

Blowing and Bursting Bubbles
Sharon Verner Chappell

Created from a child's breath
Blown from a wand of any shape
A perfect sphere
Surface tension holds strong as it
Spins alongside the others
Reflecting iridescent colors in sunlight

To catch them, my daughter reaches
through her whole body
Fingertips almost touching their strong
Yet fragile whole

Personal space is a bubble
Built from invisible energy
I burst it once
When I was four,
prancing around another child at preschool
chanting his name, foreign on my tongue
While he cried under the blanket
we wrapped him in

Pop

A school burst it once—
the bubble so delicately and intentionally blown
through the coos of parent to baby,
her name in whispers—
pale pink, golden yellow, cerulean blue swirls—
the many I love yous
Heard in languages unspoken at school
Those words kept her bubble whole
Until one day
in kindergarten
It bobbed onto a pencil tip
That wrote a new name for her.
Her American name.

Pop
I wonder about

The blowing and bursting of bubbles
Who gets to dip into the sticky substance of life's self worth?
To hold the wand and blow?
Who gets to burst? And what follows—
a squeal of excitement, a tear of loss
Some other quiet rupture?

How can I be a mother now
based on what I wished I had known as a girl,
About the fragile sureness of belonging?
About our actual selves
Whose differences are held in stark relief
from the cookie cutter body
the news anchor accent
the kids on TV shows who fit in without even trying—

How can I attend to those who feel the sticky bursts of bubbles everyday
From the not-saying and not-hearing,
From being on the outside of assumptions and privilege.

What if I cannot work in the school to do it,
What if those four walls box the bubbles in
What if everyone in charge says there is no time or space in the curriculum
To start a new bubble blowing project.

I am too old to be young, too young to forget
And my daughter is just right when it comes to the joy of bubbles
Our bodies stretch to the open sky
She shows me what is possible

I must work with her,
we have bubbles to burst,
and so many new ones to blow.



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