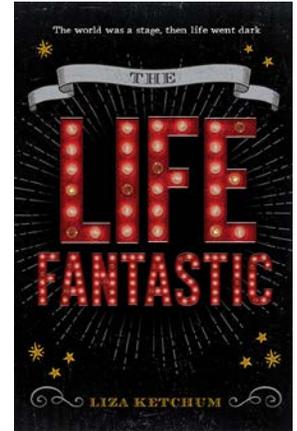


## ***The Life Fantastic* \* Liza Ketchum \* Readers' Theater or a Short Skit**

If you use this script for readers' theater, pick and choose which stage directions you will follow. Not all of them will be necessary for that performance format. This is one of three Entr'acte scripts included in *The Life Fantastic*. Your troupe may wish to write more scripts based on the book.

**Setting:** *The attic room of a Vermont boardinghouse, late at night. The room holds a single bed with a brass bedstead, a chest of drawers, and a coat stand. The staircase from the floor below opens into the center of the room. Moonlight pours through a single round window under the peak of the roof, lighting the wide chestnut floorboards. A dormer window is open to the cool night air, and a barred owl hoots in the distance: "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you-awll?" It is the spring of 1913.*



### **Characters:**

TERESA (RESA) LECLAIR: age thirteen

ALICE LECLAIR: Teresa's mother

### **Script:**

*As the scene opens, TERESA sits up in bed, dressed in a nightgown. She stares at the round window in horror. Her bright orange curls fan out from her face like flames.*

TERESA: Mama! Mama! Don't go!

Sounds of a door opening and quick footsteps on the staircase. ALICE appears, dressed in her nightclothes. She hurries to her daughter and wraps her arms around her.

ALICE: There, there, child. It was only a dream.

TERESA: *(Turns to ALICE but still seems imprisoned by the dream.)* Don't leave Mama! Don't leave me!

ALICE: *(Runs her fingers through Teresa's hair in a vain attempt to smooth out the tangles.)* Don't worry, my sweet. I'm not going anywhere.

TERESA: But you *did*. In my dream, you were leaving, like when you ran away with Papa.

ALICE: *(Strokes Teresa's forehead.)* I'm right here, Resa.

TERESA: *(Leans heavily against her mother. She shifts from the world of the nightmare to the reality of her attic room.)* Your canary died when you left. Right?

ALICE: How strange that you think of that. Poor Lebo. My father found him when he uncovered his cage, the morning after I left.

TERESA: Why didn't you take him with you?

ALICE: How could I bring a canary in a cage? He would have died on the road. *(Pause.)* My mama, your Grandma June, said Lebo died of a broken heart.

TERESA: Did he?

ALICE: Who knows? Maybe he was just old. *(Pulls the covers up to Teresa's chin.)* Do you feel better? We should sleep now.

TERESA: *(Murmurs)* Did Lebo sing for you?

ALICE: He was a funny canary. He wouldn't sing in his cage. But if we let him out, he would perch on a lamp, or on my shoulder, and sing like an opera star. I guess he was like that song about the rich lady in the Gilded Cage. *(Sings.)* She's only a bird in a gilded cage / a beautiful sight to see. / You may think she's happy and free from care; / She's not, though she seems to be ...

TERESA: Sing more!

ALICE: I don't remember the words. Time to sleep now. *(She stands up to leave.)*

TERESA: Mama, wait. Why did Grandma June hate Papa?

ALICE: *(Frowns.)* Is that what Papa says?

TERESA: Yes.

ALICE: My mother didn't approve of your papa because he was Quebecois and Catholic. Silly reasons. And because ... *(She stands and tightens the belt on her dressing gown.)* I think she knew he might steal me away.

TERESA: Are you glad you ran away with Papa?

ALICE: Of course! I'm happy we got married. How else would I have you and Pascal? I wish we hadn't eloped, but we knew my parents would never let me go. They said vaudeville was cheap entertainment. *(Her gaze drifts, as if she's back in the past.)* Grandma June called women in variety "hussies."

TERESA: What's a hussy?

ALICE: Enough talk, my sweet. *(She kisses Teresa.)*

TERESA: Did Papa like Lebo?

ALICE: He did. But he wasn't surprised that Lebo died.

TERESA: *(Snuggles under the covers.)* Why?

ALICE: *(Stands at the top of the stairs, her hand on the banister, listening. The barred owl hoots in the distance and ALICE shivers.)* "Let the bird go," your papa said. "A bird only sings when it's free."

*Fade to black.*