

Performance rights must be secured before production. For contact information, please visit [the information page for Punk Grandpa.](#)

PUNK GRANDPA

By LaurA! Force Scruggs

LaurA! Force Scruggs

101 E. Sixth St., Unit 405

Winston Salem, NC 27101

773.905.9103

laura.e.scruggs@gmail.com

Cast of Characters w/possible cast breakdown:

LAURA: an 8 3/4 year old misfit girl and, later, a grown-up, raised in the fundamentalist, born-again Christian tradition and takes everything very seriously, until she doesn't, under the influence of her grandpa.

GRANDPA: a completely uninhibited, free man, with a very unique sense of humor. He completely accepts and loves his granddaughter, LAURA.

ENSEMBLE #1: Josh, Adult, Churchgoer #1 & #5, Uncle Jon, Kid #1, Sean, Schoolboy, Jake, Friend, Security Guard, NY Guy, college car person

ENSEMBLE #2: Aunt Susan, Grandma, Mandi, Woman Resident of Nursing Home, Kid #2, Juniper, Lady at Bank, Churchgoer #4, college car person

ENSEMBLE #3: Dad, Churchgoer #2, Darren, Teenager, Policeman, Doctor, Director

ENSEMBLE #4: Mom, Teacher, Churchgoer #3 & #6, Kid #3, Stranger Lady, Black Umbrella Puppeteer, Tour Guide, Emilie, Aunt Amy

Settings by Scene:

Scene 1: Normal, IL, Laura's bedroom

Scene 2: Grandma and Grandpa Pohlmann's house in Mount Prospect, IL

Scene 3: Grandma and Grandpa's church in Mount Prospect, IL

Scene 4: On the road with Grandpa and a bank in Mount Prospect, IL

Scene 5: Dinner table back at Grandma and Grandpa Pohlmann's house
in Mount Prospect, IL

Scene 6: Grandpa's room

Scene 7: Alzheimer's Land, bare stage

Scene 8: Grandma and Grandpa's house

Scene 9: Adult World, bare stage

Scene 10: Fairyland

Time

December 1981 - present

Place

Normal, Illinois; Mount Prospect, Illinois; Alzheimer's Land, Adult World and Fairyland

Scene 1

(There is a chair Stage Right. There is a screen or blank wall center stage (onto which various pictures and film footage are possibly projected upon throughout the show. There is a small chair Stage Left with a fairy chest with a few objects peeking out: a tutu, wings and other magical things. Offstage Left is an umbrella puppet and a small chair. Offstage Right are two big feet, which, when pounded upon the floor, make loud, echo-ey, monster-ish sounds. We are in LAURA's childhood bedroom)

LAURA

(knelt down, praying in her bedroom)

I'm sorry, God; I just can't do it anymore.

It is 7 am, on a Monday before school.

It is December of 1981

and I live in Normal, Illinois.

I am 8 3/4 years old.

I am doing my morning devotional and I read the Bible verse,

“Pray without ceasing, for this is the WILL of GOD.” King James version.

So, I start making my bed

“Pray without ceasing for this is the will of God...”

But, God, how can I pray without ceasing forever? But I have to, it's in the Bible!

I look down at my Precious Moments bedspread

(Slide: Precious Moments picture)

that says,

'Thy word have I hid in my heart that I might not sin against thee.'

Exactly. I know I can do this and,

with JOY!

(continue to make bed, singing)

'Pray without ceasing,'

(top idea)

but, God, how can I pray without ceasing during school?

In my heart, but I won't be able to stop my mouth from moving, so everyone will think I'm drunk, like the High Priest Eli thought Hannah was in the Bible, even though she wasn't, she was just desperately praying to have a baby.

And after school, during play practice?

I was a green bean in a play at church called

(sings)

"Clarence the Carrot."

(picture of LAURA as a green bean flashes up on screen or wall?)

LAURA

And while playing over at my friend Elizabeth Rose's house tonight?

There were elves that played hockey with the ice cubes in her freezer, so every time someone opened the freezer, ice cubes would come shooting out at me and I would be distracted and would not be able to pray without ceasing...

(plastic "ice cube or cubes" is/are thrown at LAURA from offstage)

(noise of frustration! She shows how this would make her cease praying)

The morning before, while waiting for church to begin,

(LAURA acts this out)

I was holding my offering money in one hand very tightly because I was nervous that I was going to lose it. But, it got really hot, so I switched it to my other hand.

It was then that I realized, too late, that *I broke the Bible* - I had *sinned*, because of that verse, 'Don't let your left hand know what your right hand is doing.'

I was a very serious child.

(Slide: picture 1seriouslittleme flashes up on screen)

And, I just got a hamster for my birthday and named him

Yum Yum Chew Chew Octavius the Perfect.

My Bible teacher at my school, Calvary Academy, told me

But, only God is perfect.

Oh.

(pause)

The next day, Yum Yum Chew Chew Octavius the Perfect died!

