

EL TORO BOMBITO

An animated screenplay story

By Ron Mita

The legend is told from the Pyrenees Mountains to the Straits of Gibraltar of the Spanish hero who rose up against oppression, who fought against a system of violence and deceit, and led his followers on a journey of discovery and adventure.

Who was this Castilian Moses, this Spanish Spartacus, this Corinthian? William Wallace? His name is known throughout the arenas in all the great cities, in the ganadarias across the countryside, and in the streets of Pamplona, where he first made his mark. His name... Bombito. And this is his story... and it's all bull.

It's been more than 100 years since the greatest bull of them all began his journey to infamy the only way he knew: the easy way. Bombito was a strong, muscular bull and, at first glance, a glowing example of his breeding, but inside he was lazy. "Hard work is for fools," he often bragged to his closest friend, GANSO, a wayward goose who claimed to know everything about bullfighting but in reality knew next to nothing. Your mother often says that taking the easy way is not the path to success, but for Bombito, it had worked quite well. He was very popular with the senioritas and was placed in a special pasture for bulls under consideration for the ganadaria. The easy way is the only way.

For those unfamiliar with the ganadaria, it's where the best bulls are brought to train for the grand bullfighting arenas of Spain. Being selected to go to the ganadaria is an honor second only to being chosen to fight in the prestigious arena. Fame and honor; those were the words that drove Bombito. In fact, the honor part was less important to him than the fame aspect. It was truly all about fame, with nothing to do with honor.

It was no secret to Bombito that Cachuro was the strongest and best candidate for the ganadaria. His rippling muscles, fierce disposition, and perfect black coat were unlike any other on the ranch. He had Bombito beaten in all areas...save one. Cachuro was very gullible and not very bright. In the end, it was no match, as Bombito convinced Cachuro to eat some of the mushrooms growing in the field -- special performance-enhancing mushrooms that would make him perfect. Cachuro grazed on the spores until he began to see double, then triple, then a two-headed fox, a flying burro, and monkeys playing musical instruments. Stricken with a serious case of the munchies, Cachuro was far too concerned with a fly that landed on his nose to impress the men from the ganadaria.

Rested and ready, Bombito went through a rehearsed sequence of moves while being “coached” by Ganso, and... no surprise here, he was selected to go to the ganadaria, leaving Cachuro to make chains out of daisies.

All bulls know of the ganadaria, but few have ever been there. All bulls know of the arena, but none have ever been there. As Bombito was carted off to the ganadaria, he smiled and winked at the cows. He was one step from the arena, one step from immortality. The ganadaria would be more of the same, and in a few weeks he would be in a cart on his way to the Plaza De Toros – the greatest bullfighting ring in the world. As he stepped off the cart, Bombito was met by a fierce old bull, LEGUENTO. Old and scarred, Leguento still had the body and heart of a warrior. He stood proud, but Bombito didn’t notice. He was transfixed by Leguento’s right horn. Instead of a sharp point, the horn was abruptly broken four inches from the tip. Like a huge mole on someone’s forehead, the disfigurement held Bombito’s gaze. A bull with a broken horn was not whole; he could never go to the arena. If there was no chance of going to the arena, what was your purpose for living? All Bombito saw was an old bull, a freak.

Whispers from other bulls explained that Leguento was determined to make sure all the young bulls fresh from the ranches would give their best...or else. Ganso was intimidated by Leguento, and perhaps Bombito would have been too if he had not caught sight of ALDONZA, the most beautiful bovine he’d ever seen.

As far as she was concerned, Bombito and the rest of the new recruits were nothing but the same old sides of beef she’d seen hundreds of times before. To make matters more complicated, Aldonza was the daughter of Leguento. Bombito set about his old tricks, but Leguento and Aldonza had seen them all before. Just another bull who thought he could come to the ganadaria and impress. They were certain he would leave as the others before him, in a cart, back to the ranch, in disgrace.

