

The Apology

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Characters

Martin Brennan: Male, 50 – 60.

John Brennan: Male, 25 – 30. Martin's son.

Catherine Sheehan: Female, 25 – 30, Martin's second cousin.

Edward Dunphy: Male, 50 – 60. Martins neighbour.

Pat Dunphy: Male, 25 – 30. Edwards son

Danny Brophy: Male, 40 – 60. Worker on Dunphys farm. Mild special needs.

Judge: Recorded voiceover.

Setting

The play takes place in and around the fictitious village of Dunroe in Co. Kildare, although it could be set in any rural location in Ireland with minor changes. Time period is 1932 / 1933. It is in 8 scenes set in 6 different locations. Stage design will be a challenge for the director. A simple setting is suggested so that each scene can be established easily and quickly while still being unique and distinguishable from the other scenes. Lighting will play a big role in this.

Scene Summary

1 - Brennan's farm , April 30,1932. Morning.

2 - A small roadside near dance hall, April 30,1932. Night.

3 - Dunphy's farm, May 1,1932. Morning.

4 - Brennan's kitchen, July 3, 1932. Night / morning.

5 - Dunphy's farm, July 3, 1932. Morning.

6 - Multiple locations, Jul - Sept 1932.

7 - Courtroom., Jan 1933. Afternoon.

8 - Brennan's farm, Feb 1933. Morning

Scene 1

Brennan's farmyard, early morning. John is sitting down mending a small piece of farm equipment. After a while, his father, Martin enters.

Martin: You're up early.

John: Couldn't sleep.

Martin: Aye. *(long pause)* Fixing the?

John: Aye. It's been a long time broke. Thought I'd have a go at it.

Martin: I suppose. I've been putting it off myself. When you're finished you might have a look at the fence in the second field. It's fallen over to one side. I saw one of the cows sniffin around it yesterday. Wouldn't want it breakin in to Dunphys. We'd never hear the end of it.

John: I remember the last time.

Martin: I don't want a repeat of that.

John: I'll go up now. This thing has me cross-eyed.

Martin: No rush. Finish that off.

Enter Catherine carrying a basin and a small spade.

Catherine: I'm goin out to get a few spuds for the dinner. Will one of ye bring in some turf. The fire is goin low.

John: I'll get it.

Martin: No. Stay where you are. I'll get it.

Catherine: The drawer in the press is sticking a bit too. Maybe one of ye might have a look at it.

Martin: *(Smiling sadly)* Julia was always giving out about that drawer. I'll have a look at it later.

Catherine: Right.

Catherine exits. Martin makes to follow.

John: Da.

Martin: Yes.

John: Will Catherine be stayin much longer?

Martin: Hadn't thought about it. I suppose she's not rushing back to anything. Why?

John: It's just that

Martin: What?

John: Well, it's just that people are starting to talk.

Martin: Talk?

John: A young girl living in a house with two men. It was different when Ma was alive but

Martin: Sure she's my cousin's daughter. We're family.

John: It doesn't stop them talking.

Martin: Who's saying this?

John: It's just talk.

Martin: Catherine was a great help when your mother was sick. I don't know what we would have done without her. People have little to talk about and your mother only buried a week.

John: I'm just sayin.

Martin: We need her help now more than ever and her own house is full to the rafters. She's happy here with her own room.

John: Even Lizzie was sayin it the other day

Martin: Lizzie knows better than that. Sure isn't herself and Catherine great friends.

John: Still ...

Martin: Maybe you should marry Lizzie, bring her into the house and that'll put a stop to the talk.

John: Da!

Martin: Sure Lizzie's a grand girl and you've been great together now for a long while. Your mother liked her too.

John: I know.

Awkward pause

Martin: Anyway, I'd better go and get that turf ... and don't be listening to idle gossip.

As Martin exits, he meets Pat and Danny coming in. Pat is nervous on two fronts; giving condolences to John and anxious to bump into Catherine. Occasionally, he glances in the direction of the house in the hopes of getting a glimpse of her.

Martin: Danny, Pat.

Danny: Morning Martin.

Pat: Mr. Brennan

Martin: Don't be distractin John from the work now lads. Particularly you Danny!

Pat: (*Indicating Pat*) Just came in to Ye know.

Danny: Distractin! Divil a fear Martin. I might give him me oul song though.

Martin: In that case, I'm glad to be going. I'll leave ye to it.

Martin exits.

Danny: How's the man?

John: Grand.

Pat: Morning John.

John: Pat.

Pat: How are ye getting on?

John: Fine.

Pat: I haven't seen you since You know.

John: Yes.

Pat: I wasn't talking to you at the ... you know ... just wanted to say sorry about your mother.

John: Thanks.

Danny: Julia was a good woman.

Pat: None better. She was always nice to me.

John: Aye.

Danny: She was a good lookin woman too.

Pat: Danny!

Danny: What?

Pat: Will you whisht.

Danny: What? Why? Am I wrong?

Pat: You just shouldn't say that now.

Danny: Sure I'm only complimentin the man's mother. Amn't I John?

John: It's OK Danny.

Danny: There! Sure I'm only telling the truth.

Pat: That mouth of yours will get you in trouble one of these days Danny.

Danny: Whether she's dead or alive, she was still a nice woman, a good lookin woman.

Pat: Sorry John.

John shrugs.

Danny: I'm only telling the truth and wouldn't the world be a far better place if everyone told the truth.

John: You're right there Danny.

Danny: See, he's not offended. You're not offended, are ye John?

John: I'm not Danny.

Danny: I know about women. I'm an expert on women.

Pat: Indeed you are Danny!

Danny: Women love men who sing to them. When I sing to them, I have to bate them off.

Pat: Is that so? It's a wonder you never married.

Danny: Sure I couldn't make up me mind, I had that many to choose from.

Pat: They weren't women from around here so!

Danny: I had a song written about me, you know.

John: Is that a fact?

Danny: Sure, haven't you heard me singing it lots of times.
(singing) Oh Danny Boy/

Pat: We've heard it alright Danny.

John: I thought that was written by a yank?

Danny: A yankee woman! She must have heard about me. Are you sure ye don't want to hear it.

Pat: No, no doubt you'll be singing it later at the dance.

Danny: I will, no fear.

