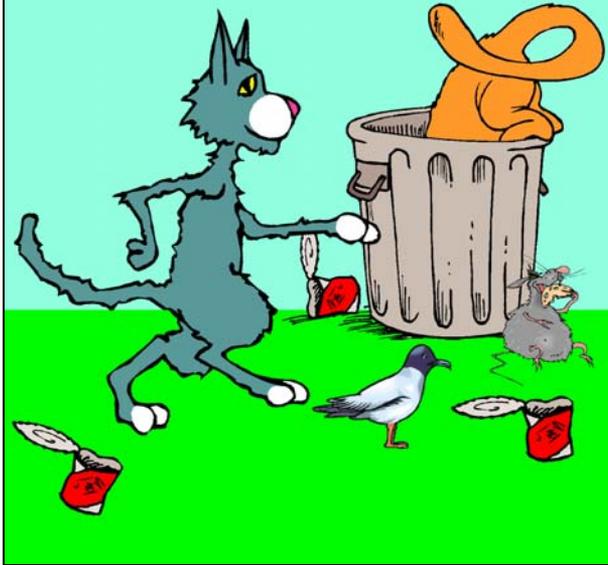


Mama Tomcat's FLYING SCHOOL



Spring Hermann

Adapted from Luis Sepúlveda's novel,
The Story of a Seagull and the Cat Who Taught her to Fly

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

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*Thanks to everyone
at the Bonderman, CWU, UNH, and Pollyanna
for helping Mama Tomcat to fly.*

*Thank you,
Mr. Sepulveda,
and thanks to Professor Catherine Kurkjian,
who saw in this novel
the potential for a great children's play.*

Mama Tomcat's Flying School

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Mama Tomcat's Flying School was first performed by the Pollyanna Theatre Company, Austin, TX, June 13-19, 2008: Judy Matetzschk-Campbell, director.

Mama Tomcat's Flying School

Winner, Central Washington University New Plays for Youth Project, 2008
Semi-finalist, Bonderman Youth Playwriting Symposium, 2007

COMEDY. Adapted from award-winning author Luis Sepúlveda's novel *The Story of a Seagull and the Cat Who Taught Her to Fly*. Zorbo the tomcat, used to living "the cat's life" with his buddies Sal, Einstein, and the Admiral on Boston harbor, never planned to settle down. Yet when a seagull is downed in an oil slick and deposits her egg on Zorbo's porch, what can a guy do? Promise to hatch it and raise the gull! Zorbo's pals help him "sit on" the egg, so that when the baby gull they name Lucky arrives, she insists on calling Zorbo "Mama." The challenges of finding Lucky food, protecting her from bad rats like Sneaky and hungry cats like Trash-heap, and learning to love Lucky change all the tomcats' lives. Even Zorbo's dates with his beloved Lucinda have to take a back seat when it comes time to teach Lucky the skill of flying. Will the Flying School be a flop? Will other gulls give Lucky the right advice? And will Lucky's dear Mama Tomcat be able to help her take wing and soar? This tale of growing up in a very special family will delight children of all ages. Perfect for touring.

Performance Time: Approximately 45 minutes.



Luis Sepúlveda

ABOUT THE STORY

Award-winning author Luis Sepúlveda was born in northern Chile, lived in Germany for 10 years, and now lives in Gijón, Spain. His first children's novel, *The Story of a Seagull and the Cat Who Taught Her to Fly*, has sold more than 1.5 million copies worldwide. Mr. Sepúlveda's short stories, novels, plays, and essays have been published in more than 30 countries.

Characters

(3 M, 3 F, 4 flexible)

(With doubling: 1 M, 2 F, 3 flexible)

LUCKY: Orphaned baby seagull; female.

ZORBO: Tomcat who has agreed to care for Lucky and teach her how to fly; male.

SAL: Tomcat who works at an Italian restaurant and Zorbo's best friend; male.

EINSTEIN: Intelligent, book-loving cat who works in a museum and knows how to read; flexible.

ADMIRAL: Cat who works at the harbor and loves to tell tales of his seafaring days as a ship's cat; male.

TRASH-HEAP: Scruffy, hungry, street cat who loves to eat birds; flexible.

SNEAKY: Scruffy rat who likes to eat food out of garbage cans; flexible

SHIFTY: Scruffy rat and Sneaky's friend; flexible.

LUCINDA: Zorbo's girlfriend; female.

LADY GULL: Lucky's mother, a seagull, who is a victim of an oil spill in the Atlantic Ocean.

