

# **Requiem**

an opera by Oscar Strasnoy  
libretto by Matthew Jocelyn

based on «Requiem for a Nun» by William Faulkner

Dramatis personae

Temple Drake (Mrs. Gavin Stevens), mid twenties (light to lyric mezzo)

Nancy Mannigoe, early thirties (lyric soprano with coloratura)

Gavin Stevens early fifties (bass-baritone)

Gowan Stevens *his nephew*, late twenties (lyric baritone)

Bucky Stevens *Temple and Gowan's son*, 7 years old (boy soprano)

The Governor, late fifties (bass-baritone)

Red, early twenties, a voice from the past  
Pete, Red's younger brother, mid twenties



same singer  
(tenor)

The Jailor (character tenor)

The Judge (bass)

Audience at the trial and Chorus

## Prologue

*October.*

*Temple's private apartment.*

*The room is scattered with clothing and other objects – as though every closet, cupboard or desk drawer has been emptied of its contents in the thorough, somewhat savage search for something.*

*Temple's hat, gloves and handbag are on a table, as is a bag associated with an infant. Two other bags, obviously Temple's, are on the floor by the door. There is a sense of imminent departure.*

*Pete is standing by the closet door.*

*Temple enters from the house. She is wearing a dark suit for traveling beneath a lightweight open coat. She is hatless, carries a fur coat and a child's blanket over one arm. In the other hand she carries a baby's milk bottle, full.*

*She stops, glances around at the mess.*

PETE : Well?

TEMPLE : No. No-one's seen her since this morning.

PETE : Like I said.  
Okay. We still got time.  
Where does she live, the bitch?

TEMPLE : And then what?  
Hold a cigarette to her foot?

PETE : It's five hundred dollars. Hard cash.  
Plus the jewellery.  
Maybe nothing to you.

TEMPLE : Pete! Why not quit now?  
Clear out till my husband returns.  
I'll make good  
As soon as he's back.

PETE : Maybe I don't understand...

TEMPLE : The letters. You've still got the letters.

PETE : Oh, the letters.

*He reaches inside his coat, takes out a small, carefully tied-together bundle of letters and tosses it onto the table.*

PETE : They're yours for the taking.

TEMPLE : I don't want them. I already told you.

PETE : Sure. You don't want them.

*They watch each other. Temple dumps the fur coat and the blanket onto the table, carefully sets the bottle down, picks up the letters and holds her hand out to Pete.*

TEMPLE : Give me your lighter.

*Pete holds his lighter out to her. Temple flicks the lighter on, holds it in one hand, the bundle of letters in the other.*

PETE : Go ahead, burn them.  
You say you don't want them.  
Be my guest – burn them.

TEMPLE : Okay. I'll burn them.  
I swear to you I'll burn them.  
I'll burn them. I'll burn them.



*They watch each other. Finally Temple extinguishes lighter, drops her arm.*

PETE : Baby. My Baby.

TEMPLE : Don't call me that.

PETE : Red did. I'm as good a man as he was – ain't I?

*They kiss passionately. Nancy steps just inside the doorway. They don't see her.*

PETE : Come on. Let's get outa here.  
I can't do it in this house ...

*Pete notices Nancy across Temple's shoulder. Temple turns and sees her too.*

PETE : What the hell...?!

TEMPLE : What are you doing here?

*Pause.*

NANCY *offering them a cigarette* : I brought my foot.

*Pause. Blackout. A lone harmonica is heard. Perhaps Pete is playing.*

### Interlude

*(Introit)*

Requiem aeternam dona eis, Domine,  
et lux perpetua luceat eis.  
Tu decet hymnus Deus, in Sion,  
Et tibi reddetur votum in Ierusalem.

*Grant them eternal rest, O Lord,  
And let perpetual light shine upon them,  
A hymn becomes you, oh God, in Zion  
And to you shall a vow be repaid in  
Jerusalem.*

.

*The curtain rises.*

## **Act 1**

### Scene 1

*Yoknapatawpha County Courthouse. November 13<sup>th</sup>, 5.30pm.*

*In the courtroom – the bar, the judge, officers, the opposing lawyers, the jury. The prisoner – Nancy Mannigoe – is standing.*

*Silence.*

JUDGE : Have you anything to say before the sentence of the court is pronounced upon you? Once the sentence is pronounced, you will hold your peace, in the name of the law. Is that clear?