Pat: Although, maybe you should learn a second song.

Danny: Ah no, no. This one works for me.

Pat: Will you be going to the dance John?

John: No ... well, with the mother and all, ye know.

Pat: I suppose.

Danny: Are you still walking out with Lizzie Doyle John?

John: Aye

Danny: Now there's another fine woman. A fine houl't I'd say on a cold night

Pat: Ah Danny! Will you ever stop talking about women!

John: Leave him Pat.

Danny: What else is there to talk about?

Pat: You have an answer for everything Danny!

Catherine enters carrying the basin full of potatoes. Both Pat and Danny become more awkward at the sight of Catherine.

Pat: Hello Catherine.

Catherine: Pat. And how's Danny.

Danny: I'm fine miss.

John: Miss? You're very proper Danny.

Pat: Can I help you with that Catherine?

Catherine: I've carried it this far. I think I'll manage the rest of the way.

Danny: I can help if you like?

Catherine: Well Danny, that's very kind of you. You're a gentleman. Here. Take it into the scullery.

Danny takes the basin and exits.

Pat: You have the knack there Catherine.

Catherine: Poor Danny. He's a nice man. He always says hello to me.

Pat: Has he tried to sing to you yet?

Catherine: No.

John: He must think you're special so ... I mean, by his account, he tries to sing to every woman he meets.

Catherine: Sure that's only talk. There's no harm in him. He's just a bit lonely, that's all.

Pat: (*Pointedly*) You might hear him sing tonight if you come to the dance. He only has the one song, Danny Boy!

Catherine: Maybe.

Pat: You're going so?

Catherine: I hadn't thought about it. You're not John?

John: No, but don't let that stop you.

Catherine: Your father wouldn't mind, would he?

John: Not at all, he'd like to see you getting out. You've been stuck in this house too long.

Catherine: Ah, I wouldn't know many there.

John: All the neighbours will be there.

Pat: Danny will be there ... and sure I'll be there too.

Awkward pause. Danny enters.

Catherine: I'll see. Thanks Danny.

Catherine goes to exit.

Pat: Might see you there then.

Catherine: *(As she goes)* You might.

Catherine exits. Both Pat and Danny look after her. Pause.

Pat: I suppose she'll be off home soon now that you know

John: I suppose.

Pause.

Pat: Well Danny, we'd better get a move on

Edward enters.

Edward: I thought I told you two to get started on the top field.

Pat: We're just on the way.

Edward: Ye decided to go the long way round, I see.

Danny: It's alright boss, we're going now.

Edward: Be quick about it. Straight to work now d'ye hear

Danny and Pat exit.

Edward: That Danny fella. I don't know if he's worth keeping at all. Is your father here?

John: He's just gone to get some turf. He won't be long.

Edward: I'll wait. *(pause)* How are you boy?

John: I'm alright.

Edward: I mean ... after your mother and all ...

John: I'm fine.

Edward: She had a rough time at the end. Like my own missus, may she rest in peace.

John: Aye.

Edward: Still, life goes on.

John: *(Prepares to go)* I have to go and mend the fence in the second field.

Edward: Aye, I saw it was leaning a bit alright.

John: (*Going to exit*) Well, me Da won't be long.

As he's about to exit, Martin comes in carrying turf.

John: Mr. Dunphy here was looking for ye. I'm off to the second field.

Martin: Aye.

John exits.

Martin: Edward

Edward: Martin

Awkward pause.

Edward: How ye getting on.

Martin: Grand.

Edward: That was a great turn out for the funeral. Julia was a popular woman. I seen people there that I haven't seen in years.

Martin: That's the way.

Edward: I was talking to your cousin, Jimmy from Boula. He was telling me he lost his own missus two year ago. He's failed greatly.

Martin: Aye

Awkward pause

Edward: I was just passing, lookin for that son of mine and the Danny fella. I declare to God, Danny would find any excuse to avoid doing a bit of work

Martin: He's not the worst.

Edward: I don't know what me father was thinking of when he took him in all those years ago.

Martin: That was a good thing your father did.

Edward: I'm stuck with him now.

Pause

Edward: I see the young one is still with ye.

Martin: Catherine?

Edward: I suppose she'll be headin home soon?

Martin: There's no rush. There's not much for her to head back for.

Edward: I suppose.

Pause.

Martin: Is there something I can do for you Edward?

Edward: I was just wondering about the narrow field.

Martin: What about it?

Edward: You know well. Have you changed your mind about selling it?

Martin: It's not for sale.

Edward: It's no use to you and it splits my land.

Martin: You have right of way across that field and that won't change. If I sold it to you, it would divide my land too.

Edward: That field and the rest of your land belonged to my grandfather back in the day.

Martin: I suppose. So you keep telling me anyway.

Edward: There's no supposing about it. It belonged to my grandmother until your family grabbed it.

Martin: That's not the way it was and you know it. None of them owned the land in those days. They were all only tenants.

Edward: My family farmed all of this until they were evicted. That's a fact.

Martin: All that was nearly 80 years ago. They were different times.

Edward: This area isn't called Dunphy's glen for nothing.

Martin: It's only a name.

Edward: Aye, my name!

Martin: That means nothing.

Edward: Are you saying my name counts for nothing?

Martin: I'm just saying that it doesn't matter what the place is called, it's still my land.

Edward: Because it was grabbed.

Martin: Look, I don't want to argue with you.

Edward: I'm not arguing. I'm just stating the facts.

Martin: The land is not for sale Edward.

Edward: Edward! Don't make it sound like we're friends.

Martin: We have to live beside each other. Can we not be civil/

Edward: I've been civil long enough out of respect for your missus.

Martin: Will you just leave it.

Edward: Leave it? I'll tell you one thing Brennan, I'll have that land. As long as I have breath in me ... I'll have that land.

Martin: Well, I'll tell you one thing. You'll have that land over my dead body.

Edward: If that's what's needed

Martin: Don't make threats that you can't carry out.

Edward: Oh can't I? You just watch out for yourself.

Martin squares up to him

Martin: Go on so ...

Edward: I'm warning you.

Martin: But you're the sort of man that would sneak up on a fella in the dark. Too much of a coward to do it to his face.

Edward: You just watch yourself.

