



The Legend of the

Emerald Monkey

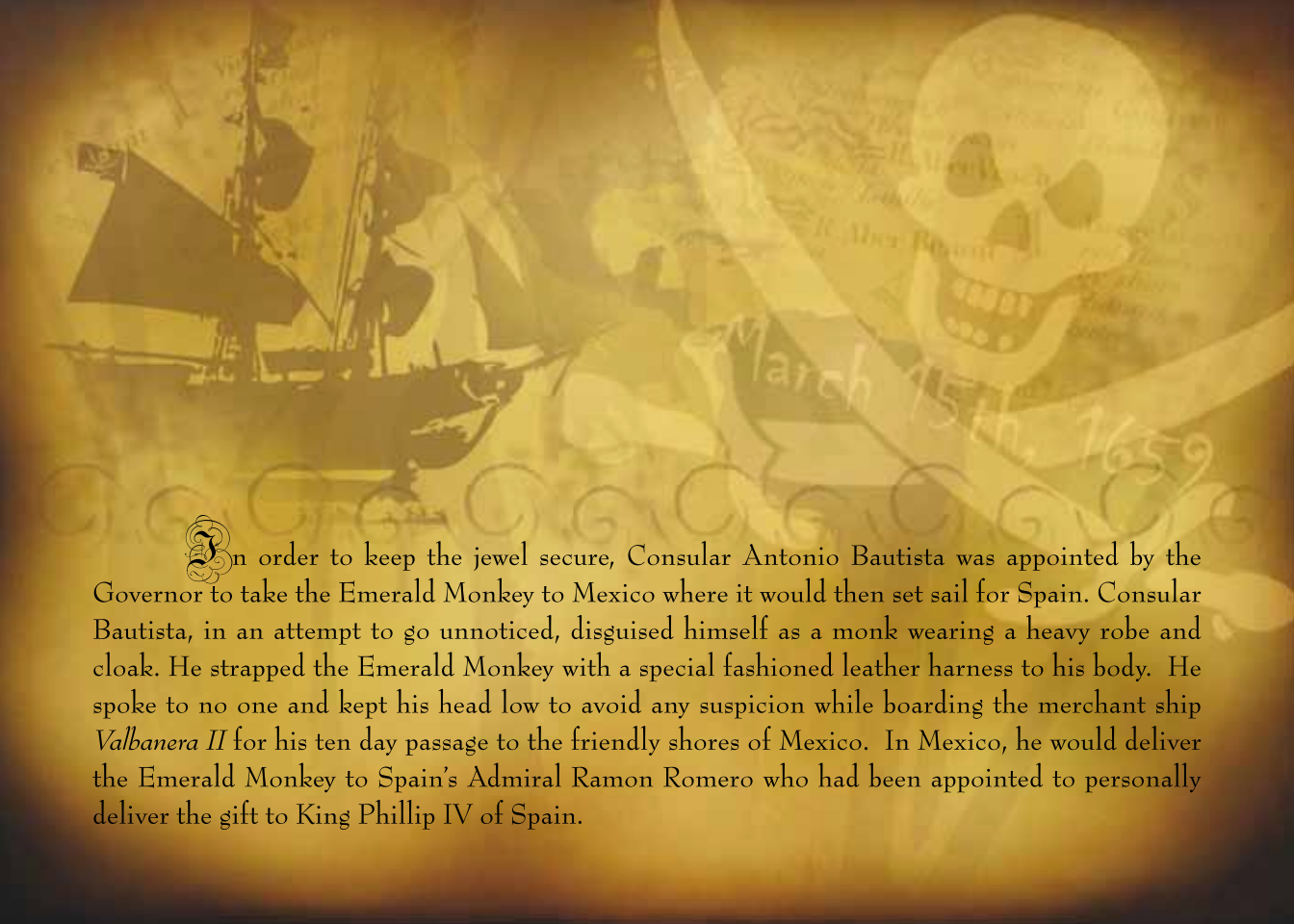


In the mid 1600's Spain and England battled for control over much of the Caribbean. Spanish and English colonies had been well established throughout the Western Caribbean primarily in search of gold and treasures. Some of which were produced in the region while others were buried in the hills and mountains by privateers and pirates. The Western Caribbean and Central America's coast line was the playground of the most fearsome and dreaded pirates. These pirates were known for plundering anyone who sailed their waters, including other pirates. They would wait until the ships least expected them, then in the veil of darkness they would attack, stealing and killing any profitable bounty they could get their hands on.