*Nancy remains motionless.*

JUDGE : I said, is that clear?

*Nancy remains motionless. Is she even listening?*

JUDGE : Mister Stevens, does your client understand that she is to remain silent after the pronouncement of the sentence? If she has anything to say, say it now.

STEVENS : Nancy?

*Nancy remains motionless.*

STEVENS : Nancy?

*Nancy remains motionless.*

STEVENS : She understands, your Honor.  
Insofar as a suffering and confident soul  
Can understand the laws of man.

JUDGE: Then I shall proceed. It has been determined that you, Nancy Mannigoe, on the ninth day of September, did willfully and with malice aforethought kill and murder the infant child of Mr. and Mrs. Gowan Stevens, in the town of Jefferson and the County of Yoknapatawpha.

It is the sentence of this court that you be taken from hence back to the Yoknapatawpha county jail and there, on the thirteenth day of March, be hanged by the neck until you are dead. And may God have mercy on your soul.

*Silence.*

NANCY : Yes, Lord. Thank you, Lord.

*A gasp is heard from invisible spectators.. This is an unheard of violation of procedure, and sets off a wave of shock – an uproar.*

*All of the below happen more or less simultaneously, or at least in rapid, overlapping succession. The result is quite cacophonous.*

*At the same time the chorus erupts. (Dies irae)*

CHORUS : Dies irae, dies illa	<i>The day of wrath, that day</i>
Solvat saeculum in favilla	<i>Will dissolve the world in ashes</i>
Teste David cum Sybilla.	<i>As foretold by David and the sibyl.</i>

*Exchange below (G and T) is not necessarily distinguishable as separate text.*

GOWAN : How dare she?!  
The murdering bitch.  
How dare she?!

TEMPLE : Gowan, let's get out of here.  
C'mon, Let's go!

JUDGE : Order! Order! Order! Order!

*Nancy Mannigoe remains immobile, impervious to the reaction she has provoked.*

*Blackout.*

*The CHORUS continues :*

Quantus tremor est futurus, Quando iudex est venturus, Cuncta stricte discussurus.	<i>How much tremor there will be when the judge will come, investigating everything strictly.</i>
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## Scene 2

*The Stevens' living room. November 13<sup>th</sup>. 6pm.*

*The light switches on, then the door opens and Temple enters, followed by her husband Gowan Stevens and his uncle Gavin Stevens.*

*Temple is very soignée in appearance, taut, stylish, in an open fur coat (the same as from the Prologue), hat, gloves.*

*Gowan is three or four years older than Temple is, carefully groomed, still has certain traces of a former youthful insouciance, though long gone. A tragedy has struck which has left its mark.*

*Temple takes a cigarette from a box on the table, and mimics Nancy Mannigoe.*

TEMPLE : Yes, Lord. Guilty, Lord. Thank you, Lord.  
Here's my neck your Honor, where's the noose?

GOWAN : Stop it, Boots. That's enough.  
I'll light the fire then get us some drinks.  
(to Stevens) Or you snap the match while I play butler.

TEMPLE : I'll do the fire. You get the drinks.  
Then Uncle Gavin can go.  
Spare us his speech :  
(She imitates Gavin)  
"Sadly, despite my efforts,  
I could not save your daughter's murderer,  
The assassin, that is, of my own great-niece.  
Humbly, therefore, I shall take my leave."

GOWAN *anxiously* : Boots ...

TEMPLE : (Holding lighter to gas) For God's sake, just get me a drink.

*He exits. Stevens remains by the door.*

TEMPLE : Take a seat if you want -  
or better still, leave.  
Can't I triumph  
in the privacy of my home?

*Stevens crosses to her at the fireplace, holding out a handkerchief. She looks up at him.*



TEMPLE : What's that for?

STEVENS : It's all right. It's dry too.

*She makes no effort to take the handkerchief.*

STEVENS : For tomorrow, then.

TEMPLE : Oh, for the train you mean.  
We're flying. California.  
Then maybe Hawaii.  
Or Canada- Lake Louise.  
So keep your rag.

*Stevens remains immobile.*

What do you want?  
You'll get nothing from me.  
Is that clear?  
Not even tears.

STEVENS *putting away the handkerchief* : I hear you.

TEMPLE : Good.  
Now let me ask you this:  
how much do you know...?

