered  
If that one woman was you

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# Life

What is life but an empty shell  
What is life but a hollow emptiness  
We walk around in gold  
Ours ears glittering in pearls  
To blind the anguish beneath  
We thirst for diamond  
As if it were air itself  
What is life  
I ask you  
What is life  
Is it being adorned in myrrh  
Or in exclusive flowing garments  
What is the worth of all this  
Don't call me naïve  
For I have seen them  
Them that have all this  
Them have it all  
Them that are already there  
And are now coming back  
Yes I have seen them  
They moan and mourn  
I moan and mourn too  
But I am in high spirits  
I am bewildered  
Give me an answer  
That will make me rest  
It's stifling me  
Or maybe life is living in lavish hotels  
Or having boxfuls of cash  
What is life  
But wastefulness and ingratitude  
What is life  
But betrayal and folly  
What is it but thirst  
Thirst for shallowness  
Thirst for meaninglessness  
Why live carefully  
Only to perish carelessly  
Why live carelessly

Only to live longer

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# My Class Of Five

My class of five  
Is driving me nuts  
I went to class this morning  
To teach them action verbs  
But it's as if I was teaching them  
Inaction verbs  
For they looked at me  
Strangely  
The look that students give you  
The look that makes you feel  
Well.....  
Rather stupid

Give me an example  
Of an action verb  
I said  
All they did was look at me

It was too much  
I had to walk out of class  
Or else I would have had to scream  
And lose my mind

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# My Heart

I have no words, only fears  
Lots of them  
Pressed in, overflowing

The wind is still  
And like a leaf, I'm coming down  
Steadily  
I struggle to go up again  
I can't  
There is nobody to propel me up!

Within me my heart is a stone  
Numbed  
By too much hopes and fears

Am the dry leaf  
Degenerating

I look around  
I can't  
My sight is dimmed  
By worry

I am sinking, frozen  
Wriggling free is out of question  
It is a dreary and barren task

Will I ever rise again?  
Will I ever see light?

Like a broken ceramic I lie  
Irredeemable

If only I get a dropp of hope  
For my soul  
And a tingling of assurance  
For my heart  
And an inkling of light  
For my mind

I may rise again  
Just maybe

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# Ocean

The ocean whines,  
In hunger, in anger  
It wants more  
All rivers are running dry  
'It's not enough',  
It frets

Who demands all these waters?  
Is it the lobster, to multiply?  
Is it the whale, to live?  
Is it the anglerfish, to capture prey?

To me, you are the ocean  
Running me dry

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# Our Hearts

I am lying alone, thinking  
Sleep as usual has rebelled  
Refusing to do what it ought

What time it is am not sure  
I guess it's long past midnight

I am wondering  
What really control our hearts?  
Is it the mind, always sceptical  
Is it the emotions, always unpredictable  
Is it faith, always rebuking  
Is it love, always intoxicating  
Is it advice, always unwanted  
Is it rage, always blinding  
Maybe it is experience  
Being the best teacher  
Wait a minute, can it be the body  
Our uncultured component  
Whose cravings are perpetual

I am wondering  
But I need not  
For I know  
Mine heart is controlled by fear  
Yes, real raw fear  
Of the unknown

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# Ravens

Have you seen the ravens?  
One of them perched  
On this roof yesterday,  
Show me now;  
Which one it was,  
I know you can't.  
I hope  
I have not a similar fate  
That as soon as I fly away;  
Into the murky oblivion  
I sink

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# Rose

Your beauty and fragrance inspires me,  
Your complication intrigues me,  
Sometimes you are natural and perpetual;  
At others you are hybrid and delightful  
Always folded;  
Your colourful petals baffle me,  
But when you open them;  
You blossom gorgeously.

Your range of colour is awe inspiring,  
If at peace you're white or pink,  
When cheerful, you rush through tones of yellow,  
When inflamed, you're dark crimson or maroon.  
Your slender stems - full of thorns;  
Prevent me from feeling you,  
All the same your delightful fragrance  
Reaches me  
Compelling me to linger around you  
In anticipation.

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# The Last Day

If you knew your last day  
Where would you spend it?  
Would it be at the beach- breezing?  
Or at the park, meditating

Will it be beside me, silently?  
Thinking of what your life might have been  
If I hadn't chanced upon it

Maybe you would rather walk in the wild  
Brooding  
Complaining to yourself  
Complaining of how your life has been  
How it has been slow and eventless  
How unappreciated you have been

For me I would rather have you beside me  
Looking directly into your eyes  
Feeling the flames within me  
Hearing and feeling your heavy sigh  
As it grazes me  
As it inflames me  
Allowing myself to be carried away  
By your presence  
Yes, wishing to have one more day  
And still in love  
Even if it is in vain

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# The Lump Again

The lump in my throat  
Has refused to go away.  
It wakes me up in the morning  
Reminds me am still alive.  
It threatens

The lump  
I wish it were a lamp  
For it would light  
My dark dreary life.

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# The Phone Call

He kept glancing at the phone  
He wanted it to vibrate  
He always put the phone in silent mode  
He hated the squeaky ring tones  
He did not expect a call  
He did not want a call  
How could he expect a call?  
When he did not know what to say?

He knew he could most certainly sweat  
If a call came.  
He wanted to hear her voice  
Her husky, throaty voice  
But what could he tell her?  
Should he tell her  
To move on  
That they are incompatible  
That he is tired  
Of her moaning  
Her persistent nagging  
Her annoying everything  
That he did not think of her  
Anymore  
Or maybe  
He should just let the phone  
Ring, ring, ring  
Until it stops

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