HESTER: Who are you? Haven’t seen you around here before.
GF: I’m a ghost fancier.
HESTER: A ghost fancier. Never heard tell of the like.
GF: You never seen ghosts?
HESTER: Not exactly, felt what I thought were things from some other world betimes, but nothin’ I could grab onto and say that is a ghost.
GF: Well, where there’s ghosts there’s a ghost fancier. What’re you doin’ draggin’ the corpse of a swan behind ya like it was your shadow?
HESTER: This is auld Black Wing. I’ve known her the longest time. Found her frozen in a bog hole last night, had to rip her from the ice, left half her underbelly.
GF: No one ever tell ya it’s dangerous to interfere with swans, especially black wans?
HESTER: Only and auld superstition to keep people afraid. But you. Mr. Ghost Fancier, what ghost are you ghoulin’ for around here?
GF: I’m ghoulin’ for a woman be the name of Hester Swane.
HESTER I’m Hester Swane.
GF: You couldn’t be, you’re alive.
HESTER: I certainly am and aim to stay that way.
GF: Is it sunrise or sunset?
HESTER: Why do you want to know?
GF: Just tell me.
HESTER: Dawn,
GF: Then I’m too previous. I mistook this hour for dusk. A thousand apologies.
HESTER: What do ya mean you’re too previous?
GF: (tips hat and exits)
HESTER: Come back! (Monica enters)
MONICA: What’s wrong of ya, Hester? What are ya shoutin’ at?
HESTER: Don’t ya see him?
MONICA: Who?
HESTER: Him!
MONICA: There’s no wan. What’s that you’ve there? Oh, Black Wing, what happened to her?
HESTER: Auld age, I’ll wage, found her frozed last night.
MONIA: Ya look half frozed yourself, walkin’ all night again, were ya? Ya’ll cetch your death in this weather. I came up to see if ya wanted me to take Josie down for her breakfast.
HESTER: She’s still asleep.
MONICA: Ya have to pull yourself together for her, you’re goin’ to have to stop this broodin’, put your life back together again.

HESTER: Wasn’t me as pulled it asunder.

MONICA: And you’re goin’ to have to lave this house, isn’t yours anymore. Caroline Cassidy talkin’ about how she was goin’ to mow this place to the ground and build a new house from scratch.

HESTER: Caroline Cassidy. I’ll sourt her out. It’s not her is the problem anyway. If he thinks he can go on treatin’ me the way he’s been treatin’ me, he’s another thing comin’. I’m not to be flung aside at his biddin’. Carthage Kilbride is mine for always or until I say he is no longer mine. I’m the one who chooses and discards, not him.

MONICA: You’re angry now and not thinkin’ straight.

HESTER: Of he’d only come back, we’d be alright, if I could just have him for a few days on me own with no wan stickin’ their nose in.

MONICA: Hester, he’s gone from ya and he’s not comin’ back.

HESTER: My life doesn’t hang together without him. I suppose I may bury auld Black Wing before Josie wakes and sees her.

MONICA: I’ll come up to see ya in a while, bring yees up some lunch, help ya pack.

HESTER: There’ll be no packin’ done around here. (exit both, in opposite directions)

- POSSIBLY ADD JOSIE SINGING HERE AS A TRANSITION –

(enter Hester by caravan – digs a grave for the swan. Enter Catwoman)

CAT: You’re buryin’ auld Black Wing, aren’t ya?

HESTER: How d’ya know?

CAT: I know everythin’ that happens on this bog. Here, give her to me a minute, auld Black Wing. She came to my door last night and tapped on it as she often did. I bent down and she puts her wing on my cheek and I knew this was farewell. Goodbye. Auld thing, and safe journey. Here, put her in the ground. (Hester does – Catwoman produces a mouse from her pocket) A saucer of milk there, Hester Swane.

HESTER: I’ve no milk today. You may go up to the hose and, I told ya, I don’t want ya pawin’ mice around me, dirty auld yokes, full of diseases.

CAT: I had a dream about ya last night.

HESTER: Spare me your visions and dreams, enough of me own to deal with.

CAT: Dreamt ya were a black train motorin’ through the Bog of Cats and, oh, the scorch off of this train and it blastin’ by and all the bog was dark in your wake. Hester Swane, you’ll bring this place down by evenin’.

HESTER: I know.

CAT: Do ya now? Then why don’t ya lave? If ya lave this place you’ll be alright. That’s what I came by to tell ya.

HESTER: Ah, how can I lave the Bog of Cats, everythin’ I’m connected to is here. I’d rather die.

CAT: Then die ya will.

HESTER: There’s sympathy for ya! That’s just what I need to hear.
CAT: Ya know what I think?

HESTER: What?

CAT: I been thinkin’ a while now that there’s some fierce wrong ya done that’s caught up with ya. What was it ya done, Hester?

HESTER: I done nothin’ – Or if I did I never meant to.

