

## The Emperor of Scartaglen

Cast: Bart, 46, ruthless, venal, cruel, cunning.

Fiona: Twenty years old, attractive, resentful, hates Bart, arranged marriage, (mother taken care of in arrangement)

May: Fiona's mother. Manipulative with few ethics.

Phelie: Works for Bart and takes constant abuse.

Ellen: Bart loved her and wanted to marry her. She sensed something in his character that chilled her and rejected him. She married Conor Daly, a good man but weak.

Conor Daly: Small farm holding but struggles with his own demons.

Scene: Kitchen of farmhouse. Bart comes across as benign. Fiona prepares breakfast.

Bart goes to window, looks out, turns.

Bart: Are you good?

Fiona: I'm all right.

Bart: We'll get things done today.

Fiona: The forecast is good.

Bart: We have a lot of catching up. Damn rain held us back.

(Bart sits down to breakfast, wife Fiona at stove.)

Bart: Is Phelie around yet?

Fiona: Not yet, no.

Bart: (pause ) Is the bacon ready?

Fiona: No, but soon.

Bart: Is that all you know, no?

Fiona: No.

Bart: (he turns to look at her) Is anything ready?

Fiona: (She brings the pan to him and dishes it out. Says nothing.)

Bart: Any brown bread?

Fiona: No.

Bart: (He turns, grabs her by the back of the head. He brings her head forward. He leans his face in close to her, studies her and tells her in a low voice) Don't say no, no more.)

Fiona: (trembling) Okay.

Bart: Okay. Now kiss me.

Fiona: (Pan still in hand, she kisses him)

Bart: Good girl. Brown bread tomorrow morning, right?

Fiona: Yes. (Bart devours his breakfast)

Bart: You had the breakfast?

Fiona: I did.

Bart: Up early?

Fiona: I was up by six.

Bart: (Looking at clock) Where's that amadan? (Just then the door opens and Phelie comes in.)

Phelie: Well, boss, you're having the bit of breakfast?

Bart: Where were you?

Phelie: Well...

Bart: Well, I had to scratch my arse, pick my nose, sit on the pot? You're late.

Phelie: Ah sure, only a few minutes. (He comes over, looks at Bart's plate) You're getting the full fry. Well, Fiona? (Fiona nods towards him)

Bart: If you're late again, you'll lose money.

Phelie: Ah, sure.

Bart: (Roars) If you're late again, you'll lose money. Is that clear?

Phelie: Right, boss.

Bart: If you can't get here on time, should I tell you shag off? Should I go look for someone else? Should I?

Phelie: No, no no, boss. You're right as rain, boss.

Bart: Goddamn the lot of ye.

Phelie: Yes, boss.

Bart: I wouldn't be waiting for you to tell me neither.

Phelie: I'll do better, boss.

Bart: (Quieting down) You better do better.

Phelie: (Looking at the food) Is there a cup of tay there, missus? (Fiona goes to give him a cup, but Bart stops her)

Bart: There's no tay for a man can't be on time. (He gets up, pushes back the chair, turns to Fiona) See the vet looks at that horse and do what he says. (She's slow to answer so he stops and turns.)

Fiona: I'll take care of it.

(Bart storms out the door, Phelie follows. As soon as the door closes, she subsides. The door bursts open, Bart comes back in, goes into bedroom, stops briefly, looks at her and goes out. She stands rigid for a moment or two, then subsides in a chair, brushing the hair from her forehead. She wanders round the kitchen, picking things up,

studying them then replacing them. She sits down, a look of despair on her face, shoulders slumped. She begins to caoin softly to herself, her arms wrapped round her, goes to mirror and studies herself, rearranges her hair then goes and spits vehemently into fire. She mutters (Loud enough for audience to hear) ‘Damn your soul, damn your soul to hell.’ She sobs quietly to herself.

## Location: Bar

### Bart with his cronies.

Bart: (In expansive mood) I’ll tell you, ‘tis hard grafting in this oul’ country. If it’s not the weather, it’s the Church interfering. If it’s not the Church, it’s the Government, if it’s not the Government, it’s the taxman and if it’s not the taxman, ‘tis the banks. They rob us every step of the way with their laws and licenses, regulations and restrictions – and the politicians taking brown envelopes to do what they want. They have us regulated to death and back again.

Phelie: Never a truer word spoken, boss.

Bart: Soon they’ll want a tax every time we throw the leg over a young wan.

Laborer: That’s a good one, boss.

Bart: There was a time when a man could be independent, work only for himself, gave nothing and got nothing from the ass wipes up there.

Laborer: Regulations, my arse.

Bart: That day is gone. They want to know everything. You must sign this, and you must return that. And the more they know, the more control they have.

Phalie: "Tis a dark place we inhabit.

Bart: My word is my bond. Any man that ever dealt with me will tell you that. If I strike a bargain, shake your hand and spit on it, that's the end of it. A man is a man who acts like a man. I wouldn't wrong a man but if he wrongs me...

Phelie: Right you are, boss. There's a bit of the poet in you.

Bart: Poet my arse. That's for them ponsies up in Dublin sitting around writing love poems, and if they're rejected they can't go on living and if they can't go on living, they do us all a great favor and commit hari kari or whatever they call it – what the Japs do.

Phelie: Well, boss, a broken heart...

Bart: Phelie, shut your trap.

Phelie: Yes, boss.

Bart: Now, where was I?

Laborer: You were talking about the poets.

Bart: Ah, fuck the poets. Anybody – an owl song. No? A bunch of wasters the whole lot of ye.

Laborer: Ah, now Bart, when the chips are down, we're with you.

Bart: And why wouldn't ye? I'm the man who makes things happen in this parish. I bought when nobody wanted to buy. But I knew. There's only so much of it.

Laborer: There's more to it than the buying?

Bart: (Stares at the man) Aye, there's more to it, Michael. A farm needs discipline too, a touch of the whip, a kick in the arse. (pause) Now you could say the same for a woman, discipline, a touch of the whip, a kick in the arse. And a farm needs looking after, every day of the year. You prod it but you stroke it too.

Laborer: Just like a woman. (they all laugh)

Bart: Just like a woman. I had a hundred acres. Now I have five hundred and – I'll have more.

Phelie: People appreciate what you done for the parish, boss.

Bart: They should. But I like to see a man working, money in his pocket for the wife and childer. God gave me the drive and I'll use it.

(He spots a young girl helping behind the bar.)

Bart: Hello there, me darling. Say hello to Bart Brien. (She reluctantly, shyly gives her hand over the bar. He pulls her towards him and kisses her roughly. His cronies cheer)

Phelie: Good on ye, boss, you never lost it.

Bart: Did you like that, love? (Suddenly he's all business.) Right, it's time to leave.

