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I had just woken in a wood, all hidden round by ferns and fallen cones, a meadow with a stream not far below, awake only enough to catch the scent of her, and sitting up, I saw her there, undressing in the mist.

And half upright, but lying low and still, dew in my hair and streaks of early sunlight through the trees, I saw a loosening and a slipping off, a patch of earth and her, encircled by her fallen clothes; and, jumping lightly clear of them and moving towards the water's edge, she looked serenely round and then stepped in.

Always. Always since, I think of David and Bathsheba.

And it came to pass in the evening tide, that David arose from off his bed, and walked upon the roof of the king's house: and from the roof he saw a woman washing herself; and the woman was very beautiful to look upon.

The rest is well known. That David brought Bathsheba unto him and lay with her and she conceived by him and that he sent her husband, Uriah the Hittite, in the forefront of the hottest battle, and ordered his men to fall back so that Uriah would fight alone and die. A child was born to her but God smote it with an illness. Knowing it was his doing, David fasted and wept for the child and cast himself upon the ground for seven days and on the seventh day the baby died.

She must have loved David still, Bathsheba, for she slept with him again and bore another child, this one named Solomon. But brilliant though this child was to become, nothing could change the

fact that two lives were gone . . .

I stood up from my hiding place and went to her and watched her bathing in the stream. And she was exceedingly beautiful to look upon. She was afraid of me at first, but later loved me and was happy I had come.

That day now brings to me the memory of wild flowers, of dark ferns, and of the lengthening of many shadows.