Options For Doubling

LADY GULL/LUCINDA (Female role)

TRASH-HEAP/EINSTEIN (Flexible role)

SHIFTY/SAL (Male role)

SNEAKY/ADMIRAL (Male role)

Setting

Boston's North End.

Set

Townhouse porch and street. There is a large geranium planter and a large garbage can out front.

Steeple deck of the Old North Church. There is a white wooden railing with an image of church bell behind it.

PROPS

Book

Paint bucket labeled "paint remover"

Egg, large enough to contain Lucky

Chart showing days that egg was turned and kept warm

Bucket of squid tails and fish heads

Notes, for Einstein

SOUND EFFECTS

Music to indicate time is passing
Sound of tapping, egg cracking
Tiny squawk
Sound of gulls calling
Scary music
Car horns
Dogs barking
Celebratory music
Seagulls calling and chattering
Seagulls calling and taking off
Church bells

**"YOU'RE LEARNING
HOW TO FLY, LUCKY,
EVEN IF WE HAVE
TO START OUR OWN SCHOOL."**

—Zorbo

Mama Tomcat's Flying School

AT RISE: A street in Boston's North End. There is a townhouse with a porch. Beside the porch there is a large geranium planter and garbage can. Partially concealed by the planter and garbage can, Lady Gull is quietly covering. Two large scruffy rats, Sneaky and Shifty, are snooping around beside the porch.)

SNEAKY: Hey, Shifty, Zorbo's gone. He must be out on the prowl. Let's check his garbage can.

SHIFTY: *(Nervously looks around.)* Don't let him see us. That tomcat is one tough dude. *(Indicating garbage can.)* Smell anything good in there?

(Sneaky loudly sniffs the garbage can.)

SNEAKY: Naw. *(Sniffs around the can.)* But I do smell something...bad...

SHIFTY: The best garbage always smells bad!

SNEAKY: It's something else. *(Sniffs.)* It's from over here...

(Sneaky discovers Lady Gull. Sneaky and Shifty creep over and stare stupidly at Lady Gull.)

SHIFTY: Whoa! It's a seagull...just lying around. Hey, Sneaky, how about we make some seagull stew for lunch? Heh, heh. *(Advances toward Lady Gull.)*

SNEAKY: Sure, but why does she smell so bad? Hey, Lady Gull, we're a couple of bad old rats. Why are you just sitting there?

SHIFTY: *(To Lady Gull.)* Ain't you scared we'll eat you?

(Sneaky and Shifty freeze. Zorbo, a tomcat, enters SL. Sleek and well-fed, he is returning from lunch.)

ZORBO: (*Calls.*) Salvatore, my buddy, thanks for the great lunch! Mmmm, all those meatballs! So long, pal... (*Spots Sneaky and Shifty near his garbage can. To Sneaky and Shifty, shouts.*) Hey! (*Snarls, raises paws to show his claws.*) Are you rats crazy?! Get out of my territory!

SNEAKY: Easy, Zorbo. We just thought we'd take this smelly seagull off your hands—

SHIFTY: (*To Zorbo.*) Clean up the garbage for you. (*Grins weakly.*) Heh, heh.

ZORBO: Seagull?

(*Zorbo looks at Lady Gull, who looks up at him.*)

LADY GULL: (*Weakly.*) Please, Mr. Tomcat. Help me...

ZORBO: Just beat it, you rats. Or *you'll* be the garbage. (*Sneaky and Shifty nervously back off and exit. To Lady Gull.*) You better take off, too, Lady Gull, before I forget I just had a big lunch.

LADY GULL: (*Sighs, coughs.*) I can't fly. I can't go on.

ZORBO: Why not? (*Sniffs her.*) It's oil. Yuck. (*Grossed out and doesn't want to touch Lady Gull. To Lady Gull.*) What happened?

LADY GULL: (*Weakly.*) An oil slick. I got off my flight plan in the Atlantic. Landed in the oil. Took all my strength to make it to Boston. Now...I'm done for.

ZORBO: That stinks, all right. Do you want some of my kitty snacks? Some water?

LADY GULL: Thanks. You're real kind...for a tomcat. But I'm too weak to eat.

ZORBO: It's the oil that's making you sick? Why don't you wash it off?

LADY GULL: You can't wash off oil. That's why it's a bird-killer. I won't make it much longer...

