



## Father to Be

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## **Father to Be** Marilyn Pappano

Four miracles and a bachelor add up to...one family.

J.D. Grayson agrees that the Brown kids, abandoned by their parents, deserve a loving home. He's just not sure that one man is parent enough for four young children--not if *he* is that one man. But a persuasive--and mysterious--young woman insists he's exactly what the children need. Now he has to convince twelve-year-old Caleb, fierce guardian of his younger brothers and sister--and then pass muster with Kelsey Malone, Bethlehem's newly arrived social worker.

With one good deed, J.D. finds his life turned upside down. The kids barely talk to him and they won't eat his home-cooked meals. Then he finds himself looking forward to Kelsey's home visits too much. Her buttoned-down suit and tough-as-nails professionalism can't hide the vulnerable woman inside. But haunted by the shattered life he left behind, J.D. doesn't want to risk loving again.

It'll take a miracle to make a family of them all...but as one enigmatic young woman knows, Bethlehem has no small supply of miracles.

## **Father to Be Details**

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## From Reader Review Father to Be for online ebook

### Amanda Williams says

A very sweet story.

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### Leya says

I picked up this book the last time I went to the UBS. I chose it because of its cover. Seriously. Something about it got to me and it was one of those impulse buys. The thing with impulse buys usually (more time than not) you end up returning them or just not liking it. But fortunately for me, this impulse buy proved wrong. I truly enjoyed reading Father To Be.

J.D. is a man that unexpectedly is saddled with three children. He truly wants to help these children, but the eldest is giving him a hard time. Also there's the children's case worker, Kelsey, who he finds very appealing and there might just be something more...

Although I liked all the (main) characters, I had a soft spot for J.D.. He had this tough exterior, but you just knew that somehow he was covering his true feelings: hurt, guilt, and the fear to love again. The children and Kelsey helped him with that. His story is one of redemption.

Reading this book was quite an experience. I cried, and laughed and cried some more, but it was worth it.

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### Cathy says

A; Light and fun; heartwarming love story.

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### Cathy says

Really good book. Hero was a man's man, but is hiding a broken heart. Heroine is a sweetheart, but is also very feisty. Great secondary characters, especially the children in Hero's care. Recommend along with the first 2 books in Bethlehem series.

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### Julianna says

Reviewed for THC Reviews

It's been a very long time since I've read a Marilyn Pappano book, and I have to say that I'm very glad I finally had time to pick one up again. *Father to Be* reminded me of all the reasons why I love this author and the *Bethlehem* series. This is small town romance at its finest with all the residents of Bethlehem really bringing the town to life. Anyone who's a fan of *Touched by an Angel* like I am will also appreciate

Bethlehem's very own guardian angel, who always shows up at just the right times to give people hope, encouragement, and guidance. *Father to Be* is an emotional and heartwarming tale about overcoming tragedy, redemption, reconciliation, and new beginnings. Most of all, it's a story about the importance of family and how those we come to love as family aren't always related to us by blood. Anyone who likes a healthy dose of family drama with their contemporary romance should really enjoy *Father to Be*. I know I did, and now, I'm once again eager to keep going with the series.

J. D. is known and loved by nearly everyone in Bethlehem, but virtually no one knows of his life in Chicago before moving to this little town. He wasn't content to simply be a psychiatrist; he wanted to be the best. Through hard work and determination, he achieved his dream of becoming renowned in his field for his work with troubled children who came from backgrounds of abuse and neglect. However, his illustrious career came at great personal cost, and it was this pain that drove him to move to Bethlehem where he lives a fairly quiet existence, maintaining a private psychiatric practice as well as working in the schools and the local nursing home. I love what J. D. had done to transform the nursing home into a place where the elderly residents could truly feel at home. He seemed to really understand their emotional needs in a way that few do. Deep down, J.D. is a truly good man, but he's far from perfect. When asked to play foster parent to four abandoned kids ranging in age from five to twelve, J.D. reluctantly accepts the responsibility with the intention of only providing them a home for a short time. He slowly begins to make inroads with the three younger children, but he had no idea just how much of a challenge the oldest child would be. The boy is a painful reminder of J.D.'s biggest failure in life, which causes his demons to rear their ugly heads. While he provides a safe, secure home for the kids, J.D. isn't thrilled about them being there at first and has trouble opening his heart to them, especially Caleb with whom he is in near-constant conflict. He's anything but a perfect parent, but he does change and grow throughout the story to become a better person and the kind of father his own dad modeled for him. When Kelsey comes into the picture, J.D. is the consummate charmer with a touch of arrogance on the side. Overall, he's a very likable person who also comes off as quite trustworthy, so it's easy to see why Kelsey fell for him and why she and the whole town came to his defense when the unthinkable happened.

