

# **The Best Medicine**

**By Kathryn West**

**A Comedy in One Act**

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## **The Best Medicine**

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### **Synopsis**

Bubbles' personal life is falling apart and she is barely holding it together. She hopes that her new laughter yoga business, Bubble-R-Us, will get her life back on track, but despite numerous phone enquiries, nobody seems to understand what Bubble-R-Us is all about. Furthermore, only three women have turned up to her first group meeting, and it seems none of them meant to be there. Downtrodden Kim is looking for upholstery, accident-prone Deb for 'ordinary yoga', and recently widowed Sheila for life-drawing. Over the next few weeks the four women find friendship and share secrets, support and laughter – despite never actually doing any laughter yoga!

A comedy about female friendship, which proves that laughter really is the 'best medicine'.

### **Character List**

- Bubbles: Female, approximately 50. Anxious and depressed, but tries to hide it with false cheerfulness. She is quick to anger and cries easily. She wears trousers and a T-shirt with 'Bubbles-R-Us' and a logo on it.
- Kim: Female, approximately 50. Nervous. Mousy. Wears shapeless, baggy clothes.
- Sheila: Female, 70s. Has a sad demeanour. Initially wears stylish black clothes, but adds grey and beige later in the play.
- Deb: Female, late 40s. Fit. Assertive. Quite scatty. Initially wears typical, colourful (but clashing) yoga wear. Has a bit of a hippy vibe, so later wears colourful loose trousers or skirt etc..

### **The Setting**

The action is set in a room in a community centre. Initially there are approximately 6 chairs in a semi-circle, but 2 of these chairs can be removed between Scenes One and Two (they need only be stacked at the back of the stage).

If wished, a box set can be used, but equally, the entire play can be performed in a black box with no scenery.

Offstage are the kitchen and the main exit. It may be that these are best served by the same door/exit into wings, to allow for quick changes by the actors between scenes.

### **Laughter Yoga**

The play requires no prior knowledge of Laughter Yoga by either the actors or the audience. Should you wish to find out more about it, there are many resources online. I would suggest looking up 'Madan Kataria' on YouTube. He is the founder of Laughter Yoga and will have you laughing in an instant!

## Scene 1

*(A room in a community centre. There are approximately six chairs in a semi-circle.)*

*(Bubbles stands, looking at chairs, counting them. She is clearly nervous, fidgeting and checking her watch. Her mobile phone rings.)*

**Bubbles:** *(Brightly)* Hello! Bubbles R Us! Bubbles speaking. How can I help?

*(Kim enters, unseen by Bubbles)*

**Bubbles:** *(Exasperated, her voice rising)* No, we don't do packaging materials. You have the wrong number. In any case, bubble wrap isn't very environmentally friendly. So I suggest you review your business practices! Good-bye! *(She hangs up, puts phone back in her pocket.)*

**Kim:** Hello?

**Bubbles:** *(Jumps)* Oh! *(Recovers herself.)* Hello! Welcome! Come and join the circle. We're still waiting for a few more, but then we'll get started

*(Kim tentatively approaches a chair and sits)*

**Bubbles:** I'm so happy to meet you! I'm Bubbles; and you are?

**Kim:** Kim

**Bubbles:** Kim! Lovely! Welcome Kim! Have you ever done anything like this before?

**Kim:** Well, no, but I think it's a good idea to learn new skills. And meet new people. Don't you?

**Bubbles:** Absolutely!

**Kim:** Best to keep active, both mentally and physically. 'The Devil makes work for idle hands', as Mother used to say.

**Bubbles:** Indeed, indeed. Your Mother was obviously a very wise woman. Did she like to laugh?

**Kim:** Pardon?

**Bubbles:** Did your Mother like to laugh?

**Kim:** Well... no, actually. Mother was... she was very stern and bad-tempered. Everyone was afraid of her. Oh dear! Sorry! It's wrong to speak ill of the dead, isn't it?

