

like any good indian woman

i pull my brothers from words, *stupid injun*, shot like bullets. when people ask why my brothers hated school i say: the spirit remembers what it's like to be left behind when america took children from homes, displaced families with rupture, ripping a child's hand from a mother's to put them in boarding school buildings. my brothers are mourning a loss they try to fix in finding home in another person, so they travel from reservation to city singing blues and 49 songs about love.

i pull my brothers from cars named after indians: *navajo, cherokee, & tacoma*. on a danger destined road my brothers are born longing for a way back from relocation & long walks across miles & miles & miles of removal. my brothers search for themselves in unhealthy addictions disguised as makeshift bandages.

i pull my brothers from bottles they think answers might be hidden at the bottom of. my brothers stumble through back alleys looking for a love & laughter that was stolen from them like the land. and when their brown bodies try to find healing & love, other brown bodies cringe at their touch because like any good indian woman, our bodies are connected to an earth, still being raped by the pipelines forcibly laid down inside all that we hold sacred. and my brothers hold onto their colonial emotional baggage so tightly they think it's gravity

so i pull my brothers from oceans believing they deserve the hurt so much they nearly drown themselves in it. and sometimes my brothers knife ancestral grieving onto their wrists, slits to remember the only time we are ever red, skinned is when blood flows from the open wounds america knifed onto our brown skin. self-love: apply pressure.

i pull my brothers from ashes. america tried to burn us not knowing we were already flame.

& these will be the stories i tell my grandchildren when one day, they ask me – why being a good indian woman means we burn like phoenix repeatedly pulling our brothers.

—Tanaya Winder