My Bible teacher told me that was an answer to prayer. God smote the hamster dead; for, like I told you, only God can be perfect.

But I prayed the salvation prayer with Yum Yum Chew Chew Octavius so I know he is in Heaven.

Again, I was a very serious child.

It took a lot of work; I was exhausted.

(sit in chair)

I might have been serious forever and started gathering animals for the ark, or jumping into lions' dens at the zoo

or throwing snacks at boys I like because Boaz asked his workers to throw extra grain at Ruth when she was gleaning in his fields...

I might have been serious forever...

if it weren't for my outrageous, unforgettable, wildly inappropriate, punk grandpa.

(Slide: photo.30.jpg.crazywhoagpa)

*(Something in the public domain like “Cottontail” plays for about 30 seconds and Laura dances around, crazy, so excited to tell the audience about her punk grandpa! This is where **GRANDPA** makes his entrance and dances with **LAURA**)*

(Slide: GRANDPA's voice, saying, “Bob Pohlmann, All-American Boy”)

This one's for you, grandpa,

*(maybe a picture of **GRANDPA** flashes up on the wall or screen)*

Scene 2

(We are now at **GRANDMA** and **GRANDPA** Pohlmann's house)

LAURA

I am 8 3/4 years old. I think it's going to be a magical day, because I am at my Grandma and Grandpa Pohlmann's house in Mount Prospect, Illinois!

I am there with my family: my mom, dad, brother Josh and baby sister Katie (who looks a little like Shirley Temple).

My mom is a strict librarian who wakes up in the mood to vacuum at 7 am on a summer morning and my dad is a CPA, who safety pins his socks together in the wash. My brother, Josh, is a six year old who makes fun of everything I do, always calling me

JOSH

Freakshow! You aren't just a freak in the freakshow; you are the entire freakshow!

LAURA

I was not the favorite in my family; I just did *not* fit in.

My Aunt Susan once asked me

AUNT SUSAN

So, how did you manage to spring from the loins of those two? I think you are a changeling.

LAURA

What's a changeling?

AUNT SUSAN

A changeling is: a fairy child left in place of a stolen human child.

LAURA

I'm a fairy?!

(LAURA revels in what this could mean; might do a dance to fairy music)

My brother, Josh, doesn't know that I am a fairy.

He wrote

JOSH

“Laura is not allowed in the kids' bathroom” on the Kids' Bathroom Rules Sign.

LAURA

And when I brown hamburger meat, when cooking with my mom, I think it starts to look like an old man's head, you know, because of those wiggly lines in the ground beef, as they start to look gray as I brown them. So I feel like I'm chopping up an old man's head, as I brown every side of the hamburger meat!

No one else in my family thinks like this.

GRANDPA

Let's pray.

LAURA

(is feeling desperate about her freakishness, wants some help from God)

Yes, please.

Grandpa prayed a lot; he loved to do it, for all kinds of reasons: to find something that was lost, to pray for others and to give thanks.

GRANDPA

Thank you, Father, for the pancakes.

LAURA

I look down at my grandma's sparkly snowflake tablecloth

(Slide: picture of grandma's snowflake tablecloth)

and grab the Hungry Jack syrup when no one is looking,

except for Aunt Erna's peppermint stick kid figurine.

(Slide: picture of peppermint stick figurines flashes up on screen)

(to figurine)

Don't tell anyone!

And I put just a drop of syrup on my pancake,

like a piece of fairy dust, because I was a chubby child!

I try to spread it out over the whole pancake, with my fork fairy wand, but,

I was shredding it.

And then, I hear

(make or hear high-pitched ringing sound, it is GRANDPA's hearing aid)

and then my grandpa says into his hearing aid.

GRANDPA

Bob Pohlmann here, how's the foreign situation? Yes, FBI agent Kevin, my granddaughter Laura is right here.

LAURA

My grandpa handed me his hearing aid and I looked at it,

(trying to figure out right thing to do)

scared, wondering what the foreign situation was and what I must have done wrong this time.

(get idea)

I remember the night before, when my brother and I were screaming at each other, fighting over who should get to hold my baby sister, Katie, and then she started to cry.

And then...

(get big feet and tromp on stage with them, making a big, scary echo-y sound with each footstep)

It was my dad! He had heard everything!

DAD

See kids, even a baby can sense *sin!*

LAURA

Did the FBI somehow find out about that?

(get hearing aid back)

I look at my family around the breakfast table and I carefully hold my grandpa's hearing aid; I was afraid of breaking it and just, everything about the situation.

I look at it for a moment, take a deep breath and hold it to my ear.

Hello, Agent Kevin, this is Laura Force. How can I help you?

I listened and listened, and

(mashing hearing aid into ear)

I just hear some static!

GRANDPA

Hm, seems strange.

JOSH

Freakshow, you thought there was really an FBI agent?

GRANDPA

(with actions)

Josh, too far.

