

A SPECIAL MOMENT



It's four o'clock in the morning and we are woken by a cry from two rooms down the hallway.

Sue is first to respond. She has always been like that.

By the time I am fully awake, our twenty-month-old grandson, David, is making it very clear that he is awake too.

I hear everything in stereo. David's cry from down the hallway and, ever so slightly delayed, the same sound coming from the baby monitor next to Sue's side of the bed.

Sue is already entering his room.

"It's okay, David. Nan's here."

The crying becomes softer.

By the time I get there, only a few minutes later, the door is slightly ajar and Sue has David in her arms. She is giving him a bottle, one we had prepared earlier, and he acknowledges me with a look of complete contentment.

He seems relaxed with his Nan. Safe.

Now it's my turn.

Nan passes David to me and his head settles into that space between my chest and shoulder.

It is very dark.

My eyes are only a few inches from his face, yet I cannot tell whether his eyes are open, half open or closed. I have to feel it through my arms and through his body.

I hold him with both arms. It reminds me of doing exactly the same thing with our son.

It feels like yesterday, and yet next week it will be forty years ago.

My job is simple.

Rock this little fella. Make him feel safe. Make him feel loved. Help him fall asleep. The thought crosses my mind that this might be the best job in the world.

The house is quiet. Once in a while I hear it make a sound, rather like it is softly stretching.

David stretches too. He rubs his eyes, touches his hair and extends his legs.

This is the tipping point. It could go either way.

In the next few minutes he could become fully awake and ready to play, or he could disappear back to sleep and give all of us another couple of hours.

So I keep rocking.

There were nights with our own son when nothing seemed capable of getting him to sleep. I would put him in the car and drive around the block. It nearly always worked. Sometimes he was asleep before we had properly left the driveway.

That was forty years ago.

And now I am sitting in the dark doing much the same job again.

A few minutes later, the rocking seems to have worked.

Then another thought arrives.

I wonder how long it will be before David no longer needs, or wants, to lie against me to fall asleep.

I suspect it will be sooner than I would like.

Now comes the difficult bit. Getting him back into his cot.

My movements become incredibly slow.

Almost Tai Chi-like.

Slow, purposeful and careful.

I move him away from my chest while keeping as much contact as possible, then lower him into the cot.

A little stroke of his back lets him know I am still there.

He wriggles slightly and finds his comfortable position.

And that is it.

Twenty minutes have passed.

David is sleeping.

Sue is sleeping.

For now, the house is resting.

The only light comes from a lamp in the living room, next to the table and chair where I have started writing this.

David will probably never remember this night.

I think I always will.

Perhaps that is true of many of the things we do for the people we love.

They may never remember the moment itself. But somehow, I hope, they remember how it felt.

If I am lucky, I will get to do it all again tonight.

Note to David: if we could do this an hour or so later tomorrow morning, it would be perfect.

Tony Bennett

29.08.2026