

The Life of a Bubble

A Mind Wandering by Lisa Hering
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Music: “Always” by Peder B. Helland, aka
Soothing Relaxation
at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9Q634rbsypE>



I’m inside a large bubble. The surface looks like crystal glass, clear and clean, but with a soapy surface. It rises and floats and rotates gracefully in the air and I slide along its silky smooth sides. I am in a dreamy, far away place. Time and space make no sense, and I’m unable to find my ordinary life. My clothing is from the 1950’s. I’m dressed in one of those big floppy skirts and bobby socks. My hair is short and curly. I can’t see anything except the reflection of the light shining on this bubble. Outside it’s all dark. I touch the bubble’s slippery surface with my hands and put my face up close, squinting my eyes in hopes of seeing something. Then, gradually, I see other bubbles rising up from below, one by one, until there are many. When they come into the light, they shine brightly. But they are all empty. I see no other people. I am the only one inside a bubble. There are now hundred of them rising through the air. They pass one another, some bump into each other like bumper cars, and soapy slip past each other.

I gently touch the bubble’s surface to see what will happen. I am afraid to press too hard in case it might burst and I would fall. But it’s like glass. I knock and hear a solid sound. It is strange to be in here. I don’t remember getting in and I don’t know how to get out. I don’t know where I am, and I don’t know where I would go if I got out. There is only darkness below me, except for the bubbles that shine in the light. But what light? There is no sun. There is no moon. Yet, somewhere there is a light that is shining on them, a distant light, an unknown light.

I have nothing to do, nothing to keep my mind occupied. So I slide down, and rest my body on the bottom of the bubble. I relax and just look out, and wonder. I wait for

something to happen, but I don't know what. But I am waiting... I am waiting to see anything that might explain this unusual situation. But time passes and all is quiet except for a soft, almost inaudible tune which plays somewhere far away and comforts me.

I see another bubble coming close to mine. It bumps into me and the two bubbles stick. Eventually, it becomes a double bubble with only a thin bubble wall between them. I touch the wall and it bursts. It is one large bubble now, one has been made of two, like a marriage. This is a strange world, but perhaps no so unlike my own. And I don't know yet if I am the audience or the protagonist.

But I do know that right now, my world is dark and alone, and I don't understand why. But it is so. There are no people in my world. Just me and bubbles of isolated space. The melody I hear puts me at peace and causes me to have no desire to leave. It feels safe. So, I'll just stay here a while. It's comfortable, almost familiar. No one to bother or annoy me. No one to have an opinion of me. No one to ignore me nor hurt me. In here, I am just me with no influences. It's almost a womb.

As I lie, I smush my nose against the windowy surface out of sheer boredom to see what I can see. I see more bubbles. They are all still empty. Some are merging into others, others are bumping and bouncing and heading off in a new direction. It's almost like the bubbles have their own society. Like people, some fall in love and become one. Some reject each other and go their separate ways. There are many bubbles to choose from. And they are all going somewhere. It's a herd of bubbles in rush hour traffic. It's a bubble community. I'm experiencing the life of a bubble. And yet, somehow it feels like it's showing me my life. Can this be true? Have I created a life of isolation?

I think about my life. I think about my experiences, my growing up, my sadness and pain. Where was the happiness? Others were uncaring. I was happier on my own. This bubble seems a safe place. There's nothing dangerous, nothing to hurt me. There's no hunger or thirst. I'm not hot or cold. Everything is just right. And it's comforting to float and slip and slide. I don't mind this, for a while.

But occasionally there was a friendly face in my life, a face that made me smile and laugh. There is also no one here to make me laugh. There is no happy face for me to see. There is no one out there at all to see. Only bubbles. Am I dead? Is this eternity? How did I get myself into this place of ... just me. Just me, and no one else?

Am I perhaps the reason I am here? Did I put myself in here? Did I trap myself? Did I give up so much on people that I forced upon myself this world of bubbles and isolation? Did I go away? Am I the perpetrator?

Or is it a temporary safe haven, a storm shelter when the tornado is approaching? Do I need to be in here for a while to absorb the peace I need? Am I here to protect and regain my sanity? To refill my cup of dopamine so that again I can brave the world? Here, I can rest my mind. There is nothing to fight. I don't have to make decisions here. I don't have to choose one against another or take sides. I don't have deadlines or anyone to give me commands I don't want to follow. I have no stress at all. I just float with the bubbles. They are just living their bubble lives. They are doing what bubbles do. They float. They bump. They merge. They spin. That is their life. It seems without purpose. But is mine really any different? Do they die? I guess at some point, they have to burst. What happens if my bubble dies?

