

THE BACKYARD PIRATES

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FADE IN:

EXT. SOUTH SEAS, OFF THE COAST OF SANTIAGO - 1680 - NIGHT

A sea battle. A Spanish brigantine, Estela del Mar - sporting a Jolly Roger flag - is under attack by a British man-of-war. Fires blaze on the pirate ship's decks and she's listing to port.

BOOM. The British cannon fires again. Direct hit. The Estela leans further to port. She's sinking.

ON DECK OF ESTELA DEL MAR

The crew - disreputable looking PIRATES - race around, shouting, bailing water and firing small cannon back at the frigate.

Two pirates work feverishly loading muskets and handing them to other pirates who take position.

A brave and beautiful young woman, DESIREE, 21, peeks up from below deck. She spots the pirate captain, Raveneaux.

RAVENEAUX, 40s, is dangerous and rakishly handsome. One glittering black eye surveys the situation - the other eye is covered by a patch.

Raveneaux shoulders his musket and looks down the scope with his one good eye. Desiree strides up to him.

DESIREE

So then, Father, do you still think we'll make Santiago by morning?

RAVENEAUX

Have faith, Desiree.

Raveneaux steadies his aim

RAVENEAUX (CONT'D)

Did they teach you nothing in the convent about faith?

Raveneaux fires.

ANGLE ON A SMALL DORY IN THE WATER

A BRITISH SOLDIER clutches his chest and falls overboard.

Raveneaux reloads. A brightly colored parrot, ST. PEEPER flaps at his elbow.

ST. PEEPER
Oh ye of little faith. AWK!

DESIREE
I learned in the convent that the Christ can walk on water - but I doubt you and I will be so lucky. We're sinking!

RAVENEAUX
Then I suggest you get a bucket and bail.

DESIREE
Bail out the entire South Sea?

Raveneaux points his musket out to sea. BOOM!

RAVENEAUX
I know of a hidden shoal not far from here. The tides be in our favor. We'll put in at the cove, then turn the tables on these demons.

DESIREE
We must get rid of as much ballast possible if we're to make it to this cove.

Desiree strides to a large barrel. She looks around.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
You there, Lucky!

A young pirate hurries to her. LUCKY has the face of an eager puppy - and an IQ not much higher.

LUCKY
Yes, ma'am?

DESIREE
Help me with this water barrel.

Lucky opens the barrel and offers her a ladle of water.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
No! Help me haul this to the gunwale and hoist it over!

Lucky and Desiree throw their weight against it, but it doesn't budge.

Desiree grabs Lucky's sidearm. BLAM! She shoots a hole in the barrel and water spurts out, flowing over the side of the ship.

DESIREE (CONT'D)
Come with me!

Lucky follows Desiree to another place on deck. Several crates are stacked and lashed to a pole. Desiree pulls a knife from her garter and slashes the ropes.

Together, she and Lucky lug a crate to the side of the ship. They strain to lift it over the deck, but it's too heavy. Desiree opens the crate.

INSIDE THE CRATE

Coins, gold bars, jewels, and other treasure glisten.

Desiree scoops up an armload of treasure as Lucky watches.

DESIREE
Don't stand there gawking, help me
toss it over.

Desiree tosses it over the side. Lucky reluctantly follows her example.

The treasure glitters and sparkles as it cascades into the dark water.

Raveneaux notices what his daughter is doing.

RAVENEAUX
Stop, young miss! That's my
retirement and your dowry!

DESIREE
What need do I have of a dowry? I
will take whatever man I choose.
And t'will be a better selection
above sea level.

Raveneaux rushes over, tries to catch the treasure before it falls.

RAVENEAUX
I told you, we'll soon put in at a
safe harbor.

DESIREE

I've bad news for you, Father,
we're putting in already.

The ship creaks and groans as it sinks. Water sloshes over the side.

DESIREE (CONT'D)

Our only hope is to lighten the
port side of the ship. We must be
rid of every last bit of ballast.

RAVENEAX

Ballast, yes.

Raveneaux looks around. He grabs Lucky and throws him over the side!

Lucky wails as he tumbles to the sea. SPLASH!

ANGLE ON THE WATER

Lucky thrashes his way to the side of the ship, finds a handhold, and clings to it.

Desiree fills her arms with treasure and is suddenly bathed in a strange bluish white glow.

DESIREE

What's this?

ST. PEEPER

Walk in the light, as he is in the
light.

Raveneaux peers into the crate.

RAVENEAX

In all my years a'voyage, I have
never seen such a--

ANGLE ON THE TREASURE

A strange opalescent stone glows and seems to pulse with light.

CUT TO:

THE BRITISH MAN-OF-WAR

The BRITISH CAPTAIN, looking stunned, holds his hand in the air. The SOLDIERS cease firing. All is quiet.

The captain walks to the side of the frigate, scans the horizon.