CAT: There’s a fine answer, a half a lie and a half a truth

HESTER: Everywan has done wrong at wan time or another.

CAT: Aye but not everywan knows the price of wrong. You do and it’s the best thing about ya and there’s not much in ya I’d praise.

HESTER: Ah, would ya give over. Go way and kill a few mice for your dinner, only lave me alone – or tell me about me mother, for what I remember don’t add up. What was she waitin’ for, Catwoman? And did she ever find it?

CAT: Ya’d often hear her voice comin’ over the bog at night. She was the greatest song stitcher ever to have passed through this place. But somewhere along the way she became bitter and mean. Bu the time she ran off and left ya I couldn’t abide her.

HESTER: There’s a longin’ in me for her.

CAT: I wouldn’t long for Josie Swane, if I was you. Sure the night ya were born she took ya over to the black swan’s lair, auld Black Wing ya’ve just buried there, and laid ya in the nest alongside her. And when I axed her why she’d do such a thing like that with snow and ice everywhere, ya know what she says, Swane means swan. That may be so, I says, but the child’ll die of pneumonia. That child, says Josie Swane, will live as long as this black swan, not a day more, not a day less.

HESTER: You’re makin’ it up. Xavier Cassidy put ya up to this.

CAT: Xavier Cassidy put me up to nothin’. I’m only tellin’ ya so ya know what sort of a woman your mother was. Ya were lucky she left ya, just forget about her and lave this place now or ya never will.

HESTER: Doesn’t seem to make much difference whether I stay or lave with a curse like that on me head.

CAT: There’s ways around curses. Curses only have the power ya allow them. I’m tellin’ ya, Hester, ya have to go. Lave this place now or ya never will.

(Josie & Mrs K enter- sit at garden table)

MRS K: Snap – snap, snap! How many games is that I’m after winnin’ ya?

JOSIE: Five

MRS K: And how many did you win?

JOSIE: Ya know right well I won ne’er a game.

MRS K: And do ya know why ya won ne’er a game, Josie? Because you’re thick, that’s the why. I bet ya can’t even spell your name.

JOSIE: And I bet I can.

MRS K: G’wan then, spell it.
JOSIE: J-o-s-i-e K-i-l-b-r-i-d-e

MRS K: Wrong! Wrong! Wrong!

JOSIE: Well, that’s the way Teacher taught me.

MRS K: Are you back-answerin’ me?

JOSIE: No, Grandmother.

MRS K: Ya got some of it right. Ya got the Joie part right, but ya got the Kilbride part wrong, because you’re not a Kilbride. You’re a Swane. Can ya spell Swane? Of course ya can’t. You’re not a Kilbride and never will be.

JOSIE: I’m tellin’ Daddy what ya said.

MRS K: Tell him! Ya won’t be tellin’ him anything I haven’t told him meself. He’s an eegit, your Daddy. I warned him about that wan, Hester Swane. You’ve your jumper on backwards.

JOSIE: It’s not backwards, it’s inside out.

MRS K: Don’t you cheek me – and tell me Josie Swane, how much has your Mam in the bank?

JOSIE: I don’t know.

MRS K: I’ll tell ya how much, a great big goose egg. Useless that’s what she is, livin’ off of handouts from my son that she fritters away on whiskey and cigars, the Jezebel witch. Guess how much I’ve saved, Josie, g’wan, guess, guess.

JOSIE: Ten pound.

MRS K: Ten pound! A’ya mad child? A’ya mad! Ten pound! Three thousand pound. All mine. (enter Carthage)

CARTHAGE: I don’t know how many times I tould ya to lave the child alone. Ya know I don’t want ya around here at the minute. G’wan home, Mother, g’wan.

MRS K: And do what? Talk to the range?

CARTHAGE: Do whatever ya like, only lave Josie alone, pick on someone your own size. (to Josie) You’ll have to learn to dress yourself.

MRS K: Ah, now, Carthage, don’t be annoyed with me. I only came up to say goodbye to her, found her in her pyjamas out here playin’ in the snow. Why isn’t her mother mindin’ her?

CARTHAGE: Don’t start that again.

MRS K: I never left you on your own.

CARTHAGE: Ya should have.

MRS K: And ya never called in to see the new dress I got for today and ya promised ya would. Alright, I’m goin’, I’m goin’. Just don’t think now ya’ve got Caroline Cassidy ya can do away with me the same as you’re doin’ away with Hester Swane. I’m your mother and I won’t be goin’ away. Ever. (exit)

CARTHAGE: Where’s your Mam?

JOSIE: Isn’t’ she always on the bog? Can I go to your weddin’?

CARTHAGE: What does your mother say?

JOSIE: She says there’ll be no weddin’ and to stop annoyin’ her.