Ganso found Bombito with news that MARCHOSO, a great bull from Seville, had arrived. Marchoso was the odds-on favorite to make it to the arena, and seeing him only underscored the comment. Unlike Cachuro, Marchoso was more than all brawn; he had the brains to match and humility to boot. He was a cloven-hoofed golden child, and Bombito knew it.

For his part, Leguento coached the bulls, offering sound advice such as keeping your eyes on your target, not on the ground, when charging. Bombito never heard those words, as he rarely attended the lessons in favor of wandering the fields and talking to Aldonza.

Aldonza suggested that Bombito work a bit harder, but the young bull would have none of it and began a series of prankish attempts to

undermine Marchoso, each met with a duck and a dodge worthy of a matador.

Speaking of Matadors, it was around this time that the infamous Tincho María Manzanares arrived at the ganadaria to practice his moves as he prepared for his big debut in the arena at Pamplona. A slim, stick-thin bullfighter, Tincho hated bulls; no one knows why, but let's assume his mother was trampled by one. That probably didn't happen, but his hatred ran that deep. Disliked by the bulls, Manzanares wasn't well liked by people either. Still, his record was unmatched. It was as if Manzanares knew he would win easily every time he faced a bull. It wasn't just a gut feeling; this guy was a cheat.

Each day, several bulls were given the chance to joust with the angry matador. He would wave his red cape; they would charge, and the dance would begin. Manzanares carried a long stick, which he would try to poke the bulls in the back with. The bulls thought it was funny and would snort and stamp their feet to get attention, each trying to knock the bullfighter off his feet.

Bombito had heard the gossip. When Tincho was up-and-coming, he was scheduled to fight a brave young bull... Leguento. But Tincho was a coward, so when Leguento slept, Tincho cut his right horn with a saw, making Leguento unfit for the arena. Tincho went on to success, and Leguento was sent back to the ganadaria. Bombito sized up old Leguento. So, he got a raw deal. So what?

Bombito admired Tincho's innovation. Finally, someone as clever as himself.

Bombito took his turn without much fanfare or result. But it was Marchoso who made the little matador fume. As the man waved his cape, Marchoso managed to get his left horn into the man's pants, ripping them from top to bottom and leaving him bare-assed and red-cheeked. As the matador ran off, all the bulls whooped it up, leaving Bombito fuming. Marchoso was the popular bull, and there was no changing that fact. Aldonza commented that Marchoso was incredible. Bombito asked her about his joust, and she replied, "Interesting... but not incredible." And that's when Bombito pulled out his safety net... the long list of excuses he called upon when criticism came his way. Today, it was an errant column of dust combined with the inferior grain he'd been fed. Aldonza wandered away, shaking her head at the arrogant bull and his menu of excuses.

Aldonza looked in the window as Tincho changed out of his matador suit, mocking his very existence. The matador was stomping and spitting, and if

she had not been laughing too hard at his anger, she might have noticed him sitting at a grindstone, sharpening his sword.

Things got bad between Marchoso and Bombito, and when Bombito saw the proud bull courting Aldonza, things got even worse. Aldonza had gone from making it a hobby to insulting and humiliating Bombito, and had turned it into a full-time job. She was annoying, maddening, and damn, he was falling for her head over hooves. The only words she would say to him always included “grow up” or “be a bull, not a calf”. Marchoso was going to get the girl and the trip to the Plaza Del Toros...not if Bombito could help it. Leguento laughed at his worst student. The pain of a love lost (actually never found), the thought of being left behind, and Leguento’s insults put it all in perspective for Bombito. The road to Pamplona was through Marchoso.

And so Bombito did the unthinkable. He insulted Marchoso’s mother. Oh, yeah, insulting a mother is universal. In fact, amongst bulls, it’s about as bad as it gets.