JOSH

I didn't do it; it was Hungry Jack!

GRANDPA

Josh, you are being too hard on your sister.

LAURA

Grandpa was good at protecting me.

(Slide: 10huggrandpapicture flashes up onscreen)

(hoping maybe there could be)

So, there's really no FBI agent talking to you through your hearing aid?

MOM

Laura, stop it, it's not real.

GRANDPA

What does that have to do with anything? Well, what do *you* think, Laura?

LAURA

Grandpa wanted to know what *I* thought!

I don't know...

maybe...

the faeries are playing with them today...

(to audience)

I love not knowing for sure if something is real or not.

DAD

Laura, calm down.

GRANDPA

(get up to go to the bathroom)

I'm going to the twilight.

LAURA

My grandpa meant he was going to the toilet,
as he always liked to play with words
and he told us everything that he was doing,
so we knew exactly where he was ALL of the time.

On his return from the twilight:

GRANDPA

It don't mean a thing if it ain't got that swing...

(GRANDPA dances to Big Band/Jazz style music)

LAURA

He danced and sang a lot.

GRANDPA

(singing some scat music)

Doo wah doo wah doo wah...

GRANDMA

Bob! I hate scat singing and you KNOW that!

LAURA

So, my grandpa stuck out his prosthetic teeth at her.

He only had three real teeth,

because when he was a kid,

every time his mom sent him to the dentist,
he took the money and went to the movies and bought lots of candy instead.

GRANDPA

I like your new dress, Caryl.

GRANDMA

I've had it for 35 years, Bob, and I wear it every day!

GRANDPA

Where do you get those dresses with the bumps in them?

GRANDMA

Oh, Bob!

GRANDPA

You have nice breasts, Caryl.

LAURA

I covered my brothers' ears!

He said BREAST! You aren't supposed to talk about private parts; you could get punished for that.

It made me so nervous that I reached for the Hungry Jack bottle and started pouring the syrup on, as hard and as fast as I possibly could.

The syrup was going everywhere!

GRANDPA

That'll put hair on your chest.

LAURA

WHAT?

GRANDPA

That'll put hair on your chest.

LAURA

What does that *mean*?

GRANDPA

It means it'll make you a big strong punk, like me.

LAURA

Ohhhhhh!!!

I wanted nothing more.

(LAURA pours more syrup onto her pancakes, in hopes of growing hair on her chest and becoming a big strong punk, just like her grandpa)

Scene 3

(At **GRANDMA** and **GRANDPA**'s church.)

LAURA

After breakfast, we went to my Grandma and Grandpa's very conservative church for a special Saturday Christmas Eve service.

Upon entering the church's narthex,

their word for lobby,

(music stops)

I heard an adult say,

ADULT

The liberals are not going to Heaven.

LAURA

I didn't know what a liberal was, but it sounded kind of delicious, like ice cream or something.

I wanted to meet the liberals and tell them

Everything is going to be ok!

Then, I saw: ladies were lining up in the back of the church, waiting for my grandpa, an usher, to seat them.

After he seated someone, they were always smiling. He would call every lady that he seated,

GRANDPA

(Singing)

Miss America.

LAURA

He was known as the best usher.

And, it was time for me to go to children's church!

TEACHER

(glasses down nose)

Where does alcohol come from?

LAURA

(look around)

Nobody knew.

TEACHER

Besides the fruit and the wheat mixing together, THE DEVIL!

LAURA

(raise hand, waits for teacher to call on her)

My grandma has a glass of red wine every night with dinner and she told me it's good for her heart.

TEACHER

and you believe her?

(LAURA tries to figure out where she is and what she's doing here)

LAURA

I wondered what was going on upstairs in big church.

(Cut to GRANDPA asleep in church, waking up suddenly, driving to a donut place, getting a donut and then coming back to church, just as it ends)

LAURA

After the service, I saw Grandpa talking to all of these grown-ups that were bragging about their children's prestigious careers in science

and technology

and going into the ministry

and so my grandpa said,

GRANDPA

My kids are doing great, too. My son John, he lives in New York. He drives a big car, runs his own business. He's a pimp.

And, my daughter, Amy, she's doing real well, too.

She works for him!

CHURCHGOER #1

We will have to talk to pastor about this!

CHURCHGOER #2

We're praying for you!

CHURCHGOER #3

Is he a real Christian?

LAURA

The churchgoers decided it was time to go to

CHURCHGOER #1

Baker's Square!

(and the churchgoers leave quickly)

LAURA

I was shocked and jealous that grandpa could say such things inside of a church.

Like grandpa, I have encountered some self-righteous, condemning, judgmental church people throughout my life.

In high school, there was a girl in our church youth group, Jen, who was dating a non-Christian guy named Darren. One night we were all hanging out and Darren dropped something on his foot and said

DARREN

(dropped something on his foot)

Oh my God.