*Gowan enters. Temple immediately and seamlessly changes subject in mid-sentence.*

... and as her lawyer, did she not explain?  
Give you an excuse?  
Even a dope-fiend who murders a child  
must have an excuse.  
A nigger dope-fiend who kills a white baby.  
A whoring nigger dope-fiend...

GOWAN : Stop it, Boots. Please, stop it.

*He is carrying a tray containing a pitcher of water, a bowl of ice, three empty tumblers and three whiskey glasses already filled. The bottle is in his top-coat pocket. He offers a drink to Temple.*

GOWAN : That's right.  
I too 'm gonna have me a drink.  
A nice cool drink.  
And after eight years - why not?

TEMPLE : Why not?

*Temple takes one of the filled glasses. Gowan offers the tray to Stevens, then sets it on the table and takes up the third glass.*

GOWAN : Time to start again, if ever there was.

STEVENS *under his breath* : If ever there were.

*Almost unaware of what he is doing, Gowan sets his glass back on the tray, untouched. He pours water from the pitcher into a tumbler and hands the tumbler to Stevens.*

GOWAN : Now maybe Defense Attorney Stevens will tell us what he wants.

STEVENS : To say good-bye.

GOWAN : Then say it.

*Gowan takes the tumbler from Stevens, takes the bottle from his coat pocket, pours, then makes a highball, adding ice and water to the whiskey. Temple places her own drink back on the tray.*

A drink for the lawyer of the murdering coon.  
To Defense Attorney Stevens,  
and his child-murdering nigger.  
To the mother. To the father.

TEMPLE : Gowan.

GOWAN : Sorry.

*He notices her untouched glass beside his on the tray.*

GOWAN : No drink?

TEMPLE : No, thank you. I'd like some milk.

GOWAN : Yes. Right. Hot, of course.

TEMPLE : Please.

GOWAN : Right. Please. Excuse me.

*He exits back to the kitchen.*

TEMPLE *quickly* : How much do you know?  
Don't lie to me. Don't you see there's no time.

STEVENS : No time for what?  
Nancy has four months. Till March.  
The thirteenth of March.

TEMPLE : A nigger. With a white lawyer.  
I'm not stupid.  
You could make her talk.

*Temple stops herself, looks at Stevens, who remains silent.*

Oh, God. Oh, God. She told you nothing?  
I just can't believe...

STEVENS : ... that a dope-fiend nigger whore might not rat?  
No, she told me nothing.

TEMPLE *trying to backtrack*: Even if there was anything...

STEVENS : Even if there were.

TEMPLE : Then what do you think you know?

STEVENS : There was a man there that night.

TEMPLE : Gowan.

STEVENS : Gowan left that morning.  
He took Bucky fishing.

TEMPLE : So I was right. She talked.  
Did you threaten her? Frighten her?  
Bribe her with some dope?  
There was no man. Understood?  
You will get nothing. Not from me.

*They hear the pantry door slap shut. She changes face, in full command, as Gowan enters, carrying a small tray with a glass of milk, a salt-shaker and a napkin.*

*She checks glass for temperature, picks it up, heads upstairs.*

TEMPLE : Thank you, dear. It's time for Bucky's bath.

GOWAN : Of course, dear.

*Temple remains immobile, as though suspended, holding the milk. She hears Red's voice – treated in such a way as to be somewhat disturbing, disorienting, unreal :*

RED *offstage* : Temple? Temple baby, open up.  
It's me, Red.  
I'm coming in...

GOWAN : Boots? Are you -

TEMPLE *coming to* : - Sorry. *(to Stevens)* Good-bye then.  
Until next June.

*She heads upstairs, then pauses again on her way up. She hears Red again.*

RED *offstage* : Baby. My baby.

TEMPLE *as though alone* : Red...

GOWAN *as before* : Are you all right?

*She interrupts her own momentary hallucination ...*

TEMPLE : What? Oh -  
Toodle-loo

*She disappears upstairs.*

GOWAN : Drink up uncle Gavin.  
Best leave us to our revenge.

STEVENS : I wish it could help.

GOWAN : I wish to God it could.  
An eye for an eye – how empty it feels.

STEVENS : And yet she still has to die.

GOWAN : No loss – a nigger dope-fiend whore.

STEVENS : ... saved one day  
By Mr. and Mrs. Gowan Stevens.  
Pulled from the gutter, to raise their children,  
And in return –

GOWAN : Enough, already.

STEVENS : So you say she must die?

GOWAN : The state says she must die.

