

Dinner for the Toreador

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(Inspired by "Toreador Hallucinogene" by Salvador Dali)

(1st place first category)

The Toreador always felt that the tense expectation that precluded his performance was like the soup he was always served at dinner at his hometown. It felt deliciously lacking, as if you knew that despite the hot, filling sensation that invaded you wasn't nearly a little bit of what you would experience. The main dish would be the glorious entrance to the Arena.

Soon the gates would open and a blinding stream of light would crash against his eyes. A few steps in he would be able to see around him and gloat in the sensation that rushed into him.

All the men would roar in unison, pouring their souls out of pride just to honor their hero. All the women would give a high-pitched scream that could very well burst a window, some of them out of admiration, others out of joy, others wishing that he would just look over there at them and fall in love forever with each other. All the children would then tug fiercely at their mother's dress and scream;

it's him, it's him, it really is, he is so awesome, I want to be like him when I grow up, mommy, mommy, look, it's the Toreador.

And it felt so good. As the applause rose up into the skies he wallowed in his fame, in the screams, and the sun in the heavens seemed only be shining only for him. Oh yes, he lived for this.

Then the band would begin playing. The brass of their instruments would become the storytellers, guiding the audience through the tale of man defeating the beast, a tale as old as time itself.

With an air of grace and elegance strode to the center of his stage and waited for his foe to make his appearance. The gates would open up once more, and the beast would rush into the battlefield.

His heart skips a beat as he sets his eyes on the bull. It's hair is perfectly tidy, and his ivory horns only oppose the ebony of his entire being, save for his eyes. His sight locks on his target, and they trade red-hot glares of rage. The Toreador extends his mantle and prepares for the first charge.

The fight itself felt more like an obligation towards his spectators, more like a favour in exchange for his fame, than a challenge. This was the bowl of peas of the show, and, by God, did he loathe beans. He was invincible. He was the hero. What possible entertainment would rise from the asinine action of a man slaughtering a crazed animal?

He performs every dodge with a with a calculated, precise move. He indulges the audience by dodging the charges slightly, so the crowd would go wild in cheers and applause. The bull charges again and again and again. The Toreador dodges, evades, sidesteps just in time. The bull became more and more tired with every step he took. Soon it couldn't hold its weight and collapsed, sinking into the dirt of the arena.

The Toreador sighs in disappointment. He retrieves his sword from the holster hanging from his belt, and looks up to the audience. In cathartic pleads they beg him to finish the beast.

He looks the bull in the eye and raises his weapon up in the air.

A lunge, a stabbing, a helpless yelp, a disgusted grimace as a speck of blood lands on his face. The bull struggles, shudders, stays still. The Toreador breathes heavily and turns to face his admirers.

The audience jumps in the air. The guttural screeches interweave each other and make the whole coliseum tremble. The Toreador tosses his mantle and his sword aside, extends his arms and smiles away at the ovation. This is his dessert; his sweet, delightful reward. He surrounds himself in it. It is so good, so incredibly beautiful, it borders on hedonistic.

The Toreador doesn't notice the fallen beast rising again. Some of the watchers do, and scream at him, telling him to look out. He can't notice them over the cheers. The bull stares into nothingness, turns to the killer and slams his back with its horns with his dying breath.

A strong pain, a shove, a sudden lack of breath, the Toreador finds himself stabbed through the chest by a crimson horn. The waiter bringing him the espresso stumbled and threw it all over his lap. The dinner is ruined.

This isn't happening he says to himself. I'm invincible, I'm the Toreador, I'm the best, I'm the hero.

The crowd goes silent.

The band stops playing.

And as blood stains his colorful, fancy, dignified, heroic clothes, the Toreador sheds a tear and with his final thoughts he regrets everything.

He wishes he had tried Mom's stew one last time.