The showdown began. Marchoso and Bombito, face to face. As they ran toward each other, the other bulls looked on in disbelief. The match raged with glancing blows and near gorings. As they passed, Bombito kicked dirt into his opponent’s eyes, blinding him. Now Bombito had his chance and charged. Head down, he drove his horns toward Marchoso, oblivious to Leguento’s advice and...WHAM. Bombito came to an abrupt stop. Running headlong, he missed his target and impaled his horns in a wooden wall. Stuck fast, he bucked and kicked against Leguento’s orders. The ranchers were running to free the prize bull when a mighty CRACK filled the air.

Bombito fell back, and all eyes went wide with fear. He stood with a snort, saw the shock, and stopped. Had they finally realized he was the great one, not Marchoso? He preened and paraded; the moment was his. Then he saw it. His right horn was broken, hanging by a thread. It dangled there, then fell, and with it, Bombito’s hopes, dreams, and future.

Days later, sitting in a field of tall grass, Bombito watched the other bulls parade in front of the men from Pamplona. Aldonza came by to visit him, hoping the experience would have changed him, but all it had done was make him bitter.

Two wagons arrived at the ranch. As Bombito was loaded into the first, Marchoso was loaded into the second. One bull was going home, and one was going to Pamplona and glory. Head low, Bombito could not bear to look at his adversary. Amid the adulation of all the cows and bulls, Marchoso took a moment to offer Bombito his condolences and to remark that, at the moment Bombito charged, he had seen, albeit briefly, “the fiercest bull in

all of Spain. If you could be that bull, all the time, then you would be in here and I would be honoring you.” As the wagons began to roll out of the ganadaria, Bombito’s last view was Aldonza alongside Marchoso’s wagon, offering a rose to his rival. Each wagon took a different road. For Marchoso, it was on to Pamplona; for Bombito, it was back to the ranch.

Ganso soared down from the clouds and landed on Bombito’s back. He could see his friend was changed, defeated, and perhaps sorry. “I always wanted to see the arena, to see the glory. Just to see the crowd, to hear them call my name,” Bombito pined. Ganso could not bear to see his friend in pain, so he flew off. Soaring high, he spotted Marchoso’s convoy heading north.

In the heart of Pamplona sits the Plaza De Toros. A majestic stadium, it is the site of some of the greatest bullfights in Spain’s history. All the cows and bulls of Spain know about the plaza and the bullfights, but there is one thing they don’t know—the outcome. It has been common knowledge among all Spanish bovines that a bull who goes to the Plaza De Toros, jousts with the matador, embarrasses the human, and is then carried off the plaza as a hero, taken to “prados mas verdes,” which, when translated, means “greener pastures.”

Ganso soared ahead of the procession, over the hills and down into the city of Pamplona. Cruising over the red-tiled roofs, he noticed the streets were empty. Not a soul in sight. Then, a mighty roar. The sound of applause and cheering. Ganso banked and came low over the Plaza de Toros.

In the plaza, nearly everyone in Pamplona gathered to watch the bullfights. As Ganso settled on the wall, he marveled at the pomp and circumstance. It was everything Bombito had claimed it would be and more. The bull challenged the matador, and the crowd went wild. A break in the action saw the matador leave, and Ganso guessed he had given up, but then he returned...with sword in hand. Perplexed, Ganso watched in horror as the bull charged the matador, who stood perfectly still and then plunged the sword into the bull’s back. The mighty creature buckled...staggered and fell. Ganso fell too. Gathering his wits, he took to the air.

Flying out of town, he swooped low over Marchoso’s caravan to speak to the mighty bull. Explaining that the arena means death, Ganso did his best to urge Marchoso not to fight, but the mighty bull only laughed and accused Ganso of again doing Bombito’s bidding. “Tell your friend I fight for him and all my fellow bulls. I will see him someday in prados mas verdes.”

And so Marchoso was led through the gates of the city. Ganso flew home to the ranch, where he found Bombito alone in his pasture. So overwhelmed with excitement, Ganso didn't know where to begin, but it didn't take long for Bombito to understand that the arena meant death for a bull and that Marchoso was only days away from his.