*He picks up the highball – starts to drink.*

GOWAN *spoken* : Who in hell ever called that a drink?

*He dashes the drink, glass and all, into the ice bucket, takes the bottle of whiskey and begins to fill a tumbler. He continues to pour until the tumbler is overflowing. Stevens stops him.*

STEVENS : Stop it. Stop it, now.

*He takes the bottle and glass from Gowan, pours some of the contents of the first glass into an empty glass and hands this back to Gowan. Gowan takes the glass, but still does not drink.*

*Aria. (He has gone over this scenario every day of his life.)*

GOWAN : Eight years. Eight years.  
Eight years. Eight years.  
Not a sniff, not a drink.  
Such is the price of honor.  
But what did it buy me? What did I get?  
Gowan Stevens - taught to drink like a gentleman...  
Eight years. Eight years.  
Eight years. Eight years.  
Then one fine day got drunk like ten.  
Took Miss Temple for a spin,  
My head already spinning,  
Round, and round, and round.  
Eight years. Eight years.  
Eight years. Eight years.  
Got lost, got crashed,  
Drank s'more moonshine, got totally bashed.  
Yup, drank like an army, got right down smashed.  
And Miss Temple, the small-town virgin  
With the hunger-seeking lips?  
She disappeared, she vanished,  
Got herself kidnapped, stolen away.  
Miss virgin Temple.  
Eight years. Eight years.  
Eight years. Eight years.

Oh they found her, yup they found her all right,  
Locked up tight in a Memphis whorehouse,  
A sporting house, a humping palace.  
A sporting house, a humping palace,  
where she...

*He sings something under his breath, inaudible.*

Lo... lo... lo... lo... lo ...lo... lo... lo...  
(Loved it.)

STEVENS : What's that?

GOWAN : So I married her. To make amends.  
Pure Virginia.  
A gentleman times one hundred, that's me.

STEVENS : Hold on. What did you say?  
Locked up in a whorehouse where she...?

GOWAN : That's all. You heard me.

STEVENS : ...where she loved it.

*Short silence. They stare at each other.*

STEVENS : Is that it?  
You paid a heavy price  
for something she never even lost –  
a willing white girl prisoner  
to some bad-boy Bedouin prince.

*Short silence.*

GOWAN : Get out! Go!

STEVENS : And is that why this poor,  
Negro woman must die?  
So you can stop remembering  
what really happened  
while Temple lay prisoner  
in that Manuel Street Memphis dive?

*Still staring at Stevens, Gowan sets the glass of whiskey back on the tray and takes up the bottle. He swings it bottom up back over his head. The whiskey begins to pour out of it, down his arm and sleeve and onto the floor.*

GOWAN : So help me Christ... So help me Christ.

*Stevens puts his own glass back on the tray, turns, takes his hat, and exits. Gowan remains standing, bottle in the air. Then he takes a long shuddering breath, seems to rouse, wake, sets the empty bottle back on the tray. He notices his untasted whiskey glass, takes it up, then turns and throws the glass crashing into the fireplace.*

BUCKY upstairs : Daddy? Daddy?

*Gowan hears but does not respond to his son's cries. He dabs at his whiskey-drenched shirt, then collects glasses on tray and heads back into the kitchen, outwardly calm.*

*Blackout.*

CHORUS : *(Sequenza 12-13)*

Ingemisco, tamquam reus :  
Culpa rubet vultus meus :  
Supplicanti parce, Deus.

*I sigh, like the guilty one:  
My face reddens in guilt :  
Spare the supplicating one, God.*

Qui Mariam absolvisti  
Et latronem exaudisti,  
Mihi quoque spem dedisti

*Thou who absolved Mary,  
and hearest the robber,  
gavest hope to me, too.*

### Scene 3

*Four months later. The Stevens' living room. March 11<sup>th</sup>, 10pm.*

*Temple paces. . Bucky is asleep on the sofa.*

*The doorbell rings. Temple goes to the door. Stevens enters.*

TEMPLE : Something to drink?

*Stevens shuts the door behind him.*

TEMPLE : Shhh. Bucky's sleeping.

STEVENS : Bucky?

*Temple indicates where Bucky is sleeping on the sofa.*

STEVENS : He shouldn't be here...

TEMPLE *cutting him off* : But he is.

*Pause*

STEVENS : So, you came back.

TEMPLE : I came back?

Your telegraph was clear.

«One more week till March 13.

