

## **I Give You Back**

by Joy Harjo

I release you, my beautiful and terrible  
fear. I release you. You were my beloved  
and hated twin, but now, I don't know you  
as myself. I release you with all the  
pain I would know at the death of  
my daughters.

You are not my blood anymore.

I give you back to the white soldiers  
who burned down my home, beheaded my children,  
raped and sodomized my brothers and sisters.  
I give you back to those who stole the  
food from our plates when we were starving.

I release you, fear, because you hold  
these scenes in front of me and I was born  
with eyes that can never close.

I release you, fear, so you can no longer  
keep me naked and frozen in the winter,  
or smothered under blankets in the summer.

I release you  
I release you  
I release you  
I release you

I am not afraid to be angry.  
I am not afraid to rejoice.  
I am not afraid to be black.  
I am not afraid to be white.  
I am not afraid to be hungry.  
I am not afraid to be full.  
I am not afraid to be hated.  
I am not afraid to be loved.  
to be loved, to be loved, fear.

Oh, you have choked me, but I gave you the leash.  
You have gutted me but I gave you the knife.  
You have devoured me, but I laid myself across the fire.  
You held my mother down and raped her,  
but I gave you the heated thing.

I take myself back, fear.  
You are not my shadow any longer.  
I won't hold you in my hands.  
You can't live in my eyes, my ears, my voice  
my belly, or in my heart my heart  
my heart my heart

But come here, fear  
I am alive and you are so afraid  
of dying.