

Torera by Monet Hurst-Mendoza
Allyson Broyles

I was engaged in this script until the very end. Although we are presented with snippets of Elena and Tanok's lives, these pieces create a beautiful tapestry of love, family, and bullfighting. Due to Latinx only casting, Elena's evident disadvantages in this narrative are that she is a woman and economically low-class. It is refreshing to see a struggle where ethnicity and heritage are universal and race division does not define the characters. *Torera* immerses the reader in a world where Mexican culture is revered. I am reminded of the world of the Pixar film *Coco*, a movie that was successful in the box office.

The playwright releases the scent of oranges into the audience at the beginning and end of the show. This is an intriguing immersion device that could be effective if executed correctly. I enjoyed exploring Elena and Tanok's relationship in the scenes where they are interacting with other characters. These outside interactions reveal more about their true nature, and the consequences of their relationship make their bond deeper. A few lines inspired me, including "Being exact and being creative are one in the same" on page 17, and "If you can't even get me into the dining room, how the hell are you going to get me into the bullring?" on page 52. I felt a connection with Pastora's character, especially when she is making breakfast. I think she will be loved by audiences despite her scruples about Elena's bullfighting career.

The time skips, while cinematically engaging, are not laid out clearly enough for live performance as they are currently written. Will there be projections with the year for clarity? Will actors be assigned wigs/signature costume pieces to portray their age? Small details could mean a world of difference in relaying the passage of time. While the revelation of Don Rafael as Elena's father exposes the corruption of his character, this information feels extraneous. Perhaps the playwright is revealing the origins of Elena's talents and her journey of reaching greatness without the training she could have received from her birth father. Nevertheless, my admiration for Pastora's character waned after discovering that she has continued to be subservient to Don Rafael despite his treatment of Elena.

Due to the healthy dose of Spanish phrases scattered in this script, directors would need to be sure to cast people who speak Spanish as a first or second language. While the playwright suggests puppetry if you cannot bring horses/bulls to your stage, I wonder if this will cheapen the glory we are supposed to experience.