

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.
Kódóó Hózhoo dooleet
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
Hózhó Náhasdlijj
Hózhó Náhasdlijj
Hózhó Náhasdlijj
Hózhó Náhasdlijj