Catherine enters and sees the commotion.

Martin: Go on. Have a go if you think you're able.

Edward: You'd like that wouldn't you?

Catherine: Martin, I've made a cup of tea for you.

Both men continue staring at one another.

Martin: I'll be there in a minute

Catherine: It's poured.

Martin: Right. Mr. Dunphy is just leaving.

Edward: Remember what I said.

Martin: I'm not likely to forget am I?

Edward storms off

Catherine: Is everything alright?

Martin: Grand. Go on in.

Catherine exits followed by Martin. Lights fade.

Scene 2

A small roadway. That night. In the distance, there is the faint sound of Ceili music. Danny staggers in from SR, singing Danny Boy. He has a naggin bottle of whiskey and is quite drunk. He takes a drink and continues singing. He stops as if hearing something. He looks right, takes a while to focus, then moves UL and hides off. After a few seconds, Catherine runs on, breathless. Soon after Pat enters, he too is breathless.

Pat: You can move fast.

Catherine: Faster than you anyhow.

Pat: Why did you run off?

Catherine: I just wanted to get some fresh air.

Pat: In the middle of our dance.

Catherine: Didn't we have a dance earlier?

Pat: I just thought that /

Catherine: Anyway, the way you dance, I was fearful of losing me toes.

Pat: I'll have you know, I've been to the Gaelic league dance classes.

Catherine: That doesn't say a lot for your teacher.

Pat: I'm sure Miss Cronin would love to hear that.

Catherine: Danny must have been in the same class!

Pat: Did you see the state of him tonight?

Catherine: Poor Danny.

Pat: The girls all scattered as soon as they saw him coming.

Catherine: I gave him a dance.

Pat: I saw that.

Catherine: Were you watching me?

Pat: It was hard to miss. The way he was throwing you around the place.

Catherine: He's harmless.

Pat: I think he has an eye for you.

Catherine: And every other woman in the parish.

Pat: So, have you had enough fresh air?

Catherine: What?

Pat: Do you want to go back in and finish our dance?

Catherine: Our dance!

Pat: It'll be over soon.

Pause.

Catherine: Fresh air wasn't the only reason I ran off.

Pat: What do you mean?

Catherine: As if you didn't know.

Pat: What?

Catherine: There was too many people in there.

Pat: There surely was.

Pause.

Catherine: I wanted you to follow me.

Pat: Oh!

Catherine: I see the way you look at me.

Pat: How?

Catherine: Think I don't notice.

Pat: I didn't mean to/

Catherine: I've been looking at you the same way.

Pat: What Do you mean

Catherine: What sort of an eejit are you?

Pat: I never thought ... I mean ... you hardly ever gave me the time of day.

Catherine: I was waiting for you.

He shrugs.

Catherine: I didn't want to wait too long. I'll probably be leaving here soon.

Pat: I wondered about that ... when?

Catherine: I only came to help out when Julia was sick.

Pat: But you like it here?

Catherine: I have me own room which I never had. Martin and John are good to me but they'll hardly need me now.

Pat: Do you want to go?

Catherine: I don't know. I miss my family sometimes but sure they're not that far really, only on the other side of the mountain.

Pause.

Pat: I'd miss you.

Catherine: I'm sure.

Pat: The place wouldn't be the same without you around.

Catherine: Will you stop!

Pat: I've never seen a girl like you before. Not around these parts anyway. (*Embarrassed now*) Ah, don't mind me, I'm just

Catherine moves to him and puts a finger to his lips.

Catherine: Shhh!

She kisses him gently on the lips.

Pat: I never thought that would happen.

Catherine: You try it.

He returns the kiss. It gets more passionate.

Catherine: What would your father say if he saw you now?

Pat: My father?

Catherine: Would he approve?

Pat: Why would my father need to approve?

Catherine: He certainly doesn't like Martin.

Pat: That's only aul talk. All in the past.

Catherine: I walked in on them earlier today having an argument.

Pat: My father sometimes talks without thinking. They'll be fine tomorrow.

Catherine: I don't know. If I hadn't been there, there might have been blood spilled.

Pat: Why are we talking about my father when there's more important things to be doing. Come here.

He draws her to him and kisses her

Catherine: The dance will be over soon.

Pat: Do you want to go back?

Catherine: It's just that they'll be starting to leave soon.

Pat: So?

Catherine: We don't want to be caught by anyone in the middle of the road, do we?

Pat: Do you want to go somewhere?

Catherine: Do you?

Pat: We could go into the field.

Catherine: We could.

Pat: Only if you want to.

She grabs his hand.

Catherine: Come on.

They exit UR. After a while, Danny creeps silently on, moves to where they have exited and watches on with glee! Lights fade.

Scene 3

Dunphy's farm, the following morning. The stage is empty.

Edward: (Off) Danny! Danny!

Edward enters

Edward: Where the hell Danny! Pat!

Pat enters

Pat: Yes Da.

Edward: Was Danny with you?

Pat: I haven't seen him all morning.

Edward: I told him to bring the mare to be shoed.

Pat: He was in a bad state at the dance last night.

Edward: Don't I know. I had to put him to bed. He hardly knew where he was.

Pat: He had more than a sup taken.

Edward: Where did he get money to buy the drink?

Pat: The lads give him the drink. They think it's a great laugh.

Edward: The eejit should know better.

Pat: He's probably sleeping it off somewhere.

Edward: Well, he's not in his bed. I tell you, I'll sort him out. Nothing like hard work when a fella is sick from drink. What? Was the dance any good itself?

Pat: The usual.

Edward: You had a late one. I never heard you coming in.

Pat: Ah, I wasn't that late.

Edward: Where is that fella! Danny!

Danny enters

Danny: You were calling me boss.

Edward: You mustn't have heard me all that well.

Danny: I just

Edward: I thought I told you to bring the mare to be shod.

Danny: I just ... I had to ... I'm not feeling too well.

Edward: And why is that, do you think?

Danny: I don't know ... I ...

Edward: You know you shouldn't be drinking.

Danny: No, I wasn't ...

Edward: I can still smell it off you, even over here.

Danny: I couldn't refuse the lads.

Edward: The lads! Well the lads are trying to make a bigger fool out of you than you are. *(To Pat)* And you should have kept a closer eye on him.