CARTHAGE: Does she now?
JOSIE: Will you ax her for me?
CARTHAGE: We’ll see, Josie, we’ll see.
JOSIE: I’ll wear me Communion dress. Remember me Communion dress, Daddy?
CARTHAGE: I do.
JOSIE: Wasn’t it just a brilliant day?
CARTHAGE: It was, sweetheart, it was. Come on we go check on the calves. (both exit)

(enter Caroline – looking for Hester)
CAROLINE: Hester – are ya there? (Hester comes up behind her)
HESTER: Haven’t you the gall comin’ here, Caroline Cassidy.
CAROLINE: Oh! Can come here whenever I want, this is my house now, sure ya signed it over and all.
HESTER: Bits of paper, writin’, means nothin’, can asaisy be unsigned.
CAROLINE: You’re meant to be gone this week, it’s just not fair.
HESTER: Lots of things isn’t fair, Daddy’s little ice pop.
CAROLINE: We’re goin’ ahead with the weddin’, me and Carthage, ya think ya’ll disrupt everythin’, Hester Swane, I’m not afraid of ya.
HESTER: Ya should be. I’m afraid of meself – What is it ya want from me, Caroline? What have I ever done on you that ya feel the need to take everythin’ from me?
CAROLINE: I’m takin’ nothing ya haven’t lost already and lost this long while gone.
HESTER: You’re takin’ me husband, you’re takin’ me house, ya even want me daughter. Over my dead body.
CAROLINE: He was never your husband, he only took pity on ya, took ya out of that auld caravan on the bog, gave ya a home, built ya up from nothin’.
HESTER: Them the sweet nothin’s he’s been tellin’ ya? Let’s get wan thing straight, it was me built Carthage Kilbride up from nothin’, him a labourer’s son you wouldn’t give the time of day to. It was me who tould him he could do better. It was my money that bought him his first fine acres and no frigid little Daddy’s girl is goin’ to take him from me. Now get off my property before I cut that dress to ribbons.
CAROLINE: I’ll have to get Daddy. He’ll run ya off with a shot-gun if he has to.
HESTER: Not everyone is as afraid of your Daddy as you are, Caroline.
CAROLINE: Look, I’ll give ya more money if ya’ll only go. Here’s my bank book, there’s nearly nineteen thousand pounds in it, me inheritance from me mother. Daddy gave it to me this mornin’. Ya can have it, only please go. It’s me weddin’ day. It’s meant to be happy. It’s meant to be the best day of me life.
HESTER: What ya want me to do, Caroline? Admire your dress? Wish ya well? Hah? I used to babysit you. Remember that?
CAROLINE: That was a long time ago.
HESTER: Not that long. Listen to me now, Caroline, there’s two Hester Swane, one that is decent and very fond of ya despite your callow treatment of me. And the other Hester, well she could slide a knife down your face, carve ya up and not bat an eyelid. (grabs C’s hair)
CAROLINE: Ow! Lavego!

HESTER: Listen to me now, Caroline. Carthage Kilbride is mine and only mine. He’s been mine since he was sixteen. You think ya can take him from me? Wrong. All wrong. (let’s her go) Now get out of me sight.

CAROLINE: Ya’ll be sorry for this, Hester Swane.

HESTER: We all will. (exit Caroline)

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(Enter Josie)

JOSIE: Well good mornin’, Tinker Swane.

HESTER: Oh, good mornin’, Mrs. Kilbride, what a lovely surprise.

JOSIE: Tell me, ya Jezebel witch, how much have ya in the bank today?

HESTER: Oh, I’ve three great big goose eggs, Mrs. Kilbride. How much have ya in the bank yourself?

JOSIE: Seventeen million pound. I saved it. I cut back on sugar and I cut back on flour. I drank biled socks instead of tay and in wan night I saved seventeen million pound.

HESTER: Josie, don’t ever say any of that in front of your Granny, sure ya won’t?

JOSIE: I’m not a total eegit, Mam.

HESTER: Did ya have your breakfast?

JOSIE: Granny made me disgustin’ porridge.

HESTER: Did she? Did ya wash your teeth?

JOSIE: Why do I always have to wash me teeth? Every day. It’s so borin’. What do I need teeth for anyway?

HESTER: Ya need them for snarlin’ at people when smilin’ doesn’t work anymore. G’wan in and wash them now. (enter Carthage in his wedding suit)

JOSIE: Did ya count the cattle, Daddy?

CARTHAGE: I did.

JOSIE: Were they all there?

CARTHAGE: They were, Josie.

JOSIE: Daddy says I can go to his weddin’.

CARTHAGE: I said maybe, Josie.

HESTER: G’wan round the back and play, Josie.

JOSIE: Can I gp, Mam, can I? Say yeah, g’wan, say yeah.

HESTER: We’ll see, g’wan, Josie, g’wan, good girl. (exit Josie)

CARTHAGE: I’d like to know what ya think you’re playin’ at.

HESTER: Take a better man than you to cancel me out, Carthage Kilbride.

CARTHAGE: Ya haven’t even started packin’.

