

Juan Felipe Herrera

MY RICE QUEENS

You drag it across Tijuana, drag it hard from Tecate
make sure the face remains elongated and oval, translucent,
light to the touch, docile—the key: whitish with the eyes
upwards, yellow to the ragged hills where one day it will return.
You the King: you the tiger speaks the long grain hump, hear
it sing to you, with a crooked guitar, wine colored string
throat, You the Baby. First you drag it, then you turn the tiny
head back, make it eat wire, enter the wire, the barbed scar blackness,
you turn the tiny head. This is the lesson,
you see, this is the way revealed for the first time.
Flip you, it speaks. Flip me, baby—burn it deep with glass
high-class brass, a sliver of dead Mexico so it may dream
as all rice-boys dream, burnt orange-face rice boys with
or without the flame sweetness that comes later. Hear me
again with or without the fire hustle underground
like tuber root, like blue stream jazz, rip it up until you shoot
the flower in the mud, in the groin, upside the alleyway.
Dr. Coyote knows. Oh, yes, he does. Night Chevy Man
picker of the Red Rice People. Weep here, the signs say
to the rice. Weep, here, the light says to the Street
Rice Queen. Weep, here again raps the Rice Killer
in search of another wise throat. Betwixt
two radish heavens, alongside the bristled fans of the sugar beet.
There, on that road—so far from Tijuana Drive, the sack
listens to you. Ready, I say. I am ready Señor, sí señora.
Jump, border spike. Take me first, the Rice Llorona says.
You took me yesterday. Take me today.