YELLOWFISH:  
A TALE ABOUT THE LUCKIEST, YOUNG PIRATE IN THE WORLD

by

Alvaro Saar Rios

An inspired adaptation of  
Augusto Rene Lopez Rios' very short story  
"The Adla Queen's Treasure"

Originally commissioned by The Kennedy Center
CAST OF CHARACTERS

YELLOWFISH: a brave young pirate

CACTUS TOOTHORNS: a deckhand on the ship with a pirate accent so thick that no one (other than YELLOWFISH & CAPTAIN TOOTHORNS) can understand what is being said

CAPTAIN SILVERY: Captain of the Adla Queen pirate ship

SHANTY: a pirate narrator; can be played by more than one pirate

SETTING
The Adla Queen Pirate Ship

NOTE #1: All roles are open to anyone (even retired pirates)

NOTE #2: When CACTUS TOOTHORNS speaks, it should sound like pure gibberish. CACTUS TOOTHORNS' lines have been provided in brackets "[]" in an effort to help the performer understand the character.

NOTE #3: The playwright highly encourages the pirate or pirates who play SHANTY to sing like true pirates should
For Michelle and Augosto
We are on a huge pirate ship. 
YELLOWFISH, a young pirate, is at 
the helm while CACTUS TOOTHORNS, 
a deckhand, looks on. 

SHANTY appears.

SHANTY
I’VE COME TO TELL YOU ‘BOUT 
A PIRATE WITH NO BEARD 
A YOUNG ONE WHO CAN SAIL 
A YOUNG ONE WITH NO FEAR 
ONE WHO SEeks ADVENTURE 
THAT IS THIS YOUNG ONE’S WISH 
TODAY IT COULD HAPPEN 
FOR THE ONE CALLED YELLOWFISH 

YELLOWFISH 
Fire the cannon!

CACTUS TOOTHORNS 
[Fire!]

A loud boom is heard and 
spaghetti flies everywhere!

YELLOWFISH
Wow. They really are made of spaghetti.

CACTUS TOOTHORNS 
[Told you.]

YELLOWFISH
We have to do that again, Cactus. Tell the crew to load up 
all the cannons. Let’s see what that looks like.

CACTUS TOOTHORNS exits. CAPTAIN 
SILVERY enters.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
Yellowfish! What is going on? I’m not asleep more than one 
hour. One hour and I wake up to you blasting the cannons.

YELLOWFISH
Cactus told me all of our cannonballs were made of spaghetti 
and I didn’t believe it. I wanted to see for myself.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
There is a worldwide cannonball shortage so we have to use 
what we can. I know I told you this already. I know I have. 
Some ships are using watermelons, Brussel sprouts, bananas... 
There is even a rumor that the feared Aquabeard is using 
mashed potatoes mixed with hot sauce. Did you hear me? You 
weren’t listening were you?
YELLOWFISH
Yes, I was. OK. No, I wasn’t.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
That is your problem, Yellowfish. You don’t always listen.

SHANTY
YONDER, IN THE DISTANCE
SOMETHIN’ CATCHES CAPTAIN’S EYE
IT IS PINK AND HAS WINGS
IT IS A BUTTERFLY

CAPTAIN SILVERY
See that butterfly.

YELLOWFISH
It’s pink. I’ve never seen one that color before.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
They’re rare. Cactus says they bring good luck.

YELLOWFISH
Then I guess now you definitely have no reason to worry about leaving me in charge of the ship.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
Too bad I don’t believe in things like that. But me eyelids feel like they are made out of concrete curtains and I feel I don’t have much choice. Don’t make me regret leaving you at the helm.

YELLOWFISH
I may not be as experienced as you but I am responsible. Just look. We’re still headed in the same direction. If my calculations are right, by the time you wake up we’ll be back home. That has to count for something.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
You have a point. But no more blasting spaghetti.

YELLOWFISH
No more spaghetti.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
And don’t change directions.

YELLOWFISH
Not going to happen. We are going straight that way until we hit land.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
And tell Cactus to stop loading all the cannons with spaghetti.
YELLOWFISH
How did you know I told Cactus to do that?

CAPTAIN SILVERY
A good captain knows everything that goes on the ship. Everything. Night, Yellowfish.

YELLOWFISH
Night, Captain.

CAPTAIN SILVERY exits.

YELLOWFISH (CONT’D)
Alrighty, mateys! You heard the Captain. Stay the course.

SHANTY
AS THE SHIP HEADED HOME
YELLOWFISH DIDN’T STAY PUT
WALKED THE LENGTH OF THE SHIP
THEN SAW SOMETHIN’ AFOOT

YELLOWFISH
(picking up a piece of paper)
What is this? Is this what I think it is?

CACTUS TOOTHORNS enters.

CACTUS TOOTHORNS
[Cannons are almost ready!]