What if I can't stay here forever? What if I can stay here forever? Which would I choose? Will I ever have to make that choice? Will I ever have the opportunity to make that choice? Would I stay where it is safe, or would I choose the real world, where there are people and bad days and good days? What would I do forever without any people? Is it worth it to be with people and get hurt, or to be alone and not get hurt?

I think I'll stay here just a little longer. I have everything I need in this womb. I can grow in here. I can put me altogether. I can rethink my life. I can try and make some sense of the world. But I'm a person, not a bubble. I don't belong in this world. Some day, I will need to be born, pushed out, and rejoin my own kind.

But I'm already together. I don't need a womb. I'm a person. What I need is people. I just don't know how to be with people. I don't know how to be a people. I suck at being a people.

I don't suck at being me inside this bubble. Inside this bubble, I'm doing everything just right. I'm just being me. And when I'm alone, being me is OK. Why then, is being me not OK when I am with others of my own kind?

Off in the distance, I hear some laughter. And I hear some singing. I hear people being together. I look for them. They are singing Christmas carols. I look down and I see a snow covered ground. They are all dressed warmly with hats and scarves and coats. They

are happy together. They are touching and holding hands. But they are down there and I am up here. Why am I always alone? They are taking pictures of people, of themselves together. When I take photographs, there are no people in them. They are of landscape or architecture. When I paint, I don't paint people. I paint still life. When I shop, I go alone. I hike alone. I take trips alone. I work alone. When I need help, I find a way to do it myself for fear if I ask, I might get rejection. But I like to help others. I like to see them smile. If I can make someone sad smile, then I feel better inside. I feel like my life was worthwhile.

Is it better to be with them, or is it better to be in this safe bubble? Am I missing Christmas outside? Inside my bubble, it can be any time of the year. It can be whatever time I make it. I can be anything and anyone I desire. There is no judge or jury. I can go on any adventure near or far. There is no one to tell me I am being silly. I can work on anything I want to, inside here, all alone. There is no condemnation, no not being good enough, no competition. I can win every race, every contest, every debate. I am queen here. I am ruler of one. I am my own nation. I can make it the way I see fit.

But no one else can join me. It is a country only made of me. I can make my rules, and I can obey them. Or I can ignore my rules, and punish myself. I can beg myself for forgiveness. I can be merciful or I can off with my head. But I always know what the outcome will be. Because I answer my own questions.

What if I want to stay in my bubble, but I want to invite someone in? What if I want to share my bubble with someone? Will someone come inside and be with me? Would they live in a world with my rules? I can write a sign in the filmy soap that says "Come in". And I put my finger to the surface of the bubble and I write, "Come in." But the gathering below only sees the words backwards, and they can't understand. But I don't realize this. I read the words, "Come in." And I look at them, pleadingly, hoping someone will come in, into my world, where I make the rules, where I feel safe. They shake their heads in bewilderment and go back to listening to the choir. No one comes in. No one understands that I want them to come in. I can't make myself understood. And they have their own places where they make rules. They don't need me. They don't need to come into my space. There is too much of me in here. They would get smothered in me-ness.

No, if I want people, I have to go out there. Although I like my space, eventually, I would remember people I miss, going to the movies with a friend and eating popcorn

with lots of butter, and getting a big drink with lots of crushed ice on a hot day. Inside the theater it's nice and cool, and the movie is awesome. And so is the friendship. And when we scream, we grab each other. Just to make sure that the other is OK. And then we laugh, because there was really nothing to be scared of. And then we can't stop laughing. And then, to make us stop laughing, she says her friend's dog died. And we stop laughing for a moment. But then, one of us snickers again, and we both break into laughter and make the people behind us angry.

What happened to those days? Are they gone forever? Can you ever get them back? Are they hidden somewhere in this bubble of mine? I could look for them. But really, there is nothing in here with me. Those days are not here. They live only in my memory, and maybe hers. How did I let this happen? I wanted a husband, and children, and a family of my own. I wanted a job I loved. I wanted to show myself and my parents that they had done a good job raising me, that I had turned out good, that I could take care of myself.

But none of that happened. And here I am inside this bubble, and I don't see the snow covered ground anymore. And I don't hear the choir anymore. I can't get out of this bubble. It's too late for me to try. Maybe later. Maybe later I'll try to find a way. Maybe I'll find the instructions. That's it. I lost the instructions. I should have paid more attention when I was getting this thing out of the box. I probably dropped them. I'll bet they are laying there, on the floor next to my couch. I'll bet it says right there, inside the instructions, how to get out. It must have told me how to get in, because here I am inside of it. Did I not read far enough? Did I just get in when the instructions showed how to get in, and not finish reading how to get back out? Now I have to figure it out all on my own.

