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Covering your tracks

David and the affair with Bathsheba

based on 2 Samuel 11 & 12

by Ralph Milton

History is written by the victors, and the stories of human injustice are almost always told by the ones who hold the power. The legend of David and Bathsheba has always been told by people who didn't want the great King David to look bad. Nowadays we call these people "spin doctors." In the biblical era, they called them scribes.

Having been through the struggles of a male in mid-life, I have a bit of a sense of what the kind of unnamed anxieties going through David's mind when he raped Bathsheba. And rape it was.

Here's a modern re-telling of the famous story.

David threw the golf clubs furiously into the closet in his office. It was the worst game he'd ever played. On two tee-shots he'd missed the ball totally, slicing the air with a great loud whoosh and cringing at the laughter of his golfing buddies.

"That's it!" he muttered. "Stupid, damn game. No more. I'm done with golf."

David was having a bad day because he was still upset about the night before. Abigail had done her best to turn him on, but it didn't work. It had been a month or more since the last time they'd had sex together but David's body still refused to respond. "She's getting old. She's lost it," he said to himself, then tried hard not to focus on the fear that *he* was getting old and had lost it.

"Get your mind off it," he said to himself. David pressed the intercom. "Somebody bring me the Benjamin Corporation file. Make it quick!" he snapped.

A few moments later Beth was in his office with the file in hand. "Here you are, sir," she said.

David hadn't noticed Beth before. She was simply another one of the women in the front office. But this time he saw that Beth was young and lithe, and by god she stirred up the old juices in his groin.

"I'm sorry," he smiled. "But I don't remember your name."

"It's Beth."

"You do good work," said David. "And you're very pretty."

"Thank you, sir," said Beth.

David was a clever schemer. That's how he'd made his fortune – gained his power—climbed to president of one of the world's largest multinationals. It took him no time at all to devise a credible scheme to have Beth work late, and through subtle hints of promotion and even more subtle hints at firing, David got her into bed. For a little while at least, he felt alive and young again.

He hadn't counted on her getting pregnant. "Why the hell weren't you on the pill or using a diaphragm or something?" David yelled when Beth came into his office two months later.

"Because we were wanting to have a baby, my husband and I."

"Husband? How the hell was I to know you were married?"

"Would it have made a difference?" Beth asked.

"So what makes you think I got you pregnant? You sleep with your husband, don't you?"

"My husband works in your international sales division, and he's been in Pakistan for three months."

"Then you'll have an abortion." said David. "I'll pay for it. Get it done right away and give me the bill."

"No," said Beth firmly.

David was livid. "You get an abortion, you bitch, or both you and your husband are looking for jobs. And if you have that kid, I can afford the best lawyers in the country to prove it isn't mine. Now get the hell out of here."

A month later, it was David's old friend Nathan in his office.

"Hey! Nathan, old buddy? How's it goin'?" David turned on all his charm.

Nathan was having none of it. He looked David squarely in the eye and asked, "What happened, David. You used to be a decent, honest man?"

"What the hell are you talking about?"

"When you and I were in school together, we talked a lot about ethics. About morality. About fairness. Do you remember how angry you got when some of the guys in our dorm got a girl drunk and gang raped her? Do you remember how you felt about that, David?"

"Of course I remember," said David, "but what in blazes are you going on about, Nathan. Get to the point. I'm a busy man."

"You may be busy," Nathan said through his fury, "but you are not much of a man. You forced Beth to have sex, you tried to force her into an abortion, now her husband has left her and she is so sick she had to quit work. Or had you noticed that she wasn't around the office any more?"

A long silence.

"No, I hadn't noticed," David said hoarsely.

"Have you noticed how low you have sunk?" Nathan demanded.

"No," David said just above a whisper. "What's happened Nathan? What should I do?"

"That's a really good question, David. You're holding all the aces. What *are* you going to do?"

**Ralph Milton has written a number of books,
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