There is a time in everyone's life when they must rise up and do the right thing. Bombito thought long and hard about Marchoso. No matter how many rotten things he had tried to do to his adversary, Marchoso was always kind to him. No matter how mean and nasty he tried to be, Marchoso always had a kind word. Aside from Ganso, Marchoso was Bombito's only friend in the world... and that was about to come to an end.

Everything he knew and believed, everything all bulls knew and believed, was a lie. Something had to be done... With that, Bombito lowered his head, stomped his feet, and took off running. Head low, eyes up, he ran headlong into the gate that guarded his pasture, shattering it into splinters, and continued across the Spanish countryside.

Aldonza was the first to spot the black hulk with a cloud of dust trailing it. She was simply amazed when Bombito smashed yet another fence to enter the ganadaria. As the other bulls gathered to see what was going on, Bombito found Leguento and explained the truth about the arena. Naturally, no one believed it. The Matadors had all used sticks. There was never blood in the arena.

Ganso explained what he had seen, but none of the bulls believed the crazy goose. Finally, Aldonza stepped forward. It all made sense to her. Aldonza called the bulls to the ranch house window. As they gathered, she entered and went to a large oak armoire. Pulling it open, they saw the familiar Matador suit... the suit of lights. There, next to the suit, a glimmering sword lay, its blade bent to aid in killing a bull.

No more proof was needed. Their futures were doomed, and the time to act was now. The bulls were about to stampede when Bombito stood tall and asked who would join him to save Marchoso. Not a word. Knowing the arena meant death, the bulls were not at all interested in charging into the city and risking their necks. And what for? "For Marchoso, for all the others, our fathers, our brothers, maybe even our children if we live that long," proclaimed Bombito, his speech passionate, well-versed, and from the soul. The first volunteer was Aldonza. The second was her father, Leguento. Soon, bull after bull joined ranks until their numbers swelled.

A cloud of dust moving across the countryside revealed itself to be thirty bulls, one cow, and a broken-horned Bombito leading the charge.

The road to Pamplona is long and arduous. Bombito and his company moved like a storm, crashing through the gates of every ranch they passed, freeing the livestock and enlisting the help of the bulls, so their numbers grew. Now, just days from Pamplona, Bombito's forces were well over one hundred.

Sunday in Pamplona. Marchoso was bathed and combed. He looked his very best as he awaited entry into the arena. Today would be his day. Today he was to be taken to Prados Mas Verdes. The gates opened, and out he charged. Running a full circuit around the arena, he kicked and snorted. The crowd loved him. The men cheered, the women threw flowers, and the children stood in awe. Then the Matador, none other than Miguel Tincho Manzanares, grinned an evil grin while fixing his pencil-thin mustache. The day was to be his.

And so, the fight began. Man against beast. Beast thinking this was all about him, man knowing that in the end, the beast would die. Round one, The Tercio de Varas, lots of dash and flash. Round two, the Tercio de Banderillas, was all Marchoso. Just like at the ganadaria, he humiliated Tincho and the worst thing a Matador could face (worse than being gored), the crowd turned on him, cheering for the bull and whistling at Tincho's every move.

Tincho left the field of battle as the round ended and in the darkness of the corridor, flicked his left arm, revealing a nasty set of razor spikes protruding from his forearm. Covering the blades with his red cape, he strode out into the area to begin the Tercio De Muerte, which every Spanish human knows is the death round. The bulls don't know that part.

As the Tercio de Muerte began, Marchoso was tired, but the screams from the crowd kept him going. Looking at the little matador walking toward him, Marchoso saw the all too familiar red cape and charged. As he passed close to Tincho, he felt a painful slash and...the crowd booed and whistled. Stopping, Marchoso looked over to see he'd been wounded. Confused, he looked to Tincho only to see him holding a sword. Ganso's words came back to him, and all the things he'd seen over the days and weeks flashed before him. Of course, it made sense...there was no glory in the arena and the prados mas verdes, the greener pastures, were just a lie. His knees wobbled.