HESTER: Them you’re weddin’ clothes?
CARTHAGE: They’re not me farm clothes, are they?
HESTER: Y’ve a cheek comin’ here in them.
CARTHAGE: Well, you missus, are meant to be gone.
HESTER: And ya’ve a nerve tellin’ Josie she can go to your weddin’.
CARTHAGE: She’s mine as well as yours.
HESTER: Have ya slept with her yet?
CARTHAGE: That’s none of your business.
HESTER: You were nothin’ before I put me stamp on ya and ya”’ again I’.
CARTHAGE: Are you threatenin’ me, Hetty? Because if ya are, ya better know who you’re dealin’ with, not the sixteen year auld fool who fell into your clutches.
HESTER: It was you who wooed me, Carthage Kilbride, not the other way round as ya’d like everywan to think. If you think I’m goin’ to let you walk over me, ya don’t know me at all.
CARTHAGE: That at least is true. I’ve watched ya now for the best part of fourteen years and I can’t say for sure I know the first thing about ya. Who are ya and what sourt of stuff are ya made of?
HESTER: The same as you and I can’t abide to lose ya. Is it I’ve gotten old and you just hittin’ thirty?
CARTHAGE: Ya know right well it isn’t that.
HESTER: I haven’t had a drink since the night ya left.
CARTHAGE: I know.
HESTER: I only ever drank anyway to forget about –
CARTHAGE: I don’t want to talk about that. Lave it.
HESTER: And still ya took the money and bought the land, the Kilbride’s who never owned anythin’ till I came along, tinker and all. Tell me what to do, Carthage, and I’ll do it, anythin’ for you to come back.
CARTHAGE: Just stop, will ya –
HESTER: Anythin’, Carthage, anythin’, and I’ll do it if it’s in me power.
CARTHAGE: It’s not in your power – Look, I’m up to me neck in another life That at least is true. I’ve watched ya now for the best part of fourteen years and I can’t say for sure I know the first thing about ya. Who are ya and what sourt of stuff are ya made of?
HESTER: The same as you and I can’t abide to lose ya. Is it I’ve gotten old and you just hittin’ thirty?
CARTHAGE: Ya know right well it isn’t that.
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HESTER: And still ya took the money and bought the land, the Kilbride’s who never owned anythin’ till I came along, tinker and all. Tell me what to do, Carthage, and I’ll do it, anythin’ for you to come back.
CARTHAGE: Just stop, will ya –

HESTER: Anythin’, Carthage, anythin’, and I’ll do it if it’s in me power.

CARTHAGE: It’s not in your power – Look, I’m up to me neck in another life that can’t include ya anymore.

HESTER: You’re sellin’ me and Josie down the river for a few lumpy auld acres and notions of respectability and I never though ya would. You’re better than all of them. Ya know what they’re sayin’ about ya? That you’re a jumped-up land-hungry mongrel.

CARTHAGE: And ya know what they’re sayin’ about you? That it’s time ya moved onto another haltin’ site.

HESTER: I was born on the Bog of Cats and in the Bog of Cats I’ll end me days. And as for me tinker blood, I’m proud of it. I’m warnin’ you now, Carthage, you go through with this sham weddin’ and you’ll never see Josie again.

CARTHAGE: Ya’ll not separate me and Josie or I’ll have her taken off ya.

HESTER: If it’s the last thing I do I’ll find a way to keep her from ya.

CARTHAGE: I want you out of here before dusk! And here. There’s your blood money. It’s all there down to the last penny. I never should’ve took it in the first place. I owe ya nothin’ now, Hester Swane. Nothin’. Ya’ve no hold over me now. (goes to exit)

HESTER: Carthage – ya can’t just walk away like this.

CARTHAGE: Remember, before dusk. (exit Carthage. Josie enter)

JOSIE: What’s wrong of ya, Mam?

HESTER: Ah go ‘way, would ya, and lave me alone.

JOSIE: Can I go down to Daly’s and buy sweets?

HESTER: No, ya can’t. Go on off and play, you’re far too demandin’.

JOSIE: Yeah well, just because you’re in a bad humour it’s not my fault. I’m fed up playin’ on me own.

HESTER: You’ll get a clatter if you’re not careful. You’re spoilt rotten, that’s what ya are. (gentler tone) G’wan and play with your dolls, give them a bath, cut their hair.

JOSIE: Ya said I wasn’t to cut their hair.

HESTER: Well now I’m sayin’ ya can, alright.

JOSIE: But it won’t grow back.

HESTER: So! There’s worse things in this world than your dolls’ hair not growin’ back, believe me, Josie Swane.

JOSIE: Me name is Josie Kilbride.

HESTER: That’s what I said.

JOSIE: Ya didn’t, ya said Josie Swane. I’m not a Swane. I’m a Kilbride.

HESTER: I supposed you’re ashamed of me too. (enter Xavier and Caroline, both in wedding clothes)

JOSIE: Caroline, you’re dress, is that your weddin’ dress? It’s beautiful.