ZORBO: Nobody's dying on my porch, lady. Let me think... (*Rushes to SL, shouts.*) Sal! I got a big problem! Come over here! Hurry!

(Sal runs on SL.)

SAL: What's going on, buddy?

ZORBO: I got this lady seagull here. She has to get the oil washed off her. Call Einstein. He's the smart one. And the Admiral, he's seen everything. They'll know what to do for her.

SAL: Well, sure, pal. I'll find them. *(Races off.)*

LADY GULL: *(To Zorbo.)* Your friend will hurry back?

ZORBO: *(Tries to calm her.)* Yeah, Sal's very speedy. And Einstein and the Admiral work down at the harbor. It's only a block away. That Sal...he's a great guy, likes to help people out...always ready with a free meal from his restaurant. He'll come through for you. *(Anxiously looks up and down the street.)*

LADY GULL: If they don't come back...in time...there's something important I have to ask of you.

ZORBO: Now you just take it easy, okay? They'll get here. Any minute. *(Spots them.)* I can see them now!

(Sal, Einstein, and the Admiral run on. Einstein is holding a book. The Admiral is carrying a paint bucket labeled "paint remover.")

SAL: Lady Gull, I'm Sal. And this is Einstein and the Admiral. They got a great idea to get the oil off. Hurry, Admiral!

ADMIRAL: Salvatore, lower your sails a minute! *(Puts down the bucket.)* My boss at the fish market just repainted the sign. He used oil paint. Then he cleaned his brushes in paint remover.

EINSTEIN: So I said, "Paint remover should remove oil from the bird." But the Admiral had no paint brushes.

SAL: So I said, "We all got brushes right here!" *(Indicates tail.)* We can soak our tails in the paint remover and then brush them on the gull!

ADMIRAL: Let's get at it. This reminds me of the time when I was at sea and we decided to paint the ship's galley...
(Admiral, Sal, and Einstein go to the pail and vigorously dip their tails in it. They then swish their tails over Lady Gull's feathers during the following exchange.)

LADY GULL: Mr. Zorbo, you are so kind.

ZORBO: *(Suspicious.)* I guess so...but not usually to birds.

LADY GULL: You saved me from the bad rats.

ZORBO: *(Shrugs.)* I was getting rid of them anyway.

LADY GULL: Now you try and save me from the oil.

ZORBO: *(Indicates Einstein and Admiral.)* No, those guys figured it out.

LADY GULL: You are all I have now. I trust you. You must take my baby.

ZORBO: *(Double-take.)* Baby?! What baby?! *(Sal rolls a large egg onstage.)* All I see is an egg.

EINSTEIN: Zorbo! That is her baby.

ZORBO: I don't know anything about babies. See, I'm a tomcat—

LADY GULL: I'm begging you...promise me three things.

ZORBO: *(Frustrated.)* Like I said, I'm a tom—

LADY GULL: *(Urgently presses on.)* Promise me you won't eat the egg and will protect it.

ZORBO: *(Frowns.)* Not eat the egg? Well, okay. But—

LADY GULL: And promise you will feed the chick.

ZORBO: Hold on, lady. Feed it? Can't it just peck around or something?

LADY GULL: And promise you'll teach it to fly.

ZORBO: *(Explodes.)* Fly?! Are you nuts? What do I know about flying?!

SAL: Lady Gull, don't little birds learn how to fly all by themselves?

LADY GULL: No. Their parents must show them.

ADMIRAL: Ma'am, can't your chick live on the ground?

LADY GULL: No. A gull must fly. We fly in flocks. We soar over oceans. We migrate. We hear wonderful tales from other flocks in gathering places. We play tag with the clouds. We race with the wind. *(Coughs weakly.)*

ZORBO: *(Spoken.)* Hey, Lady Gull, I told you...I don't know a thing about flying, so you can forget it.

LADY GULL: My chick *must* have the world of the skies! *(Gasps, wheezes.)* Promise me...before I die.

ZORBO: Take it easy. *(Relents.)* So, okay, I'll work on this flying thing. Somehow.

LADY GULL: Swear it!

ZORBO: I swear.

SAL: You better go lie down, Lady Gull.

ADMIRAL: *(Assists Lady Gull.)* Let me help you, ma'am.

(Admiral takes Lady Gull offstage.)

ZORBO: *(To Sal and Einstein.)* Oh man, I feel sorry for the lady, but come on. How am I going to hatch an egg? Or feed a chick?

SAL: Buddy, I'm here for you. You know me, I can feed anybody, anytime.