**Bubbles:** Well... I think...

*(Sheila enters.)*

**Sheila:** Hello! Am I in the right place for...

**Bubbles:** Yes, yes! Welcome! Come in! Join the circle! We're just waiting for a few more, then we'll get started. I'm Bubbles, by the way, and this is... *(Trails off, having forgotten Kim's name.)*

**Kim:** *(Shyly)* Kim. Hello.

**Sheila:** Pleased to meet you Kim. I'm Sheila.

**Bubbles:** So, Sheila, what brings you here?

**Sheila:** Well, it's something I've always wanted to try.

**Bubbles:** Really?

**Sheila:** Yes. Never had the nerve before. But now... well... it doesn't really seem to matter what other people think of me.

**Bubbles:** Well, yes, sometimes people can be a bit sceptical, but once they try it, they can usually see the benefits. And feel them, of course!

**Sheila:** Glad to hear it! I'm surprised there aren't more people here...

**Bubbles:** Yes, I am expecting...one or two more. I'm sure they'll be here soon.

**Sheila:** OK. Do you want me to get ready? Is there somewhere that I...can...*(she looks uncertainly around the room.)*

**Bubbles:** Oh, there's really nothing much for you to get ready. Although we do find it useful if you have proper contact with the floor, so please just take off your shoes. If you're wearing socks, that is. Barefoot is not actually very hygienic, is it, what with athlete's foot and verrucas and what-not? Not that I'm implying...it's just that you don't know who's been in the hall before, and... Oh dear, I hope I haven't 'put my foot in it'! Ha ha! Do you get it?

**Sheila:** So you just want me to take my shoes off? But leave my socks on?

**Bubbles:** If you're okay with that...

**Sheila:** Just my shoes? Nothing else?

**Bubbles:** If you don't mind...*(her phone rings.)* Excuse me! *(Answers phone)* Hello!

Bubbles-R-Us! Bubbles speaking. How can I help? *(Listens.)* No, we don't do balloon animals! Why would we do balloon... Clowning? What? Bubble machines? No! We don't do children's parties! You have the wrong number! GOOD BYE! *(Angrily hangs up and slams phone down on the chair next to her.)*

*(Kim and Sheila are shocked and uncomfortable)*

*(Pause)*

**Kim:** Are you okay?

**Bubbles:** *(Taking a deep breath)* Yes, yes, fine...fine. Sorry about that. I seem to get quite a few calls from people who misunderstand what 'Bubbles-R-Us' is all about.

**Sheila:** It is a curious name. I don't quite understand the connection...

*(Deb enters. She carries a rolled up yoga mat under her arm.)*

*(Bubbles leaps up)*

**Bubbles:** Hello! Welcome! Come in and join us! I'm Bubbles, and this is Kim *(pointing at Sheila)* and Sheila *(pointing at Kim.)*

**Sheila:** Sheila!

**Kim:** Kim.

**Deb:** Sorry I'm a bit late, I had trouble finding it. This place is a bit of a maze, isn't it? So many rooms! I won't hold you up any longer. *(She tries to unroll the yoga mat, but it won't cooperate, so Sheila and Kim get up to help her, by trying to hold it in place, and moving chairs onto the corners to hold it down)*

**Bubbles:** *(Agitated)* Oh no...you won't be needing that...can you leave the chairs in a circle? Please? No! they need to be in a circle! Leave the mat...You won't need it until the very end...if at all...we'll mostly be standing...

**Deb:** *(Doing some elaborate stretches on the mat)* Standing? That's wonderful! It's my balance I really need to work on. I'm always falling over. Last time I did the tree I had a very nasty fall for no apparent reason...I just toppled over! Luckily I had a soft landing but the lady I fell on wasn't very pleased. I don't think there was any call for her to be quite so nasty, it's not like I did it on purpose. And if she hadn't been tree-ing so close to the wall, she wouldn't have fallen onto the radiator. The paramedics were definitely on my side, they were very understanding. They said it was a 'freak accident', and explained very calmly to the lady that you're bound to bleed profusely when you lose your front teeth. But that didn't stop her screaming at me. It was all very unpleasant. I felt quite traumatised!

