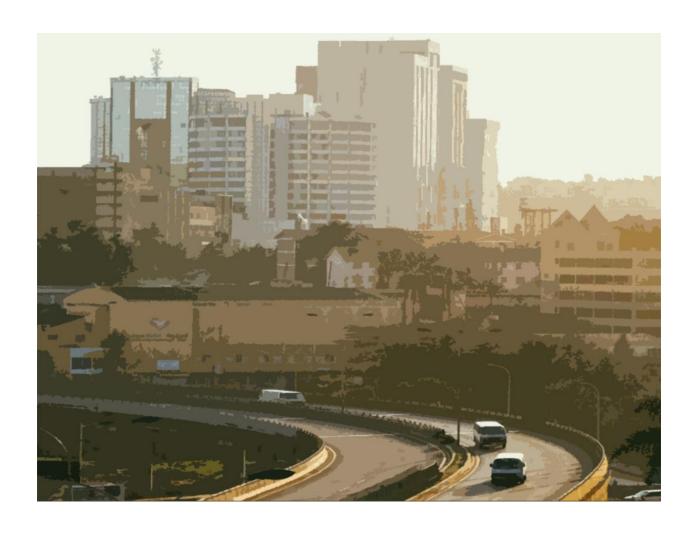
"STEADY ROCKING"

Oganga Mangiti

Poems:



BIG GIRL STATUS

There are days I often longed for,
But none like today;
Nothing comes close to this joy;
Or the happiness I feel;
I often remembered the early mornings;
And bright evenings;
When mom would walk me to school;
And wait for me at the school gate when school was over;
This was love;
This is how she showed me she cared;
This was how she reminded me;
That I was her little baby;
And today;
Comes the day;
I can finally walk myself to school;
Me and my friends, like the big girls we are;

I often wondered how it felt;
Always hoped that this new milestone;
Would make them understand;
That I was growing into a big girl;

Soon enough;
The day will come,
When I too, will be able to board matatus on my own;
Be able to move unsupervised;

There's a nice pretty stage near our school gate;
Where big girls move around the city unchecked;
And I often long to be like them;
But today; today we celebrate this beautiful milestone.



WE ONCE WALKED

There are those who claim,
Our men hate us;
But it's not just a claim,
When you see how women are treated in bus stages all over this city;
We are harassed simply for having bodies;
Simply for dressing how we like;
And on extreme cases stripped naked for all to see;
But there are those who love us, and fight for us;
On mornings like these;
Seeing women like her;
Surrounded like vultures on a stage;
I'm reminded of what it feels like; what it felt like;
I remember owning my first car;
Driving it off the yard;
It wasn't new,
But to me it was,

It gave me the kind of empowerment that many women lack; It reminded me that I am beautiful; And deserve to feel safe, It reminded me that I am human too; I offer her a lift to where she's going; I see the gratitude in her eyes; She feels safe. In a way she is reminded that women are each other's keepers; "Midnight Train" from Sauti Sol's new album has just come on; I turn the radio volume up; This is one of those mornings; I know it will be a good day; We are jamming like soul sisters; We understand something that words can't explain; We are stuck in traffic; but we love it; this is it; Right beside my car; is a matatu with "Midnight Train's" cover art on the side; It's one of those mornings that were meant to be.



CITY OF DREAMS

Growing up in this city,
Often felt momentous;
Like everything was constantly moving to this one important moment in time;
That the struggles we go through;
Are part of the beauty of the journey we are on;
Matatus represent our culture;
They hold dear what we love and cherish;
Like murals, that never stop moving;
Every corner, every turn; has something new to offer;
Our culture is embedded in the stories they tell;
The loud sounds of this city keep it alive;
From the hooting of cars stuck in traffic;
To the booming of sound from matatus;
They represent who we are;
And it is how we become, custodians of our time;

Jobs in this city are scarce; It's why we hustle through early mornings and late nights; Trying to etch a living; Moving through bright lights; And matatu stages that are always full of people on the move; And today morning is no different; I'm worried about time; Worried about the traffic that might make me late for my interview; But somehow I still have hope; Somehow, things always fall into place in this city; "Mi Siwezi" by Kahush has just come on, And like clockwork. The driver turns up the volume; This is the jam to keep your spirits up; The loud music and the lyrics from the song remind me not to stop, not to ever stop; We've barely stopped at the Railways stage; And I'm already out of the matatu; Joining the large crowd of people chasing their dreams; Making opportunities out of nothing; That's why we call Nairobi, the City of Dreams.



A PLACE WE'VE CALLED HOME

These young men,
Always flying out of Matatus that have barely stopped;
You wonder where they are running to;
I wonder what's become of this city, everyone is always in a hurry;
I remember the first time I came;
Right after Independence;
We had big dreams and hopes back then;
Not that we don't; but I'm an old man now;
A lot of these big buses you see today;
Full of color and tattoos;
You wonder why anyone would do that to such a beautiful bus;
I would never let my boss do that to this bus of mine;
When I was younger;
I remember doing cross country trips;
I loved the life back then;
Nights spent making stops in different towns, it was the life;

But when the wife became pregnant;

I had to adjust, settled for this, and I love it;

30 years and still going strong;

Fed, clothed and schooled my kids right here;

I've watched this city become everything it is;

Watched buildings come and go;

Might as well say I'm a living museum you know;

Too bad they still let these reckless *nduthis* enter the CBD.