LAURA

Mandi,

(wait for it)

a girl from our church, said,

MANDI

Is he your God, Darren? Is he?

LAURA

I couldn't believe how quickly she came up with that asinine statement; it was as if this button marked "Automatic Judgment" had been pushed on her. Now, not only did I marry a non-Christian, I married an Atheist!

AUNT AMY

It's like in "Splash," when the Tom Hanks' character has a crush on a mermaid; he thought he'd at least fall in love with a human! You thought your husband would at least believe in God.

(Slide: picture of Jake in kitchen)

LAURA

Sometimes, grandpa and I just don't follow the rules. Back to that pimp moment at church...

GRANDPA

(Calling after church people, as they quickly leave)

Nice doin' business with you. And don't take any wooden nickels!

LAURA

As the judgy people were leaving, I also caught several other churchgoers, who were smiling and laughing with my grandpa.

(CHURCHGOERS #4 - 6 could possibly be puppets)

CHURCHGOER #4

I think God has a sense of humor -

CHURCHGOER #5

And He gave part of it to Bob Pohlmann,

CHURCHGOER #6

to give to us!

Scene 4

(On the road with GRANDPA; to the bank!)

LAURA

Back to that magical day...

After lunch,

GRANDPA

Come here, oldest grandpunk, we're going for a special ride!

LAURA

(first time, exactly what she wants)

Just him and me.

GRANDMA

When are you coming back?

GRANDPA

I don't know; we're just going down the road apiece.

GRANDMA

We're having goulash and tomato soup spice cake at 5; so don't take too long.

GRANDPA

(with action)

Heil!

LAURA

and he stuck his teeth out at her

GRANDPA

(singing)

Okay, Caryl!

LAURA

That's what grandpa did when he was done fighting with grandma.

(Slide: Music Cue instrumental version of "Tonight" from Westside Story plays)

Despite their fighting, I knew that grandma and grandpa truly loved each other.

(GRANDMA and GRANDPA act out LAURA's words below)

LAURA

My grandma told me that the first time she saw his smile,

GRANDMA

It was like in "Westside Story:" I saw him and the world went away...

(Music Cue – music stops)

(Slide: happy grandma and grandpa)

LAURA

When grandma and grandpa were dating they'd see each other every day at lunch and at night,

(GRANDMA and GRANDPA act this out as LAURA says it)

but one night grandma got sick, so they agreed that they would just have to talk over the phone.

At about 9 pm, grandma's doorbell rang and grandma told me

GRANDMA

That was late in those days.

LAURA

It was grandpa.

She could see his pajamas under his clothes.

GRANDPA

I just couldn't stay away.

LAURA

Also, grandma told me that after they got married and had three kids, every time she and grandpa wanted to

GRANDMA

"get friendly,"

LAURA

they'd send the kids to the store for Twinkies.

That was the only time the kids were allowed to have Twinkies.

And when grandma and grandpa were on vacation once at Mammoth Cave and the tour guide said,

TOUR GUIDE

We are about to turn the lights out and you will all experience **total** darkness, like **velvet**.

(Lights go out)

GRANDPA

Kiss me, baby!

(GRANDPA kisses GRANDMA)

LAURA

And so everyone laughed and no one was afraid!

On our way out the door, grandpa grabbed my little sister's thumb and stuck it in his mouth.

He thought she'd been sucking on it too much, we were all trying to help her quit.

She didn't put her thumb back in her mouth *for the rest of the day.*

*(maybe **KATIE** tries to put her thumb back in her mouth, but just can't, as she is under the spell of **GRANDPA**, this could be portrayed by a puppet or baby doll)*

(Slide: 2grandpacar picture flashes up on screen)

(sit down, get cozy, settle in, buckle up)

In his gargantuan white Oldsmobile with a silver streak across the top, grandpa was driving all over the road, careening around corners, going faster than I had ever gone in my life; nobody I knew drove like this. I loved it; it was exhilarating, And, he yelled out the window to every woman we saw, they were all his neighbors and friends:

GRANDPA

Hey! Pick you up in an hour!

LAURA

I couldn't believe how grandpa was married, but flirted with every female he came into contact with. But Grandma didn't mind; she told me

GRANDMA

He gives me too much attention!

LADY CAST MEMBERS

and all of the ladies loved it, too.

LAURA

Next stop on my adventure with grandpa: the bank.

The moment we walked in, all of the female tellers turned, waved and smiled at grandpa.

When I went to the bank with my mom, we'd go straight in and come right back out in five minutes.

I don't know how long I was there with grandpa and time didn't matter. The manager sat me down at a kid's table and gave me a coloring book and crayons. It was like a dream sequence.

(Possible dream sequence – Laura dances to music with jumbo crayons, bubbles, rainbow streamer, etc., at the end, takes pretend (possibly inflatable) donut out from under chair and “eats” it)

Somehow my grandpa found where the donuts and coffee were; if there were donuts and coffee in a place where my grandpa was, he always found them.

