

Santos spat dust from his mouth. He mulled the rarity of bovine twins, far more novel than multiple mortals. He must not succumb to overawe. This was el toro de bandera every true bullfighter hoped for-- measuring the man, rationing his rage, keeping his courage and form to the end. The matador could do no less. Nostrils and eyes streaming grit, he sculpted the short cape, made it vault, caress, made it flow. Ads and signs tore off the walls; Santos defied the blowing, moved to the brass song in his brain. Perfect parones, spinning, people thunder, levitating. Pase de pecho. Perfect. Bull dancer and minotaur. Time reverted. Raced back. Stumbled. Coiled. Santos sighted down his sword.

A bull to take recibiendo-- the ultimate tribute and risk-- waiting like a figurine, committed to that stand, waiting for the dint of the deified charge to sink the espada. Holding down the triangle head with serge on a stick, leading it past his sledging chest, trying to remember the kill would be for his own twin, Miguel.

The cardinal cloth swung forward, beckoned. The bull came. Santos leaned over the horn with a name cry, rescued his lungs by a sequin, feet still as stones. A flawless execution ~~except steel and bone~~ collided; the blade bowed and sprang out of its hot sheath, out of crazed thunder. The withered flower patch bloomed with new crimson; the bull mastered desperate legs, flailing his tongue on the taint in his mouth. Santos refused to heed his wrist, the wind, the shrieked advice from his retinue and the stands. He retrieved his sword, cursing.

The centrifuge screamed and silenced unheard. He calmed himself in his bowl of sweat and whiplash chill. A bugle played in his head, an aviso. "We will have total perfection, si, Diablo?"

The bull summoned him, poised like his bronze kind on the parapet, posing his invitation low and ready. Sun flashed along the sword edge, blazing images, icons of the Virgin, faces of his brother, el toro, his brother. Santos moved to the blossoming spot, light with new speed. A piece of last Sunday's poster of Miguel spiraled toward the matador's eyes. Triumphant horn lifted as steel drove down, a compound arch. Santos heard his name, heard the wind inside him, heard them fall together.