Pat: I can't be watching him every minute, can I?

Danny: The bould Pat there was busy watching something else.

Edward: What?

Danny: Or someone else.

Pat: Danny!

Danny: I'll tell you Edward. You'd have been proud of your young fella last night.

Edward: What are you talking about?

Pat: It's nothing.

Danny: I seen it all. He was coortin' a woman. Aye and more than coortin'

Pat: You saw nothing!

Danny: Under the hedge in Costello's field. I saw it all.

Pat: That's enough now Danny.

Edward: It's about time. I was starting to worry if this fella had any interest in women at all.

Danny: No worries there Edward.

Pat: I thought you had work to do Danny?

Edward: Nothing to be ashamed of son. So tell us, do I know the young one?

Pat: I don't want to talk about it. Tis not right.

Danny: I had me eye on her meself. Sure if you threw a stone, you'd probably hit her.

Edward: Who are you talking about?

Danny: Young Catherine, next door.

Edward: Catherine Sheehan?

Danny: That's her.

Edward: Martin Brennan's cousin?

Danny: Aye!

Edward: *(To Pat)* What the hell?

Pat: It was only last night Da.

Edward: Of all the women around here and you have to pick that one.

Pat: She's a nice girl.

Danny: Aye, a lovely girl.

Edward: Go on off you now Danny and do what I told you to do. Go on.

Danny exits

Edward: Have you gone soft in the head?

Pat: But Da/

Edward: I don't want you next or near anyone from that family.

Pat: Why?

Edward: You know why.

Pat: The land!

Edward: Yes, the land.

Pat: But that was over 80 years ago.

Edward: It's how they got it. When my grandfather died young, my grandmother had to leave because she couldn't farm the land or pay the rent. She was evicted.

Pat: I know but /

Edward: She was hardly gone when Brennan's grandfather stepped in and took it. It was said that he was well in with the landlord.

Pat: You don't know that.

Edward: Look son, you don't remember your grandfather, my father. When he was twelve, he saw his mother and two of his sisters die in the workhouse.

Pat: You never told me that but that was no fault of the Brennans.

Edward: The Brennans had a small bit of land bordering my grandmothers to the north. They couldn't wait to get their hands on it.

Pat: But if they hadn't taken it, someone else would have.

Edward: A fella doesn't do that to a neighbour. When my father was old enough to get out of the workhouse, he worked his fingers to the bone and over the years managed to build up the farm we have now but he always wanted to get his mother's land back.

Pat: It was so long ago.

Edward: I promised my father on his death bed that I'd do everything I could to get it back.

Pat: Those were different times. Everyone was struggling to survive back then. Can you not just leave it be?

Edward: And deny everything that happened. Many may have forgotten but my family have not. We might have to live near them, we have no choice there but we don't have to be close to them.

Pat: But Catherine is only a second cousin.

Edward: Doesn't she share the same blood? I don't want any son of mine mixed up with that lot.

Pat: That doesn't /

Edward: Have you not heard what I told you? (*Hesitates*) I hate to say this ... but ... I'll tell you now ... while you're under my roof, you'll keep well clear of her. Do you hear me?

Pat: Yes Da.

Edward: I want you to promise me. Well?

Pat: I promise.

Edward: Make sure you stick to that! Right, back to work and we'll talk no more about it.

Pat exits. Lights fade.

Scene 4

8 weeks later. The kitchen of Brennan's house. About 3.30 in the morning. Catherine enters carrying a candle / small lantern which she sets on a table. She sits for a few seconds then stands and paces around the room. She sits again and sobs softly. Unseen by Catherine, Martin enters and observes her.

Martin: Catherine?

Catherine: (*Jumping*) You gave me a fright.

Martin: It's half three in the morning.

Catherine: I didn't think it was that late.

Martin: Are you alright?

Catherine: I'm fine. I just couldn't sleep.

Martin: Are you sure?

Catherine: I'm fine.

Martin: I thought I saw you crying.

Catherine: I just had a bit of dust in my eye. *(Pause)* I'm sorry I woke you up Martin. I was going to make myself a cup of tea if you'd like one.

Martin: I'd best go back to bed.

Catherine: Goodnight so.

Martin: Night.

He turns to go.

Catherine: Martin.

Martin: Yes?

Catherine: Martin. I ... I ... oh my God.

She starts to cry.

Martin: *(Moving to her)* I knew there was something wrong.

Catherine: I don't know what I'm going to do.

Martin: What ails you child?

Catherine: I'm sorry Martin. I never thought ...

Martin: What is it girl?

Catherine: I don't ... I can't ...

Martin: You have me worried now.

Catherine: I've brought shame to your house.

Martin: For the love of God, Catherine! Will you tell me?

Catherine: You'll hate me.

Martin: Tell me.

Catherine: I'm ... oh God ... I'm going to have a baby.

Martin: Oh Catherine!

Catherine: I'm sorry Martin.

Martin: Are you sure?

Catherine: I am.

Martin: That's ... ah well ... who's the father?

Catherine: I can't tell you.

Martin: Does he know?

Catherine: No.

Martin: Well, you'll have to tell him. If he's any way decent, he'll do the right thing.

Catherine: I don't know. Oh God, Martin! What am I going to do?

She breaks down in tears.

Martin: Shh child. It'll be alright.

Catherine: I've let you down Martin.

Martin: You're not the first nor you won't be the last woman to ... get into trouble.

She continues to sob. Martin doesn't know what to say.

Martin: You'll be fine ... Sure didn't it happen to your own mother ... with you, but your father, Tim did the right thing by her and ... sure look at them now.

She stops crying and looks at Martin.

Catherine: What?

Martin: ... just about your own mother.

She continues to stare at him.

Martin: You did know, didn't you?

She looks stunned.

Martin: Ah Catherine, I'm sorry ... I didn't mean to ... I thought you knew.

She bursts out crying again

Martin: But sure, aren't they grand now ... happy as Larry.

John enters.

John: I heard crying.

Martin: It's alright John, go back to bed.

John: What's going on?

Catherine: You may as well tell him Martin. He'll find out soon enough.

John: Tell me what?

No response.

John: Da?

Catherine: Tell him.

John: Well?

