**…Take Me out to The Bullfight…**

Two times a year, the plaza opens its iron gates and spectators crowd into the concrete seats of the Valencia *Plaza de Toros.* Locals and tourists gather to break bread, cheer, and sing, all while watching the sacred dance between the *matador* and the *toro bravo.*

Entering the Plaza de Los Toros on a festival day attacks all your senses. Screaming trumpets and drums from the arena band cut through the crowded sonic soundscape, merging with the fans' chatter and chants. The red ring circling the sand pitch immediately draws your eye to the center. And hopefully, all these things are heightened by the fact that you’ve already stopped at a station to get your obligatory \*first\* *canya.* But where this pageantry leads can be jarring to many. After the plaza parade and the beautiful matador outfits are displayed, a bull is slayed on the spot and dragged out before the audience... several times.

A *Corrida* is a multipart cultural experience that can’t exactly be relegated to a mere sporting event. The plaza, the fans, the matador and of course the bull all create the event that Spaniards know as a Corrida.

This mosaic of national pride and spilled blood is near to my heart because of my familial ties to the tradition. Hailing from Valencia, Venezuela, the city that houses the second-largest bullfighting plaza in the world, The Ojeda have been bullfighting aficionados for generations.

Although I was not able to attend the bullfighting academy like my grandfather, my love and appreciation for bullfighting runs deep. Despite the winds of immigration landing me thousands of miles away from the nearest plaza, I cherish every time I am given the opportunity to attend a festival.

Lucky for me, my time in Valencia has overlapped with the bullfighting festival of San Jaime. Between July 17 and July 21, Valencia’s Bullfighting Plaza hosts a variety of bull-centric spectacles including the iconic bullfights.

As I enter the plaza on the penultimate night of the festivals, I carry with me a combination of 4 generations of admiration and a curious gang of first-time spectators.

\*Insert Quote from Rachel about her expectations for the bullfight\*

\*Comment on assumed hesitations\*

As we take our seats, I prepare myself to play the role of cultural ambassador to my student guests. You see, in theory, the chants, enthusiasm, and convoluted ruleset aren’t much different than a day at the baseball field, but to those unversed in the ins and outs of bullfighting, the whole ordeal may appear as a string of striking scenes playing out in front of you without rhyme or reason.

“When you can follow what is happening in the arena, know what to look for, that is when you see the artistry in la faena” says Alicia, an administrator at FSU Valencia with close ties to the arenas, emphasizing that a prerequisite of enjoying this tradition is education.

A bullfight is a rigidly organized event consisting of 7 main parts tied together by a vocabulary of unique terms used within the tauromaquia- or bullfighting ecosystem.

“begin recount of bullfight, going today”