The moonlight makes a golden path across the quiet sea.

The captain looks through his spyglass, then drops it to his side.

CAPTAIN

They've disappeared. How can that be?

FIRST MATE

T'was a ghost ship!

The first mate falls to his knees in fear.

THE SEA

Is calm and empty. There's no sign that the pirate ship ever existed.

CUT TO:

INT. MINE - PLACERVILLE, CALIFORNIA - 1850

Six MINERS work the mine with pick axes. A grizzled man, McDoul, chips away some rock and a thread of gold glistens in the light of the lantern. He cackles in glee.

MCDOUL

Gold! Here's more!

Another man, a Chinese laborer, SAMMY CHU, is examining his find - a narrow vein of gold - by lantern. He slowly moves the lantern along the vein. It gets bigger and wider! Sammy Chu's eyes get bigger and wider, too.

CHU

And more over here! Much more!

GOLET and FREMONT hurry over to look.

MCDOUL

We're rich! Rich as King Midas and only just startin' to dig!

GOLET
I'm gonna build me a mansion in San Francisco and paint it gold.

FREMONT
And I'll build me a mansion just north of your'n. Course it'll be much bigger.

FEENEY, not the sharpest tack in the box, smiles dreamily.

FEENEY
And I'm gonna be so rich I don't have to work at a reg'lar job. Then I can spend ALL my time working in these here mines!

PORT holds up a lantern.

PORT
Let's have a closer look.

He stops suddenly.

PORT (CONT'D)
Did you feel that?

MCDOUL
What?

A slight tremor runs through the mine. A few rocks and bits of debris trickle down the walls. Port's lantern gently swings side to side.

PORT
An earthquake.

MOORE
A little tiny trembler. Nothing to fret about.

He returns to work.

PORT
It could be the fore shock of a bigger quake. I think we should go above immediately.

MCDOUL
And leave this rich vein? I stand against the very idear. I say we stay.

Suddenly an earthquake strikes! There is a huge jolt, then the entire mine violently shakes.

Whole walls slide into piles of rock and dirt in mere seconds. Then pitch darkness.

MCDOUL (CONT'D)
(a quiet voice in the
dark)
But I might be wrong.

We hear the strike of a match. Port relights his lantern. He holds it up, assessing the damage.

PORT
McDoul?

MCDOUL
Aye.

PORT
Chu? Feeney?

CHU
I'm here, Port. And Feeney, too.

PORT
Golet? Fremont?

GOLET
Golet here.

FREMONT
Fremont.

PORT
Thank the Lord for his goodness.
We're all accounted for.

MCDOUL
Don't be thanking too quick.
Where's the entrance?

Port swings his lantern in a circle. The walls seem solid around them.

PORT
We'll have to dig out. Come along,
the entrance is this way.

GOLET
No, sir, it's this way. It was to
my left when the quake struck.

CHU
 Watch the flame of the lantern for
 a breeze. We may see a breeze from
 the right direction.

GOLET
 I tell you, it's this direction! I
 stake my life on it.

Golet begins chipping the walls.

FREMONT
 Well I ain't stakin' my life on it.
 I say follow John Port.
 (nervously)
 Or Sammy Chu.

Sammy Chu slowly stands and points.

CHU
 (urgently)
 What is that?

The men turn to look.

A strange bluish light flickers on the far wall of the
 cavern. But it's unnatural, as if from another world.

Port slowly walks toward it.

PORT
 This may be our answer. See how
 the stone reflects the moon?

The other men stare but don't follow. Port draws closer to
 the light. Suddenly the cavern is thrown into darkness
 again.

MOORE
 Port? PORT?

Then there is nothing but silence.

CUT TO:

INT. SAN JOSE, CA CONVENTION CENTER - PRESENT DAY

It's the Antique Road Show. A huge crowd of PEOPLE pour in
 with their precious heirlooms and worthless junk.

Professional ANTIQUE DEALERS sit at tables enjoying their
 momentary celebrity and status. They eagerly examine items
 placed before them.

EMPLOYEES in Antique Road Show polo shirts hustle around with clipboards. The CAMERA CREW moves among the tables.

Many people wait in line to be matched with a dealer or sent on their way.

IN LINE

A WOMAN, hopeful, carries a large, hideous lamp. Her HUSBAND carries an enormous box overflowing with Beanie Babies.

Two SISTERS drag a heavy table between them as they inch forward in line.

A LITTLE BOY in an A's baseball cap carries a shoe box full of baseball cards. His MOM waits with him, holding a porcelain doll.

Waiting patiently, but with subdued excitement, is ALBERT PATERSON, 35, a Silicon Valley nerd. He pulls a luggage cart loaded with a shiny mahogany box. A yellow card is clenched in one hand.

A Road Show CLERK meets him, carrying a clipboard. Albert hands the clerk the yellow card.