Colombia, in 1659, was a Colony of Spain under King Phillip IV. One of its main sources of income was importing and exporting jewels and gold to Europe. One resource found in Colombia that set this colony apart from all others in the Americas was the rare jewel, the emerald. It was during this year that the largest emerald was discovered in the mountains of Colombia weighing slightly over 3,000 carats. As a gift to the King of Spain, the Colombian Governor requested that this emerald be delivered to Veracruz, Mexico. The Admiral of the Spanish Fleet would personally deliver it to the King of Spain.



Prior to its departure from the shores of Colombia, the emerald would be carved into a special shape, a one of a kind jewel, for the King. The Governor commissioned the best stone cutter in the entire world to sail to Colombia and craft the stone into a suitable gift for His Majesty, King Phillip IV. The artisan's name was Sumatra, relative of Balinese native Putra, who at that time resided in Colombia. Sumatra sailed 3 months from Bali before arriving in what was then called the "Walled City" of Cartagena, Colombia. Sumatra carved for one month, working almost around the clock, before introducing his masterpiece to the Governor. It was the most amazing jewel ever crafted and the excitement surrounding this rare piece was remarkable. Sumatra had transformed the one of a kind stone into what is known today as the Emerald Monkey.




In order to keep the jewel secure, Consular Antonio Bautista was appointed by the Governor to take the Emerald Monkey to Mexico where it would then set sail for Spain. Consular Bautista, in an attempt to go unnoticed, disguised himself as a monk wearing a heavy robe and cloak. He strapped the Emerald Monkey with a special fashioned leather harness to his body. He spoke to no one and kept his head low to avoid any suspicion while boarding the merchant ship *Valbanera II* for his ten day passage to the friendly shores of Mexico. In Mexico, he would deliver the Emerald Monkey to Spain's Admiral Ramon Romero who had been appointed to personally deliver the gift to King Phillip IV of Spain.

Captain Henry Morgan, a local pirate to the Western Caribbean, hid amongst the many islands of the archipelago of Bocas Del Toro (discovered in 1504 by Christopher Columbus). Morgan watched through his spyglass, in the protection of these islands, while perched in the Crows Nest. He had the ideal position to keep an eye on all vessels crossing the waters from Colombia up toward Mexico. After two and a half days at sea, Consular Bautista and the *Valbanera II* would cross his path.



It was the evening of March 15th, 1659, the seas were calm and the moon shone over the water giving Captain Morgan a perfect view of the *Valbanera II* as she made way on her north bound transit. On this ill fated evening, Morgan and his band of pirates were perched between Isla Pastor and the mainland. He approached the *Valbanera II* from her stern quarter, taking the crew by complete surprise. The ill prepared crew proved to be no match for Morgan as his men quickly took control of the ship. Consular Bautista, during all of the excitement, abandoned ship to avoid being captured. Still attached to him was the Emerald Monkey. He struggled to swim as the weight of the stone continued to drag him below the surface. Exhausted, he finally swam to Captain Morgan's ship where he held tightly to a loose fathom line hanging overboard and prayed no one would spot him.



 Captain Morgan returned on his ship, after capturing the *Valbanera II*, and set sail to the waters of Isla Pastor, which he called home. At dawn, Consular Bautista felt it safe to swim for shore as the Captain and his crew were sleeping. He swam with great stamina to the beaches of Isla Pastor. As he walked ashore to the beach he fell, fatigued from his journey. A crew member on watch aboard Captain Morgan's ship spotted him and rang the warning bell. In moments the crew and Captain Morgan awoke and headed for the island.

Consular Bautista now running for his life, struggled through the jungles of Isla Pastor. He removed his wet and heavy cloak. As he climbed up the hillside, he came across a temple covered in Balinese carvings and completely surrounded by the jungle. It was there he quickly dug a hole and buried the Emerald Monkey, as it would be impossible to escape burdened by its weight. He could hear the men approaching and quickly filled the hole with dirt and stone. Consular Bautista then continued running through the jungles of Isla Pastor fleeing for his life. Soon night fell and under the protection of darkness and pouring rain, Bautista found a nearby canoe. He climbed in and quietly disappeared into the night. Bautista was never heard from again. The Emerald Monkey was never delivered to the King and is said to still be buried beneath the ruins of a Balinese temple somewhere on Isla Pastor.



Still lingering today, is the hatred King Phillip IV had for Morgan. Many locals say that Captain Morgan and his ghost crew still roam the waters of Bocas Del Toro in search of the lost Emerald Monkey. It is said there are moments when the moon is full and the evening is clear you can see the sails of Morgan's ship along the island's shores.

So goes the legend of the Emerald Monkey...



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