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PART I

[Transcript from the video provided]

“Yo Ethan, did you know that Cinco de mayo was kinda horse crap? You wanna know why? It all kinda starts in 1855 when uh Benito Juarez, you know, you know, the president of Mexico, you know how tall he was? Guess how tall he was. Guess how tall he was! Guess how tall he was. No dude, he was 4’6 idiot. Um also (inaudible), so he passed the uh Law of 1855, and you know what it did? It kinda limited the power of the Catholic Church, and brought a really liberal uh system to Mexico, it all started with that, and conservatives were not too happy with that, so you know what they did? You know what they did? they started a civil war. You know what happened? They kinda lost dude, they kinda lost, and they were pissed that they lost, and so do you know what they did? They went to Napoleon III of France and said “hey, can you like, come over and help us out? And take over the liberal government of Benito Juarez? And you know what happened? So the French landed in Vera Cruz right, which was a really popular port people like to go to, um, in Mexico, and you know, people usually go like up around Jalapa and all that, but you know what they did? They went down through Orizaba, and you know, theres this town called Puebla right? This town called Puebla, and this was the Mexican Army, and they, they they encountered them there, and you know what happened? They beat them back dude, they beat them back, but you know what? Like the next day, the French kinda just, kinda b-bulldozed the entire operation there so, it was really one day of victory, but they eventually went up to Puebla and Mexico City, so it was kinda b.s. but like, yeah dude. It was pretty crazy.

And then, when they put this guy, Maximilian, who was like, Napoleon III’s cousin or something, put him in office, you know what they did? They killed him dude, because they thought they could control this guy, but really he came up, he came in knowing Spanish and was dressed up like a Mexican, like he wanted to go a good job, and the people that thought they could control him, but you know what they did? They were like “nah, this dude sucks” so they straight up killed him.” [END]

I figured my good buddy Ethan Fernandez would really appreciate this topic, and find it interesting because we have had years of taking the same Spanish classes together in high school, and the subject of Cinco de Mayo only comes up when during class our teachers would bring tamales, or bring in candies and have a generous five-minute break from class. All we ever knew was that for some reason France was messing around with Mexico, and on the 5th of May during some year, the Mexican Army beat the French sitting atop a hill, while the French slipped and slid on the mud below. So upon learning the whole context around this event, and the small piece it played in the larger context of what was occurring in Mexico during this time, I felt it was my duty to storm in and tell my old dear friend everything I could about it, while he was playing Clash Royale on his phone.

PART II

I didn't know Mexico's history was full of absolute macho dudes. Yeah its pretty sweet. You remember Santa Anna in that *Texas Rising* show? How he was just a straight badass? Yeah, he was doing that for like 30 years. Even when they shot off his leg, he was still going at it. So Mexico had what were called "Caudillos", which were like local bosses in different regions of Mexico that got their power from the support of the local people. Santa Anna was one of these, and its funny because Caudillos would usually be trying to portray themselves as like one of the people, but Santa Anna would never get down from his horse. He would rather look like a bad-ass than a regular joe, and stunt on his supporters from his horse. Like the only time he would get down is when he would go to cockfights and watch chickens tear each other up. They say he did it because it brought him closer to the people, as cockfighting was a popular everyday guy thing, but I think it's because he just liked violence, I mean the guy was a soldier. But everyone and their mom loved this guy. There was this one time, when he was fighting off a Spanish fort at Vera Cruz, and the new emperor of Mexico Iturbide, sent guys down to stop the way Santa Anna was defending the town, and Santa Anna gets pissed and gets people of the town to stop the soldiers. He even convinces the officer in charge to join his side. After this, more and more people started to support Santa Anna, and soon Santa Anna works with the officer he switched and created the plan of Casa Mata, which caused the emperor to be dethroned by Santa Anna, and Mexico operate under a government Santa Anna helped create, with himself because president in 1833.

But the funny thing is that this guy was not at all a politician, nor did he want to be. He would rather go around being a badass and just fight wherever he could. He would rarely ever go to Mexico City and actually rule the country. He would just leave that to his vice president. He wanted to be president just for the glory of it. He led his army in the front lines during the Texas Revolution, and also led his guys during the Mexican American war, which he lost both, but anyways this guy was nuts. He even overthrew his own government. When his vice president, Gomez Farias, tried to limit specialized military courts called *fueros*, Santa Anna just said screw it and overthrew his own guy. And he did this multiple times too.