Early start in the morning, on time, right Phelie?

Phelie: Early, boss - not on time but early.

Drunk: (Fed-up listening to Bart) Good riddance. (Bart stops, turns around, walks slowly over, inspects him up and down)

Bart: You said something?

Drunk: I said good riddance.

Bart: Good riddance? And what would that mean now?

Drunk: (False bravado) It means I'm tired of listening to you yapping.

Bart: I'm yapping, am I? Who is he Phelie?

Phelie: He's Barry, boss, Mickey Barry's young fella, just back from England.

Bart: (Surprised) Mickey Barry's young fella. Mickey is a good man. Where in Christ did he get you? (Suddenly strikes drunk. He falls to his knee) D'ye know, you're what's wrong with this little country of ours. Look at you, wake as a straw, polluted with drink. A mongrel, bark you mongrel, yap. Go on, you don't want to hear me yapping so I'll hear you yapping. (Bart twists his arm, drunk screams) Go on, Yap.

Drunk: Yap, yap.

Bart: Can't hear you.

Drunk: Yap, yap, yap.

Bart: (Laughing) D'ye hear that, lads. He didn't want to hear me yapping because he wanted to yap himself. Go on, Yap away.

Drunk : Yap. Yap.

Bart: (Bart pushes him over) I'll be watching you, Mickey Barry's boy. I was easy this time, y'hear?

Drunk: (Looks away)



## Fiona and mother

Mother: How are you, darling?

Fiona: I'm fine.

Mother: You look a little... drawn.

Fiona: I'm fine, okay.

Mother: I'm only asking after you, Fiona.

Fiona: And I said I'm fine.

Mother: How's Bart?

Fiona: He's the same.

Mother: Is that the extent of your conversation, I'm fine, he's fine?

Fiona: (Silence. F. walks around kitchen, looks out window) You see him every week.

Mother: (Pause) I do. He's a good son-in-law.

Fiona: (Silence)

Mother: He promised he'd look after both of us.

Fiona: (Silence)

Mother: Are you not satisfied?

Fiona: How could I be satisfied? Marriage...to him. He's a brute. There's no tenderness. Mother: My God, child, he's not going to bring you flowers or kiss your hand. He's rough. But he'll provide for you - and the children when they come.

(pause) Any sign?

Fiona: Of what?

Mother: (abrupt) Oh Fiona, you know what, you know what. You know he wants children, a son anyway. If you don't give him a son...

Fiona: What if I don't give him a son?

Mother: (Pause) He'll be disappointed. He wants a son.

Fiona: Let him buy one. He's bought everything else.

Mother: (silence) Now Fiona, the match was made, and you agreed. Did you not?

Fiona: I don't love him. I don't even like him...

Mother: (Interrupts) Oh, love, love. What's love? If he says he loves you...

Fiona: No fear of that happening.

Mother: ...but can't provide for you, is that love? If you're living in a broken-down bothan (hut) and the roof's leaking, will you love him? Is that love? Bart is a strong man, ambitious. What's wrong with that? That's why I gave my blessing.

Fiona: And he bought your few miserable acres for more than they were worth. That had nothing to do with it?

Mother: He paid good money for it, let me live in the house

Fiona: You got your house. I got a fine ambitious man. He gets...

Mother: Yes, Fiona, what did he get? He got what was promised, a woman in her prime, strong and healthy enough to have plenty children, and good looking. I envy you. There's no knowing where you and Bart will end up...

Fiona: So true. The County Jail is a real possibility.

Mother: ...That man will get anything he sets his mind to getting, anything. Wait, wait till you see. He'll make enemies but he'll get to where he's going.

Fiona: That's what I'm afraid of.

Mother: There's nothing wrong with ambition, darling. We need more Bart Briens. There's many an eejit sitting in the pub, moaning how they can't get jobs. If a job showed up, they'd take to the bed. I'd put Bart up against any of them.

Fiona: He looks at me like he looks at a heifer, wondering if he paid too much or got a bargain, wondering if his investment pays off.

Mother: (soft) He's had to make his own way since he was a young boy - had to rely on his instincts and his own judgment going up against the rich and the arrogant. It wasn't easy. He learned, every step of the way, then held his own, then beat them at their own game. He learned hard lessons. He took a few beatings and he only a young fella. (pause) He took his time, but he paid them back. He crippled a few of them.

Now they walk around him tipping their hats. "Fine day, Bart." "Good day to you, Mister Brien." If he hadn't the nerve, they would have squashed him - and walked away without a look back. He got their attention, by God he did. A man has to be like that,

Fiona: Does a man have to be like that? Can a man not be decent and still prosper?

Mother: Life is hard. Bart is hard and that's good. You're his wife. They'll tiptoe round you too.

Fiona: I'm scared.

Mother: (Softer tone) But why, darling? Why would you be scared?

Fiona: I'm scared for me, for my baby – if, when it comes.

Mother: Oh, Fiona, come here to me. It will be fine. It will. (she holds Fiona and strokes her hair)

Fiona: It will?

Mother: It will. Listen to me. Be his wife. Have his children – the more the better.

God, he'll own the county some day. He'll be rich and you'll be rich – and I'll - I'll be comfortable.

Fiona: We'll all live happily ever after.

Mother: (long silence) Do you not remember the hard times, the wind rattling through the oul' door, sitting on top of the fire? Your father, God rest him. (pause) A lovely man, they all said. Tim was a lovely man, soft he was, give his last sixpence to a tinker woman. They're worse off than we are, May, he'd say, don't begrudge 'em. God will provide. The poor simple man. (pause) God never showed and Tim was no provider.

Fiona: I remember.

Mother: I wish you would. There was a time we owed half the village. It was humiliating.

Fiona: But there's no love between us.

Mother: (Angry) Love, love, good God Almighty, there's no such thing as love. It's about surviving and overcoming. Everything I do, I do for you. Is that wrong of me?

Fiona: No, no, it's not, but...

Mother: So, accept your good fortune. Your children will be respected – go to the best schools.

Fiona: Schools? He has no time for schools or education. He hates to see me read a book. He won't allow his children to be... to have an education.

Mother: Maybe not the girls. But they'll have more than enough. Watch him and learn from him. There are those who do and those who don't - and those who don't, do nothing and end up with nothing. Do you want to have nothing, do you?

Fiona: No...

Mother: He's your man, now, Fiona. Treat him good and enjoy all the fruits of his labor. That's your reward. You're entitled.

Fiona: How about education, university for me? You said no – or he said no.

Mother: You don't need to work so you don't need university. Where are the jobs for women anyway? For God sake, child, without him we'd have nothing, no house for me, no boarding school for you. He didn't want university for you...

Fiona: ...because a woman should have only so much schooling and no more.