CAROLINE: Hello, Josie (Josie goes to touch Caroline’s dress, Hester rushes to her, picks her up and carried her away).

HESTER: Now stay around the back. (exit Josie)
XAVIER: Was hopin’ I wouldn’t find ya still here, Swane

HESTER: So ya came back with your Daddy, ya know nothin’, Caroline, nothin’. (produces a naggin of whiskey and drinks).

XAVIER: Though ya’d given up the drink.

HESTER: I had. Me first in months, but why should I try and explain myself to you?

XAVIER: Might interest Carthage to know you lashin’ into a naggin of whiskey at this hour.

HESTER: Carthage. If it wasn’t for you, me and Carthage’d be fine. Should’ve eradicated ya, Cassidy, when I could’ve.

CAROLINE: What are ya talking about Hester?

HESTER: What am I talkin’ about? I’m talkin’ about you, ya little fool, and I’m talkin’ about James.

CAROLINE: Me brother James?

XAVIER: You keel a civil tongue, Swane, over things ya know nothin’ about.

HESTER: Oh, but I do know things, and that’s why ya want me out of here. (picks up envelope and puts it into pocket) And it might interest ya to know, Caroline, that Carthage was just here in his weddin’ clothes and he didn’t look like no radiant groom and he axed me to take him back, but I said –

XAVIER: I’d say he did alright –

HESTER: He did! He did! Or as much as, but I said I couldn’t be played with anymore, that I was made for somethin’ different than these butchery lives yees all lead here on the Bog of Cats. Me mother taught me that.

XAVIER: Your mother. Your mother taught ya nothin’, Swane, except maybe how to use a knife. Let me tell ya a thing or two about your mother, big JosieSwane. I use see her outside her auld caravan on the bog and the fields covered over in starts and her half covered in an excuse for a dress....

HESTER: And what were ya doin’ watchin’ her? Catwoman tould me ya were in a constant swoon over me mother, sniffin’ round the caravan, lavin’ little presents and Christmas dinners and money and drink, sure, I remember the gatch of ya meself and ya scrapin’ at the door.

XAVIER: Very presumptuous of a Swane, to think I’d have any interest in your mother beyond Christian compassion.

HESTER: Christian compassion! That what it’s called these days!

XAVIER: Aye, Christian compassion, a thing that was never bet into you. Ya say ya remember lots of things, then maybe ya remember that that food and money I used to lave was left so ya wouldn’t starve. Times I’d walk by that caravan and there’d be ne’er a sign of this mother of yours. She’d go off for days with anywan who’d buy her a drink.

HESTER: Lies! All lies!

XAVIER: Often times I brung ya home and gave ya over to me mother to put some clothes on ya and feed ya.

HESTER: Ya expect me to believe anythin’ that comes from your siled lips, Xavier Cassidy?

XAVIER: And wan other thing, Swane, all I’ve left is Caroline and if I have to plough through you to have the best for her, then that’s what I’ll do. SO do it the aisy way for all of us. Lave this place today. Come on, Caroline.

CAROLINE: Ya heard what Daddy says. Ya don’t know his temper, Hester.
HESTER: And you don’t know mine. (exit Xavier and Caroline. Enter Josie in Communion dress) What are ya doin’ in your Communion dress?

JOSIE: For Daddy’s weddin’. I’m grown out of all me other dresses.

HESTER: I don’t think ya are.

JOSIE: I am. I can go, can’t I, Mam?

HESTER: Ya have her eyes.

JOSIE: Whose eyes – whose eyes, Mam?

HESTER: Josie Swane’s, me mother.

JOSIE: Granny said me real name is Josie Swane.

HESTER: Don’t mind your Granny.

JOSIE: Did ya like her, Josie Swane?

HESTER: -- More than anythin’ in this cold white world.

JOSIE: More than me and Daddy?

HESTER: I’m talkin’ about when I was your age. Ya weren’t born then, Josie. – Ya know the last time I saw me mother I was wearin’ me Communion dress too, down by the caravan, a beautiful summer night and the bog like a furnace. I wouldn’t go to be though she kept tellin’ me to. I don’t know why I wouldn’t, I always done what she tould me. I think now – maybe I knew. And she says, I’m goin’ walkin’ the bog, you’re to stay here, Hetty. And I says, No, I’d go along with her, and made to folly her. And she says, No, Hetty, you wait here, I’ll be back in a while. And again I made to folly her and again she stopped me. And I watched her walk away from me across the Bog of Cats. And across the Bog of Cats I’ll watch her return.

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(Interior Xavier’s house – weddin’ feast)

WAITER: You’re sure now ya wouldn’t like a glass, Catwoman?

CAT: No. no., I love the saucer young man. What’s your name? Do I know ya?

WAITER: I’m a Dunne.

CAT: Wan of the long Dunnes or wan of the scutty fat-legged Dunnes?

WAITER: Wan of the long Dunnes. Ya want a refill, Catwoman?