Even when the French shot off his leg in 1838, Santa Anna still rode around fighting and flexing, leading the army in the Mexican American War later on. He used the leg as a flex and buried it in a funeral with full military honors.

Unfortunately, the loss of both Texas in the Revolution and much of Mexico's upper territories from the Mexican American War, as well as selling even more land to the United States in 1853 and blowing all the money made Mexico fed up after 30 years with him, and kicked him out of office, and replaced him with a four foot six lawyer, who fled in a carriage when civil war and French invasions hit, instead of going out guns blazing which Santa Anna would have done. What a guy.

I chose this topic with my Dad in mind. From time to time, when something related arises, we mention the names of "Santa Anna" and "Pancho Villa" talking about them as bad-asses without really knowing why they are considered bad-asses, apart from TV shows or some distant foggy knowledge about something they once did. Being a lover of history as I am, and a fan of related bad-ass figures, I thought talking to him about Santa Anna, and what he really did that made him a bad-ass would be right up his alley.

It is interesting because besides Teddy Roosevelt, The United States does not have anyone that matches Santa Anna's masculine aura and has done, for a period longer than 10 years, anything remotely close to what Santa Anna did for 30.

PART III

One item that will forever remind me of this class is a Rock 'Em, Sock 'Em. The first time this was brought into class I was left thinking about what in the world this could mean. What did Rock 'Em Sock 'Em have to do with Mexico? Dr. Moore soon began to explain its significance, and it completely changed my perspective on that simple little game, and other things like it. Dr. Moore described how essentially the game is about exerting power onto a lesser being to do your bidding, especially in the most extreme of actions. She

related it to the cock-fighting rings of early Mexico and how it was popularized by the humbler classes in Mexico.

Cock fighting, and it's much more abhorred cousin, dog fighting, were not activities intended to satisfy sadistic impulses of heartless psychopaths as people in a more modern and affluent lifestyle might think, but instead it was a form of release for the poor, where they could focus their pent-up disgruntlements and disdain for the problems in their lives. The humbler classes of Mexico faced a lot of disparages from the higher classes. The wealthy would rather exploit them than help them, and the Church taxed and demanded fees from them, without giving up any of their own land or wealth. The poor were ultimately left feeling powerless. They were the lowest of the low in the social hierarchy and stood no chance in being able to control or manipulate policy or politicians to act on their behalf, nor garner assistance from the much more affluent classes who had the means to do so. The only thing they could control, however, were chickens.

The joy in Rock 'Em Sock 'Em doesn't just come from the violence of the act. There is another factor at play that makes the game enjoyable. The robots do consciously decide to fight each other on their own free will. Instead, the players manipulate the robot and control it, forcing it to fight and sacrifice its head for the pure enjoyment of the player, who themselves do not have to risk their own bodily harm, just the robot's that does the player's bidding. Cock fighting possesses the same principles. The enjoyment of cockfighting is that people with no power whatsoever in their ordinary lives could temporarily control the will of these chickens, and make them do their bidding, which is fighting to the death. It was a release of feeling of powerlessness by the poor, who with chickens, could at least exert power over such a being that is so inferior to them. They treat the chickens as the rich and powerful treat them; pawns to be manipulated for their own satisfaction. The powerless poor uses cockfights as a way to exert control over something inferior as a form of escapism from the own powerlessness and inferiority they feel in their own lives.

In modern iterations, violent and fatal exhibitions among animals have fallen out of favor. But the enjoyment of manipulating other beings to do one's will and abuse themselves for one's own pleasure has not. Lucha Libre could be argued to be a direct descendent of cockfighting. It possesses the same principles, two beings fighting (although it is choreographed, and not fatal) under the manipulation of the audience, who shout commands at the fighters to do their bidding in the ring. The attendees at Lucha Libre fights are not the rich and powerful. Instead, it is the ordinary people of society who do not possess such power as the rich, that are able to release pent-up frustration of their situation by going to Lucha libre fights and watch cartoonish fighters fight purely for the people's enjoyment.