**Kim:** *(Timidly)* Erm...shall I go and get my chair?

**Deb:** Were we supposed to bring a chair? I thought the yoga mat was more appropriate.

**Bubbles:** We have chairs.

**Sheila:** Why are there no easels?

**Bubbles:** Easels?

**Deb:** Oh dear! I thought the yoga mat would be sufficient. What's the easel for?

**Sheila:** Painting.

**Kim:** I'll go and get my chair. It's in the car. It won't take me a minute.

**Bubbles:** Painting? Painting what?

**Sheila:** Me! Life drawing!

**Kim:** Life drawing? Do you mean naked? Oh My God! I... I thought it was upholstery. Isn't this upholstery?

**Deb:** No, upholstery is upstairs. This is yoga...

**Bubbles:** LAUGHTER YOGA! It's not yoga, it's laughter yoga.

**Sheila:** Where's life drawing, then?

**Bubbles:** Not here! This is laughter yoga! LAUGHTER yoga! Where we laugh! It's therapeutic, it makes you feel better. It's not life drawing or upholstery, or getting naked, or even ordinary-bloody-bendy-yoga! It's LAUGHTER YOGA! Oh God! None of you meant to come here, did you? You're in the wrong place! This was such a stupid idea! I'm so useless... *(she starts to cry)* and stupid! What made me think I could start a business...*(breaks down, sobbing)*  
*(Silence)*

**Kim:** Perhaps I should go and find upholstery...

**Deb:** Stay where you are! Can't you see she needs us? *(She goes to Bubbles, pats her gently on the shoulder.)* There, there... you seem a bit stressed. Take a deep breath with me... In for 5...Out for 7...

*(Kim and Sheila join in and they all deep breathe together)*

**Deb:** In for 5... Out for 7...In...Out...

*(Bubbles' crying subsides into gentle weeping)*

**Deb:** That's better. Just keep breathing deeply, and when you're ready, tell us all about it.  
*(Long silence, broken only by Bubbles' sniffing)*

**Deb:** In your own time...

**Bubbles:** I'm such a failure! I've started this business and it's a fiasco! And my husband has left me for a 25 year old called Harmony. *(Starts to sob again)*

**Deb:** No, I meant tell us about laughter yoga

**Bubbles:** *(Between sobs.)* Well...in laughter yoga... we laugh at... everyday scenarios... that otherwise we would...get upset about...

**Kim:** Like your husband leaving you?

**Sheila:** For a 25 year old

**Bubbles:** *(Wailing)* Called Harmony!

**Kim:** So if we can laugh at those things...

**Sheila:** We'd feel better!

**Bubbles:** *(Still crying)* Because of... endorphins...

**Deb:** Well, shall we try? Ha...ha...ha...*(Nobody joins in. She tails off)*

**Bubbles:** It's not working, is it? This is all such a disaster!

*(Bubbles' phone rings. She pulls herself together, takes a deep breath and answers)* Hello! Bubbles-R-Us. Bubbles speaking. How can I help? *(Pause)* No...no...no bubble baths or soaps. We are not a cosmetic company. GOOD BYE! *(She slams the phone back down and bursts into tears again)* I can't do anything right! I'm trying to start my business, and...and help people and...do some good and...stand on my own two feet and...I'm rubbish at it! No wonder nobody came tonight!

**Deb:** Well, we're here!

**Bubbles:** But you didn't mean to be!

**Sheila:** Well, never mind that, we're here now! *(She takes Bubbles' hand.)* And we're staying, right girls?

*(They join hands, forming a circle with Bubbles.)*

**Deb:** You bet!

**Kim:** *(Less certain)* Y...yes.

**Sheila:** We're right here with you, Bubbles.

**Bubbles:** Thank you. You're all being so kind.

**Deb:** Well, this laughter yoga sounds a lot more fun than ordinary yoga!

**Kim:** Although I did rather want to do upholstery. It's Mother's dining-room chair and it's so threadbare, and...*(she tails off as Sheila and Deb glare at her)*. But now that I'm here, I'm really glad!

**Sheila:** So how about you show us some of these laughter yoga exercises?

**Bubbles:** Now?

**Sheila:** No time like the present!

**Bubbles:** Okay...erm...let me think...Oh dear, I hate being put on the spot *(Pause)* Oh! I know! There's flower laughter. You pretend you're holding a flower  
*(They all stand and do this)*

**Bubbles:** Then you pretend to pull the petals off one-by-one

**Sheila:** Oh! I remember this from when I was a girl. We used to do it all the time. You pull the petals off and you say: 'He loves me, he loves me not...'

