

The Oregon Trail

By

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Based on the smash-hit computer game "The Oregon Trail"

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EXT. PRAIRIE- DAY

We open on the prairie. It's a cold, bare, unfriendly land with little grass, and a disturbingly large amount of bones are piled about.

Words appear- "SOMEWHERE BETWEEN MISSOURI AND OREGON, 1848".

We see a grey and violent river. On the far bank, a family of five, THE BOLDMAN FAMILY, is huddled around a wooden, makeshift GRAVE. It is a sad, pitiful funeral. Their battered WAGON stands nearby.

The father, ISAIAH, a strong, wise man in his 50s, holds a Bible.

ISAIAH

And we ask the Lord to take his son, Obadiah, into his eternal kingdom...

Isaiah is interrupted by a sob from his devastated wife, BERTHA, a sturdy woman in her mid-40's.

BERTHA

My child!

ISAIAH

We must all remember that God has a plan for all of us on this journey to a new life. Though we walk through the valley of the shadow, we fear no evil.

The family nods and "amens".

ISAIAH

We also should give thanks that our Heavenly Father spared all of us, our wagon and one ox from the terrible flood that took Obadiah. We should also give thanks that we have come so far. Even after our dear little Beulah was stricken with cholera, dysentery, scurvy, influenza, leprosy, measles, typhoid, polio, smallpox, malaria, neurosyphilis, the plague...I think that's all of them...

BEULAH, a sweet 12-year-old girl taps her father on his shoulder.

(CONTINUED)

BEULAH

Don't forget the pneumonia and the food poisoning and the rabies!

ISAIAH

Right, those too. After all of this, the Lord saw it fit to deliver her from death.

Bertha hugs Beulah.

ISAIAH

Although it is difficult to leave Obadiah here, we cannot linger much longer. Jebediah, have you taken stock of our remaining supplies?

Bertha falls to her knees. Isaiah comforts her. JEBEDIAH (Jeb), their 18-year-old son who had to grow up too fast, steps forward.

JEBEDIAH

All we have left is our shotgun, one box of bullets, and 300 pounds of bacon. The river took the rest.

ISAIAH

We have to make do with what we have. Zebadiah, have you hitched up the ox to the wagon?

ZEBADIAH (Zeb), a plucky 10-year-old, bounds forward.

ZEBADIAH

Yes, father! Brownie is all ready to go. I named the ox Brownie because he's all brown!

ISAIAH

How clever of you! Alright everyone, let us be off!

The background music from the computer game "The Oregon Trail" begins to play as they slowly move along. The family walks beside the wagon.

The screen from the game that shows the health and supplies appears. Everyone's health is "FAIR" while next to Obadiah's name, it reads "DECEASED". Beside the food, it reads "300 lbs".

CUT TO

EXT. PRAIRIE - NIGHT

The Boldmans, minus Jeb, are sitting around a fire, wrapped in blankets as they fry bacon.

ZEBADIAH

What do you think Oregon will be like, Paw?

ISAIAH

Well, Zeb, I hear tell that it is a wonderful land, where there is enough space for everyone and no one ever has a reason to be sad because there is no fighting or hate. Ever. And it is full of gold...

Jeb comes back, holding the shotgun.

JEBEDIAH

I'm sorry I let you down, Paw. There wasn't even a squirrel.

ISAIAH

I know you tried your best, son. Come sit and have some bacon.

Jeb sits down and helps himself to food.

ISAIAH

Now let us say grace. Heavenly Father, we ask you to bless this bacon, and we are thankful that You have provided it for us. Lead us through this desert land as you led Moses, and help us find our Promised Land. Amen.

JEBEDIAH

Paw, Moses wandered for 40 years.

ISAIAH

I hope God won't be that cruel.

All of a sudden, the edge of Zebadiah's blanket catches on fire. Everyone jumps up and panics.

BERTHA

We have no water! What should we do?

(CONTINUED)

ISAIAH
Stifle it with dirt!

Jeb and Isaiah manage to extinguish the fire with dirt.

BEULAH
That was frightening!

ISAIAH
It's all over now. Thank our
Blessed Creator that no one was
harmed but the blanket!