YELLOWFISH
Look what I found. It’s a treasure map! I found it walking around the ship. You see that X right there. That’s where it’s supposed to be. I bet it is filled with all kinds of loot too! Do you know where we are right now?

[The Ballena Sea.]

CACTUS TOOTHORNS

YELLOWFISH
We’re close. But then that means the treasure is in the opposite direction. How long do you think it will take us to get there?

[Five or six hours.]

CACTUS TOOTHORNS

YELLOWFISH
Not far at all. I bet if we leave now, we’ll find the treasure and be back on course without the Captain noticing.

CACTUS TOOTHORNS
[But those waters are dangerous. Full of pirates. And whales.]
YELLOWFISH
But this is treasure we’re talking about. We have to find it. We have to. All right mateys. Turn this bad boy around.

SHANTY
YO HO YO HOOOOOOOO
YO HO YO HEY
THEY TURN THAT SHIP AROUND
AND SAIL THE OTHER WAY
ISN’T LONG ‘FORE THEY SEE SOMETHIN’
T’IS QUICKER THAN A BLINK
THE BUTTERFLY FROM EARLIER
THAT ONE THAT WAS SO PINK

YELLOWFISH
Hey! It’s that pink butterfly I saw earlier.

[They bring good luck.]

CACTUS TOOTHorns

YELLOWFISH
We definitely need good luck right now. All right, mateys! Follow that butterfly!

CACTUS TOOTHorns
[Follow that butterfly!]

SHANTY
THEY GO ON AND ON
AND ON AND ON AND ON
AND ON AND ON
AND ON AND ON AND ON
AS THEY GET CLOSER
THEIR VISION SEEMS SMOGGY
IT’S HARD TO SEE ANYTHIN’
CUZ IT IS SO FOGGY

CACTUS TOOTHorns

YELLOWFISH
[Fog!]

CACTUS TOOTHorns disappears.

YELLOWFISH (CONT’D)
I can’t see a thing. Cactus. Where are you?

CACTUS TOOTHorns
(Offstage.)

[Yow!!!!!!]

YELLOWFISH
Come this way.
CACTUS TOOTHORNS appears covered in mashed potatoes.

[Hot sauce. Yuck!!!]  

CACTUS TOOTHORNS

YELLOWFISH  

Hot sauce? What happened to you?

SHANTY

SUDDENLY SOME WHITE GLOBS  
HIT THE SHIP WITH A SMASH!

YELLOWFISH  

(Tasting)

Potatoes?  

SHANTY

WITH SPICY HOT SAUCE  
AND THEY ARE ALL MASHED

Suddenly, huge globs of mashed potatoes rain down on the ship.

YELLOWFISH

Why is it raining mashed potatoes with hot sauce?

More mashed potatoes rain down.

YELLOWFISH (CONT’D)

We have to get out of this mess. Full speed ahead!

CAPTAIN SILVERY enters.

CAPTAIN SILVERY

Yellowfish! What is going on here? What is all this mess on the ship? Is this what I think it is? Mashed potatoes?!?!

With hot sauce.

CAPTAIN SILVERY

Oh no! It’s Aquabeard!

YELLOWFISH

Aquabeard?!?!?

CAPTAIN SILVERY

We’re being attacked!!! We need to--

WHAM! A humongous blob of mashed potatoes lands on CAPTAIN SILVERY.
YELLOWFISH
Captain? Are you OK? Captain? The captain’s been knocked out. Cactus, we have to get out of here or we’ll be buried in mashed potatoes. Abandon ship!

[Abandon ship!]

YELLOWFISH
Help me throw the Captain overboard.

They do.

YELLOWFISH (CONT’D)
Now, we jump.

They do. SPLASH!

YELLOWFISH (CONT’D)
Aquabeard will never find us now.

CACTUS TOOTHORNS
[Look. The pink butterfly.]

YELLOWFISH
Follow it. Maybe it will lead us to land.

SHANTY
SO THEY SWIM IN THOSE WATERS
WITH SHARKS SO LARGE-SCALE
WHEN UP FROM THE BOTTOM
COMES A BIG OL’ FAT WHALE
THEY HOP ON THAT BAD BOY
AND RIDE IN SEARCH OF LAND
ISN’T LONG IN THEIR JOURNEY
WHEN SOMEONE SPOTS SOME--

YELLOWFISH
CACTUS TOOTHORNS
Sand!

[Sand!]

YELLOWFISH
Almost there.

SHANTY
SOON THEY MAKE IT TO SHORE
SAY GOODBYE TO THEIR MATE
RELIEF FILLS THEIR MINDS
BUT THEY DON’T KNOW THEIR FATE
THEY THINK THEY ARE SAFE
BUT LITTLE DO THEY KNOWS
THAT ISLAND ISN’T DESERTED
IT’S FULL OF MOSQUITOS
Mosquitos!

