



The Third Witch

By Rebecca Reisert

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Rebecca Reisert's mesmerizing first novel re-imagines *Macbeth*, Shakespeare's classic tragedy of power and madness, through the eyes of a mysterious young woman on a dangerous quest for vengeance.

For the girl called Gilly, life in the wilds of Birnam Wood is little more than a desperate struggle for survival. Seven long years have passed since she was first taken in and sheltered by Nettle and Mad Helga, the hut-dwelling wise-women whose inscrutable powers of alchemy and prophecy are feared and reviled throughout good King Duncan's kingdom. Living under the threat of deadly persecution by witch-hunting villagers, the threesome ekes out a life by peddling potions and elixirs, scavenging for food, and robbing the bloodied corpses of Scotland's battle-scarred hills for precious metals and weapons.

But Gilly is haunted by recollections of a much brighter life. She clings to fading memories of a time when she was contented and adored -- until tragedy swept all that happiness away and young Gilly's life was changed forever.

I have made my life an arrow, and His heart is my home. I have made my heart a blade, and His heart is my sheath.... Obsessed with avenging her loss and putting out the fire that still rages in her heart, Gilly has dedicated herself to destroying Macbeth, the boundlessly ambitious man who took away her childhood, and his goading wife. Disguising herself as a poor servant boy, she insinuates herself into their lives and, as she bears horrified witness to Macbeth's violent path to power, Gilly subtly begins to take a hand in the forces governing his fate. But as the culmination of her revenge draws near, Gilly finds her own life at risk when she confronts the troubling legacy of a long-concealed heritage.

The Third Witch is a brilliantly imagined, wonderfully satisfying novel. In a riveting story of ruthlessness and revenge, debut author Rebecca Reisert demonstrates a profound understanding of the Bard's timeless drama -- and of the real-life Macbeth upon whom Shakespeare's incarnation is modeled.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

For her first novel, high school teacher Reisert gives herself a tough assignment: rewriting *Macbeth* from the perspective of one of the three witches, here a feisty teenager named Gillyflower, or Gilly. It's an audacious approach that occasionally yields fresh insights, but more often strips bare the chilling allure of the play. The story is that Gilly, having served seven years in Birnam Wood with the witches Nettle and Mad Helga, is ready to seek revenge against Macbeth, who slaughtered her family. Disguised as a cheeky lad, she lands a job in Macbeth's kitchen and then cases the castle, once even climbing up Macbeth's private latrine shaft to eavesdrop on the conniving spouses. But there are distractions, such as her growing attachment to the orphan boy Pod, a young "moonling" she rescues in the woods. And various characters from the play keep implausibly demanding her friendship, including Banquo's son Fleance, and King Duncan's son Prince Malcolm ("Kitchen lad... Without your aid I fear I will perish in earnest"). Soon Gilly has more than Zelig-like ubiquity in the castle: she becomes the prime mover, implicated in everything from the Macduff family's slaughter to the appearance of Banquo's ghost. Reisert even uses Gilly to justify the Macbeths' marriage, as if their intimacy needed explanation. The supple language distantly evokes the poetry of the original ("I am a gapeseed, a strutting hobbledee horse, full of fury and threats but able to do nothing but playact"), yet what's best here is the fetid atmosphere, and the intriguing exploration of the place of women in macho Scotland. But Reisert overdoes the latter, concocting a cheery ending better suited to a politically correct fairy tale than to a female-centric *Macbeth*. 5-city author tour. (Oct.)Forecast: Fans of Rosalind Miles's *Guenevere* trilogy will appreciate this title.

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From Library Journal

Reisert's first novel is a satisfying coming-of-age account of loss and loneliness and of revenge and its consequences. It tells the story of the young foundling named Gilly living in Birnam Wood with Nettle and Helga, who take her in after Macbeth's deeds leave her homeless. Though she is considered a witch, Gilly is also just a young woman driven by ordinary but powerful emotions. Her goal is Macbeth's destruction, and the action relates closely to Shakespeare's play, offering considerable tension and suspense for those who know that story. Reisert, a playwright who has also directed four productions of *Macbeth*, offers an intimate look at life in an 11th-century castle from the servant's point of view, portraying a period in history that is somewhat neglected in fiction. Though Gilly's journeys in pursuit of her goal put her in unlikely circumstances, she is believable as a strong, dynamic, and sympathetic heroine who struggles with her emotions and personal identity. Fans of historical fiction will enjoy this novel; recommended for all public libraries. Jean Langlais, St. Charles P.L., IL

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From [Booklist](#)

Gilly lives in the woods with two old women, Mad Helga and Nettle, who are persecuted as witches. She once led a very different life, but, when she was just a child, that was taken away from her by one man, Macbeth. Now a young woman in her teens, she is finally ready to realize the purpose of her life: to kill Macbeth. Leaving Helga and Nettle, who attempt to dissuade her from revenge, Gilly disguises herself as a boy and obtains work in Macbeth's castle as a kitchen boy. Though she is barely able to catch glimpses of Macbeth, characters such as Fleance, Macduff, and Prince Malcolm cross her path. Even as Gilly works toward Macbeth's destruction, with the reluctant aid of Helga and Nettle, her affection for Pod, a simple boy

she rescued in the woods, and the fact that her actions may endanger someone she loves, threaten to sway her purpose. Ultimately, Gilly must decide whether the past or the future is more important. Reiser's first novel is involving, complex, and highly enjoyable. *Kristine Huntley*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Nancy Fisher:

This book entitled *The Third Witch* to be one of several books this best seller in this year, here is because when you read this guide you can get a lot of benefit on it. You will easily to buy this particular book in the book retail store or you can order it by means of online. The publisher of this book sells the e-book too. It makes you quicker to read this book, since you can read this book in your Smartphone. So there is no reason for you to past this e-book from your list.

Luke Palmieri:

Your reading sixth sense will not betray you, why because this *The Third Witch* e-book written by well-known writer who knows well how to make book that may be understand by anyone who all read the book. Written inside good manner for you, still dripping wet every ideas and writing skill only for eliminate your own personal hunger then you still hesitation *The Third Witch* as good book not merely by the cover but also from the content. This is one guide that can break don't determine book by its deal with, so do you still needing one more sixth sense to pick this particular!? Oh come on your examining sixth sense already alerted you so why you have to listening to an additional sixth sense.

Delores Saenz:

Reading a book to be new life style in this calendar year; every people loves to go through a book. When you learn a book you can get a lot of benefit. When you read publications, you can improve your knowledge, since book has a lot of information onto it. The information that you will get depend on what sorts of book that you have read. In order to get information about your analysis, you can read education books, but if you act like you want to entertain yourself you can read a fiction books, such us novel, comics, as well as soon. The *The Third Witch* provide you with a new experience in examining a book.

Barbara Guevara:

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