But then where will you go?»

STEVENS : Just two days, now.

TEMPLE : Do you believe in coincidences?

STEVENS : Excuse me?

TEMPLE *arietta* : Coincidences.

We were on the beach,

Bucky and I.

I was reading, trying to read.

Bucky was doing whatever little boys do.

Little boys – my little boy.

Then suddenly he asks :

Is California far from home?



- Yes, my darling.
- How long are we staying ?
- I don't know, honeykins.

Then he looks at me,  
He looks at me wide-eyed and asks :  
Will we stay till they hang Nancy?  
He looks at me,  
He looks at me and asks ...:

*BUCKY still asleep on the sofa, barely audible :*  
Will we stay till they hang Nancy?

TEMPLE : Yes, my darling, yes, yes.  
Yes, my darling, yes.  
And he, with his innocent eyes,  
He looks at me and says :  
And then, mommy,  
Then where will we go?

*Pause*

STEVENS : Coincidence.

TEMPLE : Pure coincidence.

STEVENS and TEMPLE *together* : Coincidence.

TEMPLE : So, Nancy must be saved.  
So Bucky can sleep at night,  
So that I too can sleep.  
Is there something I haven't told you?  
Is there something that you know?

STEVENS : You alone know what you know.

*With her face averted, Temple reaches her hand to the table, fumbles until she finds the cigarette box, takes a cigarette and with the same hand fumbles until she finds the lighter.*

*She starts the following with cigarette in her mouth, unlit, trying to be supremely casual.*

TEMPLE : It doesn't matter what happened.  
Who cares what I know.  
I'll sign an affidavit -  
Say she's crazy.

Been so for years.

*She lights the cigarette. Stevens pushes the ashtray along the table to within reach.*

STEVENS : It's too late for that.  
In the eyes of the law  
Nancy Mannigoe is dead.

TEMPLE : There must be something I can swear  
to this bunch of lawyers –  
this Supreme Court.

STEVENS : Not the Supreme Court.  
It's too late for that too.  
We're going to the Governor.  
Tonight.

TEMPLE : The Governor?

STEVENS : He will hear you -  
Temple Drake.

TEMPLE : Mrs. Gowan Stevens.  
Temple Drake is dead,  
Died eight years ago.

STEVENS : The past is never dead.  
It's not even past.  
Temple Drake.

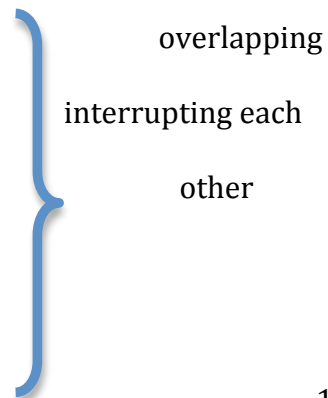
*Pause*

TEMPLE : And what are we to tell him?  
What is she to say?

STEVENS : The truth.

TEMPLE : The truth?  
I'm here to save this woman,  
Which is more than you could do  
I, the mother of the murdered child,  
I've come back to save her.  
And you speak to me of truth.

STEVENS :  
If we're to save this woman...



(For we can't save the murdered child),  
Then you must speak the truth

STEVENS : Just to have it said.  
Just to say it. Just to hear it.  
Just to have it heard.

TEMPLE : Listen – how much do you know?

STEVENS : There was a man here, that night...

*Pause*

TEMPLE : There was no man.

STEVENS : Temple!

TEMPLE : Listen to me. I've said it before.  
Temple Drake is dead.  
The girl I was died eight years ago.  
Eight long years before Nancy will die.  
So if Nancy Mannigoe's salvation  
Depends on Temple Drake, then  
God help Nancy Mannigoe.  
Now get out of here.

*Stevens rises, slowly, moves towards the door.*

STEVENS : Good night.

TEMPLE : Good night.

*He opens the door.*

TEMPLE : Gavin...

*He pauses, hand on the knob, the door open.*

*She hesitates, then decides not to recant.*

TEMPLE : Close the door quietly.  
Bucky's asleep.

*But he is already gone.*

*Temple remains immobile. She presses her palms hard against her face for a moment, her face calm, expressionless, cold. She drops her hands, picks up the ashtray, goes to empty it in the fireplace. She comes back, looks over Bucky, arranges the blanket on him. Bucky rolls over, groans.*

BUCKY : Mommy? Can I go to bed now?