CLERK

(tired, reads card)

Paterson, Albert. Let's see... you got figurines. Okay, open the box. Let's take a look.

ALBERT

If you don't mind, I'd rather wait and show them to your expert, Mr. Desmond. They're very unusual, you see, and--

CLERK

Yeah, yeah, rare and precious - do you know how many times I'll hear the words rare and precious this weekend?

Reluctantly, Albert kneels by the box. He removes the bungee cord holding it to the cart. He takes a key from his pocket and inserts it in the lock.

The clerk sighs impatiently. Albert opens the box and carefully removes a velvet pouch.

Albert reaches into the pouch and pulls out an amazingly detailed figurine, about nine inches tall. It's a perfect replica of a pirate.

The clerk's eyes narrow.

CLERK (CONT'D)

May I?

Albert nods and hands the figurine to the clerk. The clerk studies it.

CLERK (CONT'D)

I've never seen anything like this.
What is it made of?

ALBERT

Some kind of carbon, I think. I collect miniatures of all kinds, but these are unique.

The clerk turns the figurine over.

CLOSE ON THE PIRATE FIGURINE

An elaborate letter "G" is imprinted on the bottom of the Pirate's boot.

The clerk studies the imprint, then hands the figurine back to Albert.

CLERK

Well, I don't recognize this imprint and I may be making a fool of myself, but let's get you on Mr. Desmond's list.

ANGLE ON A TV SCREEN

Albert looks terribly nervous, pushing up his glasses, clearing his throat, running his hand through his hair.

MR. DESMOND, an ancient, uptight sort with a jeweler's eyepiece examines the pirate.

The TV show cuts to a close up of the table. Several pirates are spread out - we recognize Raveneaux, Lucky, and Desiree!

The camera pans to the other side of the table - it's the miners: Port, Chu, Golet, Feeney, Fremont, and McDoul!

MR. DESMOND

A very unusual collection. The detail is quite incredible. What do you know about these pieces?

We see each piece - amazingly realistic and life-like - as Albert explains.

ALBERT

Well, I found them in a shop in Cobas when I was visiting the Mayan ruins. The shopkeeper told me they depict two cursed expeditions.

(eagerly)

I've done some research. The pirate figurines depict the crew of the Estela del Mar which mysteriously disappeared one night off the coast of Santiago - modern day Cuba. The miners depict a group lost in a haunted mine during the California gold rush. I've got some other figures, too - musicians and--

Mr. Desmond studies the Raveneaux figurine.

MR. DESMOND

How much did you pay for these figurines?

ALBERT

I paid \$480 for the miners and \$900 for the pirates.

Albert eagerly looks to Desmond, waiting to hear the real value.

MR. DESMOND

So, \$1,380 total for the two sets?

Albert nods, his eyes never leaving Desmond's face.

MR. DESMOND (CONT'D)

The total amount for the two sets, combined, was \$1,380?

A curious crowd gathers near the table, strains to hear.

Mr. Desmond hands the pirate figurine to Albert.

MR. DESMOND (CONT'D)

I hope you enjoyed your visit to the Mayan ruins, because I believe the shopkeeper there was having some fun at your expense. He probably had a hundred more boxes of these in a back room.

Albert is in shock.

ALBERT

But, but...

MR. DESMOND

The imprint is merely some unknown individual's scrawled initial. The substance from which these figures are made is some kind of cheap clay. The entire collection is worth about \$38.

Mr. Desmond picks up the figurine of Lucky. He tosses it in the air and catches it with one hand, then gives it to Albert.

Albert accepts it. He notices Lucky's leg now has a crack in it. Albert touches the crack gently with one finger.

Mr. Desmond reaches behind the counter and pulls out a plastic action figure of the He-Man nemesis Skeletor.

MR. DESMOND (CONT'D)

Now a good example of a figurine with some value is this perfectly maintained, vintage Skeletor.

Embarrassed, Albert kneels by the table, putting the figurines into their velvet pouches and putting the pouches carefully into the mahogany box.

Type appears across the bottom of the screen: "Paid \$1,380.00. Actual value: \$38.00."

CUT TO:

EXT. ALBERT'S HOUSE - DAY

Albert's backyard is a masterpiece of artistic landscaping. A babbling brook runs east-west dividing the yard. A wooden bridge spans it.

THE BROOK

Koi fish swim swiftly through the reeds. An ancient turtle slips from a rock into the water.

ACROSS THE BRIDGE

On the south side of the brook is Albert's collection - a delightful miniature world, SAND VALLEY, built to a tiny scale. An old mill turns by a waterfall at the entrance to a stone quarry. Rows of miniature houses and sea-side businesses line the embankment.

Albert sadly trudges across the bridge pulling the luggage cart behind him.

He stops and kneels by the cart, removing the mahogany box.

