

THE MAGIFICENT MATADOR
by
Benjamin Mark

There is a little town in Mexico, the name of which escapes me at the moment, which has, as a peculiarity to set it apart from all other towns of that country, bulls and cows as inhabitants.

Toro, a bull of magnificent proportions was, as is only fit, mayor of the town. It was he that had planned the great event.

In all other aspects the town had the same lazy quality as any other Mexican village you or I might want to visit. In front of Juanita's Bar and Grill, Pepito, a small Black Angus, was taking a siesta, his eyes shaded from the sun by a large, floppy sombrero. Hardly a wind disturbed the banners strung across the street from store front to store front, announcing the gala event of the forthcoming evening.

Miguel Cordova, a Brahman, a great great Matador, was going to fight that very evening for the last time before going into retirement. It was in no other area but that one, in the southernmost part of Mexico, that Man-Fights were allowed.

Carlos, a young male bull, had been handing out leaflets to the touristos in the vicinity. As he gave each one of the brightly inked papers away, he would excitedly tell them that this would be Miguel's most magnificent fight.

"He is a great fighter that Miguel Cordova, and tonight he will again prove himself by meeting that most dangerous animal, El Hombre--also known as The Man for

those amongst the populace who prefer to practice their English rather than use their native tongue. You must all come to see him. It will be a spectacle."

"Oh my," said an attractive young heifer, patting Carlos on the head with her hoof. "We will most certainly make it our business to be at the Man-Fights tonight."

The advertisers had done their jobs well, and outside the arena, as the sun started to set, casting a pink glow across the sky, throngs of bulls and their pretty cows waited eagerly to buy their tickets to see the great Miguel Cordova. Rumors had been circulating that the man selected for tonight's first event was an evil-tempered creature with many deaths to his credit in other parts of the world.

Here and there voices could be heard murmuring their concern for Miguel. There were many who were afraid for him to fight El Hombre.

It was not long before the stadium was filled with the sweating bodies of the spectators, their horns reflecting the rays of the setting sun. Vendors could be seen selling oat and alfalfa burgers to the hungry crowds.

Suddenly, blasting trumpets heralded the beginning of the evening's events. As the procession came into the arena, the crowds roared their approval. Miguel Cordova, dressed in a magnificent array of colors, came in surrounded by the Banderilleros and the Picadors, whose job it was to stab El Hombre with darts and lances to enrage him. After they had toured the arena amid shouts of encouragement, they stepped aside to let The Man in.

Pushed and stabbed by the sharp barbs of the Picadors, El Hombre came in stumbling wildly, blood oozing from a gash in his neck and trickling in skinny crimson rivulets down his chest. He stood there, in the middle of the arena, surrounded by the

taunting screams of the now savagery imbued animals in the stands. Naked, his red-rimmed eyes burning from tears of frustration, The Man looked at his opponent balefully. He knew he was going to die out there in the open, slaughtered without mercy for the enjoyment of the spectators.

Miguel Cordova sneered at him and turned to the crowd, brandishing his horns and sword in the air, promising them a slow cruel death for the victim. They roared their approval.

"Olé Miguel. Cut off one of his ears for me."

Miguel Cordova bowed low, never for a moment showing any fear of The Man. Then silence descended into the arena. The fight was about to begin.

The Matador waved his cape in front of El Hombre while two Banderilleros worked their way around The Man unseen. In a moment, faster than the eye could follow, they had stabbed him in the neck with two hooked barbs. El Hombre turned around with a shrill scream of agony, the two bits of steel hanging limply from the wound. He felt weak, his vision was becoming blurred. He no longer heard the crowd's roars, for as death came beckoning at his door, he became oblivious to the happenings of life.

Stumbling insanelly about, the pain in his neck becoming unbearable, he moaned and shrieked to the delight of the spectators. Blindly, he passed close to the great Matador who, in one smooth motion, lopped off one of his ears with his sword. The blood gushed out of El Hombre's head as the crowds began to stand, applauding Miguel Cordova, who stood in the center of the ring with the human ear in his hoof.

Miraculously, The Man was still on his feet. Miguel, his chest proudly swollen, turned to face his opponent again. El Hombre stood still, his chest heaving with pain, gasping for a breath of air, hoping for a minute of respite.

Again the Banderilleros came around the rear. And again they stabbed The Man, this time leaving their barbs dangling painfully between his shoulder blades.

The wind began to blow slightly, causing the colored strips of paper on the barbs to flow festively out of the back and neck of The Man.

The crowds were becoming impatient. They shouted to Miguel.

"Kill El Hombre. Now. Give him the kill."

The Matador turned once more to The Man, his sword pointed at his throat. A Picador pricked him deeply in the back, causing him to shriek wildly and rush unseeing toward his slayer.

Miguel thrust his blade home, stifling The Man's cry in mid air. Blood spurted out of El Hombre's mouth for a distance of two feet, and he stood there, eyes glazed, momentarily suspended, before falling in a heap, dead, at the feet of the great fighter.

Attendants came in with a cart and some hooks attached to a rope. They sunk the hooks deep into the flesh of the neck of The Man and dragged the dead carcass off the sandy floor.

Other attendants came in and swept the sand about, covering the now drying blood, making the arena clean for the next fight.

Bulls and heifers alike roared their approval of the fight. They were happy. Their thirst for cruelty was awakened. There would be six more great fights tonight. Six more Men would die at the hands of the great Matadors of Mexico. It was wonderful.

THE END