Mother: Well... yes, that's how he felt...

Fiona: ...and you went right along – with how he wanted it. I was fourteen, the bargaining chip, the prize heifer that hadn't yet calved.

Mother: He strikes a hard bargain.

Fiona: He got me. What did you get, mother – financial security, or was there more?

Was there more, mother, was there?

Mother: (soft) Oh, my child, it was all for you. I swore I'd do all I could for you.

Can you not see that?

Fiona: Did he want more?

Mother: He got what he wanted, you.

Fiona: Did he want more?

Mother: He got only what I could give him.

Fiona: He scares me. He's not gentle or...tender.

Mother: He doesn't know how. He never knew it. He only knows hard work and getting his way. He'll be better.

Fiona: When?

Mother: Sons, when he has sons and maybe a daughter too.

Fiona: What if the sons...if they never come?

Mother: Oh, Fiona, they will. Of course they will. Why wouldn't they? You want to, don't you?

Fiona: Any more, I don't know what I want.

Mother: (Harsh) Listen child and listen good. Give him a son, Fiona, at least one. It'll make him content, fulfilled. You hear? It's what he wants and what he deserves.

Fiona: And if I don't?

Mother: If you don't, there'll be hell to pay. He'll do any and all to get what he wants – and I wouldn't stand in his way. You're on your own if you act foolish.

Fiona: You'd go against me?

Mother: Keep the peace. Have the child, one or more. It'll all work out. (she hurries out)

## Bart and Fiona in kitchen

Kitchen: Bart at table going over papers. Fiona is reading book near fire. Bart glances over at her at intervals. He's impatient, irritated. (Never calls her by her name) She knows he's irritated but won't acknowledge it.

Bart: Doo, do, doo, doo. (Gets up, stretches, looks out window, looks at Fiona, sits down. Shuffles papers. Sighs)

Bart: I need help with this bloody stuff. (Fiona is quiet) I'm going from morning to night.

Fiona: I offered to help.

Bart: Real help, a professional man with the books.

Fiona (Slow to answer) See Rice the accountant.

Bart: That fella is losing it. He should be retired.

Fiona: Go into the town.

Bart: I don't trust them with my business. They have other clients. The less they know, the better.

Fiona: You have to file. You have to give an accounting to the Government.

Bart: I'll give them as little as I can.

Fiona: Watch yourself.

Bart: Don't you worry. I'll do what I have to – give them a little once in a while, just enough. (He gets up, walks over near her, holds her neck. She stiffens, looks straight ahead) What's wrong?

Fiona: No.

Bart: No what?

Fiona: No, nothing's wrong. (She leaves book down, sighs)

Bart: Things are working out well. That thirty acres I picked up from Casey is going great guns. He's working it for small enough money, but he's glad to be left on.

Fiona: He's getting old.

Bart: Old and cranky but 'twill do for now. Are you checking on your mother?

Fiona: I am.

Bart: That's a good woman.

Fiona: (Silence)



Bart: Come on now, no sulking. You're not a child anymore.

Fiona: It's true. I'm a child no more.

Bart: You're as well off as any woman in the parish.

Fiona: I've heard that said.

Bart: (Bart doesn't hear her) You're the envy of them all. Look at this kitchen. You have the best of everything. If my mother, God rest her soul, had a kitchen like it she'd faint away. (Ruminating) God knows, 'twas hard to satisfy her. Whatever was done wasn't good enough. She worked me from dawn to dark, the bitch, God forgive me. Bart (he imitates his mother calling) Bart, more wood for the fire, thin the beet, feed the pig, milk the cows, cut the hay, clean the barn, fix the roof and I only a young fella. I couldn't go to school. She killed the owl man years before. (Long silence) She was a hard woman (Pause) but she made me hard, hard as bog oak. She did that to me and for me. She could only be what she was, I suppose. (He starts to rub Fiona's neck again) Go into the bed and get ready.

Fiona: (Looks at him) It's not the time.

Bart: You'd swear you don't enjoy it – that look on your face.

Fiona: Am I supposed to enjoy it?

Bart: (Cups her face) Why wouldn't you enjoy a fine virile man on top of you? And you're my wife, aren't you? Weren't we married in front of the priest and a reception they're still talking about in the three parishes. Didn't I promise you a mighty wedding, didn't I?

Fiona: You did.

Bart: And wasn't it all that and more?

Fiona: It was.

Bart: So, why the long face? You have a face on you long enough to touch the floor.

Go on, go on in. (Pulls her up and slaps her on arse. Fiona slowly walks to bedroom.

Bart goes back and stares at papers on table, scoops them up, looks furtively around and hides them - secret compartment, stands back, stares at it. He turns and humming to himself goes to bedroom, taking braces off as he goes. Sound of sexual activity, a whimper, a scream. Fadeout)

## Bart sitting in kitchen.

(Bart sitting in kitchen, gazing out window for long moments. There's a knock at the door. Farmer comes in, Conor Daly. Late forties, cap in hand. Bart sits unmoving.

Fiona comes from back room, opens door, greets Conor Daly)

Fiona: Hello, Conor.

Conor: Well, Bart.

Bart: Conor

Conor: (Shifts uneasily ) The place looks great.

Bart: There's no secret recipe, hard work and more of it.

Conor: Bart, I...

Bart: You owe me money.

Conor: I do, I do.

Bart: You're (looks at calendar ) seven days late with your payment.

Conor: The rain is playing hell with the crops.

Bart: (Laughs ) It rains on my fields, too, Conor. How is Ellen?

Conor: She's grand, grand. A touch of a cough that comes and goes.

Bart: She never liked the dampness.

Conor: She never did. (Pause ) Bart, I don't have the money, not yet. I will, I will. If I had a few months, If I could postpone a payment or two. I promise you'll get your money – and the interest.

Bart: A man's word is his bond.

Conor: I agreed to the loan and I'll pay it back

Bart: Would the bank postpone payments?

Conor: It depends on the circumstances, but I think they would, in my case.

Bart: But they wouldn't give you a loan.

Conor: No, no, they wouldn't.

Bart: And why is that?

Conor: Well it's a small holding. Twenty two acres is not a big farm anymore.

Bart: It's good land.

Conor: It's good land but bad things have happened.

Bart: Bad things?

Conor: Yes, the tractor seized up. You heard the horse broke his leg and was put down. I swore by him for years. I miss him.

Bart: Accidents happen.

Conor: (Sighs) Accidents happen.

Bart: What if you don't?

Conor: I will. I have to.

Bart: And if you don't?

Conor: If I don't, you'll have it, I suppose.

Bart: I will, Conor, I will. That's the way of business.

Conor: There's no Christian charity?

Bart: There might be. I haven't found it yet.

Conor: That's how it'll be.