(admiration)

When we were getting ready to leave, it started to look overcast outside.

(panic, terror)

So, my grandpa went to the Lost and Found right away and asked,

GRANDPA

(serious)

Did anyone turn in a black umbrella?

LAURA

making believe that he had lost his. Of course, there were tons of black umbrellas, so he just picked one.

I could never do that!

It was dishonest, but it was so funny!

GRANDPA

I've lost so many umbrellas; somebody's walking around with mine.

LAURA

(realizing this)

Ohhh, ok. That made sense to me.

Then, we headed home...

Then, when we were about a block away from grandma and grandpa's house, grandpa just started honking the horn like a maniac.

GRANDPA

(shows how much he enjoys this game, builds it up)

I do this every day; watch. The kids are going to come out.

LAURA

(builds, like a race)

At that moment, all of these kids started pouring out of every house on the block and running after us. Then, my grandpa started driving on the sidewalk!

GRANDPA

Race ya!

LAURA

The kids loved this game, except for one.

TEENAGER

(call, yell)

Get off my sidewalk.

GRANDPA

Drop dead!

LAURA

Grandpa loved to say that and I loved to hear those two words, so magical to me, because *grandpa really didn't care what anyone thought*.

When we pulled into the driveway, about 25 kids had assembled and they all wanted grandpa to twirl them around and give them

KIDS #1, #2 & #3

Airplane rides! Airplane rides!

LAURA

And he was happy to swing them all around and around and around.

(GRANDPA swings kids around)

LAURA

But, after the last kid, he was getting tired, so he started heading towards the front door.

But, the kids wouldn't let him go. They blocked the door, so grandpa started

(run Down Right, around)

running around the side of the house to the back door

and all of the kids followed.

GRANDPA

(pounding on door, might be a sign that says BELL OUT OF ORDER, PLEASE KNOCK)

Caryl! Open the door!

LAURA

My grandma opened the door,

and we slipped in, just in time, as we saw the kids smashing their faces up against the glass, looking at us, wishing they were where I was, WITH HIM.

(Slide: singing with grandpa picture flashes up on screen)

Scene 5

(Dinner table at grandma and grandpa's house)

LAURA

(sit down in chair)

We sat down to eat our goulash and tomato soup spice cake.

GRANDPA

Let's pray. Thank you Father for the goulash and tomato soup spice cake.

(Singing)

Pass the biscuits, Miranda!

LAURA

There were no biscuits or anyone named Miranda!

Grandpa would just say this over and over to drive my grandma crazy.

GRANDMA

(growls)

Get some new material, Bob.

GRANDPA

Okay, Boss.

GRANDMA

You know I hate it when you say that!

MOM

I hear the Russells are pregnant again.

GRANDPA

I think they don't know what causes it, because they keep on having them!

LAURA

Huh?

GRANDPA

(singing)

Mary had a little lamb.

She also had a bear.

I never saw Mary's little lamb, but I always saw her BARE!

GRANDMA

What did everyone think of the sermon this morning?

(Silence)

Bob?

GRANDPA

Oh, it was nice....

GRANDMA

Bob! You snuck out for a donut again and missed the whole sermon, didn't you?

(Slide: doorbell sound)

(GRANDPA is saved by the doorbell)

LAURA

(She is happy to help GRANDPA escape GRANDMA's questioning)

Who could that be?

(looks)

It's a policeman!

Oh no, they found my Mighty Mouse vitamins and they've come to arrest me!

I had been flushing my Mighty Mouse vitamins down the toilet for about a month now, because they tasted like throw-up.

And so I knew that a humongous pile of them had accumulated underground and it was only a matter of time before someone found them and came to arrest me!

GRANDPA

(size up policeman)

How's it going baby? Are you fine and dandy, sugar candy?

POLICEMAN

We received a report that someone was driving on the sidewalk.

GRANDPA

Yeah, it was me. What? Is it illegal?

LAURA

Grandpa was just playing; TAKE ME! I'm the one who should go to jail, for flushing all of my Mighty Mouse vitamins down the toilet! I know you found them!

POLICEMAN

I don't know what you're talking about. This whole family is crazy. Just, you

(points at grandpa)

don't drive on the sidewalk

and you

(points at LAURA)

take your vitamins, young lady.

Good evening, folks.

GRANDPA

Nice doing business with you. And don't take any wooden nickels!

LAURA

(jumping up and down)

Yay, grandpa, we're not going to jail!

GRANDPA

Nope. Don't you worry, little punk, Bob Pohlmann is a good boy. And you are a good girl.

Scene 6

(In grandpa's room)

LAURA

After dinner, grandpa and I had music time in his room, just him and me.

(Slide: Grandpa's voice sings, "Robert L. Pohlmann, la la la!")

(Slide: picture of grandpa playing the saxophone)

GRANDPA

I want to have a theory talk with you, punk.

