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Macbeth

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*Macbeth*

William Shakespeare's fictional story *Macbeth* is a tragic and riveting story of a Scottish warrior named Macbeth. Macbeth encounters three witches who give him prophecies predicting him to have a bright and successful future, after hearing this he becomes obsessed with ambition. His desire for power and success leads him to commit terrible acts, resulting in his downfall. This play teaches a lesson of how unchecked ambition can have serious consequences. One of the key elements in the play is the supernatural, this includes witches, ghosts, apparitions and visions. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, the supernatural elements represented by the witches and the apparitions serve as motivation for Macbeth's ambition and downfall, showing how outside influences can manipulate human behavior and challenge the difference between fate and free will.

In the beginning of the play Macbeth meets three witches who tell him prophecies. All of these prophecies are positive and predict he will be in a position of power. They tell him he will become Thane of Cawdor and become King by saying "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" (Shakespeare 1:3:48-50). These prophecies provoke Macbeth's ambition and begin his

path of destruction. After the witches tell Macbeth his prophecies he chooses to take action and make them come true. If Macbeth would have just done nothing and let the prophecies come true on their own he could have had a much better ending. The witches embody supernatural forces that disrupt fate and test what is real and what is not. The witches' phrase, "Fair is foul, and foul is fair" (Shakespeare 1:1:12) suggests that things aren't always what they seem. The prophecies produce the question of fate versus free will. For example, are Macbeth's actions his own choice, or are they pre-established by the witches? The more Macbeth learned about his fate the more his ambition began to overthrow his humanity. This ambition led to terrible choices like murdering King Duncan and Banquo. This shows how the supernatural can encourage bad decisions.

Macbeth experiences three apparitions later in the play that spark his paranoia, create false hope and encourage him to make the wrong decisions. They tell him "Be bloody, bold, and resolute. Laugh to scorn the power of man, for none of woman born shall harm Macbeth" (Shakespeare 4:1:87-89). By telling Macbeth no one born of a woman can harm him it gives him a false sense of security and makes his ambition even bigger. However this was just a clever trick. The apparitions mislead Macbeth and add to his increasing arrogance. An example of his arrogance would be when Macbeth says

They have tied me to a stake; I cannot fly,  
 But, bear-like, I must fight the course. What's he  
 That was not born of woman? Such a one  
 Am I to fear, or none. (Shakespeare 5:7:1-4).

He becomes a king, believing he cannot be defeated. This shows how the supernatural can lead to a person's downfall. These experiences also reveal Macbeth's mental decline. Because he relies on these supernatural messages, he becomes paranoid, revealing how ambition can change one's view of reality.

The supernatural also affects Lady Macbeth, who is originally portrayed as calm, power-hungry and demanding. After assisting in Duncan's murder she is calm and guilt free while Macbeth is a panicked mess. Lady Macbeth shows how unbothered she is by saying:

A little water clears us of this deed-  
 How easy it is then. Your constancy  
 Hath left you unattended.  
 Get on your nightgown lest occasion calls us,  
 And show us to be watchers. But not lost  
 So poorly in your thoughts. (Shakespeare 2:2:66-71)

However, as the play goes on, her guilt starts to take over her. She begins hallucinating and sleepwalking as a result of her guilt and shame. In Act five scene one Lady Macbeth hallucinates that there's blood on her hands and she tries to wash it off. While trying to wash off the imaginary blood she says:

Here's the smell of blood still. All the  
 Perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little  
 Hand. Oh, oh, oh. (Shakespeare 5:1:45-47).

By saying this she shows how her guilt over the murders haunts her. Both Macbeth and Lady Macbeth experience hallucinations. At an important gathering one night Macbeth hallucinates

Banquo's ghost and has a very dramatic episode. This scene uncovers the guilt and fear he experiences because of his actions. The supernatural represents their mental challenges and reveals the consequences of their evil actions.

The supernatural beings in *Macbeth* play an important role in shaping the story and the character's fates. Witches, apparitions, and ghosts create action and deepen the plot while exploring the themes of ambition, guilt, and the battle between fate and free will. The supernatural elements in the play are what motivates Macbeth's ambitions, confuses him, and portrays the physiological impact of his choices. These elements are used to create a powerful story about the risks of over ambition and the effects guilt can have on a person. This play serves as a lesson of how you should not let outside forces have an affect on your own choices.