

THE BEST BULLFIGHTER

by

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ABSTRACT

The Best Bullfighter is an original illustrated story in which anthropomorphic bulls engage in the tradition of bullfighting and grapple with perpetuating violence against their own kind. It follows two characters, Florian and Oscar, who are indoctrinated into the world of bullfighting at a young age. Each must choose as he enters adulthood whether he is willing to continue hurting and killing his peers for the sake of fame.

Bullfighting in this story represents patriarchal violence done to men, by men. Men are simultaneous victims and perpetrators of constrictive male gender roles, and so too are bulls the victims and perpetrators of bullfighting in this universe. I wanted to explore the ways that young boys are harmed by patriarchy, as well as the choice they have as they grow to end that cycle or inflict it on their peers and the next generation.

I. PAGE I

"It's a perfect fit!"

It really wasn't, Florian thought, drowning in the heavy chaquetilla. Oscar's arms wobbled trying to hold up the pointed estoque towering above them.

The world of bullfighting was one the boys knew absolutely nothing about, but they were in no position to argue with someone whose horns were as big around as they were. Their training would begin in the morning.

II. PAGE II



III. PAGE III

Florian found he was very good at the art of mock-bullfighting. He conquered every bull-shaped hay bale and metal test dummy brought before him. This is just like playing, he thought. What was he so worried about before?

Oscar lagged behind. How frustrating to pour twice as much effort in and see worse results every time! He was determined to catch up to Florian, and soon.

IV. PAGE IV



V. PAGE V

The time came for Florian and Oscar to complete their training. No more hay bales and test dummies. This time, the battle was for real.

The boys looked onward as another novillo was brought out in front of them. He shook and cowered at the sight of the boys. I've never had a friend look at me like that before, Florian thought.

Is this what it means to prove myself? What am I really being asked to do?

The glinting metal sword appeared colder and sharper than ever before. Florian could not bear to use it to hurt a friend. He turned and ran before he could see Oscar make his choice.

"Coward!"

VI. PAGE VI



VII. PAGE VII

"So this is what Oscar is up to now."

He did it. Oscar had become the world-famous matador he set out to be, leaving Florian behind in the dust.

Florian knew Oscar resented him for abandoning the sport and all his potential. He knew that if he ever saw him again, Oscar would probably want to kill him.

Florian also knew that as long as Oscar remained the land's champion bullfighter, then bulls like him, their friends and family would continue to suffer.

VIII. PAGE VIII



IX. PAGE IX

Florian volunteered to be here. He shuddered to think of the countless bulls who stood in this ring before him that couldn't say the same.

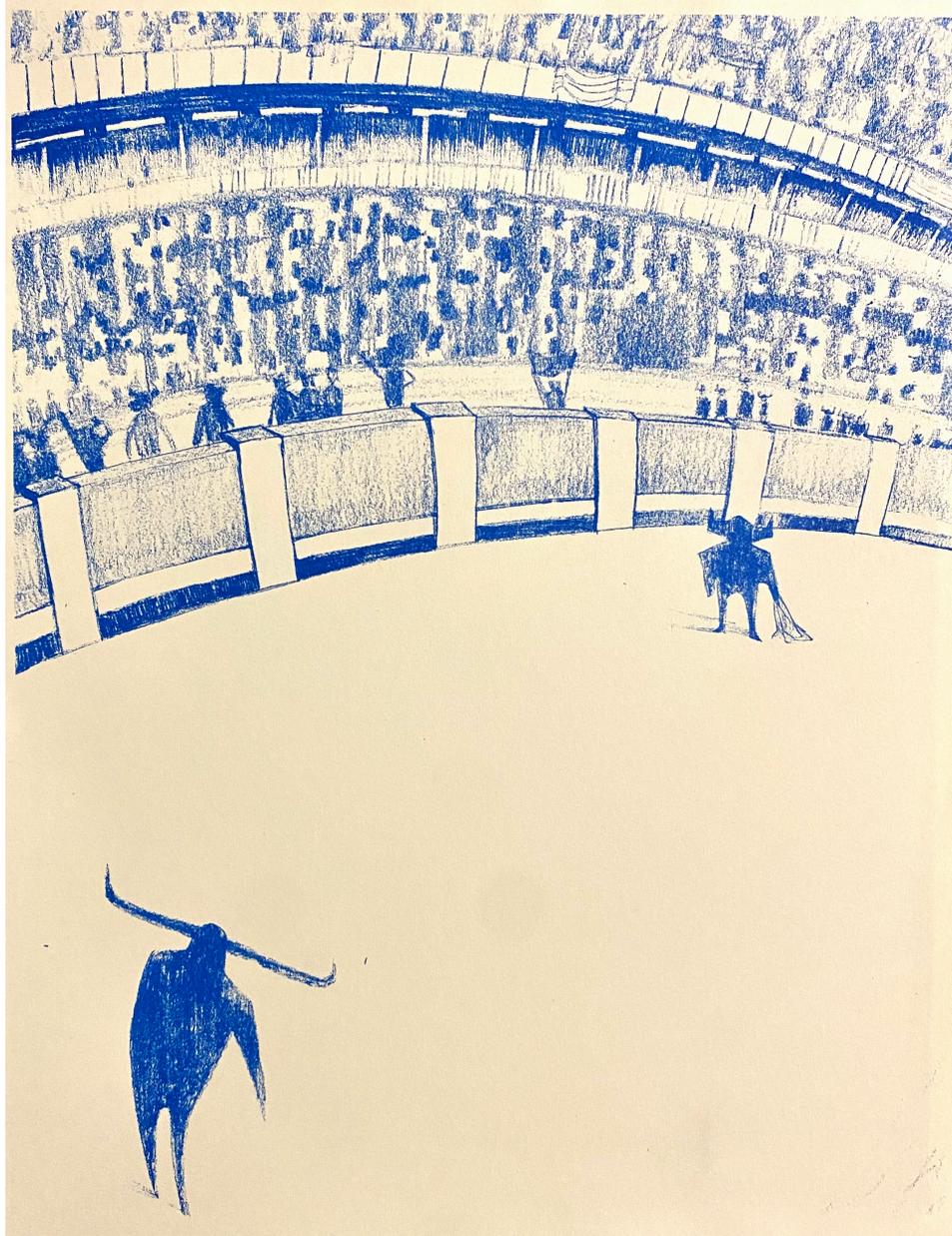
Oscar had grown into his chaquetilla since Florian saw him last. The heavy adornments seemed to weigh down his shoulders. Perhaps that was why his height still barely reached Florian's own.

Looking around the bullring, Florian saw faces that looked just like his and Oscar's filling the stands and cheering on the violence.

"I don't want to fight you," Florian said.

Oscar did want to fight Florian, particularly for saying something as embarrassing as that.

X. PAGE X



XI. PAGE XI

But in spite of all of Oscar's medals, and all the morrillos he had pierced, and all of his opponent's years out of practice, Florian was still the better bullfighter.

Flowers tentatively rained down from the stands while Florian looked down at Oscar, wounded and mortified. Oscar could not meet his gaze.

Neither of them would ever step foot in a bullring again.

XII. PAGE XII