Martin: Catherine has a bit of news ... she ... am she's going to have a baby.

John: What! Is this some sort of a joke?

Catherine: It's true.

John: No. You can't be ... what will people *(to Martin)*
Didn't I tell you this would lead to trouble ... who's the father?

Catherine: I can't say.

John: What do you mean? You can't say!

Martin: Easy John.

John: Well, she'll have to get out of this house straight away.

Martin: Catherine is not going anywhere.

John: But what will people say? What will Lizzie say?

Martin: People can say what they like.

Catherine: He's right Martin.

Martin: And if Lizzie is half the woman I know she is, she'd be the first to stand beside Catherine.

John: And Mam only ten weeks in her grave.

Martin: I wonder what your mother would say if she saw you carrying on like this?

John: But Da ./

Catherine: I don't want to cause any trouble between you and John. I'll go back home tomorrow.

John: That's the right thing to do.

Martin: Stay where you are Catherine. *(To John)* I'm disappointed with you son.

John: But Da, we can't/

Martin: I thought your mother and me raised you to have compassion to those less well off than you.

John: I'm sorry Da. I just/

Martin: And Catherine is family.

John looks at his father and then back to Catherine.

John: I know ... I'm sorry Catherine ... I didn't mean ... it's just the shock and all.

Catherine: I'm sorry too John. *(To Martin)* I think it might be best if I go home though.

Martin: I'll not tell you what to do Catherine but know this, you're welcome to stay here as long as you want.

Catherine: Thanks Martin. You're a good man. I'll think about it.

Martin: Do that so. Things will work out fine. You'll see.

Catherine: I don't know Martin.

Martin: They will.

Catherine: I'm sorry for landing all this on ye. Ye don't deserve it.

Martin: I think it's time we all took to our beds. Go on.

Catherine: You go. I'll follow ye in a minute

Martin: Everything will be alright.

Martin and John exit. Catherine sits, staring into space as lights fade.

Scene 5

Dunphy's farmyard. The following morning. Pat is doing some work. After a few beats, unseen by Pat, Catherine enters. She stands still for a while observing Pat

Catherine: (Softly) Pat

Pat: (Jumping) You gave me a fright. I didn't see you there Catherine.

Catherine: No. You haven't seen much of me lately. Have you?

Pat: Well ... no ..

Catherine: You haven't been looking very hard.

Pat: What do you mean?

Catherine: You haven't spoken to me since the night of the dance.

Pat: I've been busy in the farm.

Catherine: Busy?

Pat: To be honest, I haven't seen much of anyone lately.

Catherine: You couldn't have called by to say hello?

Pat: I told you I was/

Catherine: Busy, yes. So busy that you'd walk the other way if you saw me coming.

Pat: No, no, I'd never/

Catherine: Only last week, I saw you ducking behind a hedge when you spotted me. You thought I didn't see you but I did.

Pat: Sorry Catherine.

Catherine: I thought you liked me.

Pat: I did. I do.

Catherine: You had your way with me. You got what you wanted.

Pat: No, it's not like that.

Catherine: What is it like? All your talk on the night of the dance. Was that all lies?

Pat: Well no ... it's just ...

Catherine: We walked back hand in hand that night. That was eight weeks ago and I haven't heard from you since.

Pat: It wasn't easy for me but ... I had little choice.

Catherine: What are you saying?

Pat: It was my father. He found out about ... well ... you and me ... that night and/

Catherine: What? How?

Pat: Danny saw us.

Catherine: Danny?

Pat: He saw us ... in the field.

Catherine: This has nothing to do with your father

Pat: You must know that he hates your cousin, Martin and he warned me to have nothing to do with you.

Catherine: (*Scornfully*) Are you a man or a boy? You don't have to do everything your daddy tells you.

Pat: You don't know my father.

Catherine: Maybe not but I'm not sure now if I want to know his son.

Pat: He said he'd put me out of the house.

Catherine: Did he! Well, you needn't concern yourself about hiding and dodging anymore. I'm going back to my mothers.

Pat: I see.

Catherine: I just came to tell you that and ... I have another bit of news that might interest you.

Edward enters followed by Danny.

Edward: I see we have a visitor. What's she doing here?

Pat: Catherine was/

Catherine: ‘She’ is just about to leave. I came here to give your son some news. You may as well hear it too.

Edward: News? What news?

Catherine: I’m expecting a baby. Your son’s baby.

Edward bursts out laughing.

Edward: Doesn’t that bate everything. I’ve heard it all now.

Pat: You’re what?

Edward: I should have guessed that you might try that trick around here. You’re your mother’s daughter and no doubt.

Pat: Catherine, is it true?

Catherine: You leave my mother out of this

Edward: Her mother did the same trick when she was carrying this one. She was a gamey thing, her mother. Half the men in the parish knew her but that poor gom Tim Sheehan ended up walking her down the aisle. She tricked him you see, like this one is trying to do to you.

Catherine: My father is a decent man. He’d make ten of you.

Edward: Your father! Sure, poor Tim is probably not even your real father.

Catherine: How dare you!

Pat: Da!

Edward: You keep quiet now son before she tricks you into saying something.

Danny: I’m sure the girl doesn’t mean/

Edward: You keep out of this Danny.

Catherine: *(To Pat)* How can you stand there and let him say things like that? I thought you were a decent man. Pat.

Edward: Don’t mind her son. The cheek of you coming round here trying to get an innocent lad in trouble.

Catherine: He wasn’t so innocent the night of the dance eight weeks ago.

Danny: Oh aye, the dance. I forgot/

Edward: Danny! Tis all lies.

Catherine: (*To Pat*) Tell him.

Pat is silent. Looks away.

Edward: Lies! Pat wasn't even at the dance. He was with me all that evening.

Catherine: Let him tell me that. Pat?

Pat remains silent.

Catherine: You're no better than your father. (*To Martin*) You needn't worry about me 'tricking' your son into marrying me. I wouldn't want to have anything to do with your family.

Edward: Go on out of here now and find some other eejit to get your claws into.

Catherine: I don't know what I ever saw in you.

Pat: Catherine /

Edward: Go on. You're not welcome here.

Catherine: Goodbye Pat. You should think about getting out of here too.

She storms off.

Edward: The cheek of that one!