BERTHA
Amen! But now I think we should all
get some rest. We have a long,
difficult day tomorrow, children.

The children bid the parents goodnight and go to sleep on
the ground outside. Zeb shares a blanket with Jeb.

FADE OUT

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

The Boldman family is once again walking along beside the
wagon while the "Oregon Trail" music plays.

Isaiah begins to frown as he scans the horizon. Bertha
notices his concern.

BERTHA
What is it, Isaiah?

ISAIAH
We should have reached South Pass
by now.

BERTHA
Should we stop?

ISAIAH
When night falls, I will re-check
the map and see if we are off
course. Everything will be fine, I
am sure of it.

CUT TO

EXT. PRAIRIE - EVENING

We see Jeb with the shotgun in a small patch of trees.

A deer appears, slowly moving among the trees. Jeb, excited, takes aim and fires. He misses. He shoots and misses again. The deer stares at him. He looks at the deer. It trots off.

JEBEDIAH

This isn't over, you bastard deer!
I won't rest until I've hunted your
entire family! You better watch
yourself because I'm going to shoot
your ugly deer face off! You are
done, you hear me? DONE!

Defeated, Jeb decides to call it a night.

CUT TO

EXT. PRAIRIE - NIGHT

Jeb arrives at the wagon empty-handed and ashamed.

JEBEDIAH

I let you down again, Paw. almost
got a deer, but it ran off before I
could get a good aim on it.

ISAIAH

Hunting is not an easy task, my
son. Join us.

Bertha hands Jeb a plate of bacon as Isaiah, brow furrowed, intently reads a map. Bertha goes to him with more bacon.

BERTHA

Have you figured out the problem?

ISAIAH

Well, I know we're lost, but I
cannot seem to find out where
exactly we are. I don't even know
which direction we're going right
now.

BERTHA

Are we going to die?

ISAIAH

No! Holy Mary Mother of God! Calm
down, woman! We will simply

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ISAIAH (cont'd)
continue until we find someone to
point us in the right direction.

ZEBADIAH
I'm getting tired of eating bacon!
Don't we have anything else?

BEULAH
I like the bacon.

ISAIAH
We should be thankful that we have
healthful, nourishing bacon to eat.
In fact, we should offer thanks to
the Lord of Lords for this
blessing...

JEB, ZEB, BELULAH, BERTHA
No thanks.

BERTHA
Well, I think that we should all go
to sleep now. Everything will be
better in the morning.

ISAIAH
Yes. Everything will be better
tomorrow.

The health screen appears again. It is the same except the
health of everyone (still alive) is now "POOR" and there is
now 250 lbs of food.

FADE OUT

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

Once again, the Boldman family walks beside the wagon.

ISAIAH
There is little grass or water for
the ox.

ZEBADIAH
You mean Brownie?

ISAIAH
Yes. Brownie. He looks weak.
Perhaps we should rest soon, and
find him something to eat. Do oxen
eat bacon?

(CONTINUED)

As he says this, the ox falls over. Isaiah, Jeb and Zeb rush to it.

ZEBADIAH

Brownie? Brownie? Paw, will Brownie be OK?

ISAIAH

Well...no. Brownie is dead.

Zeb begins to cry.

BERTHA

Whatever will we do? We can't very well pull the wagon ourselves!

Isaiah gives her a grim look.

CUT TO

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

Bertha and Isaiah now pull the wagon. Zeb, still upset by the death of Brownie, drags himself along far off to the side of the wagon.

An enormous hawk circles overhead.

BERTHA

You didn't tell Zebadiah that you butchered the ox's corpse for food, I hope?

Isaiah pulls out a piece of ox jerky. He takes a bite and hands it to Bertha.

ISAIAH

No, of course not. Ox jerky?

BERTHA

Oh, yes please!

ISAIAH

Either way, Zeb really seems to like the jerky. He doesn't *have* to know that he's actually eating his pet ox, Brownie.

BEULAH

(overhearing)

What did you do to Brownie?

(CONTINUED)

BERTHA AND ISAIAH
 (Mouths full of ox jerky)
 Nothing.