LAURA

This made me feel very special, smart and important because I had been taking piano lessons for two years and music theory was the hardest part for me.

My piano teacher told me we would take a vacation from theory, but, we never came back from it.

But, somehow, I knew all of the answers to grandpa's questions about theory!

He made me feel like a Sophisticated Lady.

During one of our theory talks, grandpa asked me

GRANDPA

(looking at his sheet music)

What does Rubato mean, grandpunk?

LAURA

Not in a strict tempo; like you, grandpa.

Grandpa decided to start playing the saxophone, pretty much because someone told him he was too old to start, at the age of 68.

He didn't feel ready to play in a band with people his own age yet, so...since senior citizens could audit *any* class for free at the high school nearest to his house, he learned how to play the saxophone by playing in the band at Prospect High School.

I can just imagine the things he might have said and done in that high school band class.

(Slide: something dreamy like "Stardust" (in the public domain) starts playing quietly in background)

I am sure that he walked in like he owned the place, as that was his way. He would say and live

GRANDPA

If you act like you belong, people will believe in you.

LAURA

I bet he announced to the whole class,

GRANDPA

I'm going to the twilight!

LAURA

every time he had to go to the toilet. And, I am sure he asked all of the kids,

GRANDPA

Do you want to see my teeth?

(stick out teeth)

(Music stops playing)

After our theory talk, grandpa played one of his favorite songs, "Polka Dots and Moonbeams," for me, on his saxophone. It's a song about a girl and boy who accidentally bump into each other at a dance and they end up spending the rest of their lives together.

(LAURA sings the lyrics below)

*In my frightened arms,
polka dots and moonbeams
Sparkled on a pug-nosed dream.
There were questions in the eyes of other dancers
As we floated over the floor
There were questions but my heart knew all the answers
And perhaps a few things more.*

My grandpa taught me to trust my heart, despite the questions of others.

LAURA

And, he gave me a real love for big band jazz/swing music.

*(Perhaps **LAURA** dances (maybe with a rainbow feather boa) to a medley of Big Band/Jazz/Swing songs in the public domain)*

(Slide: Grandpa in big band picture flashes up on screen)

(Slide: Music Cue - some kind of Big Band/Jazz music in the public domain plays under LAURA's words)

Swing is defined as: melody notes that are played ahead of the beat, across the beat or behind the beat, allowing the performer to express a more relaxed, rhythmic or even driving feeling, with an “anything can happen” feel, full of improvisatory FREEDOM!”

(Music stops playing)

That describes not just the only kind of music my grandpa would listen to, but his approach to life.

I aspire every day to possess the kind of freedom that he had, as my Uncle Jon says,

UNCLE JON

the kind of freedom for which people would pay thousands of dollars for in therapy.

Scene 7

(We are in Alzheimer's Land, bare stage)

LAURA

The Big Band/Jazz/Swing music always reached grandpa, even...when he was diagnosed with Alzheimer's.

It's hard to say when grandpa actually got it, since he was so out there all the time anyway...

The last words I could understand my grandpa say were:

GRANDPA

Doo wah....

(This section should be different from the rest of the play: slower & serious)

LAURA

My grandpa having Alzheimer's felt to me like I was in a backwards version of my favorite movie, "The Wizard of Oz," from color to gray.

Throughout his life, he certainly had the *heart* of Tin Man,

the *brains* of Scarecrow

and the *courage* of Lion. The *courage* to

GRANDPA

Crash the original Mayor Daley's birthday party,

LAURA

the *brains* to tell me after every heartbreak,

GRANDPA

Don't worry, men are like streetcars, there'll be another one along any second now.

LAURA

and the *heart* to say, after I'd spent my entire paycheck from State Farm Day Camp in one afternoon,

GRANDPA

Don't be too hard on yourself.

LAURA

Grandpa made my troubles melt like lemon drops.

Grandpa was my home, but I didn't have any ruby slippers I could click together to get back there.

(music stops playing)

I was so angry and confused, because I had prayed without ceasing for God to heal grandpa from Alzheimer's and it wasn't working. My family and I really believed that God would deliver grandpa from Alzheimer's, but He didn't.

I wanted to drop a house on Alzheimer's.

We were tired of running and felt like we were passed out in the poppy field, under the wicked spell of Alzheimer's...with no snow to wake us up.

For the first time, grandpa couldn't do whatever he wanted.

This is the punk grandpa who took all of the Sweet'n Lows in the boxes at every restaurant table we sat at (he had a trick with his fingers to make it look like he was only taking one), who, when he was asked to take a fertility test at the doctor and was handed the cup, said,

GRANDPA

Oh, I thought someone was going to help me

LAURA

and, who pounded on the glass in the monkey house at Brookfield Zoo, because there was a sign that said

ENSEMBLE #1

Please don't tap on the glass.

LAURA

Now, it was as if he was on the other side of the glass and the glass was an insurmountable number of inches thick.