But I'm sleepy now. I think I'll just take a nap. I won't bother getting out today. It's late. I'm tired. I'll think about it tomorrow. Maybe tomorrow I'll get out. Not today. Not now. I'm just too tired.

And I laid down and curled up comfortably in the curve at the bottom of the bubble, and I pulled little bubbles up over me and snuggled deep into the slippery softness. And my bubble kept rising and rising. I don't know where it was going, or if it was even going anywhere. Maybe it was really just standing still the whole time. Movement is all relative, you know. Maybe it wasn't going up. Maybe time was standing still while I was in the bubble. But I wasn't wondering that at the moment. I was sound

asleep dreaming. I was dreaming that it was Christmas, and I was watching a choir sing in the beautiful velvety snow. And I was there, with my family. And we were holding hands.

And I was trying to understand what I was supposed to be learning from all this, if anything. Why did all of this come to pass for me? Why am I floating in a bubble? Is it showing me what it's like to be completely alone so that it will scare me? Or is it showing me the comfort of a stress free life?

And I began to dream. I dreamed I was a small child, and people were telling me what to do. I wanted to go one way, and they wanted me to go another. I wanted to play with my friend, and they wanted me to play with someone else. I wanted to paint, and they wanted me to sing. I wanted to arrange my things in a way that made sense to me, and they wanted me to just mix them up and put them away all in a big chest. I wanted to be with them, and they were too busy. So I went outside, alone, and I went the way I wanted to go, and I played with the friend I wanted to play with, and I arranged my things the way I wanted them arranged. And I saw that when I was alone, I could be me. I could make my own decisions and do things the way that excited me. I could express myself the way I needed to be expressed. Only when I was alone, could I truly be me. Being alone wasn't a prison. For me, it was what I needed to be me. It gave me the freedom to choose my own destiny. It made me feel alive. Alive, but alone. And suddenly, I realized what the bubble was all about.

Although I was alone, I wasn't lonely. I was more comfortable with myself than with others. I was complete, alive, present, full of love and joy more so when I was by myself than when I was with others. I didn't need others the way some people do. I loved others, and I wanted others, but I didn't need them like other people did. I was the cake, and others were the icing. When I compared myself to others, I felt somehow wrong for not needing people. But there was nothing wrong with me. It was simply my space. And once I felt the sweet happiness of being with myself, the tenderness of loving the soul within this body for who she is, the doors of the bubble opened wide, and the people below pointed up at me in wonder.

"Look!" they said. "She has a bubble all her own. Such a nice, warm space she has. It is hers and only hers. She has solitude. She can think and hear her own thoughts. No one will force their opinion on her or tell her what she should or should not be doing. She can

see us and her own reflection at the same time with no condemnation on our faces or hers. She sees people all in simple wonder. She can interact with us if she desires, but yet, she has the ability to go anywhere and see anything she wants. The bubble is clear and she can see forever. The bubble can take her anywhere she wants to go. She can see much more than we. How lucky she is. If only we could join her.”

The bubble showed me the comfort and peace of my own space and solitude. And that is my true desire. Yes, I want people too, but as I choose. What I need first is space and solitude and the freedom to come and go as I please.

And I waved with a smile, and thought to myself, “No, you will not come in. I will come to you when I am ready. And until then, I will be free to wander in this bubble anywhere I want to go. And these wide open doors will let me be a part of you when I choose. But the choice is mine. And I choose to be me first, and then to be a part of you.”

And that was how I figured out how to get out. When I realized I didn’t need to get out, when I didn’t try to get out, when I didn’t worry about my situation, or what I might be missing out on in the real world, when there was no urge to get out, then open doors appeared in the bubble. And the bubble carried me anywhere I wanted to go. I was free to leave the bubble’s safety, but I could choose to stay. I just had to be comfortable with me first. I had to learn not to rely on the opinion of others for my self worth. When that happened, then the bubble became a vehicle rather than a prison. And the people below looked up at me in wonder and envy as I floated past and waved, they wanting to come into my bubble and me being satisfied where I was. My best friend is me. And no one else will ever, and I mean ever, take that place. It is reserved for me.

And that is what the bubble was trying to teach me. And that is what I finally understood. And I stepped out of the bubble almost like a warrior, and as I walked, the bubble followed me like a loyal steed.

Thank you for listening to this wandering and I wish you a good night.