

LEARNING TO FLY



a ten-minute play

by Leon Kaye

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SYNOPSIS: An elderly woman wants to take flying lessons

SETTING: Minimal. Couch and table.

TIME: The present.

CHARACTERS:

GRAM – Late 60's, unassuming

PHIL – teenage athlete

LEE -- Bitter, 40's.

GAIL – Twenties, rational but self-centered

(Couch center and arm chair right. Gail enters with Phil, both have a slice of pie on their own plates. Phil heads downstage center)

GAIL

Oh, don't put on the tv.

PHIL

I just want to see the scores.

GAIL

We never see Gram. Let's just sit and talk with her.

PHIL

About what?

GAIL

Anything. Everything. She must have stuff to talk about. She's got a life.

PHIL

Really. It must be sooo interesting.

(LEE walks in with coffee)

GAIL

It could be. She has years of experience, and I'm sure she's done things other than sewing and baking.

PHIL

Collecting miniature figurines? Making scrap books? Reading mysteries?

GAIL

No pie, Mom?

LEE

Cholesterol. My 401K goes down and my cholesterol goes up. It's like a geometric progression.

PHIL

A what?

LEE

I don't know what I'm saying. Once you hit fifty, the brain cells begin deteriorating.

GAIL

What's his excuse?

PHIL

Har har. You're so funny.

(GRAM comes in with a tray)

GRAM

Who wants some warm milk?

PHIL

Warm milk?

GAIL

Not funny.

LEE

If you got some tequilla, I'll go for a cup.

GRAM

That's very funny. I don't think you drink coffee, do you Gail?

GAIL

That's okay. Sit down, Gramma. We never get to see you.

GRAM

You only live twenty miles away.

GAIL

I know. But we're always running around in different directions.

PHIL

College takes up so much of my time.

GRAM

Holidays too?

LEE

You know, sometimes Mom... we go away or there's always a wedding or a first communion or something. I have too many friends.

PHIL

You should do something about that.

GAIL

Hire a hit man.

LEE

Way too many relatives. You don't invite them for a few years to anything and you think you're free. Then someone dies and you see them at the funeral and you have to exchange emails and the whole cycle begins again.

GRAM

You know, I like that email. I write to the girls in my quilting club.

GAIL

Oh, that's real nice. It's good you have social clubs and friends.

GRAM

I volunteer at the hospital to read to the sick children.

PHIL

That's really great, Grams. Is there more pie? (heads to the table)

GRAM

And I'm taking flying lessons.

GAIL

What kind of flying?

PHIL

This pie is really great.

GAIL

Wait.... Did you hear what she said?

PHIL

I wasn't listening.

LEE

I stopped listening a few years ago.

GRAM

I'm taking flying lessons. Every other Friday. I take my plane up for about thirty minutes, and I'm landing now. It's very challenging.

PHIL

You're flying a real airplane?

GAIL

Mom, do you know about this?

LEE

Yes. Let the woman fly. Birds do it. Bees do it.

GAIL

Grams, why are you flying a plane?

GRAM

It's kind of fun.

GAIL

Fun?

PHIL

But Grams, flying a plane?

GAIL

You now what's a lot of fun? Mah-jong.

GRAM

It's not a jumbo jet. It's just a two seater.

PHIL

Understood. It's just... you're old.

GRAM

No older than my plane.

GAIL

What?

GRAM

It's been refurbished. And painted. They fixed the broken wing.

GAIL

Just how old is your plane?

LEE

Mom, you follow your bliss. Don't listen to these two. And don't forget, we have some papers to sign later.

GRAM
(to Gail)

Don't mind her. I'm outliving my life insurance despite her plans.

LEE

We'll see.

GAIL

Gramma, you're doing something that's totally dangerous.

GRAM

Flying is safer than driving.

GAIL

Maybe a seven forty-seven, but not a Snoopy plane.

GRAM

There are no propellers. I was surprised too that I didn't have to go out, pull on the prop and yell Contact!

PHIL

Grams, let me see something. Catch this.

(He takes a nerf ball or small stuffed animal from the table, tosses it at Grams. The ball hits Grams in the forehead, at which time she puts her hands together showing poor coordination.)

GRAM

Oh my. Let's go two out of three.

GAIL

This is serious.

GRAM

You have plenty of time in the plane to react.

GAIL

JFK Junior crashed his plane!

LEE

I would have liked to have his insurance.

GAIL

You had a great life, a family that loves you. I promise you'll have grandchildren in a few years if that's the beef.

GRAM

(stands, perturbed)

Phil, did I ever say you shouldn't play football? Cause it's too dangerous?

PHIL:

You might have. I probably didn't pay attention.

GRAM

And Gail, you live alone in the city. Don't tell me it's safe.

GAIL

So what is this about, you want to do dangerous stuff like we do?

GRAM

No.

GAIL

Cause that's pretty juvenile.

GRAM

Juvenile? My, I feel so young.

LEE

I know what it is. All your life you've been a good little girl... you listened to your father and did what he wanted. Then there was dad, dominating your life. And now he's gone and you want to do something wild.

GRAM

I've done plenty of wild things.