

READERS THEATER (2 Samuel 13) Narrator, Amnon, Jonadab, Absalom, Tamar

Narrator: Absalom, David’s son, had a sister who was very attractive. Her name was Tamar. Amnon, also David’s son, was in love with Tamar. In fact, Amnon was obsessed with his sister Tamar — to the point of making himself sick over her. She was a virgin, so he couldn’t see how he could get his hands on her. But Amnon had a cousin named Jonadab, who was also a good friend. Jonadab was exceptionally streetwise.

Jonadab: “Hey Amnon, why are you moping around like this, day after day—you, the son of the king! Tell me what’s eating at you.”

Amnon: “In a word, Tamar. My brother Absalom’s sister. I’m in love with her.”

Jonadab: “Here’s what you do. Go to bed and pretend you’re sick. When your father comes to visit you, say, ‘Have my sister Tamar come and prepare some supper for me here where I can watch her and she can feed me.’”

Narrator: So Amnon took to his bed and acted sick. When the king came to visit, Amnon said, “Would you do me a favor? Have my sister Tamar come and make some nourishing dumplings here where I can watch her and be fed by her.” David sent word to Tamar who was home at the time: “Go to the house of your brother Amnon and prepare a meal for him.” So Tamar went to her brother Amnon’s house. She took dough, kneaded it, formed it into dumplings, and cooked them while he watched from his bed. But when she took the cooking pot and served him, he wouldn’t eat.

Amnon: “Everyone, clear out of the house. Now, Tamar: Bring the food into my bedroom, where we can eat in privacy.”

Narrator: So Tamar took the nourishing dumplings she had prepared and brought them to her brother Amnon in his bedroom. But when she got ready to feed him, he grabbed her.

Amnon: “Come to bed with me, sister!”

Tamar: “No, brother! Don’t hurt me! This kind of thing isn’t done in Israel! Don’t do this terrible thing! Where could I carry my shame? And you—you’ll be out on the street in disgrace. Oh, please! Speak to the king—he’ll let you marry me.”

Narrator: But Amnon wouldn’t listen. Being much stronger than she, he raped her. And no sooner had he raped her than he hated her—an immense hatred. The hatred that he felt for her was greater than the love he’d had for her.

Amnon: “Get up, and get out!”

Tamar: “Oh no, brother. Please! This is an even worse evil than what you just did to me!”

Narrator: But he wouldn’t listen to her. He called for his valet.

Amnon: “Get rid of this woman. Get her out of my sight! And lock the door after her.”

Narrator: The valet threw her out and locked the door behind her. Tamar was wearing a long-sleeved gown because that’s how virgin princesses used to dress from early adolescence on. Tamar poured ashes on her head, then she ripped the long-sleeved gown, held her head in her hands, and walked away, sobbing as she went.

Absalom: “Tamar, has your brother Amnon had his way with you? Now, my dear sister, let’s keep it quiet—a family matter. He is, after all, your brother. Don’t take this so hard.”

Narrator: Tamar lived in her brother Absalom’s home, bitter and desolate. King David heard the whole story and was enraged, but he didn’t discipline Amnon. David doted on Amnon because he was his firstborn. Absalom quit speaking to Amnon—not a word. He hated him for violating his sister Tamar. Two years went by. One day Absalom got the idea to throw a big sheep-shearing party and invite all the king’s sons. He was finagling it so his brother Amnon would have to make an appearance and the king would have to allow it.

Absalom: Hey there servants, Look sharp, now. When Amnon is well into the sauce and feeling no pain, and I give the order ‘Strike Amnon,’ you kill him! And don’t be afraid—I’m the one giving the command. Courage! You can do it!”

Narrator: Absalom’s servants did to Amnon exactly what their master ordered. The other sons of the king managed to escape, although at first King David thought all his sons were dead.

Jonadab: Don’t be so upset my master, King David. Not all your sons are dead — just Amnon. And I can tell you why. It’s because Absalom has been outraged at Amnon for years, ever since the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar.

Narrator: And David mourned the death of his son Amnon for three years.