Marchoso stood still. The Matador advanced. The crowd went silent. Then a distant rumble. It grew louder. Louder still. Then...with a deafening blast, the gates burst open as Bombito and a crew of mad bulls careened into the arena, heads low and angry.

The Matador stood frozen for a beat, and then he did what any man might. He ran into the crowd, and they did what any mob might: they threw him back in the ring. Several other Matadors came to his aid, but they were just child's play for the angry bulls. Their golden pants shredded by the bovines, the matadors fled in shame and pain as the bulls gathered around Marchoso, defending him against attack.

Realizing that staying in the arena would be dangerous, Bombito rallied the troops. By now, the stands had emptied as people fled to the streets. Bombito called his comrades together and asked them to follow him to the mountains. Bursting out of the arena, they hit the cobbled streets of Pamplona, and woe to anyone in their path. Most of the spectators from the arena were still in the streets when the bulls began their run. This sea of humanity rolled like a wave as sharp horns met soft backsides, and the running people were tossed like rag dolls. Bombito charged into The Plaza del Castillo, a large open square.

There, breathing hard, stood Tincho. As man faced beast, the running citizens all entered the square, gathering around the outskirts and forming an impromptu arena. Behind Bombito, his fellow bulls began to arrive, but it was clear this battle was between two animals only, bull and matador. Remembering Leguento's training, Bombito approached the matador cautiously. Still holding his red cape, Tincho's razor-sharp forearm was well hidden.

And then, the charge. Not one, but both. Running at full steam across the plaza, Bombito and Tincho would finish this here and now. The crowd roared. They wanted blood, whose it didn't seem to matter. Tincho dropped the cape to reveal daggers protruding from both arms. Now only a few feet apart, both man and beast became airborne, as if in a Hong Kong Kung Fu film, and both blade and horn met flesh. Bombito went down hard, crashing into a market cart selling olive oil. Tincho crashed to the ground, his daggers shattering.

Grabbing a torch from the wall, he turned to the injured Bombito and charged. In a strange role reversal, Bombito took on the matador role, dodging the madman with flair and then sticking him with his horn. Enraged, Tincho threw his torch at Bombito, which bounced off... but not before his oil-soaked hide caught fire.

The flames did nothing to slow the mighty bull as he plowed headlong into Tincho, sending both into a large fountain in the center of the plaza, which sent up a wall of steam and smoke. All eyes waited to see who would emerge victorious. And then... Tincho staggered out... only to fall flat on his face as Bombito walked past. The crowd roared their support, as did the bulls. Aldonza came to Bombito's side, both unaware that Tincho had

grabbed a butcher's cleaver and was approaching. When... THWOCK... Old Leguento gave the vile Matador a kick in the head that sent him back to the fountain. Payback.

Bombito paused to look back at the arena. For his entire life, he had dreamed of making it big in the arena. He dreamed of the crowd and of people yelling his name. From this day on, Bombito's name would be remembered forever in the arena and in the streets. As he led the bulls across the plaza, the people of Pamplona looked on with fear and respect. In silent union, they stepped aside, opening the way for the bulls to leave the city. Bombito began a gentle run, and his brothers-in-arms followed. The people began to cheer. All heroes are humane, but not necessarily human.

Leading his bulls out of the city, a cloud of dust rose from the streets of Pamplona. The bulls had run for the first time, but it would not be the last. No one knows for sure where Bombito and his followers went. In town after town, they attacked the arenas and freed the bulls. They say his descendants still roam the mountains of Andalusia. At night, a sound louder than a mighty freight train echoes off the hills and mountains, and every now and again, a champion bull goes missing. In Pamplona, they celebrate Bombito by running the bulls down the streets of the ancient city.