Kelsey has her own secrets, events from the past that drove her to become a social worker, and she prides herself in always trying to make the right decisions so that no child falls through the cracks in the system. When she first comes to town, she's a by-the-book rule-follower who initially rubs J.D. the wrong way, but I never doubted that her heart was in the right place. It doesn't take long before she's falling for the handsome psychiatrist and the four kids in his care. She sees the potential there and does everything in her power to help them create a successful foster family. Soon, Kelsey finds herself interacting with them on a more personal basis than her job dictates. Unlike, Nora Robert's *Sea Swept*, another book I recently read which has a similar theme of a social worker becoming personally involved with the guardian of children under her care, I liked that Ms. Pappano didn't gloss over the conflict of interest inherent in such a relationship. Kelsey feels guilty from the outset for having feelings for J.D., and while she does still allow things to go further than they probably should have, she recognized the possible implications. There were also some consequences to her actions. The thing I liked most about Kelsey was her unwavering support of J.D. Although she had to distance herself from him when things hit the fan, she never stopped believing in him and trusted him implicitly. Most of all she facilitated a much-needed reconciliation for him that totally changed his life.

The secondary characters were beautifully rendered and each one brought something special to the story. Marilyn Pappano is extremely talented with writing child characters. Each of the kids has their own distinct little personalities and each one of them act their age. While the three younger ones were cute as a button, especially Gracie, the oldest, Caleb, is the true standout. He's like a miniature tortured hero himself. Unable to deal with taking care of so many kids and never having nice things, their mother abandoned them and their father a long time ago. Caleb constantly asserts that their dad was a good man, but he too left them, ostensibly to find work, and never returned. Caleb had to grow up fast and become the man of the house, playing a little father to his three younger siblings at the tender age of twelve. He did his best to take care of

them, but when he got caught stealing food, they were placed in foster care with J.D. which Caleb finds untenable. He's a very angry young man who butts heads with J.D. constantly over who's really in charge and who refuses to let go of the past to embrace a possible future with someone other than their biological dad. Because of his anger and belligerence, Caleb could have easily become annoying, but I always felt like I understood him. All of the main townspeople play supporting roles too, including the charming widowed sisters, Agatha and Corinna, both former school teachers who adore kids. Nathan and Emily Bishop (*Season for Miracles*) and their kids, particularly Alanna, who Caleb has a crush on and vice-versa, as well as Ross and Maggie McKinney (*Some Enchanted Season*) appear occasionally. Holly McBride, the owner of the local inn and J.D.'s best friend and former lover, tries to make friends with Kelsey too. She becomes the heroine of the next full-length book of the series, *First Kiss*, paired with workaholic attorney Tom Flynn who appears briefly.

Marilyn Pappano is very talented at crafting emotional stories that really tug at the heartstrings. She also has an uncanny ability for creating an air of mystery. For most of the novel, we don't really know what happened in J.D.'s past that has made him the man he is today, and even Kelsey's motivations for doing what she does are rather cryptic. All I can say is that their backstories are very touching. The author does leave a trail of breadcrumbs and if one is good at deducing such things, it might be predictable. I, however, suspected a few things, but the whole story wasn't entirely clear until it was all finally revealed. There was even one thing I didn't really see coming at all. Overall, *Father to Be* was a wonderful read that I thoroughly enjoyed, and I'm very much looking forward to seeing what's in store for Holly and Tom next.

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### **Clarity says**

Please tell me I missed reading J.D's full name and how Kelsey found out instead of the fact that it wasn't stated at all!!!

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### **Dawn says**

I like the blend of Christian morality (but not too preachy), romance and family values, with a little mysticism thrown in for good measure! Light reading, heartwarming but predictable, likable characters and interesting premise, I like the psychology angle.

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