

Stephanie Disler

English 250 6:00 MW

Professor Barkley

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Trapped by Deceit

"I have heard That guilty creatures sitting at a play Have by the very cunning of the scene Been struck so to the soul, that presently They have proclaim'd their malefactions;". (II, II, 599-603) Hamlet decides to stage a Spanish revenge play so that Claudius will be overcome with guilt over his murder of Hamlet's father. Hamlet has heard that the guilty, upon seeing their own crime, will be so overcome that these persons or person will confess in order to relieve their own guilt. This passage has a parallel in the Bible.

David, King of Israel, sees Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, and commits adultery with her. Uriah, a soldier in David's army, is sent into the front line of a battle and is killed. This is not an accident of war, but a carefully contrived maneuver by David. For David intended that Uriah be killed so that he could take Bathsheba to wife. David does not think he will be found out. Nathan, a prophet of God, goes to David and tells him a story of a poor farmer who has one little lamb and the King comes along and takes what little the farmer has. Nathan then asks David what should be done to the King. David replies that the King deserves to die. Nathan informs David that he is that King. (II Samuel 11:15, 12:5-7)

Hamlet and Nathan both desired that Claudius and David be convicted within before they could be dealt with publicly. Both crimes were committed out of lust. Claudius' crime was committed for lust for the throne of Denmark and the Queen. David's crime was committed for lust of a beautiful woman and greed. Both, ultimately, confess their respective crimes following a public re-enactment of their crimes. One confesses in private, one confesses in public. Both suffer horrible consequences. Both were caught in a mousetrap.