TEMPLE : In a minute, sweetie.

BUCKY : Is uncle Gavin gone?

TEMPLE : Yes, sweetie.

*She brushes his hair out of his face. He is already asleep again. She goes over to the telephone, lifts the receiver, dials.*

TEMPLE : Hello Maggie? It's Temple... Yes, we're back.  
Oh, I don't know. Too much sunshine. *(little laugh)*  
Yes, of course, I'll drop by tomorrow.  
I need to leave a message for Gavin...  
Yes, yes... he just left.  
When he comes in, please ask him to call.  
It's ... urgent.  
Yes... of course... see you tomorrow then... thank you.

*She puts the receiver down. She goes back to pick up Bucky, but almost immediately the telephone rings. She runs back to pick up the receiver.*

TEMPLE : Hello ... I just called Maggie.  
Oh...the gas station.  
I didn't think you'd had the time.  
In twenty minutes?  
Your car or ours?  
All right. Listen.  
How much will I have to tell?

*She listens, frozen-faced, then slowly begins to lower the receiver.*

TEMPLE : Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh, God. Oh...

*She crosses to the sofa, takes up the sleeping Bucky and carries him upstairs.*

BUCKY *mumbling* : And then, mommy, where will we go?

*As she is leaving, Gowan enters from the door at the back, fully dressed. He has obviously been listening. He goes to the buffet, opens a drawer, takes out the car keys,*

*hesitates a moment, then make a decisive action with the keys and heads towards the back exit.*

GOWAN *mimicking earlier Bucky comment*: And then, mommy, then where will we go?

*Blackout.*

CHORUS : *(Sequenza 5-6 Tuba Mirum)*

Liber scriptus proferetur,  
In quo totum continetur  
Unde mundus iudicetur.

*The written book will be brought forth  
In which all is contained  
From which the world shall be judged.*

Iudex ergo cum sedebit,  
Quidquid latet, apparebit:  
Nil inultum remanebit.

*When therefore the judge will sit,  
Whatever hides will appear  
Nothing will remain unpunished.*

#### Scene 4

*Jefferson. Office of the Governor of the State. March 12<sup>th</sup>, 2am.*

*The Governor stands behind his desk. He has obviously been roused out of bed, or at least out of his study. He wears a dressing gown, though there is a collar and tie beneath it, and his hair is neatly combed.*

*Temple and Stevens have just entered. Temple wears the same fur coat, hat, bag, gloves etc. as in Act 1, sc.2. Stevens is dressed exactly as he was in Act 1, sc.3. He is carrying his hat.*

STEVENS : Good morning, Henry. Here we are.

GOVERNOR : Yes. Sit down.  
Does Mrs. Temple smoke?

STEVENS : Yes. Thank you.

*Stevens takes a pack of cigarettes from his pocket, as though he had come prepared for the need. He works one of them free and extends the pack to Temple. The Governor pulls a lighter from the pocket of his dressing gown.*

TEMPLE *taking the cigarette* : What, no blindfold?

*Temple puts the cigarette into her mouth. The Governor snaps on the lighter.*

TEMPLE : But no. Of course not.  
I'm not the one on death row.  
So go ahead – fire away.

*The Governor approaches the flame to Temple's cigarette. She leans across the desk to get the light, then sits back.*

TEMPLE : Thanks.

*The Governor puts out the lighter and sits down in the chair behind the desk. Stevens also sits, laying the pack of cigarettes on the desk beside him.*

GOVERNOR : What has Mrs. Stevens come to tell me?

TEMPLE : Not tell you. Ask you.  
*to Stevens* Go on. You tell him.  
Don't lawyers always tell their patients (*nervous laughter*)  
– clients - not to speak?

GOVERNOR : Only before entering the witness stand.

TEMPLE : So this is the witness stand?

GOVERNOR : You've come a long way,  
at two in the morning.  
What would you call it?

TEMPLE : All right - you win.  
But not Mrs. Stevens.  
Temple Drake.  
Surely you remember Temple Drake?  
The all-Mississippi debutante  
Found tucked away in  
a Memphis sporting house.

GOVERNOR : Yes, I remember.  
Temple Drake, then.  
Tell me about Nancy Mannihoe... Mannikoe...  
How does she spell it?

TEMPLE : She doesn't. Can't. Can't read or write.  
Nancy Mannigoe -she's to be hanged tomorrow.

GOVERNOR : Tell me about her.