Bart: Okay, three months, no payments. (He spits on his hand and offers it to Conor, who takes it)

Conor: Thanks, Bart, thank you.

Bart: Fiona, bring a bottle.

Conor: No, no, I have to be on my way.

Bart: Nonsense, you'll have a drink.

Conor; No, no, I'm staying away from it. It slows me down...

Bart: I suspend payments for three months and you won't drink with me.

Conor: No, well, well alright, I'll have one but that's it. I told Ellen I'd be back within the hour.

(Bart pours, they drink. Bart pours another round. Conor has the taste now and acquiesces. Bart stares at him as one would at a rabbit caught in a snare)

## Phelie and Fiona in kitchen

(Fiona is making a cup of tea and a slice of bread for Phelie. Phelie is playing with his dog. Fiona sits with Phelie)

Fiona: He doesn't treat you well, Phelie.

Phelie: And you?

Fiona: Well, he's rough...

Phelie: He treats nobody well. For me, it's like water off a duck's back.

Fiona: What happened with Mick O'Keeffe? He fired him. He was a good worker.

Phelie: He was.

Fiona: He stood up to Bart?

Phelie: Well....

Fiona: He stood up to Bart.

Phelie: Well...he stood his ground.

Fiona: And he was right?

Phelie: I don't have to tell you.

Fiona: He's always right.

Phelie: True enough. He's always right.

Fiona: Even when he's wrong.

Phelie: But he's never wrong.

(They both laugh)

Phelie: Sometimes I see your father in you.

Fiona: God, I miss him.

Phelie: He was a lovely man.

Fiona: We never had much, then. But I was happy. He told me stories. We walked in the woods. He knew all the flowers.

Phelie: He was a great man for reading.

Fiona: He got me into reading and the library.

Phelie: The library is where dreams begin. Someone famous said that.

Fiona: Sometimes we sat in the library of a Saturday morning and we'd read away, for hours. I loved those times.

Phelie: How old were you – when he died?

Fiona: Twelve. I was twelve years old - when he died?

Phelie: Things changed.

Fiona: That's when the bad times started – for me anyway.

Phelie: That's when Bart and your mother...?

Fiona: An unholy alliance, the books might call it. After that he was always around, him and my mother whispering and negotiating, him sizing me up and rubbing his chin and sizing me up. He scared the beJesus out of me, and I wanted my father to be there, to protect me, to hold me.

Phelie: That's when the match was made.

Fiona: I was still going to school, still allowed to go to school. Then it all changed.

Phelie: You and Bart.

Fiona: I was pledged to a man sixteen years older than I was.

Phelie: And you accepted it.

Fiona: I suppose I was flattered – in the beginning, and my mother never stopped. It would make us for life, no more poverty, and on and on and on.

Phelie: So, what happened?

Fiona: When I began to know him, he was all my father wasn't. He had no love for books. There wasn't a kind bone in his body. He was obsessed with land and the getting of it. By hook or by crook, too. He got it any way he could.

Phelie: Your mother?

Fiona: My mother? They could be twins, two of a kind. (pause) So often I feel a loneliness, an emptiness so intense. I see no way out. God is nowhere near. I have no one. I'm all alone.

Phelie: Your father is looking out for you. I'm certain of that. But Bart is a, a...

Fiona: Do you think, Phelie, do you really think he's watching out for me?

Phelie: I do, child, I do.

Fiona: Bart is a what? What were you going to say?

Phelie: He wants what he wants, and he gets it. Be careful.

Fiona: I wish he was dead. I wish there was a book somewhere, 'Fifty ways to kill your husband.'

Phelie: And end up in jail? You wouldn't want that, would you?

Fiona: It's what I'm thinking.

Phelie: Thinkin' is the first step to doin.'

Fiona: I could never - could I?

Phelie: When you wish him dead, you start thinking about ways to make him dead.

Fiona: I haven't got that far...yet.

Phelie: Where?

Fiona: Ways to make him dead.

Phelie: You could walk out the door.

Fiona: And go where? I wouldn't get far.

Phelie: England, maybe. If you got to England, he'd hardly find you.

Fiona: Oh, he would, he would. He'd scour the ends of the earth – not because he loves me or can't do without me. Oh no. Because I'm his property. Because he hates to lose whatever belongs to him.

Phelie: Careful. The walls have ears.



Fiona: (startled, looks furtively around.) (in a whisper) And time is running out. Oh, if only I could...

Phelie: (pause) He never laid a hand on you?

Fiona: (she thought for a moment before answering) And if he did?

Phelie: 'Twouldn't be right – a slip of a girl like yourself.

Fiona: Would you stand up for me, Phelie, would you?

Phelie: (says nothing)

Fiona: If he did? Would you stand up for me?

Phelie: No man should lay a hand on a woman.

Fiona: Are you non-violent, Phelie?

Phelie: I wouldn't be inclined to violence.

Fiona: But you wouldn't shoot a gun, would you?

Phelie: I shot plenty of guns in my day.

Fiona: (she laughs) You'd run away if you saw a gun.

Phelie: I wouldn't.

Fiona: You would.

Phelie: No.

Fiona: You know guns?

Phelie: The Queen's army, (sshhh) four years – a secret – between us.

Fiona: My lips are sealed. Were you...in the war?

Phelie: The war to end all wars.

Fiona: And a pension?

Phelie: No.

Fiona: You were in the war and no pension?

Phelie: Oh, I was in the war. Oh, was I in the war?

Fiona: And you got no pension?

Phelie: Well, I left.

Fiona: You left?

Phelie: I walked away and kept on walking.

Fiona: You went... AWOL?

Phelie: I went AWOL. They never stopped sticking needles and asking questions, questions and needles, needles and questions.

Fiona: You were wounded? In the hospital? And now you can't go back?

Phelie: I'd be surprised if they're still looking for me. I did my bit and then I had enough of it.

Fiona: Bart doesn't know?

Phelie: Bart doesn't know – and I'd be beholden to you if he didn't know.

Fiona: It's between me and you and no other.

Fiona: You were in the war. You weren't wounded?

Phelie: Not a scratch on me.

Fiona: Was it... terrible? Were you...did you see... a lot?

Phelie: Oh, I saw plenty, I did. Pfc Jonathan Daly lost his head.

Fiona: Who's Pfc Jonathan Daly?

Phelie: A Limerick man. Ah, he was a great pal of mine. We enlisted the same day. He was a funny man...and he made everyone laugh.

Fiona: And he...lost his head? He couldn't stand the noise, the blood?

Phelie: No, he lost his head. It came off.

Fiona: What? What came off?

Phelie: His head. The head was blown off. And not a scratch on me.

Fiona: You saw the head come off? You were there?

Phelie: He was standing next to me and I was standing next to him.