The hawk suddenly swoops down and grabs Zeb in its talons. Zeb cries out, but the hawk swiftly flies away, carrying its prey. The Boldmans are stunned.

JEBEDIAH
 What just happened?

BERTHA
 My baby! Isaiah! Do something!

ISAIAH
 Bertha, what can we do? Her nest is probably in a crevice high in those mountains, some 20 miles away. And even if we could get to the nest...it would probably be...too...

He trails off as Bertha and Beulah sob. Jeb looks grim. Isaiah comforts his wife and daughter.

The health screen appears. Obadiah and Zeb are "DECEASED" and the rest of the family is "VERY POOR". They have 220 lbs of food and 0 oxen.

FADE OUT

EXT. PRAIRIE - EVENING

Jeb is hunting again, more determined than ever to bring home the bacon.

The prairie is littered with rocks and pine trees. Suddenly, the deer slowly appears from behind a tree. It walks across and disappears behind a boulder.

JEBEDIAH
 (whispers to himself)
 You, again!

The deer appears again, this time somehow from behind a rock 50 ft. closer to Jeb. He fires wildly and aimlessly. The deer nonchalantly struts behind the rock again and disappears for good.

JEBEDIAH
 I hate you, you turd-nugget! You can't hide forever! I don't care
 (MORE)

(CONTINUED)

JEBEDIAH (cont'd)

what it takes! I will stop at nothing to kill you in the sickest, most violent way possible and then I'll eat your sweet meat raw. And it will be the best raw deer meat I've ever eaten because it will taste like satisfaction.

Jeb picks up a rock and throws it in the general direction of the deer. It doesn't go very far. Jeb sits down, dejected.

FADE OUT

EXT. PRAIRIE - NIGHT

Bertha and Beulah are asleep while Isaiah and Jeb sit near a dying campfire.

JEBEDIAH

Why is all of this happening to us, Paw?

ISAIAH

All of what, son?

JEBEDIAH

What happened to Obe and Zeb...all of this bad luck! Why us?

ISAIAH

I honestly don't know, Jeb. I feel like I don't know anything anymore.

JEBEDIAH

We left Kentucky to find a better life, and this is what we get?

ISAIAH

Just don't lose hope.

(beat)

I'm going to sleep now. Everything will be better tomorrow.

Isaiah and Jeb lay down on their blankets. Isaiah falls asleep instantly, while Jeb lays awake.

Suddenly, from the glow of the dying embers, a shadow falls across the wagon. It's shaped suspiciously like a deer...

Jeb quickly closes his eyes in fright.

(CONTINUED)

CUT TO

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

We see the stats screen- they have 195 lbs. of food, 0 oxen, Zebadiah and Obadiah are "DECEASED" and their health is "VERY VERY POOR". The Oregon Trail music plays.

Jeb and Isaiah now pull the wagon. Beulah, looking weak, sits inside the wagon.

BERTHA

How do you feel, Beulah?

BEULAH

Much better, Mama.

BERTHA

(to Isaiah)

I think she might just be exhausted. We can't keep going on like this.

ISAIAH

I know, Bertha, but we can't stop in the middle of the desert!

BEULAH

May I help pull the wagon?

ISAIAH

No, Beulah, you're too small, sweetheart.

BEULAH

But I'm feeling much better!

Beulah hops out of the front of the wagon. As soon as her feet touch the ground, she is accidentally tripped by Jebediah and falls down. We hear a sickening crunch and Beulah screams.

BERTHA

BEULAH! My poor baby!!

BEULAH

Owww...

CUT TO

EXT. PRAIRIE - EVENING

The Boldmans sit around a fire, once again frying bacon. Beulah has makeshift splints on both of her arms and is in a great deal of pain. Jeb sits with the shotgun on his lap.

ISAIAH

So it's agreed. We'll camp here for *only* a few days, just until Beulah feels better. Then we will continue our journey.

BERTHA

Yes. Poor, poor Beulah. How are your arms, dear?

BEULAH

Well, they hurt a lot...

ISAIAH

Jeb, why don't you put that gun down, son?

JEBEDIAH

I can't Paw. Always got to be prepared.

ISAIAH

Prepared for what?

