

Fern the Mighty



(Setting: a sturdy pirate ship with a barrel on the deck. Enter Parrot.)

PARROT:

WELCOME, OH WELCOME, ye land-lubbers all,
To our fabulous pirate ship, The Terrible!
I'm Parrot, your tour guide and expert narrator—
if you like the show, I'm accepting tips later.

Voilà! I'm making my Amazin' Cajun Jambalaya.
Don't just stand around, Miro. Grill the onions!



Oui! Yes, chef!

A play by Liz Siedt
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(Enter the crew, including the Cook and Captain Brash. The cook is stirring a bowl. The others go to work swabbing the deck, steering the ship, and other things.)

PARROT:

Now, this crew, they seem surly and burly and rough. But they're really nice, too! I promise—no bluff. Yes, ol' Captain Brash cares for each of his crew. And not long ago, he hired somebody new.

(Enter Fern, carrying a big book in one hand, and a mop in the other.)

PARROT:

Friends, meet Fern! She's the new cabin girl, so smart she could probably turn peas into pearls! Her inventions could make this old ship run much better.

I'd list some of them, but why don't we let her? First, there's—

FERN (showing a page of her book):

A pump for if we start to sink!

PARROT:

And—

FERN (flipping to a different page):

A sea salt-filtering straw for a refreshing cool drink!



MIRO! STIR THE POT.
You want to be a great chef, but I'm afraid you lack the intellect—the power to think.





PARROT:

But the crew doesn't know there's a genius on board because Fern is so shy—she rarely says a word.

COOK (*tasting his food*):

H'm, these pancakes are not quite my best.

FERN (*quietly, to herself*):

To brighten them up, you could use lemon zest . . .

PARROT:

Hey Fern! Speak up! You've got great intellect!

FERN:

But what if my ideas are all incorrect?

They'll laugh me right off of this ship, back to shore.

No, I'll keep to myself. I like that much more.

PARROT (*sighs*):

But that would soon change, when from deep
down below

A great giant OCEAN STORM started to blow!

(*A loud rumbling sound comes, and everybody wobbles on deck as the boat rocks.*)

PARROT:

The storm, so it seemed, came from out of the blue.

COOK:

Captain Brash, Captain Brash! Oh no! What should we do?

Miro wasn't kidding about his cousin. That mushroom is surly and burly—unfriendly and strong.



Not what I'd call a fun guy.



I feel bad for Miro. Look how many buggies are waiting in his line for food.



CAPTAIN BRASH:

Lower sails! Batten hatches! We'll get through this squall!

PARROT:

But then up from the deep—

COOK:

ARE THOSE . . . TENTACLES!?

(Tentacles wobble at the crew from offstage. They grab the captain, and he tries to wrestle himself free. The crew runs around in a panic. Tip: build a giant squid with pool supplies! Use pool noodles for tentacles and a beach ball for a giant squid eye.)

PARROT:

Indeed! They weren't dealing with dark, stormy skies

But a SQUID with two massive beach-ball-sized eyes!

It was hungry for lunch, you can surely imagine.

COOK:

Don't have to! It's trying to devour our captain! And we can't shoot the cannons, they'll hit Captain, too!

CAPTAIN BRASH *(struggling with the squid tentacles):* Well, SOMEBODY please think of SOMETHING to do!

Yo, Frenchie. Got anything spicy? This stew here is kinda bland and flavorless.



Non, Bill, no!

What . . . did . . . you . . . say?

COOK:

Ahh! I don't know the first thing about squid!

PARROT:

But luckily, someone on board the ship did.
That's right, little Fern had a plan up her sleeve—

FERN (*flipping to a page in her book*):

Yes! Here in my book, on page one-forty-three!

PARROT:

See, like I told you! Fern knows what to do!

FERN:

Well . . .



Stand back, gang. We're in for
a squall—a storm!

Oh, dear . . . Nothing's
ever spicy enough for Bill.





PARROT:

Uh oh, FREEZE!

(Everybody freezes except Parrot and Fern. The crew members all look terrified. Parrot goes over and puts a wing around Fern's shoulder.)

PARROT:

Fern, are you scared they won't listen?

FERN:

Ugh! Yes! What if I fail? What if the squid eats us all?!

PARROT:

Slow down, Fern! Take a deep breath! For one, squid MUCH prefer fish over humans! For two, think of it like this: if you had a friend in this same situation, what would you tell them to do?