TEMPLE : A dope-fiend whore  
We took from the gutter  
To raise our children.  
She murdered one of them.  
Tomorrow she's to be hanged.  
I'm asking you to save her.

GOVERNOR : Why?

TEMPLE : Because she was crazy. Crazy.  
*(realizing she has nothing to say)*  
Crazy, crazy, crazy.

*Temple watches, waits for a reaction. The Governor watches her just as attentively.  
She smokes, puffing rapidly.*

TEMPLE : All right.  
Not why I want to save her,  
but why we hired her

- a dope-fiend whore –  
to nurse our children.  
Is that it?

*The Governor continues to watch, saying nothing. Temple continues to smoke rapidly.*

TEMPLE : To have someone to talk to.  
Yes, that's right.  
Someone to talk to.  
And why, you ask, a dope-fiend whore?

*She hesitates.*

GOVERNOR : Yes.  
This far, this late at night.  
Tell.

*Temple still hesitates – the Governor leads her on.*

*Trio :*

GOVERNOR : I know who Temple Drake is.  
Taken by her date to a baseball game.  
There was an accident,  
She disappeared, no-one knew where.  
Then one day she turned up,  
She'd been taken hostage...

TEMPLE : ...  
Taken by my date to a baseball game,  
There was an accident,  
I disappeared, no-one knew where.  
Then one day I turned up,  
I'd been taken hostage...

STEVENS ...  
There was an accident,  
She disappeared, no-one knew where.  
Then one day she turned up,  
She'd been taken hostage...

*Brief suspension*

TEMPLE : ...in a Memphis sporting house -  
you mustn't forget that.



GOVERNOR and STEVENS *together* : In a Manuel Street Memphis dive.

*Pause.*

GOVERNOR : And the young man?

TEMPLE : The young man...?

GOVERNOR : Your escort, your so-called date?

TEMPLE : He's my husband now.

STEVENS : My nephew.  
Did what he had to.

TEMPLE : Did the proper thing.

GOVERNOR, then TEMPLE and STEVENS *together* : He married you? / me. / her.

TEMPLE : Pure Virginia. Always the gentleman.

*Pause*

GOVERNOR : You want to tell me something  
your husband doesn't know,  
Is that right?

*Pause*

TEMPLE : That's right.

GOVERNOR : Suppose he were here – sitting in this chair...  
Would you tell me then?

*Temple is staring at the Governor. Stevens tries to get the Governor's attention. The Governor stops him with a gesture, unnoticed by Temple.*

TEMPLE : He's not.

STEVENS *following her quickly* : He's not.

TEMPLE : He's at home.

TEMPLE and STEVENS *together*: I/She gave him a sleeping pill tonight.

*Pause*

TEMPLE : Please, a cigarette.  
I'll have one now.

*Stevens takes up the pack of cigarettes and works one of the cigarettes free. Temple takes it, already singing, while the Governor shoves the lighter across the desk to Stevens, who picks it up, snaps it on. Temple makes no effort to light the cigarette, holding it in her hand. Finally, she lays it, unlit, on the ashtray. Stevens closes the lighter and sits down again, putting the lighter beside the pack of cigarettes on the desk.*

TEMPLE : Temple Drake liked evil.  
Yes - and evil liked me too.  
The itching, the yearning...  
Something other, something bad.  
The itching, the yearning...  
I could have fled that whorehouse.  
Hit the road and hightailed it home.  
But I stayed. Stayed.  
Shut up like a child bride  
in some Spanish convent.  
Safe in the middle of sin and pleasure.  
Oh so safe in the middle of sin.

GOVERNOR : Safe?

STEVENS : Yes – you didn't know?

TEMPLE : Gavin!

STEVENS : Her abductor – Vitelli by name –  
a tight, slick, cockroach of a man -

TEMPLE : Gavin! No!

STEVENS : He – Vitelli – delivereth not!

GOVERNOR : There was no – sex?

TEMPLE : Not with him.  
He was worse than a father,  
A eunuch, a guard.  
But Temple Drake liked evil.  
So she did what us sporting girls call :  
Fall in love.

STEVENS : The young man – Red was his name –  
was brought by Vitelli himself.

TEMPLE *to Stevens* : Please, stop.

GOVERNOR : I don't think I follow.

TEMPLE : Don't try to.  
I met the man. How doesn't matter.  
What we did – and who was watching us–

GOVERNOR *interrupting* : Watching you?