JEBEDIAH

Anything.

Jeb has an intense look on his face. He's clearly thinking about The Deer.

FADE OUT

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

The Boldman family has set up camp and bustle about, trying to make their beat-up wagon more homey.

BERTHA

Isaiah, why don't you try to fix up the wagon a little bit? Jeb wants to go hunting, and I can go looking for some plants or fruits to add to our all-bacon diet... oh, I can look for water as well! Beulah, you stay put, dear...

(CONTINUED)

JEBEDIAH
Deer? Where? What?

Everyone gives Jeb strange looks.

ISAIAH
I have been wanting to repair that
giant hole in the floor of the
wagon. And the one in the roof.

JEBEDIAH
I'm gonna head out now. I swear on
this shotgun, I won't let you down.

ISAIAH
You better not let me down.

Jeb takes the shotgun and leaves. Bertha begins to root
around the dusty ground, checking under and around rocks for
water or food. Isaiah begins work on the wagon, hammering
away.

Bertha turns over a rock. Underneath it is a nest of huge,
deadly rattlesnakes.

She is paralyzed by fear. The snakes strike, biting her
legs.

BERTHA
ISAIAH! HELP! SNAAAAAAKES!

Isaiah, seeing her troubles, runs over to help her. He
begins smashing the snakes with the hammer he was using to
repair the wagon. Bertha crawls away.

ISAIAH
(as he hammers snakes)
Beulah! You know how I showed you
how to tie a tourniquet?

BEULAH
Yes...

ISAIAH
(still hammering)
I need you to give your mother one.
Now!

BEULAH
But...my arms!

ISAIAH

(hammering)

I don't have time for your
problems, Beulah! Give your mother
a tourniquet! LIVES ARE AT SNAKE! I
mean STAKE!

Beulah, unsure and awkward with her casts, manages to find a piece of string and begins to attempt to tie a tourniquet on Bertha's leg with her teeth.

Isaiah kills the last of the snakes and sits down on the ground, panting.

ISAIAH

Blessed JesusMaryJoseph...things
could not be any worse right now.

CUT TO

EXT. CLIFF - DAY

Jebediah stalks across the prairie with his gun, a deranged look in his eyes.

A stick cracks. He stops and looks around wildly. It's nothing; he continues on.

JEBEDIAH

(muttering to himself)

I can't wait to see the look in
your eyes as you die a slow,
painful death, you stupid deer!
Hah! You picked the wrong pioneer
to mess with! You have no idea...

He reaches a cliff. He looks out across the prairie. It's actually kind of pretty.

As he turns around, he is face to face with The Deer, who, as always, appeared out of nowhere. Jeb is frightened.

JEBEDIAH

What's going on? What do you want
from me?

THE DEER

I am Joshua.

JEBEDIAH

Wait, you can *talk*?

(CONTINUED)

THE DEER

Yes, Jebediah. We deers can do a lot more than just be hunted.

JEBEDIAH

How do you know my name?

THE DEER

I know a lot about you. I've been following your wagon.

JEBEDIAH

I knew it! But why?

THE DEER

(bitterly)

You pioneers think that the Oregon Trail is some kind of game. But it isn't. This is real life! It's real people facing real problems and dying, *for real*, every real day.

JEBEDIAH

You think I don't know that? You think I don't know that you have been causing us all this misery? Well, it's just you and me, Josh, for real this time. Facing off, man to deer.

Jeb raises his gun and cocks it.

THE DEER

Be careful, Jeb. You don't know what you're getting yourself in to.

Jeb pulls the trigger. The gun backfires. He staggers backward, severely injured, as The Deer advances threateningly.

THE DEER

I'm done playing games with you, Jeb. Your journey on the Oregon Trail ends here. And you *won't* get to write your epitaph.

Jeb's foot finds the edge of the cliff. He loses his balance and falls backward off it. His cries grow weaker as he falls, and end with a THUD.

The Deer looks over the edge of the cliff. Satisfied by what he sees, he lifts his leg, pees off the cliff, and trots off to find some leaves to eat.