FERN:

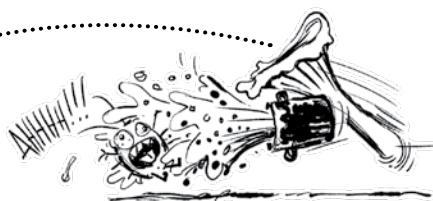
H'm . . . maybe . . . "Share your idea! You've done the research—no one will tease you! Act fast! Before Captain Brash becomes lunch!"

PARROT:

That's great! Now tell YOURSELF that and get in there! UNFREEZE!

(Everybody starts running around in a panic again.)

Maybe you will taste the spices if I
fling—throw—it IN YOUR FACE!



COOK:

Ahh! Does anyone have an idea that'll help?

FERN:

I DO!

PARROT:

—our brave cabin girl managed to yelp.
And everyone stopped and listened to her plan—

(The Captain is still battling the tentacles.)

PARROT:

AHEM.

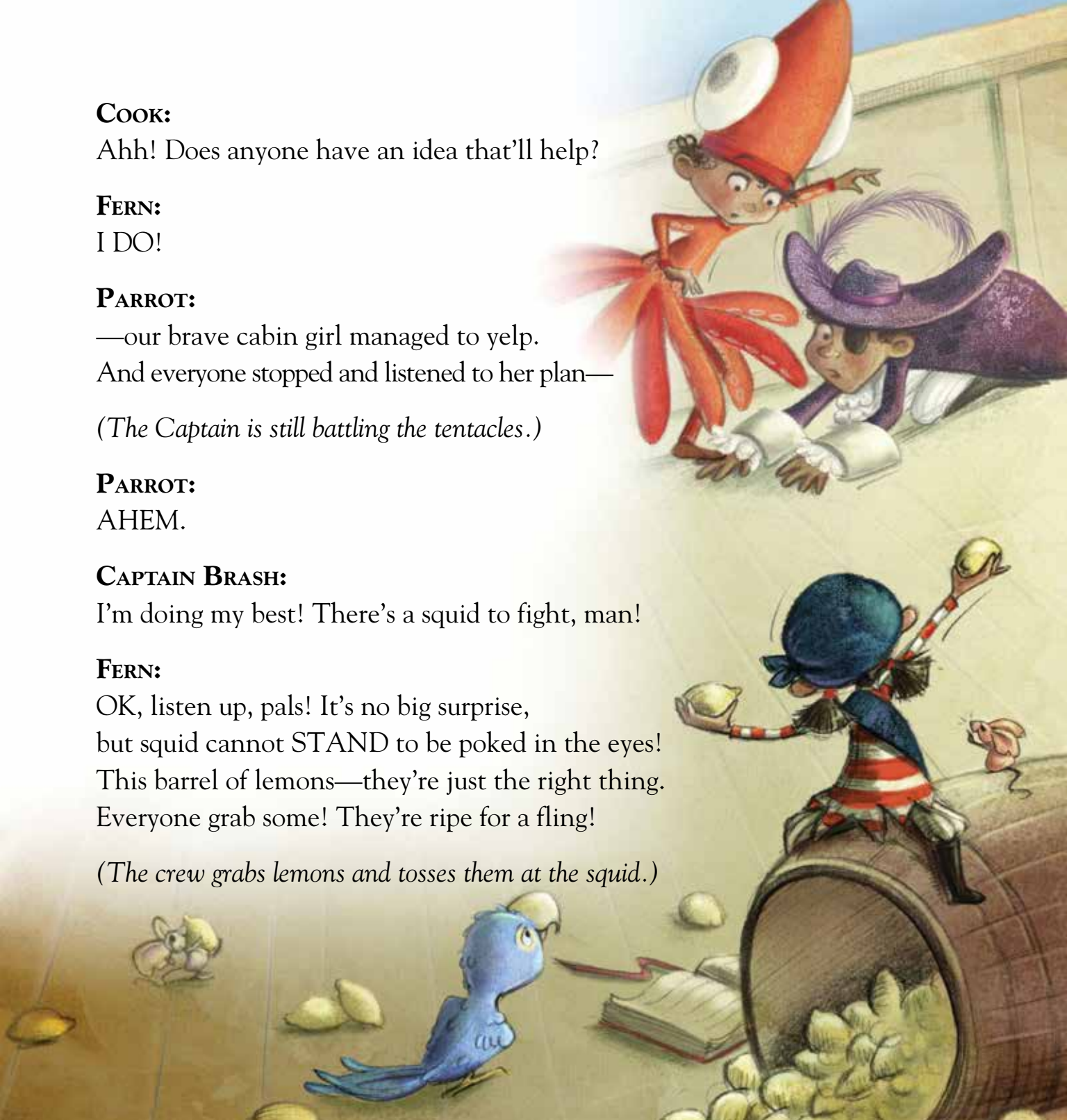
CAPTAIN BRASH:

I'm doing my best! There's a squid to fight, man!

