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Finally, a Father
David & Bathsheba II
based on 2 Samuel 12:15a-24
by Ralph Milton

This is Part II of the David and Bathsheba story.

It started as a guilt-ridden attempt to compensate.

Nathan and David had talked long into the night after the confrontation over Beth. This was a very unusual thing for David. He had never really talked like this before. He had no real friends. Lots of business pals, but none that he really, deeply trusted. And now here he was, talking to Nathan and expressing feelings and emotions he didn't even know he had.

Nothing got solved. David still didn't know what to do about Beth. But for the first time in years, David went to bed and slept right through the night without a sleeping pill.

The next morning he went and talked to Beth. "I'm sorry," he said. "I've been a real shit."

David paused; half hoping Beth would deny the self-accusation. She didn't.

"I can't make it right to you," David continued after an awkward pause. "But I want you to know that I am going to do my damndest to change my life and my attitudes, and I would like to begin by making any money you need available, if that will help you rebuild your life and take care of the child."

"*The child?*" Beth asked icily.

A long, painful silence. "OK. Our child," said David.

David left feeling worse than when he'd come. But he went back the next day and talked to Beth some more, and again a few days later. Gradually, Beth began to share the conversation. Gradually, the two of them began to really talk.

This was another first for David. He'd never been friends with a woman. Oh, he'd known lots of women, and Beth was by no means his first adultery. He'd been married to Abigail for years. Abigail had tried to build a relationship, and finally settled for a substantial alimony.

Beth and David talked. They met each week to talk and talk and help each other rebuild their shattered lives. And slowly David learned to own the life in Beth's expanding womb. And when the child was born, he held the baby with a gentleness he'd never known he had.

Beth was the age of David's other children, sons and daughters he hardly knew. "It's no wonder those kids messed up," David said to Beth. "They never had a father. And now I'm too old."

"You are not too old, David," Beth said gently. "Reach out to them. Tell them you love them. I think they really want to know that."

It was true and it wasn't. None of David's daughters would even talk to their Dad. Ab, his oldest son simply said, "If you want to turn over your fortune to me, that's cool. If not, you can stuff in up your nose."

But David said, "I love you," and hoped that someday, somehow they would hear his cry.

"It's far too little, and it's far too late," David said to Beth. He had quite suddenly lost the corpulence gained over a life of too much food and drink. In the space of a few months he had become thin and frail.

"I knew all along how to father a child, but it's only now that I'm dying, that I've learned something about being a father. Or about love. Or about God."

"Talk to our son about God," Beth asked. "In spite of all you've been and done, you have been a man of God, haven't you?"

"Nathan seems to think so. It's funny. We were such good friends, and we shared a deep, deep faith when we were together in school. Then I went on to build a fortune, and Nathan went on to build a life.

For a while they sat together in silence.

"You know, Beth, there's really only one thing I'd like to do before I die. I'd like for you and our son Solomon and Nathan and me to just sit and talk for a few hours, just to really talk about important things, real things, hopeful things. Maybe our son doesn't need to learn everything the hard way. I'd like to tell him what it really means to be a man."

Beth kissed the old man gently on the forehead. "I'll call them," she said. "We'll talk."

**Ralph Milton has written a number of books,
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