CAT: I will. And what’re ya goin’ to be when ya grow up, young Long Dunne?

WAITER: I want to be an astronaut but me father wants me to work on the bog like him and like me grandfather. The Dunnes have always worked on the bog.

CAT: Oh, go for the astronaut, young man.

WAITER: I will so, Catwoman. Have ya enough wine?

CAT: Plenty for now. (exit Dunne. Enter Joseph)

JOSEPH: Hello. Hello.

CAT: Ah, not another ghost.

JOSEPH: Who’s there?
CAT: Go ‘way and lave me alone. I’m on me day off.

JOSEPH: Who are ya? I can’t see ya.

CAT: I can’t see you aither. I’m the Catwoman but I tould ya, I’m not talkin’ to ghosts today.

JOSEPH: Please, I haven’t spoken to anywan since the night I died.

CAT: Haven’t ya? Who are ya anyway?

JOSEPH: I’m Joseph Swane of Bergit’s Island. Is this Bergit’s Island?

CAT: This is the Bog of Cats.

JOSEPH: The Bog of Cats. Me mother had a song about this place.

CAT: Josie Swane was your mother?

JOSEPH: Ya know her?

CAT: Oh aye, I knew her. Then Hester must be your sister.

JOSEPH: Hester, ya know Hester too?

CAT: She lives only down the lane. I never knew Hester had a brother.

JOSEPH: I doubt she’d be tellin’ people about me.

CAT: I don’t mean to be short with ya, Joseph Swane, but Saturday is me day off. So, tell me what is it ya want and them be on your way.

JOSEPH: I want to be alive again. I want to rest, ate a steak, meet a girl.

CAT: You’ll never do them things again, Joseph Swane.

JOSEPH: Don’t say that to me. I’m just turned eighteen.

CAT: Eighteen. That’s young to die alright. But there’s nothin’ I can do for ya. Look, I’ll take ya down to Hester Swane’s house, ya can talk to her.

JOSEPH: Can she hear ghosts?

CAT: Oh aye, though she lets on she can’t.

JOSEPH: Alright so, I suppose I may as well since I’m here.

CAT: C’mon, folly me voice till I lead ya there. (exit Catwoman and Joseph. Enter Caroline and Carthage)

CAROLINE: This is the tablecloth me mother had for her weddin’ and it’s the same silver too. I’d really like for her to have been here today.

CARTHAGE: You mother, she had class. And you have too, Caroline, like no wan else around here.

CAROLINE: I can’t stop thinkin’ about Hester.

CARTHAGE: (kisses her) Hester’ll be fine, tough as an auld boot. Ya shouldn’t concern yourself with her on your weddin’ day. Josie’s the wan I worry about.

CAROLINE: You’re still very tangled up with Hester, aren’t ya?

CARTHAGE: I’m not wan bit tangled up with her, if she’d just do what she’s supposed to do which is fierce simple, clear out of the Bog of Cats for wance and for all.
CAROLINE: It’s all fierce messy, Carthage. I’d hoped ya’d have sourted it out by today. It laves me in a fierce awkward position. You’re far more attached to her than ya’d led me to believe. I wonder have we done the wrong thing.

CARTHAGE: Ya should’ve said this before ya took your vows at the altar.

CAROLINE: I’ve been tryin’ to say it to ya for weeks.

CARTHAGE: So what do we do now?

CAROLINE: Get through today, I suppose, pretend it’s the best day of our lives. I don’t know about you but I’ve had better days than today, far better.

CARTHAGE: Caroline, what’s wrong of ya?

CAROLINE: Nothin’ only I feel like I’m walkin’ on somewan’s grave. (enter Mrs. K)

MRS K: Oh, the love birds! The love birds! There yees are, off hidin’. Carthage, I want a photo of yees. Would you take it, Caroline?

CARTHAGE: She means she wants wan of herself.

MRS K: Shush now, Carthage, and stand up straight. Did ya get me shoes in?

CAROLINE: I don’t think I –

MRS K: Doesn’t matter, doesn’t matter. Guess how much they were. G’wan, guess.

CAROLINE: Fifty pound.

MRS K: Are ya out of your tiny mind!

CARTHAGE: Tell us how much they were, Mother, before we die of the suspense.

MRS K: A hundred and fifty pound. The Quane herself wouldn’t pay more. (Monica and Xavier & Josie have entered. Monica has Josie by the hand)

XAVIER: (taking champagne from the waiter) Here Monica, and cheers. (to Josie) Child, a pound for your handbag.

MRS K: What d’ya say Josie?

XAVIER: Lave her. Two things in this world get ya nowhere, sayin’ sorry and sayin’ thanks – that right. Josie.

JOSIE: That’s right, Mr. Cassidy.

MRS K: (taking Josie aside) Here give me that pound till I mind it for ya.

JOSIE: First give me back my Communion money.

MRS K: What Communion money?

