

Rhubarb

Deanna Graves

## **Rhubarb**

By Deanna Graves

### **Characters**

Sam, an old man

Liz, a young lady

Young Sam Houston

### **Scene**

A large shade tree set off from a county fair in the late afternoon. Thick green grass blankets the base of the tree and you can hear the children laughing and screaming, along with the carnival rides in the distance. An old man named Sam sits comfortably against the tree watching people. A beautiful young woman walks toward the tree.

Liz: Mind if I share your shade?

Sam: No, not at all young lady. (Sam motions to the grass around him.)

Liz: I should have worn better shoes, my feet are killing me. At least the day is perfect for the fair.

Sam: Yep, the fair never changes, always smells and sounds the same.

Liz: Are you here alone?

Sam: (softly) Just me and my memories today.

Liz: I'm by myself too. I am waiting for someone. My name is Liz.

Sam: Nice to meet you Liz, I'm Sam.

Liz: I can't wait for it to get dark. I love the fair lights at night.

Sam: I like the county barn shows. All the canned goods and baking contests...

Liz: Do you cook?

Sam: Nooo, my wife was the cook.

Liz: O, I am sorry. (pause) How long has she been gone?

Sam: About a year now, she had a blueberry cobbler in the bake off last year.

Liz: I love berries, I have a huge garden full of them.

Sam: She came in second; I had to eat the whole pie right by myself just so she would know it was first to me.....

Liz: How long were you married?

Sam: Sixty five years.

Liz: Any kids?

Sam: Two boys, but their grown men with families of their own now. I rarely see them. What about you? Married? Kids?

Liz: Nope just me right now. I was meeting someone here tonight. How did you meet her?

Sam: At a fair not much different than this one. I had seen her in school but it was at the fair when I began to talk to her. She loved the baking and canned goods and I liked her so, I followed her around all day like a puppy and by night fall I had convinced her to dance.

Liz: She sounds like she was fun.

Sam: She was everything. She was my waking world and my night's rest. We were partners in all things. She was there when I was late getting home from work and when I didn't come home at all because I was out drinking. She raised our boys to be good men and kept a beautiful home with a little bit of nothing. I never thought about what my life would be without her because she was always there. (Sam rubs his face and then his pants with both his hands.) I am sorry, I, I didn't mean to go on like that.

Liz: Please it really is okay. Believe me, I would much rather share your troubles than think of mine. I think your story is beautiful. Please tell me more?

Sam: You didn't come to the fair to listen to an old man. You should be riding the rides and eating funnel cake.

Liz: I like waiting with you. Besides it really isn't as fun being here alone, as I thought it might be. Let me get you something to drink or eat and we can sit here and keep talking, if you like? (Liz jumps up and heads toward the booths.)

Sam: (Talking to no one in particular.) She is a sweet, polite girl. Reminds me of you a little. I need to call the boys. (Pause) I could eat a little something.

Liz: (Walks back to the tree with two drinks and some pie.) I hope you like RC cola. I like mine with peanuts in it. Here I got you some pie. (Settling back down with their snacks) What was her name? Your wife, you never told me her name.

Sam: Elizabeth, I called her Bette. Did you say peanuts? In your RC?

Liz: I love the salty bite and the cool sweet of the cola.

Sam: My Bette loved peanuts until she had to get her new teeth and then she couldn't enjoy them anymore.

Liz: What happened to her?

Sam: She stayed tired all the time. Her legs were hurting and they would swell. The doctor said it was congestive heart failure. She got weaker and weaker until she couldn't get out of bed. Then one day she was gone.

Liz: I am so sorry. I am sure she would have stayed if she could have. How wonderful to have had her though. (Pause) I fear I will never know that kind of love again.

Sam: It is a once in a lifetime blessing and you have to appreciate it, work for it and be worthy of it. I made mistakes but I wouldn't trade one day. Well sometimes I think I would trade them all for just one more day. But I will see her again, of that I am sure.

Liz: The sun is starting to go down. They'll be putting the animals in their stalls shortly. I love the cows, they are my favorite. I love the smell of hay. When I was little I would play in my grandmother's chicken coop. I loved the outdoors and the animals.

Sam: Bette wanted a chicken coop but after that rooster woke her up at the crack of dawn every day for a week, she ask me to get rid of it.

Liz: Yeah, I bet. I like to sleep myself. You said you don't see your kids that often?

Sam: They loved their mother. She was the one who kept up with what they were doing and their birthdays. I loved them and worked so none of them would have to go without, but their mother was their heart. I lost interest in most everything after she died. The boys wanted me to move in with them but I love our old house. Her things are there like she left them. They have their lives ahead of them. I'll stay right here and bide my time.

Liz: You can't think that it's over. That life is done. Your heart is broken but there is still life to be lived. Hope, there is always hope.

Sam: You talk like someone who has lost someone before.

Liz: Yep, about a year ago now. I left and I didn't realize how much I was going to miss him. I spent my life loving him. I never traveled. We didn't spend lots of money, hell, we didn't have any money but we enjoyed each other. I would have spent my whole life with him content and happy; but life had other plans for me. I found myself in a position to have to go or he would be hurt.

Sam: I don't think I could have ever left Bette for any reason.

Liz: Hey, Why don't you eat something?

Sam: (Picking up the plate Liz had brought him) Is this, is this rhubarb?

Liz: Yes.

Sam: Rhubarb is my favorite.

Liz: I know. (Liz stands up.)

Sam: (Looks Confused). I don't understand.

Liz: It's okay. We have been sitting here a while. Why don't you stretch your legs? Take a stroll down the midway.

(Sam gets up with help from Liz. He brushes off his pants.)

Sam: Thank you for the conversation.

Liz: Any time, Sam Houston.

(Sam turns and walks away down the midway and off stage.)

(A young man dressed exactly as Sam walks up to Liz under the tree; pointing down the midway in the direction that Sam has just gone.)

Young Sam Houston: What you reckon is the commotion down there.

Liz: An old man just fell dead in the midway.

Young Sam Houston: confused he says to Liz: Do I know you?

Liz: My name is Elizabeth but you can call me Bette. I have been waiting for you.

(She takes his hand and they stroll hand in hand down the midway and out of sight.)