

Corder: Here is the spot I've fixed on to complete my purpose. Everything is ready to inhumate the body. That disposed of, I'll defy detection. I now await my victim. Will she come? (*He looks off right*). Ah yes, for a woman is fool enough to do anything for the man she loves. Who's there? (*Starts back*). Ha, 'tis no one. How foolish are these startling fears. (*Moves to centre stage*). I'll entreat the fiends of hell to work strong within me, drown my fears and slake my thirst for vengeance in her blood! *End Music Cue 36*. Hark, by Heaven, she comes! 'Tis her footsteps bounding across the fields. Little does she think that death is so near. Now, all ye fiends of hell, spur me to the deed—teach me not to feel pity nor remorse. Hand, heart be firm, my reputation save and hurl my victim to an early grave. Hold, she is here! (*Hides up right*).

Music Cue 37—(Maria Theme softly).

Maria (*calling*): William, William—are you here? 'Tis strange he does not answer. (*Moves centre looking for him*). He is not here. (*Moves down left*). How silent is all around. A fearful gloom seems to hang about this place. (*To centre stage*). Oh, William, William, to thee I trust for future happiness! In sweet companionship with thee, I'll sail down life's rough stream 'till death our fond hearts sever. (*Sits on one of the bales*). Here will I await his coming and think of all the happy days life holds in store for me. Such sweet thoughts will dispel the sorrows which now fill my troubled heart.

End Music Cue 37.

Music Cue 38—(Villain Theme).

CORDER *steps out from behind door and moves silently towards MARIA*.

Corder: Maria Marten!

Maria (*rising and moving D.L.C.*): William, is that you? How glad I am to hear your voice, for I have died a hundred times whilst waiting for you in this gloomy spot.

End Music Cue 38.

Corder (*aside*): To die but once will be sufficient for my purpose. (*Aloud*). Were you observed upon the way?

Maria: No, dearest William. Now, let us leave this place, lest we should be seen and recognised by anyone. (*Moving towards exit up right*).

Corder (*crossing to her and catching hold of her*): Stay! Ere we leave this place, we must understand each other.

Maria: What mean you, William? Speak! But speak and ease my tortured breast.

Corder: Listen to me, Maria. But a few days since, you visited the apothecary here in the village did you not?

Maria: Why yes, I fetched some lotion for the pain in my old mother's back.

Corder (*twisting her arm roughly*): And did you ask him questions about the medicine I obtained from him for the child?

Maria: I know not what you mean. William, you are hurting me.

Corder: You know exactly what I mean.

Maria: Let us leave at once. My blood is frozen in my veins and I am faint with terror.

Corder: No—not yet, Maria. (*Pulling her roughly towards him*). Tell me—have you told anyone of what you learnt of the apothecary?

Maria: I have not breathed a word to a living soul.

Corder (*pushing her down right but remaining D.R.C.*): Then, by Heaven, thou art in my power and I will keep thee so—aye and for ever!

Music Cue 39—(Maria Theme until Cue 40).

Maria (*aside*): Do I hear aright? My ears must mock me. (*Aloud*). Oh, William, how have I lost thy love?

Corder: Ask thy false heart and it will answer thee.

Maria: No, no, as there is truth in Heaven, I have not wronged thy love. What have I not sacrificed for it?

Corder (*moving to her*): I'll hear no more!

Maria (*kneeling*): Oh, William, behold me on my knees. (*Grasping him*) I pray thee to keep thy promise and make me thy lawful wife. Let me, once again, walk erect and look my fellow creatures in the face, without the blush of shame mantling my cheeks.

Music Cue 40—(Villain Theme).

Corder (*freeing himself from her grasp and moving centre stage*): Marry thee! Mark me, Maria, I brought you here not to marry you, but to let you know my resolution. Instantly swear to keep the murder of the child a secret and renounce all pretensions of becoming my wife or, by Heaven, you never quit this spot alive!

End Music Cue 40.

Maria (*aside*): Oh, wretch! Have I trusted in such a fiend? But no; it cannot be. (*Rising and moving to CORDER—aloud*). Oh, William, tell me that you have but sported with me, and I will bless thee.

Corder: Will you take the oath?

Maria: Never, villain, traitor! I will die first!

Corder: Then shall your blood be on your own head.

Music Cue 41—(Villain Theme loudly until Cue 42).

MARIA *tries to escape but CORDER seizes her and drags her to the bales of straw*.

Corder: Look behind these bales of straw!