CARTHAGE: So it was you took her Communion money. (Catwoman and Father Willow have entered arm in arm)

FW: I’m tellin’ ya now, Catwoman, ya’ll have to cut back on the mice, they’ll be the death of ya.

CAT: And you’ll have to cut back on the snuff

FW: Try snails instead, far better for ya, the French ate them with garlic and ton of butter and Burgundy wine. Delicious.

CAT: We should go on a holiday, you and me, Father Willow.
FW: Ah, ya say that every winter and come the summer I can’t budge ya.

CAT: I’ll go away with ya next summer and that’s a promise.

FW: Well, where do ya want to go and I’ll book the tickets in the mornin’?

CAT: Anywhere it’s not rainin’ because it’s goin’ to rain here all next summer, seen it writ in the sky.

MRS K: Writ in the sky, me eye, sure she’s blind as a bat. Xavier, what did ya have to invite the Catwoman for? Brings down the tone of the whole weddin’.

MONICA: Hasn’t she as much right to walk earth as you, partake in its pleasures too.

MRS K: No, she hasn’t! Not till she washes herself. Why did ya have to invite her?

XAVIER: Ya know as well as me its bad luck not to invite the Catwoman.

CARTHAGE: Well, Catwoman, what do ya predict for us?

CAT: I predict nothin’.

CARTHAGE: Ah, g’wan now, ya must have a blessin’ or a vision or somethin’.

CAROLINE: Lave it, Carthage. You’re welcome Catwoman and Father Willow.

FW: Thank you, Hester, thank you.

CARTHAGE: You mean, Caroline, Father Willow, this is Caroline.

FW: Whatever.

JOSIE: Granny, will ya take a photo of just me and Daddy for so put in me scrapbook?

MRS K: Don’t be so rude, you, to Caroline. And I tould ya to call me Grandmother!

JOSIE: Granny, Granny, Granny.

CAROLINE: She’s alright. Here, I’ll take the photo of you and Carthage for your scrapbook.

MRS K: She’s ruined, that’s what she is, turnin’ up in her Communion dress, makin’ a holy show of us all.

CARTHAGE: It’s you that’s the holy show in that stupid dress.

MRS K: What! I am not! There’s gratitude for ya. Ya make an effort to look your best. I cut back on everythin’ to buy this dress. How was I supposed to know the bride’d be wearin’ white as well.

CARTHAGE: Don’t start whingin’ now in front of everywan, sit down will ya, ya look fine, ya look great – Alright, I’m sorry. Ya look stunnin’.

MRS K: I don’t, do I?

CARTHAGE: Yes!

FW: (leading Catwoman to the table) If ya were a bar of chocolate I’d ate ya.

CAT: If I was a bar of chocolate I’d ate meself.

XAVIER: Thank you. Now before we dig in I’d like to welcome yees all here on wan of the happiest days of my life. Yees have all long known Caroline has been my greatest joy and reason for livin’. Her mother, if she was here today, would’ve been proud too at how she has grown into a lovely and graceful woman. I can’t think of a better man that Carthage Kilbride to take over the care of me only child. I wish yees well and happiness and infants rompin’ on the hearth.
ALL: Hear! Hear!

XAVIER: Father Willow, would ya do us the –

MRS K: I’d like to say a few words too –

XAVIER: Go ahead, Mrs. Kilbride.

MRS K: As the proud member of the groom, I feel the need to answer Xavier’s fine speech with a few words of me own. Never was a mother more blessed than me in havin’ Carthage for a son. As a child he was uncommon good, he went to the greatest pains always to see that me spirits were good, that me heart was uplifted. When his father died he used come into the bed to sleep beside me for fear I would be lonely. Often I woke from a deep slumber and his two arms would be around me a small leg thrown over me in sleep, remember Carthage?

CARTHAGE: I do not, would ya ever sit down.

MRS K: I only want to say that Caroline is very welcome into the Kilbride household. And that if Carthage will be as good a son to Caroline as he’s been a husband to me then she’ll have no complaints. Cheers.

ALL: Hear! Hear!

XAVIER: And now, Father Willow, ya’ll say grace for us?

FW: It’s be an honour, Jack, thank you --

MRS K: Who’s Jack?

FW: In the name of the Father and f the Son and of the Holy Ghost, it may or may not surprise yees al if I tould yees I was almost a groom meself wance. Her name was Elizabeth Kennedy, no that was me mother’s name, her name was – it’ll come to me, anyway, it wasn’t to be, in the end we fell out over a duck egg on a walkin’ holiday by the Shannon, what washer name at all? Helen? No.

MRS K: Would ya say the grace, Father Willow, and be –

FW: The grace, yes, how does it go again?

MRS K: Bless us, oh Lord, and these thy gifts which of –

FW: Rowena. That was it. Rowena Phelan. I should never have ate that duck egg – no – (enter Hester, in wedding dress)

MRS K: Ya piebald knacker ya.

XAVIER: What’s your business here, Swane, besides puttin’ a curse on me daughter’s weddin’?

