

TORERO

Savage incarnadine dawn came before Santos slept.

Day of the corrida!

A dark mountain sprouting red and yellow flowers and

Reverberating thunder waited behind his lids.

He must strike lightning into a certain crater

Between the ridges before thunder passed him through.

Early to the ^{rites} ritual of preparation, steeped in the vow

To avenge his brother Miguel. Early and long before the Virgin. ^{Cowdles of the}

Hot laughter with his comrades, fear encased in embroidery,

Superstition buried in colors of scorn.

He had even looked at his bulls and learned

One was kin to the hooking, horn-wise

Monster that routed Miguel's soul with ^a splintered bayonet.

Last notes of La Virgen de la Macarena flared out of trumpets,

Eddied into his heated head, followed by shrill corkscrews

Pulling the cuadrillas into the circle, ~~stalled~~ ^{stalled with stacks} ^{of eyes.}

^{into stacks of eyes} Into ~~its round eyes~~. A thousand prisms on his shoulders

Ignited. ^{with a thousand prisms} ~~Something~~ ^{the} high breeze, perhaps, pitched to cornets—

^{something} Hissed his name through clamped jaws.

The two flashing semaphores flanking him

marking jingling
Were silent, fierce-smiling aficionado-faces.

His name wound back in the bell of a horn or the wind's ~~mouth~~ ^{teeth}.

The musicians played with too much pathos at times;

It was better when they blasted, ponderous and bawdy,

Like pompous heralds of Caesar.

the young man cried.
"Dios, we have a gale," ~~growled an assistant,~~

"We will have to drown the capes!"

"Please, Santos, do not work so close,"

His banderillero pleaded, "do not get ~~the~~ bulls' blood

On your belly. It is enough you are here."

His eyes felt the probing eyes were in his pores.
Layers of eyes probed Santos's pores. "They must be given ~~be given~~ ^{something special} *a memorial to Miguel*
~~Their money's worth~~ today," he answered.

the
His hearing blocked olés, hoofs

Pulverizing sand, sounds of the watered cape.

His bull was a giant, an armed freight train.

Santos heard only wind instruments, then the racking thrust

Of his will arcing across the ring, entering the pic,

Bracing it against ~~the~~ man's temptation to twist

And steal the good of his bull. And finally he heard

The blessing, the God-lonely bugle

Retiring the picadors, trailing the man-animal cry

Of all who ~~ever~~ live awhile in the center of the centrifuge.

He placed his own banderillas, planted them close,

Claimed only shallow blood and flesh enough to hold. Each

Pair blossomed in thunder, clung to the windy ridge. The

Centrifuge roared, the pitch climbed.

He took the sword and muleta for a pase de la muerte,

Began the last act, the faena, *wait*

Wind snatched the cardinal cloth, exposed his hiding.

But this toro promised greatness. Waited. Shared.

Santos designed a new pass. ~~Then~~ ~~Next the naturals~~, slow ballet

Of cerise wing, silver pivot, brown muscle,

Turning, ~~winding~~. The wind held its breath, (gasped) puffed

Short gusts between ~~each series~~. Again

Santos heard his name. The beast smeared by,

Redding his spangles, honing his senses on horn,

Stench, bone-rattling sideswipe.

And the bovine voice of another avenger.

Seven years of bulls only Santos spoke,

His fluent muleta commanding the charges, punishing

The pale-hearted, persuading the valiant ones of their chances

To paint their points. ^{at length} ~~Then~~ Telling them when to bow their heads
for the offering, the ritual communion.

~~And offer the spot for benediction.~~

Veronicas ago Santos would have laughed. Or branded it

A trick of weariness or aire. Did Miguel's bull

Call his name? Does the final Toro tell ^{the} Torero?

He spat dust out of his mouth. He must not

Succumb to overawe. This was the toro de bandera,

Every true bullfighter ^{dreamed of} ~~hoped for~~ measuring the man,

Measuring his rage, keeping his courage and his art

To the end. The matador could not do less.

Torero
Glenna Holloway
1028 Apple Lane
Lombard, Ill. 60148

Nostrils and eyes streaming grit, Santos sculpted
The short cape, made it vault, caress, made it flow.
~~Raw blade~~
~~Raw blade~~ signs shredded off arena walls. Santos
Defied the blowing, the brass song in his brain.
Perfect parones, spinning. People-thunder. Pase de pecho.
~~Perfect~~ Bull dancer and Minotaur and Greek tapestries.
Time raced, 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 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 Miguel.
The cloth swung forward, beckoned.
The bull came. Santos leaned in over the horn with a name cry,
Rescued his lungs by a sequin's breadth.
A flawless execution except
Steel and bone collided. The blade bowed and sprang
Out of its hot sheath, out of crazed thunder.

Santos refused to heed his wrist, advice to descabello,
Retrieved his sword, cursing.
The centrifuge screamed and silenced unheard; the air churned
Rabioso. He made himself calm in his bowl of sweat and whiplash chill.
"We will have total perfection, eh, Diablo?"
A bugle in his head, an aviso.

Torero
Glenna Holloway
1028 Apple Lane
Lombard, Ill. 60148

Sun-flashes along the edge of the estoque, rolling images
In his eyes, icons of the Virgin, faces of his brother,
The bull his brother. He profiled very close and started in fast.
A bright swatch of last Sunday's poster of Miguel
Spiraled toward the matador's face.
Triumphant horn raised and arced from life to death.
Santos heard the wind, heard them fall, heard time unhinge.