

Ode To The Drum

By Yusef Komunyakaa

Listen

Gazelle, I killed you
for your skin's exquisite
touch, for how easy it is
to be nailed to a board
weathered raw as white
butcher paper. Last night
I heard my daughter praying
for the meat here at my feet.
You know it wasn't anger
that made me stop my heart
till the hammer fell. Weeks
ago, I broke you as a woman
once shattered me into a song
beneath her weight, before
you slouched into that
grassy hush. But now
I'm tightening lashes,
shaping hide as if around
a ribcage, stretched
like five bowstrings.
Ghosts cannot slip back
inside the body's drum.
You've been seasoned
by wind, dusk & sunlight.
Pressure can make everything
whole again, brass nails
tacked into the ebony wood
your face has been carved
five times. I have to drive
trouble from the valley.
Trouble in the hills.
Trouble on the river
too. There's no kola nut,
palm wine, fish, salt,
or calabash. Kadoom.
Kadoom. Kadoom. Ka-
dooooom. Kadoom. Now
I have beaten a song back into you,
rise & walk away like a panther.