DREAMS COME TRUE

There are few days I've aspired to live;
And today is the hallmark;
I'm making my mark in this city;
Finally having a say;
The long nights spent in the office;
The mornings spent rushing to meetings;
The eye bags built on countless cups of coffee;
It all still feels like a dream;
My parents would be proud;
Their son made something of his life;
His company is going public;
Look at that, we did it;
I remember a time when I despised these motorbikes;
Felt like CEOs were too high up to ride on them;
But my business has been built on this, if I can say;
Countless are the times I almost got late for meetings but these <i>nduthis</i> came through:

This last time;

How poetic would it be;

To ride to the NSE to ring the bell;

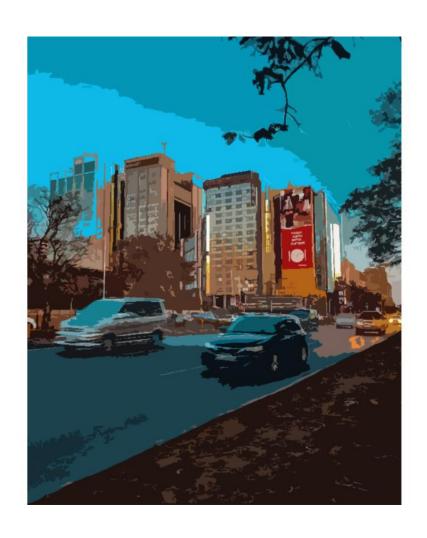
Aboard one;

The notification on the app informs me the rider has just arrived;

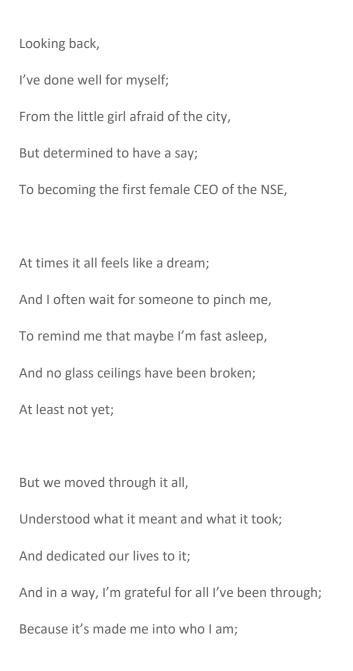
Few seconds later, I get a call from him to inform me where he is;

"Haiya si wewe ni ule CEO kampuni yake inaenda public?"

"Eeh, ni mimi..." I answer while putting on my helmet while sitting at the back of his motorbike.



BECOMING



I'm meeting my girls for lunch; It's how we've always celebrated the important moments in life; And today brought cause for celebration; I witnessed my first IPO as CEO; And nothing brings more joy than to be with the ones who've always held it down; I remember a younger me; I would probably be rushing to my car; Trying to move to the rhythm of this city's traffic; Because taking a cab back then would have cost an arm and a leg; And now, understanding that; I'm grateful for the cab hailing apps that have crowded the market; They've made good on competition; And created so much ease; That was previously unheard of; And maybe now, A girl can hope, That I'll still be around, When one of those companies goes public; As a hallmark to the impact they've had on our transport system,

I'm jolted back to the present by my PA;

She's confirming the plane tickets for the girls trip this weekend to the Coast;

And informing me, that my cab has just arrived;

As I walk out, I reminisce on our first girls trip on the SGR.



MY GIRLS AND I

We've just arrived at the terminal;
We are all a bit sweaty;
And frankly unfit;
But oh well, the gym is a rumor we haven't heard in a while;
We can't wait to get to Coast;
We've all been waiting for this moment;
We all frankly needed a break;
And what better way than to spend it together;
The SGR has been some of the gems we can claim to have as a country;
And of course better than the old railway lines that would take forever;
Plus the view; oh the views along the way;
And the beautiful terminals that are architectural marvels;
I remember stories from my parents;
Traveling in the old trains to different parts of the country;
Exploring young love;
Not knowing that, that love would be christened by my siblings and I;

Eventually when we are all married with kids;
My girls and I;
Will pass down similar stories to our children;
Remind them of this bond and this feeling of family among friends;
We are finally seated in our seats;
Our bags safely tucked away;
Traveling and drinking games laid out;
And the train's engine has come alive;
As we set off;
This feeling, reminds me of the album "Midnight Train,"
Only that it's the late afternoon,
And we'll have the evening sun to experience the views along the way;
After so long;
Here we are;
Our first girls trip in a while;
We are about to throw it down in Mombasa.



UNFINISHED BUSINESS

We've just arrived in Coast;
I honestly would have loved to see the views along the way;
But my sleepy head that was awake, all night, last night, couldn't keep awake;
But last night was heavy and worth it;
It's been a while since I was here;
Frankly three years;
And I can't wait to start writing poems;
I needed a hiatus from everything and what better way than to lock myself up in Coast;
There was this one poem that I never quite finished;
It was about Fort Jesus, just at the edge of Old Town;
I remember reflecting on the history and the significance it held;
But the words eluded me;
But here I am;
As if I was coming home;
Coming to finish this one piece;
That still held so much of my unfinished business;

