

THE PACHANGA by Mark Mecalis

(A Homeric interpretation of a real amateur Bullfight in Tijuana)

Zeus, the son of Cronos took no interest in mortal's thoughts of a mere Pachanga. Ares, however, always instigating the spirit of battle sent a select group of men a single dream of courage during the night.

The child of morning rosy fingered dawn, in robes of saffron brought light to the mortals who awoke from fitful slumber. Each man in his own bed having received the dream arose with newfound vigor. The mortals prepared themselves for a day that would bring them to challenge a wild two-horned beast in the arena.

Mount Olympus trembling from Zeus and Hera again locked in quarrel provided the diversion Ares needed to pursue his amusements in the men's Pachanga.

Multitudes of people gathered in the main tents outside the arena of combat. Thighbones were cut, wrapped in fat and laid on pits of flame as sacrifices to the Gods. Sweetmeats were cooked and eaten first. Many hetacombs of wine were offered to Zeus - thus enraged with this Ares, the son of Zeus and God of war vows to let the fates decide the outcome of the day.

All having eaten and drunk their fill, found their places to view the Pachanga spectacle. Ares, angered still by the insulting lack of prayers in the Plaza, the very place that is as a temple to him, orders the fates employ their wiles to cloud the men's dream of courage.

Ares in invisible form takes a palco to himself and watches as the warriors now fearful and gray-faced prepare for the release of the great two-horned beast into the circle of sand. The Torril crashes open and all lean forward to catch a glimpse of the beast - an immense creature with dark gray coat, large curved horns and rending the earth as it enters the arena. The warriors' legs, frozen in fear fail to carry a single man out on the sand.

The men, without the aid of Ares dream and only cloth in hand leave the beast unchallenged. Suddenly a lone warrior steps out from his protected

Burladero. He is not as skilled as the other men who did not move, yet he presses on to confront the great horror alone.

The wild, horned beast turns with the ferocity of Argus and sets a direct path to the mortal warrior. Short, snorting breaths escape the horned monster as its hooves tear holes in the earth and billow clouds of yellow sand.

Unwavering, the warrior holds his cloth out to his side and moves it gently back and forth. Without notice of the cloth, the terrible beast strikes a hard felled blow to the man's stomach at full speed. Darkness falls upon the warrior as he collapses headlong, biting the dust. His brightly colored red and yellow cloth floating down covers his head and shoulders as a shroud.

Ares palco door opened with a smash. Laughing loudly and looking directly at him was Folly, who had taken the guise of a beer vendor in red shirt and white pants and holding an ice filled bucket.

Folly, banished from Mt. Olympus by Zeus, had taken refuge among the mortals and thus became a companion to Ares and his endeavors of war. It was Folly who drove the downed mortal to act so.

In the arena, another stepped out on the sand without fear; this mortal pulled his fallen friend to safety and attends his wounds. Ares so moved by this individual act of bravery bade the fates return to the mortal his full dream of courage. Overhearing this, Folly chides Ares and wagers – Let no other man be gifted with this dream today and this “brave” warrior will die by the beast. Ares sure after all witnessed the mortal's courage in rescuing his fallen friend; no man could deny him like rescue – agreed to the Olympian wager.

Ares with Folly at his side watches as the chosen warrior steps again on to the sand of the arena. Entering without aid of Hephaestusian shield or armor, he is armed only with a cloth woven by mortal hands. Striding forward, he stands as firmly as Ajax in battle before the dark horror. Terrible sounds of great horns cleaving into the soft inner flesh of the wooden arena rise through the Plaza. The monster turns and sets upon the warrior with the fury of Poseidon. The mortals standing outside the arena step back several paces, such was the fear that gripped them. Only the brave warrior pressed onward. Ares smiled proudly. Confronting the dark menace headlong he holds his cloth to his right side drawing the on-rushing beast deftly past, bringing cheers from the crowd. With sliding hooves, the possessed horror turns in an

instant returning with greater fury. Driving its terrible horns directly for the mortal, only quick placement of the cloth over the eyes of the monster with movements swift as Iris did the warrior escape tragedy. Ares grimaced with the possibility of the mortals' death at the horns of this dark terror. Folly, delighted, cheered on the beast.

The warrior, given no time to recover was set upon again. The cloth serves no purpose as the horned menace crushes into his chest with its shoulder. Felled to his knees, darkness did not fall upon the mortal. He jumps to his feet. The great horror stands between him, the cloth and his nearest escape over the wall. The dark bringer of death with gleaming horns drawing deep and furious breaths charges. With wide eyes and empty hands, the warrior leaps to his left with all his might. Catching the mortal behind the right knee with one pointed horn the beast turns its great head, tosses him to the dust, and moves in on him with deadly intent.

From his knees the man draws himself across the sand as a wounded stag drags its hind legs after being gravely wounded by a huntsman's arrow and is set upon by the hounds that each in their own turn tear and rend leg flesh until the stag can flee no more.

The mortal, reaching to the wooden wall digs his fingernails deep into the richly painted red surface. With all remaining strength, he manages to secure the top portion of his body over the wall before the dark terror is on him again. The familiar sound of the soft wood giving way to the slashing horns of the beast fills the air. The thrusting horns fell short and narrowly missed the unguarded flesh of the mortal's legs, pinning him in helpless peril half out of the arena.

Looking to the faces in front of him, the warrior finds no one who will help him. Some laughing and drinking, most just watching. Only a few men attempted to distract the monster with shouts and slaps against the wall. No one however had the strength of courage to get near enough to pull the man to safety.

Ares in a fit of pique witnessing the events before him can endure no more of Folly's laughter, and shouts "Cowards! Mortal cowards! How dare you insult the bravery of this warrior in my arena?" Folly, continuing his chiding reminds Ares of their wager. Unable to sit and watch the mortal die at the horns of this great creature before the on looking faces of cowards, Ares

paces while hatching a scheme to save the warrior, yet not lose his wager with Folly.

Up in the brightly colored seating along the front rows in the Plaza a small black and white dog was running back and forth. Barking loudly at the monster, this common hound was showing more desire to attack the beast than all the fearful men watching down on the sand.

Ares spying the dog grins broadly. Without warning the dog leaps down to the sand covered arena floor as smoothly as an unfeathered hawk returns to its master's arm. The hound begins snarling and snapping at the heels of the great horror causing the horned beast to turn its terrible head. Free from the crushing horns, the mortal warrior pulls himself over the wall. Crashing to safety and the sand below, he is alive.

Folly reddening with anger looks to Ares. Unable to contain himself, Ares bursts into laughter. Folly accusing Ares of forfeiting his wager by interfering with the men stops in mid sentence. Realizing that indeed the hound was not a man and Ares has beaten him fairly joins him in laughter.

Reaching deeply in his bucket Folly finds two cold drinks befitting a day of Men, Beasts and Gods.

THE END

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