

## II. No

Joy Harjo

Narrator: Yes that was me you saw shaking with bravery, with a govenment issued rifle on my back. I'm sorry I could not greet you as you deserved, my relative.

No. They were not my tears. I have a reservoir inside. They will be cried by my sons, my daughters if I can't learn how to turn tears to stone.

Yes, that was me standing in the back door of the house in the alley, with a bowl of beans in my hands for the neighbors, a baby on my hip.

No, I did not foresee the flood of blood. How they would forget our friendship, would return to kill me and the baby.

Yes, that was me whirling on the dance floor. We made such a racket with all that joy. I loved the whole world in that silly music.

No. I did not realize the terrible dance in the staccato of bullets.

Yes. I smelled the burning grease of corpses after they were lit by the pages of our poems. And like a fool I expected our words might rise up and jam the artillery in the hands of dictators.

No. We had to keep going. Our songs of grief cleaned the air of enemy spirits.

Yes, I did see the terrible black clouds over the suburb as I cooked dinner. And the messages of the dying spelled there in the ashy sunset. Every one addressed: "mother".

No, there was nothing about it in the news. Everything was the same. Unemployment was up. Another queen crowned with flowers. Then there were the sports scores.

Yes, the distance was great between your country and mine. Yet our children played in the path between our houses.

We had no quarrel with each other.

cantabile

Slow, gently rocking (♩ = 60)

*pp* legato

*red. normale*