But, in a lot of ways, grandpa was still himself and glowed and sparkled despite the Alzheimer's, like Glinda the Good and all of those babies in the sky in "The Wiz." I remember being at a production of "Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat," featuring my sister, Katie, in the children's choir. As the curtain opened on the second act, my grandpa, who was wearing a red sweater and sitting in the front row, stood up, got up on-stage and shouted,

GRANDPA

GO KATIE!

LAURA

A few months later, I saw another production of "Joseph," but I didn't like it nearly as much.

My friend Sean said,

SEAN

Well, of course you didn't like this production of "Joseph" as much, your grandfather wasn't in it!

LAURA

When grandpa was put in the nursing home, he asked for his saxophone, and he would still say,

GRANDPA

Let's pray

LAURA

a lot and once, when my Aunt Amy was visiting him,

(GRANDPA acts this out)

he laid down on his back on his bed, touched his nipples and then touched his manhood over his diaper and said,

GRANDPA

I'm a dirty boy.

LAURA

And once in the nursing home, he was found in the bed of another woman. The staff separated them and so, for weeks afterwards, the woman would roam the nursing home, asking,

WOMAN RESIDENT OF NURSING HOME

Where's that man?!

LAURA

There were some things that even Alzheimer's couldn't take away from grandpa.

(Remembering)

One day, I was visiting grandpa in his room at the nursing home and his Benny Goodman tape was playing. He was at a later stage of Alzheimer's, utterly confused, had no idea who I was; he just looked at me and asked

GRANDPA

(different, needing an answer, vulnerable)

What do we do now?

LAURA

(get idea, stand up)

Dance.

GRANDPA

Dance, yeah.

LAURA

And we did.

(go to Stage Left)

(LAURA and GRANDPA dance together)

(Slide: Video montage of grandpa dancing)

(LAURA and GRANDPA catch sight of GRANDPA dancing on the video up on the screen, it is as if they have conjured him up with their dancing)

Scene 8

(Back at grandma and grandpa's house)

LAURA

Back to that magical day in my 5 3/4 year old life:

That night:

But, grandpa, I don't want to go to bed. I just want to dance with you!

GRANDPA

But, little punk, you know what'll happen if you don't go to bed.

LAURA

(terrified!)

WHAT?

GRANDPA

You won't grow hair on your chest.

LAURA

I wanted hair on my chest and I wanted to be the best possible punk grandkid.

And, Grandpa made a deal with me: he would show me his sleep apnea machine and then, I would go to bed.

He hooked himself up to the machine and,

GRANDPA

I am the man from outer spaaaace!

LAURA

As I drifted off to sleep,

GRANDPA

The waves are waving, the wind is winding, the Laura's are Laura-ing...your bed is a ship!

LAURA

And then, he sang me a lullaby he made up,

GRANDPA

Laura Spidora, don't spit on the floora! Who wiped it up? Josh did!

(Slide: picture of grandpa and I asleep)

LAURA

I remember hearing grandpa laugh in his sleep that night, across the hall from me. He even cracked himself up when he was unconscious; I thought,

'My grandpa has more fun than anybody.'

Usually, I didn't sleep well.

I would have nightmares about the boy at school who told me,

You even *run* like a goody-goody!

And I'd also have bad dreams about this stranger lady who asked me

STRANGER LADY

How old are you?

LAURA

I am 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ years old.

STRANGER LADY

Just say you're 8 $\frac{1}{2}$.

LAURA

(perhaps thrashing around)

No, no, noooo!!!! That would be a lie! I'm not 8 1/2, I'm 8 3/4!

And sometimes, I was afraid that I wouldn't wake up the next morning.

But, not that night; that night I slept better than I ever had!

The next morning, I woke up and something was weird. There was something on my body that had not been there the night before.

There was hair on my chest!

I catapulted out of bed and ran down the hall, proclaiming,

Grandpa, grandpa, GRANDPAAAA! I have hair on my chest!!!

While I was sleeping, grandpa had cut off part of the hair from on top of his head and taped it to my chest!!!

(Slide: 12happylittleme&grandpa picture flashes up on screen)

Scene 9

(Adult World, bare stage)

LAURA

As an adult, grandpa continues to affect me today. I have found a wonderful husband who is like my grandpa in many ways.

For instance, like my grandpa, he is very playful. When we were engaged, me, being an Elementary Education major, asked, So, should we have a theme for our wedding? Jake, being a physics teacher and software developer, said,

JAKE

I thought the theme is, "We're Getting Married."

(Trying to think of the most outrageous, unlikely theme)

What do you mean, like, Wizard of Oz?

LAURA

At our Wizard of Oz-themed wedding reception, we had a Munchkin table, where everything was over-sized, so that the guests would feel small; my maid of honor dyed her floor-length hair to look like a rainbow and for our escape, we had "flying monkey" Curious George gummi's thrown at us.