EINSTEIN: But flying?! That is the most difficult skill in the world. Even humans aren't sure how a bird flies. *(To Zorbo.)* You should have never promised...

ZORBO: Hey, she made me! I'll go and find her and get off the hook on that one.

(Admiral enters.)

ADMIRAL: *(Sadly.)* It's too late. The Lady Gull has gone to the Great Golden Skyplace of Birds. She'll ne'er return to this earth.

(Einstein, Sal, Zorbo, and the Admiral bow their heads. They look up and stare at the egg.)

EINSTEIN: Zorbo, my friend, congratulations. It looks like you're a parent.

ZORBO: *(Panicked.)* I'm stuck with this egg? I'm not doing this alone! Swear by the sacred Oath of Cats that you guys will help me. Swear! *(Gets the Cats to raise their paws and swear cat style. The Admiral and Einstein exit, soberly. With a confused look, Zorbo just stares at the egg. To himself.)* Now what do I do, huh? The only thing I know to do with an egg...is eat it. And I'm getting kind of hungry. *(Looks up to the sky.)* Yeah, I know. I promised. Nobody's going to eat it. *(To egg.)* How do I keep you warm and safe?

SAL: We're in this together. We'll figure it out.

ZORBO: Thanks, Sal. How long have we been best friends?

SAL: Since we were kits, remember? We were being chased by that ugly bulldog, and we raced up the same tree. That's when you found out you were so scared of high places!

ZORBO: *(Nervously looks up.)* Up that high tree? I try to forget about that day. Oh, man! Too scary!

SAL: Don't feel bad. Everybody's scared of something, right? That was the day your humans came along. They got a ladder and saved you.

ZORBO: Don't ever tell the other cats about my fear of high places. I got my reputation as a tough guy.

(Sal nods and crosses his heart. Einstein runs on carrying a book.)

EINSTEIN: Look, Zorbo! I found a book at my museum. It's on raising chickens.

ZORBO/SAL: Chickens?

EINSTEIN: Well, they're close to seagulls. It shows how you have to turn the egg every day. *(Points to a page in the book.)* See? And you have to kind of lie on it all the time.

(Zorbo awkwardly drapes himself on top of the egg. Einstein grins at the humorous spectacle.)

ZORBO: (*Sarcastically.*) Guess it's a good thing you can read.
(*Threatening.*) And if you laugh at me, you're gonna pay.

(*With muffled laughter, Einstein and Sal exit. Zorbo struggles with his awkward position on the egg. Music is heard to indicate time is passing as Einstein and Sal enter and show Zorbo ways to turn the egg, warm the egg, and to hug the egg. It is difficult, but Zorbo starts to get into his new job tending the egg. Music ends.*)

ADMIRAL: (*Pats Zorbo on the shoulder.*) Hello, Zorbo, my lad.
Doing your egg-sitting, are you? Argh, seeing you like that,
doing your duty, reminds me of a sea story back when I was
a ship's cat—

ZORBO: Admiral, not now!

(*Sal pulls the Admiral toward the exit.*)

SAL: (*To Zorbo.*) We're on our way to the Admiral's Fish
Market for lunch. His boss put out a pan of leftover fish
heads. Want to come? (*Realizes.*) Oh, that's right. You have
to stay with the egg. I'll try to bring you a few.

(*Sal and the Admiral exit in a hurry.*)

ZORBO: (*Glumly.*) Great. Man, is this going to take
forever? You are a huge pain, egg. I've been stuck with you
for weeks...can't go out to eat with my pals. I'm starving for
real food. (*Stares at his tummy.*) Does it look like I'm getting
thin? (*Stretches, yawns, and rubs his eyes.*) And I never get
any decent catnaps anymore. I'm always lying on you,
keeping you warm. How about yesterday when my
mistress swept the porch and I hid you in the planter? That
was a close one. (*Spies something off SL. Excited.*) Hey, look
who's over there. (*Shouts, waves.*) Lucinda!

(Lucinda enters.)

LUCINDA: Hiya, Zorbo!

ZORBO: Hi, Lucinda! How've you been, honey?

LUCINDA: Pretty lonely for you, baby. I thought you left town or something.

ZORBO: Naw, I'm here. Just been real busy at home...working for my humans.

LUCINDA: You old tomcat, you been going out with another girl!

ZORBO: No, not another girl! I missed you a lot, Lucinda.

LUCINDA: Me too, baby! How about I come on up to your porch for a visit?

