

# The root of all evil, macbeth

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G. R. Elliot once said, " wicked intention must in the end produce wicked action unless it is not merely revoked by the protagonist's better feelings, but entirely eradicated by his inmost will, aided by Divine grace. " This statement can be directly applied to Macbeth's descent into the darker recesses of human nature and what human weaknesses this classical tragic figure struggles with and finally succumbs to, causing his downfall. In William Shakespeare's famous play, Macbeth is drawn to the murder of King Duncan, Banquo, and Fleance by his yearning for power.

How could such a courageous, gentle man such as Macbeth suddenly be transformed and drawn to do such evil? Surely he did not come up with such villainous thoughts of his own. His desire for control, authority, and jurisdiction was strengthened by evil sources, those from both the witches' prophecies and his wife's encouragement. In Macbeth it is very clear that evil begets evil. Shakespeare focuses on Macbeth's courage early in the play. For example, Duncan and the sergeant both compliment Macbeth's mental and physical bravery in Act I, Scene II.

Macbeth " carv'd out his passage" until he and the enemy general were face to face. In the same act, the reader is told that Macbeth is brave because of his " disdainful Fortune. " In addition to his quality of courage, Macbeth is also a gentle man. Demonstrating his love and devotion for his wife, Macbeth refers to her as " his dearest partner of greatness" in Act I, Scene V. Lady Macbeth views his kindness as somewhat of a problem for their quest for power. She says that Macbeth is " too full o' the milk of human kindness" to place them on the throne of Scotland as a result of murder.

Macbeth realizes that Duncan is, in fact, a good and humble king, and other than to fulfill self-centered, uncontrolled ambitions, this is not reason to murder him. Macbeth is soon pressured into the murder of Duncan by both his wife and the three witches. The three witches are supernatural instruments of fate who predicted that Macbeth will become King of Scotland.

In act I, scene III, the witches chant, " All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Glamis! / All hail, Macbeth! Hail to thee, Thane of Cawdor! / All hail, Macbeth! That shalt be King hereafter! When Macbeth hears this prophecy, many questions instantly begin to run through his head. He begins to wonder, what are they talking about and how will I become king? Macbeth does not entirely trust the witches, for he does identify them with evil. The foretelling of the witches spark the plot of the murder. The spark becomes a flame when Lady Macbeth hears of the prophecy. Lady Macbeth is canny and masterful as she propels Macbeth to kill Duncan. She binds Macbeth's attention to the throne of Scotland, but never to the severity of the crime.

Lady Macbeth is clever when she constantly urges Macbeth to forget about his torments and the brutal death he has caused. Before the actual murder, Macbeth is shrouded with fear. Banquo can also see the fear in Macbeth, although he does not know about the plan of murder when he asks, " Good sir, why do you start, and seem to fear/ Things that do sound so fair? " He ponders what would happen if he fails, and discusses this possibility with his wife. He struggles with fear in the presence of Lady Macbeth but she

constantly reassures him that there is nothing to fear and that the murder will be for the better.

This fear demonstrates that Macbeth does realize the difference between right and wrong, good and evil, and the consequences, but the outcome, which is murder, proves he can be swayed in his beliefs and concerns. Macbeth was pressured to do a horrible deed which was driven by evil. The beginning of the evil was rooted in his wife and the witch's but quickly spread into his mind and heart. Macbeth was soon contaminated by evil, although he realized what he had done was wrong. Macbeth says, "To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself," meaning that committing such a vile act makes him uncomfortable.

Evil drives Macbeth to later kill Banquo and Fleance for fear they know that Macbeth was the murderer. One evil led to another, for if he had not done evil by killing Duncan then he would not have done evil with the death of his best friend and his son. All the evil they committed to gain power, which was what they always wanted, led to great sorrow. They realized that the dead were much happier. While Macbeth and his wife were wracked with guilt and paranoia, Duncan was seen as the lucky in the eyes of Macbeth. He did not have any threats and was much safer than Macbeth who is feared losing his throne.

Macbeth made these feelings clear when he said, "In restless ecstasy. Duncan is in his grace;/ After life's fitful fever he sleeps well. / Treason has done his worst; nor steel, nor poison,/ Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing,/ Can touch him further. " Macbeth, soon killed by Macduff, now, too,

can rest with worry. Lady Macbeth was also troubled by feelings of guilt. In her sleep she screams, " Out, damned spot! Out, I say! .../Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him. " Lady Macbeth is suffering from a disease which she created from evil. Trouble and suffering have come into their lives in the place of power.

Lady Macbeth ultimately kills herself, ending up in a state of peace without worries along with her husband. Macbeth is a basically good man who is troubled by his conscience and loyalty though at the same time is struggling with evils of ambition and murder. He is led to evil initially by the witches' predictions and then by his wife's goading, which he succumbs to because of his love for her. Lady Macbeth rids herself of any kindness that might stand in the way and fills that void with evil to achieve her ambitions. In both cases evil becomes controlling so much that both of their normal lives are ruined.