WINSTON (O.S.)
Paterson! Hey, Paterson!

Albert looks up. WINSTON, the neighbor is looking over the fence. Winston is heavysset, sunburned, aggressive.

WINSTON (CONT'D)
Have you thought about my offer?

Albert opens the box and begins removing figurines. He places them in the miniature world, trying them out in different locations in the yard.

ALBERT
I thought about it, yes, but I already told you--

WINSTON (O.S.)
C'mon it'll work out great for both of us. A little more square footage for me, a little more money for you.

ALBERT
I'm sorry, Winston, but I don't want to sell any of my land. My turtles and koi are thriving in the brook. It wouldn't be wise to alter their ecosystem.

Albert places miners at the entrance to a miniature cave with a miniature waterfall cascading over rocks nearby.

WINSTON (O.S.)

But you don't NEED it. You can keep your fish in an aquarium. My King Cobra RV is thirty-eight feet long. They don't make aquariums that size!

ALBERT (O.S.)

Well, maybe they shouldn't make vehicles that size either! Look, I'm sorry the homeowners association won't let you park it on the street anymore, but--

Winston looks like he might leap the fence and throttle Albert.

WINSTON

Paterson, I'm asking you as a neighbor. You can put your toys anywhere.

Albert continues placing the figurines.

In a sandy area, the miniature world changes into a pirate's kingdom, circa 1650. A ship is beached on the strip of sand. Albert puts pirate figures on it's decks and in the nearby PIRATES PUB tavern.

Albert examines the Desiree figurine with reverence and love.

CLOSE ON DESIREE'S FACE

Desiree looks wistful.

Albert gently places her in a little grotto area. He adds a tiny figurine of the parrot, St. Peeper.

ALBERT (O.S.)

They're not toys. They're very valuable... Well, they're not toys.

Albert kneels and looks into the window of the pub.

MUSICIANS can be seen through the windows of the pub, they're hands frozen to their instruments.

Albert straightens up and walks to the fence. The two men stand at the fence, one on either side, at the back of the elaborate yard.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Look, the world I've created in my backyard is more than a hobby to me. Why would I give this up to look at someone's thirty-eight foot King Cobra RV?

WINSTON

For MONEY!

ALBERT

No thanks. It was greed that led to the disappearance of the Santiago pirates and greed that kept the lost miners of Placerville in the mine even as the earth shook around them.

WINSTON

What are you talking about - pirates, miners? We're talking about a tiny strip of your backyard.

(pleads)

My RV has to be off the street by dawn, day after tomorrow. I'm desperate here!

ALBERT

I've given you my answer. No!

WINSTON

Fine! We'll see what the homeowners association thinks about this theme park you got back here. Once we get rid of these toys maybe you'll be more reasonable.

He storms away. Albert watches him go.

Albert kneels at the mahogany box. He takes out the figurine of Raveneaux. Next, he takes out John Port.

ALBERT

(to Port)

Welcome to Sand Valley.

Albert puts John Port at the head of the mine. Port stands proudly by the mining cart.

ALBERT (CONT'D)

Bring out lots of gold. Or silica for that matter.

(MORE)

ALBERT (CONT'D)
This is Silicon Valley - sand is
probably worth more than gold.

ANGLE ON RAVENEAUX

His one eye seems to suddenly glitter!

Albert carries Raveneaux to the model of the sinking ship.

ALBERT
Here's a replica of your ship,
Captain. They may think you're
worth \$38 at Antique Road Show, but
you'll always be appreciated in
this little world.

Albert walks back to the house.

CUT TO:

ANGLE ON A BIG SCREEN TV

The Antique Road Show. Albert and the clerk are at the
table.

INT. ALBERT'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Albert points the remote at the TV.

ALBERT
I'll fast forward a bit.

On the couch next to Albert is his sister SHELLEY, 30s. She
holds ASHLEY, a precocious 3 year old, on her lap. Next to
them is NICK, 12, a nice looking kid. He's bored. He plays
a video game on his fancy CELL PHONE.

SHELLEY
Put that away, Nick. Your Uncle
Albert's on TV.

NICK
Just a second. I'm at level seven.

ANGLE ON THE GAME - "SOUTH SEAS SIM"

A digital pirate forces a digital victim to walk the plank.
PLUNK - into the water. A digital shark appears and swallows
the hapless swimmer. Extra points rapidly mount up!

Shelley looks over Nick's shoulder.

SHELLEY

C'mon. Put the video game aside
and participate in real life for a
change.

NICK

(mutters)
Right, real life on the TV.

Albert gestures with the remote.

ALBERT

The good part's over anyway.

Nick reluctantly pauses his game and watches. We hear the
tail end of the segment.

MR. DESMOND'S VOICE

(on TV)
...some kind of cheap clay. The
entire collection is worth about
\$38.

Albert points the remote at the TV and turns it off.