STEVENS : Yes, watching...

TEMPLE *continues over above, to shut up interruption* :  
And where, and when,  
It doesn't matter.  
I fell in love. Even what that is –  
It doesn't matter.  
What matters is – I wrote the letters ...

GOVERNOR : The part the husband doesn't know...?

TEMPLE : Yes. Good letters.  
Inspired, for a girl of seventeen.  
So good no husband should read them,  
Not then. Not ever.

*She looks away. She remembers the letters, a passage of a letter. Outside of time.*

*Aria.*

Red. Oh, Red.  
I whisper your name,  
I hum it, and call it and cry it.  
I sing your name.  
It rises from the wet,  
the firey-warmth of my wet  
as you thrust and pummel and heave.  
And leave me full, and empty, and so full.  
I lose myself in your name  
as you lose yourself hungrily in the folds  
My secret, my desiring flesh.  
My devouring flesh.

Your name, the colour of my blood, of my slit,  
my hungry always yours-devouring slit.  
My hungry, yours-devouring all.  
You, Red. My Red.  
I am your red.

*She returns to the others.*

TEMPLE : So I wrote the letters.  
How many – I don't know.  
Enough - And that is all.

STEVENS : Not all.

TEMPLE : That is all.

GOVERNOR *as Gavin is about to oppose* : Gavin!

TEMPLE *relinquishing* : And then – blackmail.  
Surely you know what that is.

GOVERNOR : The letters...?

TEMPLE : . . . they reappeared.

GOVERNOR : But this Red fellow died.

TEMPLE : Yes.

*The following overlap, as though Temple is hearing Red's voice in her head.*

RED : Temple...

TEMPLE : Shot from a car...

RED : ...Temple baby, open up...

TEMPLE : ... As he climbed up to see me,

RED : It's me, Red...

TEMPLE : ...just once...

RED : I'm coming in...

TEMPLE : ... alone...

RED : My baby...

*Gunshot. Pause.*

TEMPLE *back to reality* : Killed, as I waited,  
by the man who paid to watch.

TEMPLE : Yes, "this Red fellow" died.  
And I married another.  
To forget. To forgive. Be forgiven.  
And I reformed...  
And had two children.  
And I hired a whore  
to have someone to talk to.  
Hired a whore  
to have someone who knew.

STEVENS : Then they turned up again.  
Those letters.  
She hadn't forgotten.

TEMPLE *echoing him* : I hadn't forgotten.

TEMPLE AND STEVENS *involuntarily together* : Hadn't even reformed.

STEVENS : It was Red's young brother.

TEMPLE : No! God, no!  
Do you really have to tell?

STEVENS : All he wanted was the money.  
Collect for the letters,  
and beat it. Get the hell out.  
But she, no,  
She wanted him.

TEMPLE : No, Gavin, please!

GOVERNOR : Go on.

*(From this point onwards – with interruptions as indicated, Temple hums parts of her first aria recognizable or not – overlapping with Stevens telling the sordid details of the story to the Governor. This is her way of avoiding it – interrupted just by her crying out :«No!»)*

STEVENS : The plan was simple :  
Abandon husband, abandon son,  
Disappear with Pete and her 6-month babe.

TEMPLE : Temple Drake liked  
evil.  
Yes and evil liked me too.

GOVERNOR : Pete?

STEVENS : Red's brother.  
Simple names and simple men.  
But then there was Nancy.  
Not so simple. Not so simple.  
Her mistake – and it proved fatal -  
was to hide the cash.

TEMPLE : The itching, the yearning

GOVERNOR : The cash?

STEVENS : Jewels and cash.  
Enough to see them on their way.

TEMPLE: Something evil,  
Something bad.

GOVERNOR : Temple and Pete?

STEVENS : Yes ... and the baby.

GOVERNOR : ... and the baby.

TEMPLE *hearing all this is unbearable* : No!

STEVENS : It's when she found the money,  
That's when she understood.  
She could just have paid  
young Pete to go away –  
Hush money as first intended.  
But she thought she could save – what?  
I don't know.  
Temple perhaps? The marriage?  
The children?

TEMPLE : Stop, please, please stop.

GOVERNOR : Go on, go on.

STEVENS : She thought she could ...  
But she was wrong

TEMPLE : No! God - no!

STEVENS *to Temple* : Now you. You tell.

*Suspension.*

*Blackout.*

*Intermission.*