

# Once the World Was Perfect

by Joy Harjo  
(1951–present)

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Once the world was perfect, and we were happy in that world.  
Then we took it for granted.  
Discontent began a small rumble in the earthly mind.  
Then Doubt pushed through with its spiked head.  
5 And once Doubt ruptured the web,  
All manner of demon thoughts  
Jumped through—  
We destroyed the world we had been given  
For inspiration, for life—  
10 Each stone of jealousy, each stone  
Of fear, greed, envy, and hatred, put out the light.  
No one was without a stone in his or her hand.  
There we were,  
Right back where we had started.  
15 We were bumping into each other  
In the dark.  
And now we had no place to live, since we didnt know  
How to live with each other.  
Then one of the stumbling ones took pity on another  
20 And shared a blanket.  
A spark of kindness made a light.  
The light made an opening in the darkness.  
Everyone worked together to make a ladder.  
A Wind Clan person climbed out first into the next world,  
25 And then the other clans, the children of those clans, their children,  
And their children, all the way through time—  
To now, into this morning light to you.