Fiona: Was it terrible?

Phelie: Well, he farted, looked at me and smiled. I smiled back at him, (pause) and then his head came off...and he was still smiling. (noise of battle becoming louder)

Fiona: It must have been...horrible.

Phelie: (agitated) It was. They took me away then.

Fiona: But you had no injuries?

Phelie: Not a scratch. But I...I wasn't working right. The blast knocked me off my...knocked me off. (sounds of battle receding)

Fiona: You mean the head? The head wasn't right?

Phelie: I don't know.

Fiona: How long were you in...there?

Phelie: I don't know. A long time. I don't know the answers.

Fiona: But you're all right now?

Phelie: Oh, sure I'm grand now.

Fiona: Oh Phelie, I'm sorry.

Phelie: For what?

Fiona: For what happened to you, to see what you had to see.

Phelie: I'm grand now.

Fiona: You are. God was looking out for you.

Phelie: No, it was my mother.

Fiona: You mother?

Phelie: That's what she said. 'Never fear, Phelie. I'll be praying night and day.'

Fiona: How I wish for a mother like yours.

Phelie: You'll make a lovely mother.

Fiona: How would you know?

Phelie: I think you'd make a good hand of it.

Fiona: (surprised) I think I would.

Phelie: Mind yourself. Careful steps.

Fiona: You've given me hope, Phelie, you have.

Phelie: Like I said, mind yourself. I'm on your side.

Fiona: I'm like a slave...

Phelie: But haven't you a fine house...

Fiona: It's okay to be a slave in a grand house?

Phelie: No, but...Is it that bad?

Fiona: It's worse, Phelie, worse. He doesn't talk. He gives orders, instructions. I have no freedom – to do or think for myself.

Phelie: I'm sorry...

Fiona: I'd walk away in the morning, if I could.

Phelie: You have two legs under you. Why don't you?

Fiona: (puts her arms around him) Oh, Phelie. We're alike in many ways – both ending up in a place where we shouldn't be, a place alien to us, evil and dangerous, a place to shrivel our souls. Will you help me, Phelie, will you be my guardian? Will you take up arms on my behalf? Will you pick up your rifle? Will you, will you?

Phelie: I might, I might.

(Suddenly, Fiona puts on a record, foot-stamping, drags Phelie up. He protests)

Phelie: I can't. I can't.

Fiona: Come on. He's up at the fair all day. (She drags him up, swings him around. He begins to respond. Finally, it finishes. She's energized, flushed. Then she puts on a slow number. They hold each other)

Fiona: That was good. I needed that, the touch of an honest man, to hold and be held.

(She looks at him, smiles, scene fades.)

Fiona in Kitchen. May enters.

May: Well, Fiona.

Fiona: Well, mother.

May: Well?

Fiona: Well, what?

May: You know what.

Fiona: Am I pregnant? It's what you want to know.

May: Well, yes, darling.

Fiona: Well, no mother, I'm not.

May: I would have thought...that's strange.

Fiona: Maybe it's not going to happen.

May: But, but, I don't know. Why would it not?

Fiona: What if, what if Bart has a problem?

May: Don't be stupid, Fiona, it could never be his problem. It's always a deficiency in the woman.

Fiona: Whether it is or not.

May: (sighs) Whether it is or not. We can't wait too long. If Bart is, is...deficient... there are other ways.

Fiona: None that I know of.

May: If we have to...we'll bring in another...

Fiona: Are you, are you saying...what I think you're saying? I should sleep with another?

May: What other choice do we have? Bart or no man would ever accept he's...not right. He'll blame you. If we get someone else...

Fiona: If we get someone else, will we all sleep together?

May: You know what I mean, Fiona. (thinks) There's a Doyle boy up the mountains. If he looks at a woman, she gets pregnant, three young wans in three years and a few more running around they say are his.

Fiona: And if he talks?

May: We'd deny that ugly rumor. Bart would have his life.

Fiona: No, no I couldn't.

May: One night only, darling – and Bart will never know (thinks) though Doyle is red-headed.

Fiona: And Bart won't know?

May: Well, I had an uncle of mine as red as a ripe tomato. No one knows these things

Fiona: Bart will be home soon. You better go.

(May leaves. Fiona is shaking her head in disbelief at her mother's scheming)

## Ellen and Conor in kitchen

Ellen: He's toying with you.

Conor: He has his ways.

Ellen: He has you right where he wants.

Conor: Did he not give three months grace?

Ellen: You don't see it, Conor. He's evil, cruel. He wants you beholden to him, owing more and more till he has the thirty acres.

Conor: I'll pay him back.

Ellen: He put the drink in front of you, making it a thing of honor, that you should drink with him.

Conor: He had the second poured...

Ellen: He knows your weakness. Another day lost to drink.

Conor: No, no, Ellen. It'll never be that way again.

Ellen: You don't know what you're up against. If you never drink again, he wants this farm.

Conor: But why, why.

Ellen: He wants what he can't have.

Conor: You turned down his marriage proposal. So what? He has a young wife half his age. He's the biggest farmer in three parishes.

Ellen: When he was younger, when he came courting, when he had nothing, he was likable in many ways. He was ambitious then, too. There's nothing wrong with ambition, (pause) but even then, there was something about him...that... frightened me.

Conor: He had a terrible rearing.



Ellen: Maybe it was his upbringing, how his mother treated him, how he came to view life. He detested weakness – softness in people. So, I turned him down.

Conor: How did he take it?

Ellen: He said I'd regret it, said he needed me, the only one he ever needed. He begged me, the last time he'd ever beg, he said. He gave me a week. He waited a week up at his father's place. I couldn't. It would have been out of fear. Even then there was something cold and hard and unyielding about him.

Conor: What will we do? (Long silence, Ellen staring into space)

Ellen: Not much, I'm afraid, not much. He's never looked at me since.

Conor: Is he that, that... bad?

Ellen: Once there was something there, a spark of something...

Conor: And now?

Ellen: Now nothing. A black hole.

Conor: It'll be all right. I'll take care of you. With a small bit of luck, we'll get through the bad times. Things will be better. We have each other.

Ellen: I might have put you in harm's way by marrying you.

Conor: Stop that talk, stop it now, stop it. If we work hard and trust in God, we'll be alright, we will.

Ellen: (half-heartedly ) God, yes. We will, my darling, we will.

## Mother's cottage

Two figures engaged sexually, one bent over table, the other behind. Light is dim. Exclamations of "Oh, Bart," heard. They disengage. Lights come up. It's not Fiona and Bart, It's May, Fiona's mother and Bart.

Bart: If you could have my kids, darling, I'd marry you in the morning.

May: You wouldn't. You want the young, beautiful wife and the envy of the parish.

Bart: Only for children, May, only for children.

