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Dancing on Beat

By **Rachelle M. Parker**

Having rhythm is the only way
to remember where home is.
The pounding of wildebeests,

the clacking of calabash for a stew
cooked in a caldron on open flame.
Without the beat of my mother's land,

I would forget. I would wither
and lay piled high in a heap of skin.
Bones bent under the weight

of what I have come to do,
Calves stretched and knotted
with grief and sorrow.

The rumble of the coast, lit by red gold,
calls in the twilight of morning.
The tight skinned djembe responds.

A wave of thumps tap my shoulders
and my toes. Moving in the midst
of angola seeds, leaves between my teeth.

I am in a hull ready to sprout, again.

Rachelle M. Parker has work that appears in *Tupelo Quarterly*, *Lips*, *Creations Magazine*, *New Jersey English Journal* 2016 and anthologies *The BreakBeat Poets Volume 2: Black Girl Magic* and *Poeming Pigeons: Poems About Food*. She is a Patricia Dobler Poetry Award 2017 Honorable Mention, the winner of the Pat Schneider Poetry Contest 2014 and was awarded fellowships from Tin House Summer Workshop Poetry, Willow Arts Alliance and Callaloo Creative Writing at Brown University and the poetry editor for *Peregrine*, the journal for Amherst Writers and Artists.