**Deb:** He loves me...

**Bubbles:** *(Wailing again)* He loves me not!

**Deb:** Oh dear, perhaps that wasn't the best exercise to choose, in the circumstances.  
*(They all sit down)*

**Kim:** Do you think I'm too late for upholstery?

**Bubbles:** Oh, I'm so sorry, I've ruined your plans. All of you.

**Sheila:** Nonsense! There's plenty of life drawing classes around; I can always go to a different one.

**Kim:** Why do you want to be a naked model, of all things?

**Sheila:** It's...sort of a bucket list thing.

**Deb:** Blimey! Most people want to travel or jump out of a plane, not take their clothes off in front of a room full of strangers!

**Sheila:** Well, I have parachuted actually, in my youth. And I've done a lot of travelling with my husband. We went to so many wonderful places: Africa, Asia. Such happy memories...

**Bubbles:** And now?

*(Pause)*

**Sheila:** My husband died.

**Bubbles:** Oh! I'm sorry...

**Sheila:** A year ago. Well, thirteen months, to be precise.

**Kim:** That must be... difficult.

**Sheila:** *(Wistfully)* Yes. I thought I'd wait a year to see if things got better. To see if life could be worth living again, without him. But it isn't. Since he died, all the colour has gone out of my life. Where I used to see beauty, now I just see shades of grey. I'm leading a monochrome life, and that's no life at all.

**Kim:** That's so sad! Perhaps laughter yoga can help?

**Bubbles:** Yes! Surely...

**Sheila:** It's alright dear, I'm not expecting anything from you. Or anyone. I am the only person who can help myself, and I have made up my mind what I'm going to do.

**Kim:** What are you going to do?

**Sheila:** I'm going to join him.

**Deb:** But didn't you say he was...

**Sheila:** Dead. Yes.

*(Pause, as the other women all look at each other nervously.)*

**Kim:** Do you mean that you're going to...

**Sheila:** Die? Yes, that's right.

**Bubbles:** I don't understand. Are you ill?

**Sheila:** No! That is, no more than anyone else my age. My joints hurt and my bowels are a law unto themselves, but that's just old age.

**Bubbles:** So...what makes you think you're going to die soon?



**Sheila:** Oh dear, perhaps I'm not making myself clear. I think the expression these days is to 'take one's own life'. That's what I'm going to do. When the time is right.

*(Stunned silence)*

**Kim:** But how will you know when the time is right?

**Sheila:** I'll do it when Martha dies.

**Deb:** Who's Martha?

**Sheila:** The dog. I couldn't possibly leave her. She pined so terribly when Robert died, and she became quite ill for a while. I couldn't put her through that again, it wouldn't be fair. She's quite old, you see. And she's so devoted to me, I couldn't leave her homeless. So I've got to wait until she dies, then there'll be nothing to keep me here. And we can all be together again.

**Bubbles:** But your family? Surely...

**Sheila:** I have no family. Well, there's a niece somewhere, but she doesn't bother with me. We didn't have children, just dogs. Robert and I were...we were enough. For each other.

**Bubbles:** Is there anything we can say to...?

**Sheila:** No, I'm quite sure. And please don't insult me by trying to talk me out of it, as if I haven't thought it through properly. I've thought of little else for the past 13 months. It's all planned. Now I'm just biding my time, working my way through the last few things on my bucket list before the time comes.

**Kim:** *(Visibly upset)* Isn't there anything we can do? Or say?

**Sheila:** No, dear. It's what I want. I'm of sound mind, and It's my choice. *(Pause)* Now! It must be time for tea! I'll pop the kettle on. *(Starts to exit. Stops and turns back.)* You all seem such lovely people, I'm so glad I've met you all. Could you...? That is...it would be lovely if you would all come to my funeral. And sing very loudly! And wear red! Red was always my favourite colour! Robert loved me in red.

*(She exits, leaving the other three women sitting in silence.)*

**FADE TO BLACK**

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