Danny: But boss, I think Pat was at that dance. Sure didn't I see him and /

Edward: You were so drunk that night, you hardly knew your own name. Sure, meself and Pat here had to put you to bed. Isn't that right son?

Pat looks away

Edward: Do you not remember Danny?

Danny: I don't think I remember that.

Edward: If you can't remember that, how can you remember anything else?

Danny: I don't know.

Edward: Pat was with me all that night. We played cards by the fire until you came home singing and shouting.

Danny: But Catherine said/

Edward: Pay no heed to what that one said. She's just like her mother. You remember her mother, don't you Danny?

Danny: Oh aye, a fine woman.

Edward: That one is cut from the same cloth. There's lots of young lads around here that could be the father. (*a thought*) And do you know what I'm thinking? Isn't she living in a house with two single men?

Danny: Her cousins!

Edward: I know. It wouldn't be right but I've heard tell of that sort of thing happening more than you think.

Danny: But Martin and John? Ah no.

Edward: I know better than most Danny, what tis like to be all alone when you're used to having a woman to warm your bed. The bould Martin wouldn't have to look too far and as for that young fella John ... well.

Danny: But isn't John stepping out with that Lizzie Doyle?

Edward: I'd say that one is keeping her legs closed tight until he produces a ring. He must be tempted too with a young woman all alone in the next room. I'm telling you, look no further than Martin or John Brennan.

Pat: You shouldn't say things like that Da.

Edward: Who's to say it's not true?

Pat: It's just /

Edward: It's about time you got back to work Danny.

Danny: Oh aye boss

Moves to go but turns back.

Danny: I could swear though that I saw Pat with Catherine that night.

Starts to go. Edward shoots a glance at Pat.

Edward: Oh Danny! I meant to say it to you earlier. I had a letter this morning from my cousin, Richard, down in Boher.

Danny: I didn't see the postman this morning.

Edward: (*Ignoring*) You remember Richard, don't you?

Danny: Oy aye, decent man.

Edward: He was wondering if he could get a loan of you for a few weeks.

Danny: Me?

Edward: He lost one of his men and I'm always telling him what a great worker you are.

Danny: I am alright ... but Boher is nearly twenty miles away. That's an awful journey.

Edward: Richard said you can stay with him.

Danny: Leave here?

Edward: It'll be like a holiday for you and I hear there's some fine looking women down there.

Danny: Is that so? How will you cope without me?

Edward: It won't be easy but we'll manage. It'll be only for a few weeks, a few months at most and Richard's wife is great in the kitchen so you'll be fed better than here.

Danny: Sure, I will so.

Edward: Good man. Tell you what, there's no time like the present. You go and hitch up the pony and trap and I'll bring you down. You're a very important man Danny.

Danny: I must be. Right boss, I'll do that.

He exits

Pat: What are you doing Da?

Edward: Getting him out of the way. And as for you, you keep your head down and your mouth shut.

Pat: What about Catherine?

Edward: Forget about that one.

Pat: I liked her and she thinks I'm ... I don't know what she thinks I am now.

Edward: I warned you before.

Pat: Maybe I should do the right thing by her. Where's the harm?

Edward: You don't even know if you're the father.

Pat: I know I am. Catherine wouldn't lie.

Edward: Listen carefully to me. If you marry that girl, you may walk out of here now. You'll get nothing, do you hear me? Now, just do as you're told and keep your mouth shut.

Pause.

Edward: Alright, I better get Danny away from here. Get back to work.

Edward exits. Pat stand dejected as lights fade.

Scene 6

A bare stage. Some sound effects to suggest different locations, the mart, shop, street, pub etc. Martin strides around supposedly talking to unseen individuals or groups of people.

Edward: *(At stage left)* Ah, God bless you Tom and how's the man? Aye, a good year for hay alright. Are you selling a few beasts? I had a few in myself. Got a decent price. Aye. *(pause)* Do you know what I only heard yesterday and I don't know if this is true or not but do you know the young one that was staying in Martin Brennan's house? Aye, his cousin. That's the one. She's gone back home to her own family. Did you hear she was carrying a baby? You did. Well, sure I suppose most people knew. Aye. There's talk going around that Martin Brennan himself is the father or if not him, then the son John. Would you credit that? I know, I know. Tis only what I heard but when you think about it, it was an odd set up. I mean, a young one like that living on her own in the house with two single men. Ah sure I know Martins wife only died three months ago but still it's an odd one. Aye, right, I'll leave you so. Good luck with the sale.

He moves in a semicircle to down stage centre. A shop perhaps.

Missus ... can I have some of that washing soap and a half pound of tea ... what do you make of the goings on up in Brennan's house? I know tis hard to believe it. There must be something in it all the same. There's lots of people talking about it. I hear the young ones gone back to the Rath. You never know whats going on in peoples houses do ye? What, aye sure I know him as well as anyone. His land borders mine. I never really liked him. There was always something about him, ye know. Anyway, thanks for that.

He moves again ending stage right. A pub maybe.

I'll tell ye lads. I wouldn't trust Brennan as far as I could throw him. There's bad blood in that lot. There is no doubt in the wide earthly world that either Martin Brennan or his son is the father of that girl's child. I suppose it would be hard to resist. A good looking young girl like that sleeping in the room next to you. I wouldn't be surprised if the two of them had a go at her. And she's left the house fairly quick. Thrun out I'd say. That's the kind of them.

During the above, Martin enters and unseen by Edward watches on. He is holding a piece of paper.

Martin: You seem to know a lot about my family Dunphy!

Edward gets a fright but covers it

Edward: There he is now. The very man.

Martin: I heard you were spreading lies about me. I didn't believe it until just now.

Edward: I'm only repeating what the whole village is saying

Martin: Why are you doing this?

Edward scoffs.

Martin: I've always treated you decently. It can't be all about the land. Can it?

Edward: It's just what people are saying.

Martin: (*Holding up paper*) I suppose this is your doing too. I found it nailed to my gatepost. More of your dirty lies.

Edward: Be careful what you're accusing me of.

Martin: I've seen your writing often enough to recognise the hand. How can you even think such things?

Edward: I told you, everyone is saying it. Amn't I right lads

Martin: But I'm guessing you're the one who started it. My god man, have you no thought for anyone but yourself? My John is afraid to leave the house. And what about poor Catherine. She has enough troubles without this carry on..

