

Soulful Struttin'



Julia Pierre Hammond • illustrated by Ana Latese

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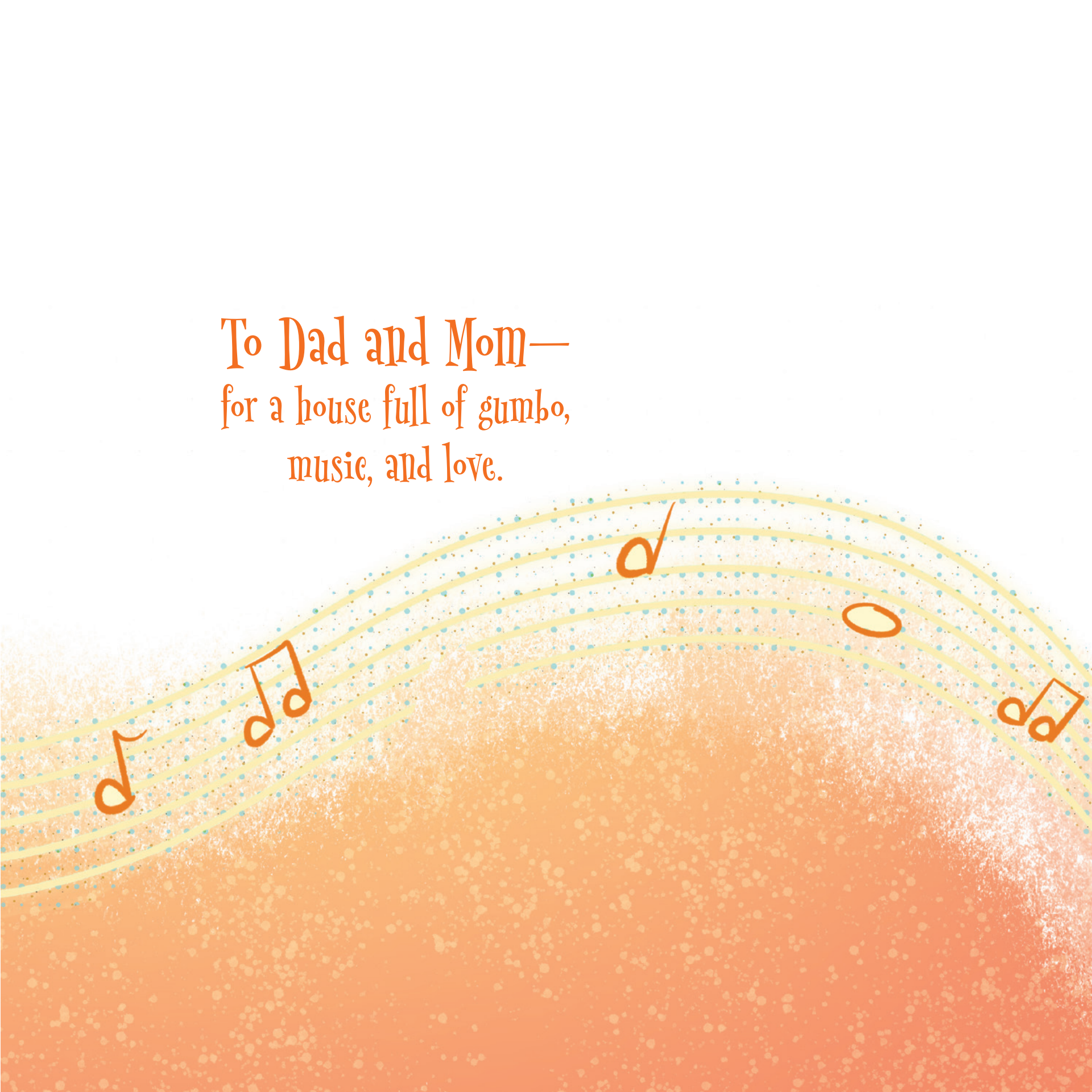
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To Dad and Mom—
for a house full of gumbo,
music, and love.

There are two Sunday traditions Dad never skips: singing and cleaning.

There is one Sunday tradition I always try to avoid: cleaning.



“Hold the broom like this, Clara,” Dad says while sweeping through the hallway. “Dance like a trombonist down the street in N’Orleans.”

“When the tuba comes near, put your hands in the air and *swaaaaay*, baby.”

Garbage duty. Ugh!
I back away from
the trash bag.



Dad's toes start tappin'.

His knees start knockin'.

His shoulders start swayin'.

And his fingers start flappin'!

A Note from the Author

I grew up in a family of nine. We always had lots of playing to do and a mess to clean—from my brother Matthew's regular soda spills to my sister Maria's costume piles or my brother Christopher's infamous cracker explosion. Whatever the mess, our dad always found a way to make cleaning fun. During sweeping, dusting, and vacuuming, we grooved to Grover Washington Jr.'s smooth jazz, got down to the funky beats of Rose Royce, and swayed to Etta James's soulful rhythm and blues. My father's playful spirit and confident voice inspired me to write this story. His voice reminds me always to use *my* voice, even if it's off-key, while my mother encourages me to find ways to make boring things fun. I hope this story inspires your family to come together and create memories, even in simple things like cleaning your home.



Thinking and Talking about Clara's Story

You can talk about these ideas and questions with a friend or a grown-up, or you can think about them on your own.

- Page through the story again. This time, don't read the words. Just use the pictures to remind you of the story. As you review the story, think of words to describe each character's feelings.
- Do Dad's feelings change or stay the same? How about Clara's feelings?
- Clara's family has a Sunday tradition of singing and cleaning. Does your family have any weekly traditions?
- In the story, how does Clara feel at first about helping with the cleaning?
- How do you feel about doing chores at home?
- What does Dad do that helps change Clara's mood?
- What could you do at home to make cleaning more fun?
- Clara and Dad sing while they clean. What song could you sing while cleaning up?
- Clara glows with pride as Dad turns simple chores like sweeping and dusting into a fun time. When has someone you love made you glow with pride?



- How are Clara and Dad similar? How are they different?
- What do you think the author, Julia Pierre Hammond, wants readers to learn from the story of Clara and her family?