May: So, I'm the best, you say?

Bart: None can compare.

May: You're only saying that.

Bart: No, my darling. You're the best ride in the parish.

May: And you've tried 'em all, I suppose.

Bart: Any worth trying, I tried. I'm telling you, May. You're the best.

May: That's something.

Bart: If only...

May: Fiona must never know.

Bart: She won't. How could she?

May: I wish she'd get pregnant.

Bart: You have to push her. You have to pressure her. She'll listen to you. She's a spoiled bitch. I give her everything. She's cold, May. There's no comfort riding her.

It's a chore to her.

May: (sighs) She has romantic notions.

Bart: Well, she better lose 'em - one year and nothing, nothing. She's stubborn, that one, and I'll have to break her before she comes to heel.

May: But you can do it gentle.

Bart: But I can't do it gentle. There's no gentle way of breaking man, woman or beast.

May: I wish, oh I wish...

Bart: (laughs) That you were twenty years younger? You were fine then. You're fine now.

May: You noticed?

Bart: Oh, I watched you. Thought about what we might do together...

May: You did?

Bart: And why wouldn't I? You were always a good-looking woman.

May: If I had known, Bart, if I had known.

Bart: (deep in thought) And then when she was fourteen, and I saw her, your daughter. She was beautiful, more than that even, proud, prancing, waiting to be broken. She took my breath away. I had to have her. She would be the mother of my children.

May: And she will. If only...

Bart: From that first day, she was what I wanted.

May: Things will work out.

Bart: I'll make them work out, like I made all the others work out.

May: Careful, Bart, careful. She's nervous. She doesn't appreciate the satisfaction of...man and woman together, the coming...

Bart: (laughs) And the going, the in and the out. By God you do, May. You enjoy it as much if not more than myself.

May: (coy) Well, I'm not over the hill yet.

Bart: (in rare good form ) Over the hill? You're only half way up the hill, and a long ways to go yet, my darling. (pause) D'you have any tug of conscience, what we're doing?

May: No, no, I don't. As the woman said to the priest who warned her about having so many children, "Isn't that all we have, Father, that and the fags." So, no Bart, I have no tug of conscience. Because that's all I have or had in a long, miserable life.

Bart: It's a good way of looking at it.

May: She has a marriage certificate and the house, and she can walk proudly beside you.

Bart: Except she doesn't want to walk proudly beside me. But by God, she will, she'll come to heel.

May: Don't wait too long then. People will talk.

Bart: If they're not already. Damn her. I have to be going.

( Bart exits. May sits in the kitchen in pensive mood ).

Bart and Fiona in kitchen. Bart looking over books, Fiona watching him.

Fiona: Bart. (Bart doesn't hear or ignores her) I have something to tell you.

Bart: (finally) What?

Fiona: I have something...important..

Bart: (impatient) What, what?

Fiona: I'm pregnant.

Bart: (Still, unmoving. Then he turns and stares at her) You sure?

Fiona: Yes.

Bart: Finally, at long last, the most important piece is in place. The empire grows and  
(laughs) I'm the emperor. The emperor of Scartaglen. We will, we'll grow an empire,  
girl.

Fiona: I don't know for sure if it's a boy but it feels like a boy.

Bart: It is. It will be, the first of many.

Fiona: Hold on, now, we'll have this one and see how it goes.

Bart: You'll have a dozen, my darling. Look at you. I knew I picked well.

Fiona: (winces) Well, you were a good judge of cattle.

Bart: I was and I am. But this is different Cattle are easy. Women are way more complicated.

Fiona: But the physical part of it is much the same, would you say?

Bart: Well, maybe, maybe it...translates. I'm a good judge of cattle. That's how I made my first pound, buying here and selling there. So, what will we call our first child?

Fiona: But you've already picked the name.

Bart: Well, yes, Bart.

Fiona: Bartholomew, Bart.

Bart: Bartholomew? I'm Bart so long I forgot I was christened something else.

Fiona: We'll call him Bart then.

Bart: Things are falling into place.

Fiona: The plan, your plan, Bart?

Bart: Yes, and you're a big part of my plan, my darling.

Fiona: And my plan is the same as your plan?

Bart: The same, the same plan, one plan for one family. Oh, if I could see into the future, where we'll be in say....twenty years.

Fiona: Where, Bart?

Bart: (laughs ) A force to be reckoned with, I'd say – the empire of Scartaglen. Bart Breen and his family, growing and expanding - and expanding and growing. When I have sons by my side – to depend on, working side by side. Oh, what a vision. (pause)  
I'll be hard on them...

Fiona: But not too hard.

Bart: Hard enough. There'll be no sheevras in my clan – the clan Brien. 'Tis only the beginning, girl. This is the start of it. Finally, finally. I must let the boys know, pick up the pace.

Bart sitting in kitchen. Sergeant comes in.

Sgt: Bart.

Bart: Well, Sergeant will you have a drop?

Sgt: That's what I came about. You heard about Conor?

Bart: Last time I saw him, we had a drink together, in this very kitchen, poor divil.

Sgt: Did you not know he had a drink problem?

Bart: Sure, sure, but one wouldn't do damage, now would it?

Sgt: More than one, Ellen said – and deliberate on your part.

Bart: No, no, maybe I was remiss. We had done a bit of business and it's the custom to have a drink. Isn't that the way it is, Sarge, always and ever.

Sgt: Not with a man who has a weakness for drink.

Bart: Well, there's some have a weakness for drink and some have a weakness for food and some for staying in bed in the morning and some get weak when you mention work to them. There's so much weakness going around, 'tis hard to keep up with all of it.

Sgt: And what's your weakness, Bart?

Bart: I'm the odd man out as usual – none that I know of.

Sgt: Ellen says to tell you she knows – and may God forgive you – you're behind every evil in the district. You had something to do with the horse – and with Conor's death.

Bart: Didn't Conor fall into a ditch and freeze to death. Wasn't it the drink had him that way.

Sgt: There were marks on him, bruises...

Bart: Didn't he fall into the ditch. Wouldn't he have bruises.

Sgt: The coroner is making his report. We'll know more, maybe...

Bart: And the sooner the better, so there'll be no more idle talk, that it was my fault



or someone else's fault.

Sgt: We'll get to the bottom of it.

Bart: He wasn't much good at anything. He wasn't much for farming – or anything really, that I know of. They say he wrote poetry, Jasus, land of poets and scholars – and not one of them with a pot to piss in.

Sgt: I'll be going.

Bart: Come around any time, sergeant.

(Sgt walks out, Bart remains sitting.)

## Killing scene.

## Bart and Fiona in kitchen.

Fiona: You know about Conor?

Bart: A poor unfortunate man.

Fiona: They say there was foul play involved.