Edward: Says the man who caused all the trouble.

Martin: You know it's all lies, don't you. You're just doing this to get at me. Well, we'll see what the judge says.

Edward: The judge!

Martin: I have no choice but to go to the courts.

Edward: Do whatever you want. It won't change the facts.

Martin: You're an ignorant man.

He storms off. Edward laughs.

Edward: Run away little man. You'll not beat me.

Laughing, he exits. Lights fade.

Scene 7

A courtroom. Martin, John, Edward and Pat are on stage. Edward standing on one side while Martin and John are seated on the opposite side. Pat is standing towards the back behind Edward.

Judge: *(Voiceover)* In considering this case, I had to constantly remind myself of the essential question that is being asked of us. We have heard testimonies from many witnesses today and the question of paternity is not an issue here. This is a civil case brought by the plaintiff, Mr. Martin Brennan in which he claims that the defendant Mr. Edward Dunphy did on numerous occasions libel and slander the plaintiff and his son. The defendant's counsel has made great pains to prove that his client's claims are based on fact. However, having examined the lady in question, I find no evidence to support the defendant's claims. Also the defendant's claim that the paternity could be either Mr. Martin Brennan or his son Mr. John Brennan does not suggest any clear knowledge of the facts and the defendant's examination did not convince me that his claims were nothing more than speculation and hearsay. I have found the plaintiff to be honest and genuine, a man who has suffered great loss in the past year.

However, I must again stress that paternity is not the issue here. The question is, did Mr. Dunphy slander and libel Mr. Brennan. The evidence is clear that both crimes were indeed committed in a most cruel and heinous fashion designed to tarnish Mr. Brennan's good name and alienate him from the community in which he lives. I can only speculate on the motives for this but I suspect that land and past history between the families are at the root of the matter. Mr. Dunphy has behaved in a most despicable manner. I find for the plaintiff, Mr. Brennan and order Mr. Dunphy to cover all costs associated with this case and pay Mr. Brennan £50 in compensation. Furthermore, Mr. Dunphy will at his expense publish a full apology in local newspapers chosen by the plaintiff. This apology must be approved by the plaintiff and the court. The plaintiff will have one week to comply. Court adjourned!

Martin and John exit. Light down on their spot. Edward moves to centre stage and retrieves some paper from his pocket. Pat remains standing looking at Edward. Edward stands in spotlight to read the apology. Halfway through the reading, Pat shakes his head and quietly leaves.

Edward: I, Edward Dunphy of Dunroe in the County of Kildare, hereby unconditionally withdraw the statements both verbal and written made by me at any time impugning immoral conduct to Mr Martin Brennan of Dunroe in the County of Kildare, or in any way reflecting on the character of the said Martin Brennan. I also hereby unconditionally withdraw the statements both verbal and written made by me at any time impugning immoral conduct to Mr. John Brennan of Dunroe in the County of Kildare or in any way reflecting on the character of the said John Brennan. I am exceedingly sorry for having written and spoken such statements of Mr. Martin Brennan and Mr. John Brennan and I hereby apologise to the said Martin Brennan and the said John Brennan for having done so. There was no truth whatever in any of the said statements and same are wholly without any foundation whatever. I make this apology for the satisfaction of Mr. Martin Brennan and Mr. John Brennan and to repair as far as I can the injury I have done them, and they, or either of them are authorised to publish this apology at my expense. In addition to publishing this apology I have also agreed to pay Mr. Martin Brennan £50 in compensation in addition to the costs of an action that he has brought against me for Libel in respect of the written statements about him before mentioned.

Signed Edward Dunphy.

Lights fade

Scene 8

Brennan's farmyard outdoor. Morning. A few weeks later. John is doing some work. Martin enters.

Martin: The calf is a bit sickly. She won't take her mother's teat. Maybe you'd bring her to the vets?

John: I'm busy here.

Martin: That can wait for a few hours.

John: Can't you bring her?

Martin: John, you're going to have to leave here sooner or later. You can't hide away forever.

John: Wasn't I out yesterday?

Martin: Aye, and back in as quick.

John: It's just that I feel people are looking at me.

Martin: Well, they have little to look at.

John: Even Lizzie is ... well, she's different

Martin: This will pass in a few months. They'll find something else to talk about.

John: Maybe.

Martin: Didn't we win the court case? People know now that twas all lies.

John: Is that why they go quiet when they see me!

Martin: Look son. You have nothing to be ashamed of. Hold your head high. If you hide yourself away, they'll wonder was it all true. Then Dunphy will have won

During this Edward enters. John sees him.

John: Da.

He gestures towards Edward. Martin turns.

Martin: You have a nerve showing your face around here.

Edward: I was looking for Pat. I thought he might have rambled in.

Martin: "Rambled in"! I think your Pat would know better than to ramble in. He has the sense to know that none of ye are welcome here.

Edward: I haven't seen either of ye around lately.

Martin: Can you believe this fella.

Edward: What's wrong with you? Didn't you win your court cast and I'm over fifty pounds out of pocket.

Martin: What do you want?

Edward: I don't want to have any bad blood between us.

Martin: You should have thought of that before you started spreading lies about us. Are you worried I might take away your right of way through my land? Is that it?

Edward: You might try.

Martin: I'm not like you. You still have right of way, nothing changes there.

Edward: You may be sure nothing changes. That's why it's called right of way. You couldn't change that even if you wanted to.

Martin: Why are you here Dunphy?

Edward: I was wondering after everything that's gone on if you might have changed your mind about selling the field?

Martin: You must be soft in the head.

Edward: My offer still stands, you might be glad of it. Of course, I'll have to knock the 50 pounds off the purchase price. I wouldn't want to be out of pocket.

John: Get out of here.

Edward: Careful, little man, no need for you to get involved in things you know nothing about.

John: Do you think? I'll show you.

John moves towards Edward. Martin holds him back.

Martin: It's alright son, you go inside.

John: But you can't /

Martin: Go on.

Martin: That's it. Be a good boy and do as your daddy says.

John: I'm warning you.

Edward: John! Leave us.

John: If you need me, I won't be far away.

John exits.