[Mosquitos!]

CAPTAIN SILVERY
(Waking up.)
Mosquitos!

SHANTY
THEY RUN 'ROUND THE ISLAND
THEY LOOK AND SEARCH AND SCOUT
BUT QUICKLY THEY REALIZE
THERE'S NOWHERE TO HIDEOUT

As they all swat away mosquitos...

CAPTAIN SILVERY
There's nothing but sand on this island.

[There is nowhere to hide.]

CACTUS TOOTHORNS

YELLOWFISH
I was thinking the same thing. There is nowhere to hide.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
I give up. I can't run anymore.

YELLOWFISH
We're pirates. Pirates never give up. Especially when covered in mosquitos.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
Then, what do you think we should do?

YELLOWFISH
Follow me.

YELLOWFISH starts digging.

Great idea!

CAPTAIN SILVERY

CACTUS TOOTHORNS

[Dig!]

SHANTY
THEY DIG DEEP IN THE SAND
DIGGING SO FAR BELOW
NO 'SQUITOS FOLLOW THEM
SAFE IS OUR FAIR TRIO
YELLOWFISH
And just like that, no more mosquitos.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
Yellowfish. You have definitely proved yourself to be a worthy pirate. You saved us from Aquabeard and from the mosquitos. I will always be grateful.

YELLOWFISH
Captain. I have to tell you something. I am the reason we are here. It’s all my fault. I found a treasure map and I couldn’t resist. Something inside me told me I had to find it. So I turned the ship around and that’s why we were attacked and had to abandon ship and...you know the rest of it.

SHANTY
SILENCE IS ALL WE HEAR
OK. MAYBE WE HEAR BIRDS
THE CAPTAIN STARES AT YELLOWFISH
AND SAYS THESE TWO WORDS

CAPTAIN SILVERY
I know.

YELLOWFISH
What do you mean you know?

CAPTAIN SILVERY
What was the thing I told you, Yellowfish? A good captain knows everything that goes on the ship. Everything. That’s my map. I left it so you could find it.

CACTUS TOOTHORNS

CAPTAIN SILVERY
I never told you this but the reason we are heading home is because I’m retiring. This pirate life isn’t for me anymore. So I wanted to see if you would be worthy of taking over the Adla Queen.

YELLOWFISH
I am worthy.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
I know. Because anyone who calls themselves a pirate will always seek a treasure. That’s what it truly means to be a pirate. To seek out all treasures. No matter how close to home you may be. The day you stop seeking treasure is the day you can no longer call yourself a pirate. Although you did not find the treasure, you did seek it out. And that makes you worthy of being the Captain of the Adla Queen.
YELLOWFISH
But you’re Captain of the Adla Queen.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
Not anymore, Captain Yellowfish.

CACTUS TOOTHORDS
(Saluting.)

[Captain Yellowfish.]

YELLOWFISH
I feel like the luckiest pirate in the world.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
Think those mosquitos are gone?

YELLOWFISH
Let’s get out of here.

SHANTY
AS THEY CLIMB OUT THE HOLE
AND MOVE SLOW AND SAFELY
YELLOWFISH SEES SOMETHING
WHAT IS IT? COULD IT BE?

YELLOWFISH holds a box.

YELLOWFISH
The treasure!!! I found it.

CAPTAIN SILVERY
Open it!

YELLOWFISH
Cactus. Will you do the honor?

CACTUS TOOTHORDS
[You bet.]

CACTUS bear hugs the box. POP!
Treasure pours out.

PURPLE OROS!

CACTUS TOOTHORDS
[Shiver me timbers!]

CAPTAIN SILVERY
I’ve never seen those before. Purple oros are worth more
than gold doubloons.

YELLOWFISH
I could fix all the damage done to the Adla Queen.
CAPTAIN SILVERY

That you could. But first we have to find it.

SHANTY

IN THAT MOMENT I BET
YOU CAN’T GUESS WHAT FLIES BY
THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS
OF BRIGHT PINK BUTTERFLIES

YELLOWFISH

Follow those butterflies!

CACTUS TOOTHORNS

[Let’s go!]

SHANTY

THEY GO BACK TO THE PLACE
WHERE THE SHIP WAS LAST SEEN
AND YO HO YO HOOOOOO
THEY FIND THE ADLA QUEEN

YELLOWFISH

There it is!

SHANTY

AND THEY SET SAIL FOR HOME
IT IS A GOOD SAFE TRIP
BECAUSE THE NEW CAPTAIN
HELMS THAT GRAND MIGHTY SHIP
AND YO HO YO HOOOOOOOO
WE HOPE YOU HAD SOME FUN
YO HO YO HOOOOOOO
NOW OUR TALE IS DONE

END OF PLAY.