FERN:

OK, listen up, pals! It's no big surprise,
but squid cannot STAND to be poked in the eyes!
This barrel of lemons—they're just the right thing.
Everyone grab some! They're ripe for a fling!

(The crew grabs lemons and tosses them at the squid.)



Sacre bleu! Bye
bye, jambalaya.



Sí, he threw it in
Bill's face.



What a saucy temper!



The judges never had
a chance to taste it.



PARROT:

They threw hundreds of lemons at those giant eyes. The squid lurched and jerked, and without a goodbye it released Captain Brash and dove back to the deeps. The crew all hurrahed! Fern went red in the cheeks.

EVERYONE EXCEPT FERN (*cheering*):

Three cheers for Fern, the smart girl who saved us from being hot lunch for the monster who craved us!

PARROT:

Then Brash cleared his throat and declared, with a wink:

CAPTAIN BRASH:

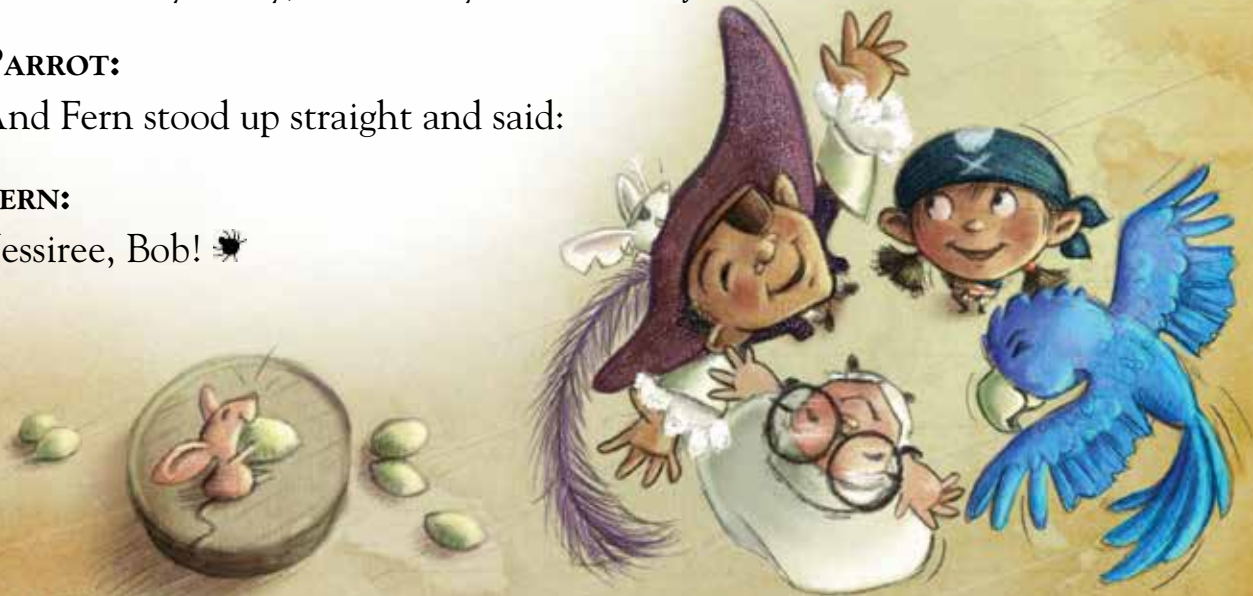
Now I've got an idea. And you know what I think? That Fern here would make the most stellar first mate. After all, her research and plans are first rate! So what do you say, Fern? Do you want the job?

PARROT:

And Fern stood up straight and said:

FERN:

Yessiree, Bob! 🐜



Hey, Araña. Where's Miro's kooky cousin?



He lurched—moved suddenly—off the boat and stormed away.



And left Miro in the lurch!



Non! Now I cook my own food to win zee first prize!



We're with you, chef. Tell us what to do!