ZORBO: No! Don't come over here! I'm still real busy! I'll catch you later.

LUCINDA: *(Insulted.)* Huh! Fat chance, Zorbo. We're through!

(Zorbo sighs and waves goodbye to Lucinda as she exits.)

ZORBO: *(To egg.)* Great. Well, there goes my girlfriend. You've ruined my love life. *(Looks around the street past the porch. To himself.)* I'm talking to an egg. If anybody hears me... *(Pause. He listens, sniffs, and stares at the egg.)* You better come out soon because I have had it! *(Listens to egg.)* Are you really in there?

(Shifty and Sneaky sneak on SL just as Zorbo wraps himself around the egg. Suddenly, Sneaky and Shifty notice Zorbo as he stretches and rises from the egg.)

SHIFTY: Hey, Sneaky, look who's here...the king of the rat catchers. Where you been, Zorbo?

SNEAKY: *(To Zorbo.)* We been cleaning out your food cellar...and here you are, lying around your porch talking to an egg! We thought you'd gone soft...

SHIFTY: *(To Zorbo.)* We thought you got lazy.

SNEAKY: *(To Zorbo.)* Now it looks like you're mostly crazy!

ZORBO: *(Shouts.)* You rats get out of here! Right now!

SHIFTY: *(Hunggrily.)* How about we take that egg off your paws?

SNEAKY: *(To Zorbo.)* Sure, we can eat it raw. Don't need to make us no omelet.

(Zorbo rises up, arches, extends his long front claws, licks his lips, and lets out a loud "hiss.")

ZORBO: *(Threateningly.)* You guys think I've gone soft? That this egg's for you to munch? You guys come near me and my egg...and you'll be my lunch! *(Yowls in a threatening way.)*

SHIFTY: *(Backing off.)* Easy, Zorbo. Sneaky, we better head out.

SNEAKY: Sure, Zorbo. You want to be pals with an egg...go right ahead! *(To Shifty.)* Pals with an egg! That cracks me up! Get it? Egg? Cracks me up!

(Sneaky and Shifty roar with laughter.)

ZORBO: *(Shouts.)* Beat it! Or someday you'll pay! Big time!

SHIFTY: Yeah, we're leaving...for now. So long, Zorbo. *(Salutes.)* So long, egg!

(Rats exit, laughing.)

ZORBO: *(To egg.)* You hear that? Sneaky and Shifty will blab this all over Boston. The other rats will call me "The North End Nut Case"!

(Einstein enters.)

EINSTEIN: How's it going, Zorbo?

ZORBO: How do you think! I'm going crazy! I don't know how birds do it! I've saved this egg from wind and

rainstorms. Today, two of the nastiest rats in town wanted to eat it, and my girlfriend blew me off! I don't know how much longer I'm gonna last here...

(Einstein whips out a chart.)

EINSTEIN: Don't quit now! You're doing a great job. See here... *(Points to chart.)* ...I made a chart showing the days you've turned the egg and kept it warm. You're almost at the hatching date.

ZORBO: Can you egg-sit while I grab a bite?

EINSTEIN: That's what I'm here for. Take a break.

(As Zorbo stretches and gets ready to leave the porch, Einstein sits near the egg. The egg starts to roll a bit on its own.)

ZORBO: Einstein, I turned the egg for today.

EINSTEIN: I didn't touch it. It moved!

ZORBO: It doesn't move. It's an egg.

EINSTEIN: I know that! But it moved. I think it may be time for...it to hatch!

ZORBO: Whoa! You think so? *(Sound of tapping, then cracking, and then a tiny squawk. Excited, Zorbo and Einstein stand and wait to see what will emerge from the egg.)* Look! The shell is cracking! It's breaking apart!

EINSTEIN: It's the miracle of birth. The chick is coming all by itself!

(Lucky crawls out of the egg. Lucky's fuzzy feathers looking damp and rather yucky. Hardly able to walk, Lucky toddles up to Zorbo and stares at him. Stunned, Zorbo stares back at Lucky.)

ZORBO: So you're the little chicky, are you? *(To Einstein.)*

Last time I saw one of these, I ate it.

LUCKY: *(To Zorbo.)* Hello...Mama?

(Zorbo and Lucky stare at each other. Lucky then gives Zorbo a big hug. Zorbo tries to push Lucky away but can't seem to detach himself from the chick. Celebratory music is heard. Einstein calls out for Sal and the Admiral. Sal and the Admiral enter and admire the newly hatched chick.)