Bart: Do they now, and who're they who say?

Fiona: It was an evil act.

Bart: Was it not an accident?

Fiona: You have no knowledge?

Bart: It's no business of ours, or yours.

Fiona: So, you had no involvement?

Bart: It's not your business to know or not know these things.

Fiona: So, you don't deny it?

Bart: You have an unborn child to take care of, woman. Mind you do that.

Fiona: Bart. I have something to tell you.

Bart: (smiling.) More good news. It's twins we're having?

Fiona: I'm leaving.

Bart: Going where?

Fiona: I'm leaving you.

Bart: (uninterested.) You can't. We're married.

Fiona: I'm leaving you, this marriage, this God-awful place.

Bart: (angry) This Godawful place? You ungrateful, spoiled child. Many a woman would cut off her right arm to have a place like this. I've given you too much, spoiled you...

Fiona: (interrupts.) I'm pregnant no more.

Bart: That can't be. You're young and healthy and...and...

Fiona: It was a lie.

Bart: What lie? Why lie? Don't you want a child, a son?

Fiona: I do, but not with you, never with you. Don't you see, Bart? I'm sure you told all and sundry that I'm pregnant and now, now, I'm not. They'll be laughing behind your back. I want to see you the laughing stock of the whole county, explaining to the empire how you can't make your young wife pregnant. And then, when I leave you?

What will they say? You can't make her pregnant and you can't even keep her. She's leaving you. Won't they laugh twice as much?

Bart: I was too easy on you.

Fiona: Imagine how they'll ridicule you. 'He can't keep that young one pregnant or happy.' Oh, they'll have a grand time. They'll talk about it for years – all Bart's grand plans, discipline, hard work and Bart's iron fist. Ah, he's a great judge of animals. Isn't that how he started out empire building. But not of women. He knows fuck all about women. The empire is at risk, emperor.

Bart: You'll have my child and my children.

Fiona: I couldn't bring an innocent child into your world, to be corrupted and brutalized, to grow up with your obscene values.

Bart: But you married me?

Fiona: I did. I'll regret it forever.

(Bart is agitated, pacing back and forth. If it's true, all he worked for, his carefully laid plans lie in ruin.)

Bart: I'll never let you go.

Fiona: I would kill your child before I'd bring it into your world.

Bart: (calmed down) You're one evil bitch.

Fiona: I never loved you, never even liked you. Once I was afraid of you, but no more. I could never spend my life laying in your bed, breeding more of your spawn.

(Bart searches and finds a piece of rope, snaps it, then drops it and gets a pillow.

When he gets the pillow, she starts for the door, but he cuts her off. He approaches her, puts the pillow up to her face. She struggles. Phelie appears, dressed in random military gear, carrying a shotgun. There's the noise of battle – in Phelie's head )

Phelie: Cease and desist. Cease and desist or I'll be forced...

Bart: Get out you fool, get out. This is no business of yours.

Phelie: No more killing, no more killing, no more killing.

(Bart turns and prepares to attack him. As he approaches, Phelie hesitates, looks stricken, then fires three times in quick succession. Bart falls dead. Fiona approaches him, bends over him.)

Fiona: Oh Bart, Bart, look what you made us do.

(They ring for the guards. Sergeant Brady comes to interview.)

Sergeant: So, give me the sequence of events.

Fiona: (Fiona whispers in his ear, telling of Phelie's war experiences.) Phelie is in a bad way so if you don't mind, I'll give you the full story of what happened.

Sergeant: That will be fine. We can interview him at a later date.

Fiona: I told him I wanted to leave, that I didn't love him and I didn't want to stay in the marriage. He laughed, thought it was a great joke, told me I belonged to him, that I was bought and paid for.

Sergeant: He did, did he?

Fiona: I told him I was serious. He got angry, threatened me. I said I wouldn't change my mind. He said he'd kill me first before he'd let me go.

Sergeant: He said that, did he?

Fiona: Yes. Then he picked up a pillow and tried to smother me. I screamed.

Sergeant: A pillow? That pillow? (pointing)

Fiona: That pillow.

Sergeant: Which leaves no marks – difficult to prove intent. He could say you dropped dead, heart attack, stroke.

Fiona: Then Phelie came, begged him to stop. But he wouldn't so Phelie picked up the shotgun. He charged at Phelie and he shot him.

Sergeant: Is this account correct, Phelie?

Phelie: Yes sir. I didn't want to but...

Sergeant: But what?

Phelie: I thought he'd kill Fiona. I couldn't let that happen.

Sergeant: I never liked him. He was arrogant and had no respect for the law. He thought we were stupid, easily manipulated.

Fiona: He had no respect for God nor man...nor woman.

Sergeant: Or guards. Okay, I'm all done here. There'll be a hearing and autopsy.

(pause) But things will settle down, the parish will be a quieter place, I'd say. I don't condone violence, but actions have consequences. Every action has a reaction, or so they tell me. Good day to ye. I'll be in touch if I need anything. When all is said and done, missus, things will be better. Good day.

Kitchen – Fiona enters, followed by Phelie, both dressed in black. Takes off her hat and hangs up her coat. Phelie takes off hat and coat and joins her at table. Silence.

Fiona: (stands up and screams) Free, free, free at last. (stands still then slowly subsides into chair. Silence.)

Phelie: There was no baby?

Fiona: There was no baby. There never was. It was a lie.

Phelie: So he'd be angry when you told him?

Fiona: I had to. I had to make him so angry he'd never want me again – so I could leave, and he wouldn't follow. I never wanted any of what he gave me. I had no interest in his, his...empire. I only ever wanted to make my own way...my own mistakes. That's what I wanted, only that. Was that too much to ask?

Phelie: No, girl, it wasn't.

Fiona: To follow my dreams, strike out on my own ...and maybe, maybe, some day, find love. I didn't want him or his marriage. I had plans, dreams.

Phelie: As you should, girl, as you should.

Fiona: But fate conspired otherwise. Everywhere I turned I was trapped, like a fly in a spider web. What could I do, Phelie, what could I do? Stop struggling and die slowly

– or fight till my dying breath? I chose to fight. That wasn't wrong of me. That was brave and courageous – no matter what the world says.

Phelie: It was brave and courageous, child. That's what you are, a child. You're barely eighteen, a child, only a child.

Fiona: And inside, a scared, trembling soul. I don't know right from wrong anymore, only that I had to escape or that same soul would die a slow, parched death.

(Fiona makes tea for them and scones. Phelie goes and looks out the window)

Phelie: Will they come for me?

Fiona: They won't, Phelie. He wasn't well-liked. He tried to kill me, and you shot him in self-defense. There'll be an inquest and investigation but they're not too anxious to pursue. It'll die quietly. I'll be assisting the sergeant.

