Saving the Injun
By Amaya Garnenez

When I first hear about You,

I was a little Injun.
Long, black, bushy hair.
Smooth, tanned skin.
Dirt covered Vans.
Ashy knees.
Dirty glasses.
A little Injun,
With big dreams,
A strong heart,
And a fierce mind.

When I first learned about You,

I was a little Injun,
Listening with fear.
As the elders,
Old and wise,
Warned me about You.
Their teachings,
“Run every morning,
For a strong mind.
Pray every morning,
For a strong heart.”
Were projecting me, the little Injun,
From You.

When I first met You,

Those big, bold letters that divided my world,
“Now leaving the Navajo Nation.”
Filled me with anxiety.
Blinding colors of american flags everywhere,
Like a suffocating blanket
Of patriotism,
And contradiction.
Crucifixes,
Hail Mary,
Full of Grace,
Like a broken record.
Deafening everything within its vicinity.
Silencing my voice.

When You silenced my voice,

I was walking through those big, steel doors,
Indigenous prophecies
Coming to fruition.
Books in my arms,
Backpack over my shoulder,
Dirt covered Vans,
A Part-time Injun.

When I last saw You,

Only a sliver of Injun was left.
I didn’t run most mornings,
Nor did I pray.
The little Injun,
With big dreams,
And a strong heart,
Was lost.
Battles I could never win.
The Injun was near-death,
But the Man was saved.
“Feeding [this]
Indian to [Western] civilization”

When I first met Me,

The ancestors mourned,
The lost little Injun.
I felt their cries,
In my bones,
In my blood,
In my soul.
I lost the little Injun.
Struggling to find her,
Grasping at apparitions,
Of songs and prayers.
Laid out before me,
7 generations ago.

When I found Me,

It was twilight
The time before sunrise
When the Holy People are listening.
I began my prayer.
Kódocó Hózhoo dooleeł
From here, there shall be blessings
Remaking me,
A Real Injun.
Able to Speak,
Able to Move,
Able to Be,
The strong Indigenous woman
They envisioned me to be.
And at the end
Beauty was restored
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