Martin: Listen to me now and listen good. Not to my dying day will I ever sell you that field.

Edward: I can bide my time. You'll change your mind. After what happened, you'll come begging me to buy the field and indeed, the rest of your land too.

Martin: What are you talking about? Have you forgotten? I won that case.

Edward: You won nothing!

Martin: I think the judge might think differently.

Edward: What did you win?

Martin: An apology from you for a start.

Edward: That means nothing.

Martin: It was in the paper for all to see

Edward: Do you think people will change their mind just because I published an apology? People like a good story and they'll believe what they want to believe.

Martin: People will believe the truth

Edward: That apology did me a favour. Before that, it was only known locally. Now the whole county is talking about it and wondering what's the real story. They'll be sayin "theres no smoke without fire". Everytime they see you, they'll wonder "is he the fella that fathered his cousin's child" And anyway, the people around here don't like to see their neighbours brought to court.

Martin: The people around here will see you as a liar and a bully.

Edward: And you forget that most of the people around here are cousins of mine and what are you only a blow in. Land grabber!

Martin: My grandfather got this land fair and square

Edward: Land grabber!

Martin: Get out of here, you.

Edward: You're the one that'll be leaving. It's going to get difficult for you if you stay here.

Martin: Are you threatening me?

Edward: Take it any way you like but a clever man would heed the warning.

Martin: What have I ever done to you? I've helped you through tough times because that's what neighbours do.

Edward: You have what I want.

Martin: How can you live with yourself? You lied about me. You must know that there was no truth to the stories you spread

Edward: I can sleep at night.

Martin: Do you have any idea /

Edward: Let me tell you something that I will never repeat to a living soul. Of course I knew they were all lies.

Martin: So why ...

Edward: You never asked me how I knew they were lies.

Martin: What?

Edward: There's only you and me here and I will deny this to my dying day. I know it was a lie because I know who the real father is.

Martin: Who?

Pause. Edward smirks.

Edward: My son Pat.

Martin: Pat?

Edward: I thought you'd like that!

Martin: That's another lie.

Edward: Sure, I would never have really believed that you or your girly son could be the father.

Martin: You knew this all the time?

Edward: I don't think your seed would be strong enough to put a baby in any woman's belly.

Martin: You bastard.

Edward: Everytime you see your new baby cousin, you'll see me looking back at you.

Martin rushes at him and grabs him. John enters.

Martin: I'll kill you.

Edward: Go on do it. We'll see who has who in court then.

John rushes over and pulls Martin back.

John: No Da, that's just what he wants.

Martin: And all because of an aul piece of land.

Edward: My land and by Jesus, I'll do whatever I have to do to get it and I will get it. Mark my words I will get it and nothing you can do will stop me. Do ye hear?

During this Pat enters

Pat: For the love of God, Da. Will you just stop it!

Edward: What are you doing here?

Pat: I could hear you shouting from the next field.

Martin crosses to Pat

Martin: Is it true Pat?

Edward: Say nothing Pat.

Pat: What?

Martin: Are you the father of Catherine's child?

Pat: I ..

Edward: I told you Pat. Keep your mouth shut.

John: What? Pat?

Martin: Are you?

Pat hesitates.

Pat: Yes.

Edward: No one will believe that.

Martin: And you stood by while he spread lies about us.

Pat: I'm sorry Martin.

Edward: Don't you apologise to him.

Pat: I didn't know what to do. The longer it went on, the harder/

Edward rushes to Pat and slaps his face.

Edward: I told you a hundred times.

Stunned silence. Pat holds his face.

Pat: Sorry Martin. Sorry John.

Martin: Do you know the pain and suffering that your lies have put us through in the last few months? Do you?

Pat: Sorry.

Martin: Sorry! You're no better than your father. The two of ye, get out of my yard.

Pat: Martin.

Martin: I'm sick of looking at ye. Come on John.

Martin and John exit.

Edward: Have you gone soft in the head? Why did you have to say that?

Pat: It's the truth.

Edward: The whole village will have it by tomorrow.

Pat: I don't care.

Edward: Well, you should care. You'll be the one they'll be pointing fingers at.

Pat: I've just been to see Catherine.

Edward: So that's where you were all morning.

Pat: She's had the baby. A lovely little boy.

Edward: Do you think I care about any of that?

Pat: I'm going to marry her Da.

Edward: You what?

Pat: I love her.

Edward: Love! Do you hear yourself? She's coddled you like her mother did before her. Well, you needn't think you're bringing her back here. That whore and your bastard son will never cross the threshold.

Pat: He's your grandson.

Edward: He's no grandson of mine. I want nothing to do with him.

Pat: I am going to marry her.

Edward: Where will you go? Live like animals with her family?

Pat: They're the same as us. We'll live there for a while.

Edward: You needn't think you can come crawling back to me. As soon as you put a ring on that ones finger, you'll be out of my will.

Pause.

Pat: We're going to America.

Edward: America!

Pat: I've been thinking about this for a few months now. I've written to uncle Tom in New York. He'll take us in.

Edward: My brother would never do that. Does he know who the mother is?

Pat: He does. He says America is for looking forward, not back and he'd be glad to have family nearby. He'll set me up in a job and a nice home. He's going to send on money for the fare.

Edward: So the two of ye stab me in the back! Ye have it all worked out. If you go, ye needn't think of ever coming back and you can tell Tom the same.

Pat: I won't be coming back.

Edward: What about the land?

Pat: The land? A few fields of scrub that we break our backs in and barely scrape a living out of? But I'd still be happy to stay with you if you give Catherine and me your blessing.

Edward: There'll be no blessing from me.

Pat: Please Da, you'll be on your own.

Edward: I'll be better off on my own. I don't need anyone.

Pat: I'll come again after you've had time to think about it.

Edward: You needn't bother. I won't change me mind. My father would spin in his grave if I let any of that family into the house.

Pat: Next time I see you will be to say goodbye

Edward: You needn't bother with that either. This is goodbye.

Pat: Da, please.

Edward: Go on if you're going.

Pat: I will go to America.

He exits

Edward: You can go to hell for all I care Do you hear, you can go to hell. (*Towards Martin's house*) You can all go to hell.

He stands, dejected as the lights slowly fade.

END OF PLAY