

## What Are the Mexicans Sayin'?

By Scott Russell Duncan

So, I worked in a restaurant as a waiter in college for two seconds. Is there any place more hell for a half-breed? Mexicans in the back, whites up front, separated by a counter. I was with the whites, but I was the only Latino working up front, serving food from an "American Grill" which meant nasty redneck food made by Mexican hands. But then again, I was working ass cheek to ass cheek with all the hot white girls, my tongue hanging out just as much as the cooks from Northern Mexico in the back as the waitresses raked my front with their bodies as we passed through narrow doors.

None of these girls would give the cooks the time of day, though. The cooks were too broke and too brown. It would've taken some Ricky Martin looking dude for girls like them to cross that counter and none of these guys, though they were cooks, could make *Menudo*, much less sing *La Vida Loca*. After the cooks realized I knew a few words of Spanish, they gave me the nickname Indio though I didn't know why, but I thought it was better than Pocho. And as a joke to pass the time, they would ask me to tell the white waitresses the horrible things they said to them in Spanish after handing over their orders. I would listen and let the words in Spanish click and the cooks would fill in the gaps with hand motions they made in front of their crotches or with their fists passing around their faces. And they always said, "Indio, dile, dile," and, though the waitresses weren't very nice, I would always shake my head no.

Then one fine redneck girl named Liz in her Texas accent demanded, "What are they sayin'?" A cook named Julio had just said something like, "Me quiero venir en su cuello y tetas grandísimas." I dislike conflict, so I told her, "He said you are very lovely." Liz laughed and said, "Thank YOU HOOL-EE-O." Then to me, "Is he really saying that?" I nodded with a taken aback half smile, half frown. Julio, happy I was finally relaying messages, then said, "Indio, dile que la quiero llevar a la casa, coger su culo y cubrir su espalda con mi leche," and rubbed the top of the counter to help me understand. She looked at me, "What?" I shook my head. "No, what did he say?" her pale face turning red. And Julio demanded, "¡Dile!" Caught between them, I said, "Oh, he wants to know if you'd do him the honor of walking you to your car tonight." Same thing, right, just a difference in manners. Half-breeds are supposed to be bridges, after all.

Liz then said, "Oh, I have un no-vee-o, low see in toe, Hool Lee O," and left with her order of dead Southern fried something. After gesturing and laughing a bit with Julio, I asked him, "Why are you guys calling me Indio all the time?" He said, "You're tall. And you look like an Indio." Mexicans on the frontier like where I'm from tended to be even more raza cósmica than most Mexicans despite our associations with being "Spanish" so even with my white father it is possible I was more Indian than some of the cooks, but Julio looked much more like a character from an Aztec codex than me. So I said, "You look more Indian. You need to be called Indio, too." Looking down at the grill, Julio told me, "No, you are the Indio." And so the name stuck. Julio and the rest of the cooks would never say Scott, they would say, "Give this to Indio," so much that even the white girl waitresses called me Indio, and either thought I was "From India"

or “Native American” as in not a Mexican and started asking more, “Indio, Indio, what are the Mexicans saying?”

Mexicans calling me Indio was one thing, but white girls calling me “Indio” when I didn’t call them “Gringa Número Uno” or “Gringa Número Dos” was a bit much. And, moreover, I got tired of being everyone’s bridge of unresolved exotic desire, so I finally told Liz and the other waitresses the obvious, “He said he wants to come on your giant fucking tits.”