

Maria : Am I not in your power? But it is hard for my little one to be here.

Corder : Nonsense! The child will sleep as peacefully here as in the graveyard. (*Stops digging and straightens up*). Ah, the grave is large enough now.

Voice (*from off left—sepulchral*): Too large—too large by far!

MARIA sinks to the ground, CORDER drops the spade and goes left to look off.

Corder (*calling*): Who are you? Answer, I charge you! Who are you? (*After a pause*). There is no reply. (*Returns to behind hillock*). Quick, we must complete the deed and away from here with all dispatch.

He takes the bundle from MARIA puts it into the grave and covers it over.

Corder : 'Tis done! (*MARIA picks up a stick and pushes it in the ground behind the hillock*). Why do you push that stick into the ground?

Maria : I am marking the spot so that later I may return and strew the little grave with flowers.

Corder : That would be most unwise. Hurry, we are not safe here!

Music Cue 24—(Maria Theme softly).

Maria (*kneeling*): Farewell, farewell, my dearest child. May the angels up above guard thee. Never, never shall I see thee more.

End Music Cue 24.

Corder : (*moving right*): Maria—come at once!

Maria (*rising and moving across to CORDER*): I come. William, I have great fear. What could that voice have been?

Corder : 'Twas nothing but the echo of this lonely place.

Maria : No—that could not be. I believe it to have been the voice of a spirit.

Corder : Nonsense. Come, we must away. (*They move to exit right*).

Maria (*checking and looking back*): I am sore afraid.

Corder (*ushering her off right*): Stupid girl—there is no eye that beholds us now. Come! (*They go off right*).

Music Cue 25—(Gypsy Theme).

Enter NELL HATFIELD from down left.
(*At this point, if traverse curtains are used, they can be opened to enable the full stage to be used for the gypsy scene which follows. Cut-out trees could be set during the first half of this scene.*)

Nell (*aside*): There you are mistaken, William Corder. There is one eye that sees your every deed. 'Tis the eye of

Nell Hatfield, the gypsy—and vengeance will be mine. Did you not rob me of my sister, Zella, and send my brother a wanderer across the sea? For these deeds, will I make you an outcast, strip you of your fortune and let you suffer the pangs of despised beggary we suffer. (*To centre stage*). I'll drag you to the scaffold foot, then, with my vengeful eyes glaring into yours and my cry of bitter mockery ringing in your ears, I'll force you to mount, step by step, until I place the rope around your neck. Then shall I watch you die and pray that your death will be a long, torturous one.

End Music Cue 25.

PETRA, CARMEN and ROSA, three gypsy women, rush in from the right.

Petra (*running to NELL*): Nell! Nell! We bring you fearful tidings.

Rosa : We have been driven from the common by the officers of the law, acting for this William Corder.

Nell : Driven from the common?

Carmen : Aye, 'tis true. But, ere we go, our men have sworn vengeance, full and deep.

Rosa : Aye, vengeance! Vengeance!

Petra : Our men will strike the blow surely. This Corder heeded not our cries nor those of our children—why then should we spare his life? This very night shall Corder's eyes be closed in the sleep of death.

Gypsies : Vengeance! Vengeance! (*They start to run off left*).

Nell : Hold! Whither you go?

Rosa : To join our menfolk. This William Corder has set the police upon us, hunted us like wild beasts from the land his good father allowed us to pitch our tents upon. And for resistance, many of our men lie in the jail. So Corder's life must answer for it.

Nell (*crossing to them*): Hold! Hold I say—this must not be!

Carmen : What mean you?

Nell : That particular revenge is mine! I claim it for my own!

Rosa : Our husbands cry for vengeance within their prison cells. Shall they cry in vain?

Nell : Not so. He has stacks of wheat and hay. Give them and all the barns and his house to the flames. Make him a beggar and that complete. I will reveal a secret that will put the hangman's noose around his neck.

Carmen : Tell us the nature of the secret.

Nell : Nay—I will not tell you my secret yet—not until the work of desolation is complete. Go now—tell our brothers