

# **BUBBLES**

**by Ken Bradbury**

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**SYNOPSIS:** Fond memories of a Grandmother and what used to be. A moving story.

**CAST OF CHARACTERS**

*(1 either)*

GRANDCHILD (m/f)

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**GRANDCHILD:** Can you keep a secret? I have one cool grandma. Okay, everybody probably thinks Grandma is pretty cool, but you look up the word cool in the dictionary and you'll see my grandma's picture ... at least in my dictionary.

Her name is Marie but I've always called her Bubbles. Don't ask me why. I started when I was little and it just stuck. Then she started calling herself Bubbles. Then everybody started calling her Bubbles.

How do I start? Let's just say that your own grandma isn't supposed to be able to beat you playing video games. Your own grandma isn't supposed to be a better free-throw shooter than you are. The typical grandmother doesn't sit there and secretly play tag with you in church. Bubbles does. She does all these things ... and a lot more.

I like cheeseburgers. I mean I like them a whole lot. I guess there's nothing unusual about that, but how many grandmothers would make a cheeseburger cake for your birthday? Yes, it can be done ... if you use very large buns for the cake layers and ketchup for frosting. You name it, and Bubbles can do it.

But my favorite memory of Bubbles has nothing to do with video games or cheeseburger cakes. My favorite memory is of something much simpler. I guess it doesn't even sound like any big deal but to me ... it was some of the best times of my life.

I'd go visit Bubbles in the summertime. She lived in the country. And even though her hips and knees didn't move as fast as they used to, our most favorite time together was on Saturday afternoons when she'd put two bottles of orange pop into a plastic sack, wrap two fresh oatmeal cookies in wax paper, and we'd take off walking ... just walking.

Grandpa had a few cows and we'd open the back gate and walk across the cow pasture to a creek that ran behind their house. I guess that maybe the creek wasn't all that big but when you're six years old any creek becomes an ocean. Bubbles would sit on the

bank of the creek and listen to the birds while I'd become a pirate captain attacking the entire British Navy. A fallen maple stick would become my sword and I'd drive the bad guys back into the creek while Bubbles shouted, "Ahoy! Avast! Tally-Ho! Go get 'em Captain! You go get 'em!" and a bunch of other words that probably had nothing to do with pirates.

Of course I'd win every time and Bubbles would shout, "Ahoy, Captain! You did it! You drove the dastardly villains into the sea! Yo ho ho and a bottle of orange drink!" Then I'd fall into her lap laughing as she broke out the oatmeal cookies.

She'd be in the middle of her cookie when she'd suddenly stop and say, "Hear that?"

I'd say, "What?"

"A meadowlark!" and then, "Now that's a Bluejay! He's mad! Listen to him! I'll bet he wants our cookies!"

Then after a couple hours of skipping rocks across the creek (she showed me how) ... identifying a few more birds (she knew them all) ... and just sitting back on the swamp grass and watching the clouds put on a show for just her and me, we'd gather up our plastic sack and head, laughing, back across the pasture.

*(A long pause, then.)* I loved those days ... filled with magic and wonder ... and love. Then ... then something tragic happened. I got busy. Sports, school activities, friends. More and more of my weekends were spent with "things that I really had to do." Bubbles would call and say, "How about a walk to the creek this weekend, Captain?" By then it sort of embarrassed me when she called me Captain ... sounded like kids' stuff. I'd always say, "Maybe next weekend, Bubbles. I'm really tied up this week." She'd pause a moment, then say, "That's fine. You're a busy boy/girl! Maybe next weekend."

I wasn't old enough, or smart enough, to catch the sadness in her voice.

*(A very long pause, then.)* I see her every week now ... well, almost every week. Mom and I go visit her. Room 212. End of the hall. You have to poke in a certain code to get into her ward.

Sometimes she knows me. On her really good days she'll smile. On the really bad days she just sort of ... stares.

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