

Oh this is the perfect ruby, O from the velvet can't you see, O my goodness,
what big eyes you have, considering your mom is Filipina, O my goodness, how
light you are, considering your father is Indian, O egg roll, O General Tsao's
chicken I cannot eat with chopsticks, O how I love dim sum.

Reach out and wave to the land of the rising sun, Reset your clock backwards,
Rejoice: you were admitted to a prestigious college and didn't accept it, Recall
how your father left India with a pompadour and a Real thirst for all things
American, Rejoice, you are the perfect opportunity for equality, and even on
this island Resort, you have the longest legs.

Enrich your life with tea and almond cookies in glassine Envelopes, and even
though you Envy all girls with blue eyes and the giant box of crayons (complete
with built-in crayon sharpener), Entire rooms of men will soon be Enchanted by
your lovely dark locks, Enrage math teachers who want to throw erasers at you,
Engrave a curlicue on your best friend's palm when she smears Vaseline on the
locker handle of the boy who called your father a scalper, *Wrong Indian, idiot*,
Enchant the priest downstairs when you tell him you once saw a real crucifixion
in the Philippines.

Tall, At 5'5, you are the Tallest woman in your family for five generations.
Tall tales about chasing water buffalo down the street, Tall tales about a white
peacock who will eat cashews out of your cupped hand, Tall tales about bad
women stealing coconuts from your tiny grandmother and the cobras who
stung their thieving feet, Tall tales of thin bangles and silver anklets hammered
into snakey designs, tall tales of the family elephant who stole the bundle of
sugarcane you were saving for dessert, Tall tales of the filthy restaurants with
sour pineapples strung like lights and the secret games of mah-jong stay inside
and never in the home because these men are betting men. But there is one white
man, the man with arms outstretched and bloodied, who looks down at you and
smiles.

prose
poem

39/

from At the Drive-In
Volcano © 2007
Tupelo Press