

ACT III SCENE III. A park near the palace.

Enter three Murderers

First Murderer

But who did bid thee join with us?

Macbeth has hired a third murderer to join the original two he has previously spoken with. This could hint at Macbeth's paranoid mental state, or in his desperation for the murder to happen.

Third Murderer

Macbeth.

Second Murderer

He needs not our mistrust, since he delivers

Unlike Macbeth, the second murderer states that they should trust the third man, as he has been sent to help them with their assignment.

Our offices and what we have to do

To the direction just.

First Murderer

Then stand with us.

The west yet glimmers with some streaks of day:

Now spurs the lated traveller apace

To gain the timely inn; and near approaches

The subject of our watch.

A reference to the change from light to dark. It is significant that this scene takes place at twilight, is this is the change between light (symbolic of goodness and purity) to darkness (symbolic of evil). This is a metaphor for Macbeth's own transition from good to evil, and of Banquo's impending death.

This line would help to create tension and suspense for the audience.

Third Murderer

Hark! I hear horses.

Banquo's reference to light is symbolic of his innocence and goodness.

BANQUO

[Within] Give us a light there, ho!

Second Murderer

Then 'tis he: the rest

That are within the note of expectation

Already are i' the court.

First Murderer

His horses go about.

Third Murderer

Almost a mile: but he does usually,
So all men do, from hence to the palace gate
Make it their walk.

Second Murderer

A light, a light!

Enter BANQUO, and FLEANCE with a torch

Third Murderer

'Tis he.

First Murderer

Stand to't.

BANQUO

It will be rain to-night.

First Murderer

Let it come down.

They set upon BANQUO

BANQUO

O, treachery! Fly, good Fleance, fly, fly, fly!

Thou mayst revenge. O slave!

Dies. FLEANCE escapes

Third Murderer

Who did strike out the light?

The pathetic fallacy shown here symbolises the evil deed that is to be committed. This is a common theme throughout the play, bad weather often signifying evil deeds and / or the unbalanced natural world.

The murderer makes an eerie joke, suggesting that Banquo doesn't need to worry about the rain, since he is about to die. It could also suggest that the poor weather will not stop them from completing their mission, and therefore the promise of rain is insignificant.

His words suggest that he at least suspects that Macbeth is behind the attack. His previous depiction as a knowledgeable and perceptive character would certainly support this.

This is significant as we know from the prophecies of the Witches that Macbeth's desire to thwart Banquo's family line rests upon the elimination of Fleance, Banquo's son and heir.

A metaphor for how Banquo's goodness has just been struck out.

Banquo commands his son to avenge his (Banquo's) death. Although Fleance doesn't get direct revenge on Macbeth (e.g. killing him), we know from the prophecy that Fleance will become, or at least father, monarchs. This defies Macbeth's wishes and, therefore, is revenge upon him. Banquo's success is long lasting.

First Murderer

Wast not the way?

Third Murderer

There's but one down; the son is fled.

This echoes Lady Macbeth's statement "what's done is done". "Done" shows it is in the past and can no longer be changed, much like the previous murder of Duncan.

Second Murderer

We have lost

Best half of our affair.

First Murderer

Well, let's away, and say how much is done.

Exeunt