SAL: Look at you! *(To Zorbo.)* I never thought she'd be so cute. Last time I saw one of these—

ZORBO: I know. You *ate* it.

SAL: *(To Lucky.)* Hello, there. I'm your Uncle Sal. You are one lucky gull to have Zorbo take care of you.

LUCKY: Lucky. I'm Lucky. *(To Zorbo.)* Mama, I'm hungry. Lucky is hungry.

SAL: We all are! How about we go to Luigi's for some Italian food? That's where I work. My boss has plenty of moldy meatballs!

ZORBO: *(Joyfully.)* Yes! Oh, man, it's been a long time. Let's go, Lucky. Just follow us.

EINSTEIN: No, no! I already checked the museum encyclopedia, volume 2-B. "B" for bird food. Chicks can't eat what we do.

LUCKY: *(Pecking at Zorbo.)* Mama, Lucky is starving!

ZORBO: *(Deflated.)* No meatballs? What do we feed her?

EINSTEIN: Volume 2-B. Page 82. Small bugs and worms.

(Zorbo, Admiral, and Sal are visibly grossed out but they groan, shrug, and get started looking for bugs and worms. Zorbo jumps down and starts scratching the ground. Sal and Admiral roam around trying to snag flies with their paws. Lucky opens his mouth wide like a hungry baby bird.)

LUCKY: Caw! Caw! Caw! *(Zorbo gives Lucky a worm.)*

Mama, you found a worm. Yummy!

SAL/ADMIRAL: Yucky!

ZORBO: *(Feeding Lucky.)* Here you go, Lucky. Don't gobble.

SAL: *(To Lucky.)* Hey, look what your uncle Sal got for you.

Think that worm was yummy? Just snack on this...big black...fuzzy...fly. *(Grins to hide his disgust.)*

LUCKY: Uncle Sal, you have fuzzy fly. Yummy! *(Gulps down fly.)*

ADMIRAL: Here you go, lass, from your Uncle Admiral. A fine bit of spider!

LUCKY: Thank you, Uncle. Mmmm...munchy spider. *(Gulps it down.)*

SAL: Your Uncle Sal has to get back to work at his restaurant. See ya later, you pretty thing.

(Sal exits. Zorbo, still starving, tries to follow Sal.)

LUCKY: *(To Zorbo, calls.)* Mama, Lucky is full.

(Zorbo turns back.)

ZORBO: That's good, Lucky, but...

LUCKY: Mama, I want to cuddle with you and take a nap.

ZORBO: I guess that's all right. But here's the thing...I'm not your mama.

LUCKY: Yes, Mama.

ZORBO: No. I'm a *tomcat*. Your real mama couldn't stay... *(Thinks of what to say.)* Well, you see, she passed on...to the Golden Sky Place of Birds. I promised to bring you into the world. See, *tomcats*—

LUCKY: Mama Tomcat. *(Yawns, snuggles, and begins to fall asleep.)*

ZORBO: Right, that's it, *tomcat*. We can't be *mamas*. We prowl and yowl. We chase off the mice and rats. We defend our territory. We have dates with our feline friends. We make our humans happy. That's what we do.

EINSTEIN: According to most books, the first person a chick sees upon hatching into the world...is called "Mama."

LUCKY: *(To Zorbo, cuddling.)* Mmmm...night-night, Mama.

ADMIRAL: We'll set the lassie straight later. You fellows go over to Sal's and get some of those moldy meatballs. The Admiral's on deck duty! I'll tend the chick and keep this porch shipshape!

ZORBO: Thanks, Admiral. Bringing Lucky into the world was hard work! Made me hungry. (*Pause. Admires Lucky as she sleeps.*) She's not bad looking...for a little bird, right?

(Admiral nods at Lucky, who is cuddled up beside him. Zorbo and Einstein exit.)

ADMIRAL: (*To Lucky, sing-song.*) Let me tell you a little naptime story, Lucky. Once upon a ship...when I was a very young sailor cat, we sailed across the South Pacific. We had slow breezes, warm sunshine, gentle waves...rocking our ship back and forth. (*Yawns.*) And the whole crew of us...believe it or not...fell asleep.

(Admiral falls asleep and snores loudly. Napping music. Admiral sleeps beside Lucky. Lucky awakens and sees that the Admiral is still sleeping.)

