

Tiny Bubbles

By Gary Jordan

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This is a *Fish Tank Anniversary Celebration*. For one week, other authors, readers, and fans felt free to comment on the story in the Fish Tank thread in the Newsgroup alt.sex.stories.d (Look for the thread named "{ASSD} FT #52 Tiny Bubbles by Gary Jordan"). The purpose of this exercise is to help an author become a better writer through *positive feedback* and *constructive criticism*. You can also find the comments archived at: <http://www.asstr.org/~Desdmona/FishTank/base/>

I woke up naked in The Bubble. I don't know what else to call it. I was surrounded by a spherical envelope. I couldn't see anything at all beyond its boundaries, but a dim light seemed to shine through the walls from every direction. Maybe the walls were the light source. I couldn't tell. I remembered an old show called "The Prisoner" where these white bubble things chased people, and some guy kept insisting he wasn't a number. Was this that kind of bubble?

I thought of it as The Bubble because there was the faintest hint of surface tension anywhere my body made contact with it. I could tell that there was a minuscule depression under my feet, a dimpling of the wall so slight it was barely noticeable. I had enough traction to take a step without my feet sliding away, but any change in my center of gravity shifted The Bubble around me like a hamster ball.

I'm neither a genius nor an idiot. Just average, I guess, but I liked to read, and I probably watched too much TV. My imagination began to run away with me. There was a Heinlein story where a guy investigating paranormal phenomena gets sucked into a fish tank. Would I have to scratch, "Creation took eight days" on my thigh with fingernail shards to alert humanity that we had owners?

I tried running, jumping, crawling, anything to create an effect that might change my perceptions. I always ended up at the bottom of The Bubble. That was when my panic really started.

There was a Clancy novel where the KGB broke an agent using sensory deprivation. Except my senses weren't completely deprived. I could see myself, I could feel myself. I could measure my heart rate and hear my own voice and breathing.

With nothing else to do, I remembered the formulae for chords and arcs and the circumference of a circle. I easily recalled all the thumb rules for the lengths of my limbs, having measured mine a time or two. (Elbow to fingertip, 18 inches; palmwidth, 4 inches.) The Bubble had a measurable arc; I estimated the diameter at 12 feet. The formula for volume is four-thirds pi times the cube of the radius. Call it a thousand cubic feet, give or take. How long would the air last?

Making the measurements and calculations had calmed me down some. Knowing the dimensions of my confinement and the potential limits of my air supply brought more panic. I remember screaming, and crying, and hurling myself about. I remember exhaustion, and finally oblivion.

The next time I awoke, I kept my eyes tightly shut for fear I would still be in the Bubble. I spread my hands about for reassurance and received none. I opened one eye - I was still there. I loosed a sob, and lay listlessly in my cocoon. Alone with an overactive imagination and an insufficiency of distraction. I finally got up and started walking. I paced myself with the beat of every song I could think of - anything to remain active. Show tunes. Reggae. "Tiny Bubbles." Beach Boys. Anything. If I used up all the air, fine--it was going to happen anyway.

Have you ever blown bubbles? Did you ever watch two bubbles merge? How they touch and the surface tension creates a flat spot between them and the area of contact grows until suddenly they' re one, big, wiggling bubble? That moment when it happens, there' s a sudden growth and a lot of shimmying and shivering...

By the time I noticed the change, it was well underway. I started to reach for the flattened area when ploop! The bubbles merged. I was tossed toward the new center of the larger bubble. I crashed into something and instinctively held on. Holding on to anything not me was an incredibly welcome change from the isolation of the Bubble. I swore I would never let go. I felt arms and hands wrapped around me as well.

When the new, larger Bubble stabilized, I pulled my head back to see what - or who - I was attached to. She was the most beautiful woman I had - have - ever seen. Somewhere in the rational recesses of my mind, some objective snippet of brain objected. Not Sophia Loren beautiful, nor Meg Ryan pretty. Maybe not even handsome. But to the rest of me, she was goddess gorgeous. Looking into her eyes, I could tell she felt the same about me.

I put my head against her neck and clung with all my might. We sobbed together, shared our fears and tears, and drew comfort from each other. The comfort of discussion. The comfort of snuggling. The comfort of intertwining limbs, of fingers sliding over silken skin, tracing the convex and concave...

The fingers snapping in front of my eyes snapped me out of my daydream as well. I looked into my wife's eyes and smiled.

"Penny for your thoughts," she offered, towelling her hair. She'd missed rinsing some bubbly suds from an ear.

I smiled and shook my head. "Just remembering when we met."

"When we were assigned as lab partners in the Industrial Petrochemistry class?" Desmondna grinned. "What a couple of nerds we were."

"Still are." I grinned back.

"True, but now we're old married nerds with kids."

"Kids who won't be home for another hour." The last of the daydream was still fresh.

"I hate to burst your bubble," she drawled, "but it takes way more than an hour to *properly* make love."

I grinned. I couldn't help it. I grabbed her hand to pull her toward the bedroom, but she pulled me there just as hard. I agreed about the hour, but it's what we had for now. A lifetime might not be long enough.
