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## The Pale Faces Are Coming

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### The Pale Faces Are Coming

“Dad... DAD!! You’re doing it again!” Exclaimed the cheeky brown girl I called my daughter, Raquel. I was dozing off from the toils of the day, “Sorry hun, a lot happened tonight and I’m a weary. But, I know I promised you our history tonight and you’ll have it. What do you want to hear about?” I replied. She said, “I’ve been asking mom why grandma had to stay and all of my cousins and uncles and aunts, she says that it was because you had a great idea to settle a new land” she said the last part sarcastically, I could almost feel my wife Anita’s scowl through her tone. Anita and I, having been together many years, was less than enthralled at my idea of grandeur. “You know what sweetie if you really want to know my perspective as to why we’re here, let me tell you the entirety of the story. It’s riddled with crime, hate, punishment, usurping, theft, and indifference, are you sure you’re ready to jump into that rabbit hole? Because once we’re in there’s no coming back out” I replied. “It can’t be worse than yesterday’s fib about fairies only coming out when I eat my greens” Raquel said. “You’re too smart for your age little one” I said.

Adjusting myself at the foot of Raquel’s bed, I crossed my legs and hoped that this truth wouldn’t mar her view of our new society. “Ok, here we go” I sighed, and I began unfolding the story. I was one of the lucky few who bought into their notion of new unconquered land. I for one have always been a sucker for discovery, any sense of adventure was alluring to me. Coming from Culiacan, me, a lowly poblador, who lived in such a tight home with so many people crammed together, I was desperate for a change. The thought of massive lands, two years pay, clothes, cattle, weapons and horses - I would’ve been a fool to refuse. Apparently the geezer

from Spain wanted to settle the land before the Britains and the Russians got the same bright idea (Britanica). Luckily for us, the trek isn't through any bodies of water, just an arduous hike to who knows where. All I know is that all I have to do is plant some land, erect a home and that plot would be mine. While signing my life away on their logs, I thought nothing of the long term - just the escape from a non ascending life. I was weary about leaving behind so much family, their support and the community I had learned to love and revel in. But the thought of new pastures over the horizon excited me enough to not delve into those trivialities. I wish I would've thought it over much more carefully.

This is the break me, my wife Anita and my daughter Raquel needed, I thought. Raquel, you, being only 4 at the time smart for your age, just like your mother, wise, witty and loving beyond comparison. Also, there was an air of upheaval in Mexico, the people seemed to be tired of colonial rule, they wanted to govern themselves. I thought that leaving those problems behind, I wouldn't get drafted for a resistance, nor would any battle come my way. It was a win win, or so went the argument with my wife and her mother as they were throwing the tantrum of their lives about separating the family. In Mexico, family is everything, there is no such thing as you leaving and making your own life, its more of, what you're gonna do with your life to enrich the entire families life. I agreed with them, but unfortunately there was no opportunity in Mexico. How could you try to multiply anything for your family when school was out of the questions, the lands were pretty much already owned, and work was arduous and not consistent. With these clever and recited excuses, we packed our bags.

The trek was inevitably brutal, especially for the kids. Those of us that had them seemed to fall far behind from the group, the others who led would wait but that would be their break, and once we caught up, they would be on the move again. Juan Bautista De Anza was a whole

character for that move. No matter - we persisted. After nearly 1800 miles of traveling north, we finally reached our destination, Monterey. The land, was beautiful - the smell, the chilly ocean breeze, the hills. It seemed like we found Eden. Raquel, if you remember, you were exceptionally pleased, and your mom was fighting how majestic it all was just to spite me. Such is her way.

During the entire trip, we all felt out the crowd and found solace in new people, which brought a taste of home even though we were so far away. Yet, looking back, the class system was still a real thing, there were the Arribeños and the Abajeños (Acuña). Or the elite with the lower class. I'm sure you know which one we are. Looking back, the trivialities that this was. If only we knew what was coming, we could've fended off what was coming next, together.

A couple years later, once we had settled everything, things were on the rise for us. We had pasture, constant rains, and the few cattles that we were awarded, multiplied and now we have stock, horses, pigs, cows, and a plethora of other critters that roam around here. Building this very house was out of my own act. the pens and the farms are all for a pastoral economy. I give to my neighbor if he doesn't have enough and we trade off, but there's no non camaraderie here, if someone's in need, if we can, we help. As such, we didn't plot our lands right on the common feeding grounds of the cattle or by the rivers, those waters are for everyone, not one person has claim over something so natural. This whole notion of this new world started becoming our reality, we were immersed, we are Californios. The gamble that we took paid off in a big way. Unfortunately for us, Spain allowed the Anglo's to move into parts of Texas even after the Louisiana purchase, right as Mexico won its independence. They allowed the devil into our home, now we have to sleep with them.

At first Raquel, it wasn't a big deal, a pale face here, a pale face there, it was rare to see many in one place. Unfortunately, like bacteria in a cold, dark, damp, place - one became two, two became 7 and 7 became an insurrection. You see, your mother and I tilled and cultivated these lands to perfection, learned the seasons, took heed of what other natives said about the land and how to respect it and each other with it. We, over here in the west felt safe from harm and from those who would take upon us, as there have been stories springing up lately of anglos wanting a piece of Texas as well.