LUCKY: (*To herself.*) Naptime's over. (*Glances at sleeping Admiral.*) I can look for my own bugs and worms. (*Lucky wanders over to street area. Lucky pecks and scratches at the dirt while she explores. Trash-heap, a derelict cat, creeps on SL. To Trash-heap, cheerful.*) Hello? Are you a cat like my mama tomcat?

TRASH-HEAP: Huh? (*Smiles.*) Oh, yeah.

LUCKY: I'm Lucky. Who are you?

TRASH-HEAP: Never mind, little chick. Want to play a game with me? (*Closes in on her.*) It's called, "Catch the Birdie."

ZORBO: (*Offstage.*) It was so great running into you, Lucinda.

LUCINDA: (*Offstage.*) Thanks for lunch, Zorbo. I'm glad we got back together.

ZORBO: *(Offstage.)* Me, too. Like I said, I had a *lot* to do at home.

LUCINDA: *(Offstage.)* You sure you're not seeing some other feline?

ZORBO: *(Offstage.)* No, honey, believe me. I'll try to get away tomorrow night. We'll hit the waterfront.

(Trash-heap sneaks up closer to Lucky.)

TRASH-HEAP: *(Pounces on Lucky.)* Gotcha! *(Smiles.)* Old Trash-heap is hungry.

LUCKY: *(Screams.)* Mama Tomcat!

(Zorbo runs onstage to rescue Lucky. Admiral wakes up in a panic. Zorbo smacks Trash-heap with his claws and Trash-heap releases Lucky. Lucky rushes over to the Admiral.)

ZORBO: *(Shouts.)* Trash-heap! You old monster! Claws off her, or I'll tear your throat out!

TRASH-HEAP: *(Recovers his footing, shouts.)* No way, Zorbo! I got this bird first!

(Admiral protects Lucky during the fight.)

ZORBO: She's mine, Trash-heap! *(Threatens with claws.)*

LUCKY: *(To Zorbo, fearful.)* Mama, those claws hurted me.

TRASH-HEAP: *(To Zorbo, confused.)* Did she say "mama"? *(Stares hard at Lucky.)* This here's a gull, not a kit.

ZORBO: I know what she is! *(Roars.)* She's mine! Get lost!

ADMIRAL: *(To Trash-heap, shouts.)* Or we'll make short work of you!

TRASH-HEAP: *(Confused.)* I don't know what's going on here, but if you don't cage this tasty birdy, somebody is going to have her for supper.

ZORBO: Just beat it!

ADMIRAL: *(To Trash-heap, shouts.)* Don't ever come around this porch again!

TRASH-HEAP: I'll go...don't feel up to fighting you both. But I'll be back. Count on it!

(Snarling, Trash-heap lumbers off. Lucky cuddles with Zorbo.)

ADMIRAL: *(To Zorbo.)* I'm sorry, lad. I dozed off. *(Gestures to where Trash-heap has just exited.)* I'm afraid other cats like Trash-heap may come for her.

LUCKY: *(Proudly.)* You're strong and brave, Mama Tomcat. You made the bad cat go away.

ZORBO: *You* were a bad little gull. Never leave the porch alone. You hear me? Always go with me or one of your uncle tomcats because most cats like Trash-heap, they like to eat little birds.

LUCKY: *(Stunned.)* They *do*? You mean my uncle tomcats might want to eat me?

ZORBO: Not us cats...because you're *ours*. Me, I'm more into mice anyway. Now, just do like I tell you! No leaving the porch alone!

LUCKY: Okay, I'll stay on the porch. Mama, how come I don't look like you and my uncles?

ZORBO: Because you're a seagull. Someday you'll be a big gull like your mother was.

LUCKY: So I won't ever look like you? But I want to! I want to be just like you.

ZORBO: Lucky, I told you, that can't happen.

LUCKY: *(Scowls.)* I *can* be like you. I'm growing up to be a cat. I'll eat cat foods and do cat things. Then we'll always be together.

ZORBO: *(To Admiral, sighs.)* Oh, man, this parent business...there's a lot more to it than catching worms and flies.

(Music. Sal and Einstein enter and help the Admiral teach Lucky to find her own bugs and worms. Zorbo applauds Lucky's efforts. Sal shows Lucky his bucket of squid tails and fish heads and offers her some. Lucky pecks at a squid tail and fish head. Music ends.)

SAL: *(To Lucky.)* You're getting to be such a big girl, sweetie. You've learned to eat squid tails and fish heads.