FADE OUT

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

We see the health screen. Jeb, Obadiah and Zeb are "DECEASED", Beulah and Isaiah's health is "NOT LOOKING SO HOT" and Bertha is "PERILOUS". They have 95 lbs of food. The ominous music that you hear at Soda Springs in the game plays.

Back at the wagon, Bertha lays on the ground, legs swollen with poisonous snake bites. Beulah appears very upset, and Isaiah is trying his best to make everything better with what little they have.

ISAIAH

Would you like another piece of
bacon, Beulah?

BEULAH

Yes, please.

Isaiah feeds the disabled Beulah a piece of bacon.

BEULAH

(mouth full of tasty bacon)
Papa, will Mama be OK?

ISAIAH

I don't know, honey. I hope so. I
really hope so.

Beulah begins to cry.

ISAIAH

Beulah, I need you to be strong for
me right now, OK?

Beulah nods bravely.

ISAIAH

In fact, could you go find your
brother? He should have come back
by now. He just went hunting over
that way.

BEULAH

Yes, Father.

Beulah gets up and walks in the direction Isaiah indicated.

CUT TO

EXT. QUICKSAND PIT - DAY

Beulah walks. She looks back. The wagon is off in the distance. The sun low in the sky.

As she walks, she steps into what appears to be mud. She tries to take another step, but her foot is stuck. She tries to pull it out, but her other foot is stuck. She begins to sink up to her knees.

BEULAH
FATHER! HELP! QUICKSAND!

As Beulah screams for help, she slowly but steadily sinks up to her waist.

CUT TO

EXT. PRAIRIE - DAY

Isaiah is sitting by the wagon when he hears Beulah's faint cries. He jumps up and runs to her.

CUT TO

EXT. QUICKSAND PIT - DAY

Isaiah reaches the quicksand pit just in time to see her outstretched hand sink into the quicksand.

ISAIAH
NO! BEULAH!

Isaiah gets a stick and pokes around in the quicksand. The stick is quickly swallowed.

He sits for a moment, staring into the quicksand. Suddenly, he has a thought.

ISAIAH
Jeb! Where is Jeb?!?

Isaiah gets up and quickly runs off.

CUT TO

EXT. CLIFF - EVENING

Isaiah reaches the cliff as the sun just begins to set. He's almost afraid to look over the edge but he finally does. His face is pure devastation. The funeral music from the Oregon Trail plays. He closes his eyes and makes the sign of the cross. He trudges away.

The health screen appears. Obadiah, Jeb, Zeb and Beulah are "DECEASED", Bertha is "PERILOUS" and Isaiah is "YOU DON'T WANT TO KNOW".

EXT. PRAIRIE - EVENING

Isaiah slowly walks towards the wagon. He sees vultures screeching and circling it. He begins to walk faster, then breaks into a run.

He arrives at the wagon and shoos the vultures away. He finds Bertha's skeleton, picked clean.

He runs to her remains and kneels by her skull. He looks to the sky and shouts to the heavens.

ISAIAH

WHY?? WHAT KIND OF PERSON, GOD OR
MAN, WOULD ALLOW THIS TO HAPPEN?
WHAT KIND OF SICK, TWISTED BEING
JUST SITS THERE WHILE INNOCENTS DIE
LEFT AND RIGHT? WHOEVER YOU ARE, UP
THERE, I'D LIKE TO SEE YOU GO
THROUGH THIS!

He breaks down, sobbing.

ZOOM OUT

We zoom farther and farther out and eventually we find ourselves in...

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

A chubby 10-year-old BOY sits at a computer.

BOY

What? Come on! Like, everyone is
dead!

On his computer, we see the health screen. There is 90 lbs of bacon, Jeb, Obadiah, Zeb and Beulah are all "DECEASED" and we watch Bertha go from "PERILOUS" to "DECEASED". Isaiah is "REALLY REALLY REALLY SHITTY".

(CONTINUED)

BOY

This game is so stupid! I don't
wanna play anymore...I quit!

The boy quits the game, hops out of the chair, and goes over to join a group of kids who are coloring.

We linger The Oregon Trail computer game's main screen, which has a painting of a cheerful family by a wagon. The family looks suspiciously like the Boldman family.

FADE OUT