All of the peace and all of the harmony we had brought to these lands came to an abrupt end. It was in 1846, president Polk had accused Mexicans of killing Americans on U.S. soil north of Rio Grande (Britanica). You see Raquel, imagine you draw a line in the sand in the playground, its probably crooked on one side and perhaps thicker on one end than the other. Now apply hefty amounts of greed, egoism and raging testosterone. What do you get? A misunderstanding and a battle that lead to the U.S. declaring war on Mexico. Now, Mexico was up in arms about this, they were ready to fight for what was theirs. Unfortunately, the military power of Mexico was centralized some 1800 miles away, sending munitions and provisions at that time was a feat in itself. You see my dear child, today, Spanish is spoken widely but at the time, the indigenous and our people had fractured communication. There was no military unity or uniformity, like a well oiled machine they ran right through. It was as if the super power U.S. was kicking a child, because Mexico's government was barely getting its legs after freshly becoming independent (Britanica).

The big boys won, now what? Well, there had to be a treaty my sweet, there was losses on both sides, and if there was to be harmony ever by these neighboring powers, they'd have to play nice. This is when the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo came fourth. To save you all of the

jargon, it was a cease fire from both sides and an acknowledgement that the US had assumed the 500 thousand square miles. What is important to us, is, Article VIII, which states, Mexicans now established in territories previously belonging to Mexico, and which remain for the future within the limits of the Unites States, as defined by the present Treaty, shall be free to continue where they now reside, or to remove at any time to the Mexican Republic, retaining the property which they posses in the said territories, or disposing thereof and removing the proceeds wherever they please; without their being subjected, on this account, to any contribution, tax, or charge whatsoever.” (Yale). In layman’s terms, we were to be left to our devices without any kind of cumbersome contact with the new lords of the land. It all seemed great on paper, the action of it though, thats a completely other monster my sweet.

That monster you ask? Well, there are many of them, this head of this evil hydra is called, James W. Marshall. This interesting fellow found gold while overseeing the construction of a mill in Sutter Creek. (*History*) Now, any self respecting man would keep this information to himself and just harvest the heck out of it, but there were many employees there at the time of the discovery, and you know how quickly news does spread. Pretty soon an all anglo tsunami came banging at our doors. If they wanted to destroy themselves over the Sutter finding, that would be great, it was when the well ran dry did their beady little eyes turn towards us.

We’re nearing almost to today, but a few major facts need to be filled. The anglos, now coined the Land Grabbers, are solely responsible for the crime that has befallen us. When the gold rush commenced, they began squatting in territories that belonged to Californios according to the treaties. Yet, this didn’t stop them from coming and taking it upon themselves to strike fear into Californios. You’d think the law would be on our side, but a coalition of tyrants called the Texas Rangers had other words about it. These folks preyed on our indignities. Whenever

some land owners who had mines and were discovered were forced to leave it to the Anglos, if that wasn't bad enough, if they brought it to the authorities, they were laughed away. When Californios took matters into their own hands, they would be tried as criminals and their lands would be taken and awarded as restitution to the Anglo. If this wasn't bad enough, the thought of manifest destiny still boiled in their pale veins. There was to now be land speculation (Barker), or the challenge of what clam Californios had over the land they presided over. When tested, the feds would ask folks for written documentation within one year of their claim on the land. When such paperwork couldn't be filed, a court hearing was held. Get this Raquel, its the best part. Everything was in English, the court system and the judge all only spoke English. If they could fend for themselves and their land - their land was taken. To add the proverbial cherry on top, if they did find representation, the lawyer fee would be ridiculous and they would have to surrender some land to them as payment. All in all, it was a usurping of their lands.

That leads us to this week, and as to why I have been tired lately. I know it's important to be here with you both as you ladies, are the love of my life but I must defend our honor. Lately, during the usurping of the lands, the Anglos have fenced off multiple community access points to pastures and common river bank access. This is a disaster, for being locked away from our livelihoods, they force our hands. My daughter, do not think bad of me, but I have adopted the white cap, a social bandit, I am a "Gorras Blancas" their tyranny must come to an end (Acuña). I ride in the middle of the night to assure that you, your mother and I have a place to call home and food to eat. No one person's needs is greater than the other, this is why we must rise and fight. In the words of my soul brother "Innocent persons shall not suffer - no. But, if necessary, we will lead a wandering life, awaiting our opportunity to purge society of men so base that they degrade it with their opprobrium. Our families have returned as strangers to their old country to beg for

an asylum. Our lands, if they are to be sacrificed to the avaricious covetousness of our enemies, will be rather so on account of our own vicissitudes. As to land, Nature will always grant us sufficient to support our frames, and we accept the consequences that may arise. Further, our personal enemies shall not possess our lands until they have fattened it with their own gore” (Cortina).

Now you see my child, why I do what I do. I must take a stand and speak through actions while other lay silent. It is not for me to feel empowered, but to encourage the new generations, you in fact, to not yield to the heathen. As you shall learn and after I pass the mantle onto you, their games are played on the backs of servitude of many. Yet, once fire is ignited in the hearts of those prostrated, their board that which is being gambled over our bodies ends once we decide to stand.

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