Like grandpa, Jake also really doesn't care about what other people think. Once, after meeting one of my particularly eccentric friends for the first time, I asked him, "So, what did you think of her?"

JAKE

Well, I didn't hate her as much as I thought I would.

LAURA

As an adult, there have also been times when I have felt misunderstood in similar ways that my grandpa experienced. A lot of people thought my grandpa was on something. My Uncle Jon's friends would ask,

EVERYONE EXCEPT LAURA AND GRANDPA

Has your dad been drinking?

LAURA

My grandpa was not a drinker or on any kind of drugs; but a lot of people thought he was. I can relate. I once went to a doctor for a required check-up before working as a counselor at State Farm Day Camp. It was the first time the doctor had met me and he asked,

DOCTOR

Have you ever done any illegal drugs?

LAURA

When I answered, "No," he did not believe me.

DOCTOR

Never?

LAURA

Also, once I auditioned for a certain children's theater company and did not get called back. A friend of mine had lunch with the director shortly thereafter.

FRIEND

Do you remember Laura Force?

DIRECTOR

Oh yes, she was very creative. The only reason we didn't call her back is because she's mentally unstable.

(possible laugh from DIRECTOR)

LAURA

I recently was walking down the street in my neighborhood, wearing one of my mismatched outfits, and a five year old girl pointed at me and asked,

KID #1

Mommy, what was that?!

LAURA

At times like this, I think of the tin man holding up the ax for many years and then getting to release his arm and let it go, after being oiled by Dorothy and Scarecrow, because, like grandpa, I can let these things go and ask for others to throw more apples at me, like from the apple trees in Oz.

For my grandma, it was "West Side Story."

During the "dating Jake" era, for some reason, I was listening to "Rent" a lot. I misheard the lyrics "Your brown eyes, good-bye, good night!" I thought the words were: "Your brown eyes **defy** good night." And that is how I felt the first night that Jake and I hung out alone.

Scene 10

(Fairy Land)

LAURA

I never stopped thinking about how Aunt Susan told me that I am a changeling/fairy.

So, sometimes, I'm a fairy

(take outer skirt off, to reveal tutu)

and not just on Halloween. A LOT!

(put on wings)

And, I know that grandpa wouldn't think that I am weird or too much or tell me to calm down or that there are better ways to spend my time; he'd be happy for me to be a fairy, because I identify as a fairy more than as a human. It's who I am.

(put fairy flower hat on and get wand)

Once, I set an alarm off at a bookstore when I was dressed like a fairy and the security guard searched me and said,

SECURITY GUARD

Well, you didn't steal anything. The only thing in your bag is a Bible. And the only reason I can think of as to why the alarm went off is because of the glitter you have all over you.

LAURA

Being a fairy, it's not always easy to get people to believe in you.

And, somehow, it can be even harder to believe in yourself.

Grandpa always believed in me.

And now, I want to pass the punk on to my nieces and nephews, to encourage them to be themselves.

My niece, Emilie, upon learning the ending of Westside Story, said, at about the age of five,

EMILIE

Well, if they made the movie a little longer, a mermaid fairy could magic Tony back alive.

LAURA

And once, out of nowhere, my niece Juniper, at the age of three said,

JUNIPER

Even ghosts come out in the Spring.

(go front and center)

LAURA

My grandpa's been gone now for 18 years; he passed away due to Alzheimer's. This year he would've been 104 years old.

If I had one wish, it would be:

to dance with my unforgettable grandpa one more time.

(Slide: fairy noise)

(LAURA waves wand, makes wish come true: GRANDPA magically appears)

(Slide: photo of grandpa smoking)

(Dance/grandpa quote montage:

(Music plays while LAURA dances with GRANDPA, interspersed with quotes from GRANDPA)

(Music plays)

GRANDPA

If you act like you belong, people will believe in you.

(Music plays and GRANDPA and LAURA dance)

GRANDPA

That'll put hair on your chest.

*(Music plays and **GRANDPA** and **LAURA** dance)*

GRANDPA

(to audience member)

Hey! Pick you up in an hour!

*(Music plays and **GRANDPA** and **LAURA** dance)*

GRANDPA

Did anyone turn in a black umbrella?

*(Slide: long fairy noise...somehow, a black umbrella puppet (with huge googly eyes, thick red pipe cleaner lips & a nose) "chases" **LAURA** across the stage)*

BLACK UMBRELLA PUPPET

I am not your umbrellaaa!!!!

*(Music plays and **GRANDPA** and **LAURA** dance)*

LAURA

(kneeling down and praying, like she did at the top of the show)

Thank you God, for giving me a grandpa that put hair on my chest.

(Lights out)

GRANDPA

Kiss me, baby!

LAURA

And now, a memory montage of my punk grandpa's life!

(About two minutes of old family film footage plays)

END OF PLAY

Performance rights must be secured before production. For contact information, please visit [the information page for Punk Grandpa.](#)