Phelie: Did we do wrong? Are we doomed?

Fiona: No, no, not at all. We survived and that's a God-given right, to survive. There was a woman, Phelie, a woman named Virginia Woolf who said – I only read it the other day – “Across the broad continent of a woman's life falls the shadow of a sword.” Well, I avoided the sword and I'm still standing. But 'tis only the first skirmish.

Phelie: You're safe now.

Fiona: (laughs) Oh no, no, there'll be others, many, many more. Women are never safe. Nowhere in this wide, wide, world is a woman completely safe. The shadow of a sword hangs over us all – and sooner rather than later, it will strike us down. That's

just the way it is – and will be ever. Now, fifty years, a hundred, society, ruled by men will find a reason.

Phelie: You're too young to know these things.

Fiona: I'm old beyond my years. I'm afraid, afraid he's touched my soul – and it's not the same. He's damaged me, and I'll never be the way I was. Like you, Phelie, damaged by war and killing. You can never be the same. I'll never be the same....

Phelie: You will. You will.

Fiona: ...as before I ever met him. I've sinned.

Phelie: And haven't we all? And God loves the sinner.

Fiona: That's what they say. Maybe, maybe.

Phelie: I feel...

Fiona: Soiled? Yes, I suppose we're soiled. We came in contact with a...man...who lived by his own rules, who would have changed us...in a bad way, Phelie, (reflexively) who had already, I suppose...and would have...kept on...changing us until we'd be unrecognizable...

Phelie: Un..what?

Fiona: Changed in so many more ways, we wouldn't know who or what we were. But we must respect him. He was tough, a formidable opponent. We had to perform the ultimate act. Nothing else would suffice. This is what he demanded of us and by doing so, we joined him in evil.

Phelie: (silence) So we're doomed. He wasn't a good man.



Fiona: He wasn't a good man. (pause) I should put that on his tombstone. "Here lies Bart Brien. He wasn't a good man." (pause) Tomorrow, pick up the few bits and pieces you have and come live here. In this fine big house, the best in three parishes, I need you now,

Phelie. Will you? Will you be by my side? There'll be tough days ahead. (Phelie nods)

Go now, Phelie, and I'll see you tomorrow.

(Phelie puts on his coat, looks at Fiona and is about to leave. Then he plays the servant role.)

Phelie: Empress, your wish is my command. With your permission, I leave now, empress.

Fiona: Go on, you blackguard.

Phelie: Yes, empress. Remember, even when you're wrong, you're right.

Fiona: (throws a shoe at him in mock anger)

**(A few minutes later, May walks in. She is angry, remains standing)**

May: You planned it all. You killed him. Oh, where did I get you? Bart was a good man.

Fiona: He tried to kill me.

May: You drove him to it. Oh, you drove him to it.

Fiona: (Fiona gets up, walks to May and stares her down) Your house was yours. You have the deeds – but you told me he hadn't signed it over, that he was holding it over your head, to put pressure on me.

May: I thought, if you thought...

Fiona: You thought? You never stopped scheming, you and my husband.

May: How dare you. For you I planned and schemed. For you, I lied. I wanted only the best...

Fiona: For you, you wanted the best. You were...having carnal relations with my husband. You were fucking my husband.

May: You didn't love him. You didn't have to love him. All you had to do was have his sons and daughters. I loved him. I would have given him all the love he wanted – or needed. Couldn't you have done that much? Was that too much to ask? Look at all you have. Wasn't that enough? For all I did, was I not entitled to something too?

Fiona: For all you did, you should go to hell.

May: But you killed him, my God-fearing daughter. You killed him.

Fiona: It was just another reason to end this...this sorry excuse of a marriage.

May: You manipulated...

Fiona: Yes, I'm my mother's daughter.

May: He had his faults, but I, I loved him.

Fiona: Then you should have married him and saved us all a mountain of grief. Go, now and never set foot in this house again.

May: But you're my daughter, my only child.

Fiona: Biologically, I suppose that's true. I had a father, a kind and loving father. But I never had a mother. And I'm the worse off for it. The emperor is dead though.

Thanks be to God for that.

May: The emperor?

Fiona: Didn't you know? That's what he called himself, the Emperor of Scartaglen, lord of all he surveyed, or at least the five hundred acres he had claim to. Didn't you know you were fucking an emperor? But the emperor is dead and long live the empress. The empress reigns. (May leaves. Fiona bends her head and cries)

Fiona: Oh God, God.

God: I grow tired of my name being invoked.

Fiona: (Looks around startled) God? Am I damned?

God: (laughs) Damned? You are my child. You are human. This is a time of learning and failure. You make choices, some good, some bad.

Fiona: Have I..will I...

God: Go to hell? Hell is a state of mind and you have free will.

Fiona: I know I have done wrong.

God: Is your time on earth ended? Have you lived your life? You will arise tomorrow and live another day in your life with choices to make. What's done is done. You have, you all have infinite capacity...

Fiona: For good and evil.

God: (laughs) You dare interrupt God – but yes, for good or evil.

Fiona: How... God, God? (silence)

God: (finally) Now you cry.

Fiona: I have sinned.

God: And tomorrow, and the day after and the day after that? What will you do?

Fiona: I have lost your love.

God; My love is constant, unconditional. Your ability to perceive it, varies.

Fiona: I feel despair.

God: Despair diminishes the spirit, the God-connection that lies within you. It is a time of learning. Be gentle and forgiving to yourself and others.

Fiona: How may I begin to feel your love again?

God: When the spirit is strong, you will know the way, where and what and how.

Fiona: How do I strengthen the spirit?

God: Reach out, touch, love and forgive.

Fiona: But, but...God, God? (silence)

Alternate God speak: My love is constant. Your ability to perceive it varies.

Fiona: What could I have done other than what I have done?

God: Did you place yourself in my care. Did you have faith? I'm  
the Force that moves the planets. In alignment with the Force,  
the Source, your life will be one of growing and expanding, the  
life you yourself have chosen in this physical reality to fulfill  
your destiny. Oh ye of little faith. Your time here is for learning  
and growing. Failure is a necessary part of your learning and  
growing. You and only you determine the life you live. Look in  
the mirror. Who you see is the one who helps or hinders. You  
create your own reality. All you need lies within you.

( In this play, the beginning scenes are short with just a stage darkening in between.

As the play progresses, the scenes get longer. )

( First scene: Breakfast, Bart, Fiona, Phelie arrives. )

( Second scene: Fiona and May. )

( Third scene: Phelie and Fiona. They dance. )

( Fourth: Fiona tells Bart she's pregnant – but she's not. )

( Fifth: Sergeant comes and confronts Bart. )

( Bart and May – sex. )

( Sixth: Fiona tells Bart she's leaving. Killing scene. )