LUCKY: Yep, I eat a lot of stuff that you do, Uncle Sal, except for moldy meatballs. Yuck! Soon I'm going to learn to catch mice!

(With this, Sal gives Zorbo a quizzical look.)

SAL: *(To Lucky.)* Mice? Now, sweetie, gulls don't do that...

LUCKY: But I'm growing up to be a cat.

ADMIRAL: *(Sniffs, tests the wind.)* Speaking of gulls, I feel autumn on the wind. Time is flying, like birds on the wing. The flocks will be heading south for the winter.

EINSTEIN: Seagulls may be going too, Lucky.

(Sound of gulls calling can be heard overhead. All look up to the sky.)

SAL: *(To Lucky.)* Einstein's right. *(Points to sky.)* See who's flying up there?

LUCKY: *(Looks up.)* Some gulls.

EINSTEIN: They might be your relatives. Can't you understand that?

LUCKY: *(Stubbornly.)* You are my family. *(To Zorbo.)* My Mama Tomcat. *(To other Cats.)* Uncle Tomcats. So there.

EINSTEIN: Yes, dear Lucky. But look up at those gulls. See how they dip and soar?

LUCKY: *(Looking up, nods.)* Sometimes I do flap my wings a little. But then I watch the birds, and it looks scary up in the sky so high.

ZORBO: *(Looking up. To Sal.)* Yeah, it sure does!

SAL: *(To Lucky.)* Spread out your wings, sweetie. Show us what a big gull you are now.

(Lucky spreads her wings and does a hop-hop like a gull. Cats nod with approval.)

LUCKY: It does feel kind of good. I want to call out like gulls do. Oh, I don't know...

ADMIRAL: *(To Cats, aside.)* I was afraid we'd have a problem keeping Lucky. She doesn't know who she is!

ZORBO: Stow it, Admiral. She's mine. That's who she is, and if she is afraid to fly up high, so what!

SAL: But you swore to her mother, remember, that you'd teach her—

ADMIRAL/SAL/EINSTEIN: And a promise is a promise.
(They make the promise sign.)

ADMIRAL: *(Announces.)* Listen to me, all of you. It's time for me to tell one of my sea stories.

(Zorbo, Sal, and Einstein groan.)

ZORBO: Admiral, we've heard them all before...

ADMIRAL: This one is about the flight of gulls.

LUCKY: Please, Uncle Admiral, tell me this one!

(Zorbo nods. Lucky, Zorbo, Sal, and Einstein gather around the Admiral.)

ADMIRAL: When I was the captain's cat on the old Sea Devil, we were sailing for Madagascar. Then our compass broke. Without it, we couldn't tell north from south.

LUCKY: How could you find your way home?

ADMIRAL: We couldn't! Then a great storm darkened the sky...no way to see sun nor stars. Finally, we heard a noise. Kee-ah, kee-ah! The lookout shouted, "Gulls aloft!" He'd spotted a flock of seagulls flying steady in one direction.

Our captain yelled, "Turn about, men. Change course! We'll follow those gulls."

ZORBO: I bet those gulls were scared to be flying up high in a storm.

ADMIRAL: Gulls are the strongest birds I ever met. They've got a great sense o' direction. And they know how to head for land. We made it to Madagascar by following those gulls. Otherwise, I wouldn't be here today. (*Everyone claps happily.*) You see, Lucky, it could have been your ancestors in that flock of gulls.

LUCKY: (*Stubbornly resisting.*) I keep telling you...I'm going to grow up on the ground and be a cat...like all of you.

ADMIRAL: (*Exasperated.*) Zorbo, talk to her!

ZORBO: Lucky, listen to me. You have to learn to fly...someday. I promised your mother.

LUCKY: (*Confused.*) Even if I wanted to fly, who would teach me? You have no wings. You have powerful legs. You can leap from fence to rooftop. You have sharp, strong fangs and claws. You can cut down your enemy. You have soft paws. You can move through the shadows faster and quieter than any mouse. You have all these great things, except...no wings.

ZORBO: That's true. (*Determined.*) But you are going to learn. Somehow...

EINSTEIN: When our humans need to learn something, they read books. They go to school.

LUCKY: That's right, Uncle Einstein, but I don't have a school.

(*Zorbo gives Einstein, Sal, and Admiral a determined look.*)

ZORBO: (*To Lucky.*) You're learning how to fly, Lucky...even if we have to start our *own* school.

LUCKY: Mama Tomcat's Flying School?

[END OF FREEVIEW]