MRS K: The brazen nerve of her turnin’ up here in that garb.

HESTER: The kettle callin’ the pot white. Remember this dress, Carthage? He bought it for me –

CAROLINE: Daddy, would ya do somethin’.

HESTER: Oh must be near nine year ago. We’d got to the stage where we should’ve parted and I said it to ya and ya convinced me otherwise and axed me to marry ya. Ya only ever wanted me there until ya were strong enough to lave me.

CARTHAGE: Get outa here right now!
HESTER: Ya thought ya could come swaggerin’ to me this mornin’ in your weddin’ clothes, well, here I am in mine. This is my weddin’ day be rights and not wan of yees can deny it. And yees all just sit there glarin’ as if I’m the guilt wan.

MRS K: Run her off, Xavier! Run her off or I will.

CARTHAGE: Would you keep out of this!

MONICA: Hester, go home, g’wan.

MRS K: I’ve had the measure of you this long time, the lazy shiftless blood in ya, this savage tinker eye ya turn on people to frighten them. –

CARTHAGE: Would ya shut up! Ya haven’t shut up all day! We’re not havin’ a brawl here.

MRS K: There’s a nice way to talk to your mother on your weddin’ day. I’m not afraid of ya, Hester Swane, you’re just a sad lost little woman –

HESTER: Have you ever been discarded, Elsie Kilbride? – the way I’ve been dis –

MRS K: No, I’ve never been discarded, Hester Swane! Ya know why? Because I’ve never overstepped meself. I’ve always lived by the rules.

HESTER: Ah rules! What rules are they? Teach them to me and I’ll live by them. Yees don’t know what it’s like, to be flung on the ashpit and you still alive –

XAVIER: No wan’s flingin’ ya anywhere! We done everythin’; proper by you –

HESTER: Proper! Yees have taken everythin’ from me. I’ve done nothin’ again’ any of yees. I’m just bein’ who I am, Carthage. I’m axin’ ya the wance more, come away with me now, with me and –

MRS K: Come away with her, she says –

HESTER: Yes! Come away with me and Josie and stop all this –

XAVIER: Come away with ya! Are ya mad! He’s married to Caroline now –

CARTHAGE: Go home, Hester, and pack your things.

MONICA: C’mon, Hester, I’ll take ya home.

HESTER: I have no home anymore for he’s decided to take it from me.

MONICA: Then come and live with me, I’ve no wan –

HESTER: No, I want to stay in me own house. Just let me stay in the house, Carthage. I won’t bother any wan if yees’d just lave me alone.

CARTHAGE: There’s a house bought and furnished for ya in town as ya agreed to –

HESTER: I’ve never lived in a town. I won’t know anywan there –

MONICA: Ah, let her stay in the house, the Bog of Cats is all she knows –

MRS K: And since when do we need you stickin’ your snout in, Monica Murray?

MONICA: Since you and your son have forgotten all decency, Elsie Kilbride. Ya’ve always been too hard on her. Ya never gave her a chance –

MRS K: A waste of time givin’ chances to a tinker. All tinkers understands is the open road and where the next bottle of whiskey is comin’ from.
MONICA: Well, you should know and your own grandfather wan!
MRS K: My grandfather was a wanderin’ tinsmith –
MONICA: And what’s that but a tinker with notions!
FW: What year is this wine?
MONICA: Go home, Hester. Don’t plead your case with this shower. They’d sicken’ ya!
HESTER: Carthage, ya could aisy afford another house for yourself and Caroline if ya wanted –
CARTHAGE: No! We’re stickin’ by what we agreed on –
HESTER: The truth is you want to eradicate me, make out I never existed –
CARTHAGE: If I wanted to eradicate ya, I could’ve, long ago. And I could’ve taken Josie off ya. Facts are, I been more than generous with ya.
HESTER: You’re plentiful with the guilt money alright, showerin’ bucket of it on me. (throw envelope at him) There’s your auld blood money back. Ya think you’re getting’ away that aisy! Money won’t take that guilt away, Carthage, we’ll go to our grave with it!
CARTHAGE: I’ve not an ounce of guilt where you’re concerned and whatever leftover feelin’ I had for ya as the mother of me child is gone after this display of hatred towards me. Just go away, I can’t bear the sight of ya!
HESTER: I can’t leave the Bog of Cats --
MRS K: We’ll burn ya out if we have to --
HESTER: Ya see –
MRS K” Won’t we Xavier –
XAVIER: Ya can lave me out of any low-boy tactics. You’re lavin’ this place today, Swane, aren’t ya?
HESTER: I can’t lave – Ya see me mother said she’d come back here –
MRS K: Your mother! That tramp hasn’t been seen round here in over thirty –
HESTER: Don’t call her that! Father Willow, tell them what they’re doin’ is wrong. They’ll listen to you.
FW: They’ve never listened to me, sure they even lie in the confession box. Ya know what I do? Wear earplugs.
HESTER: I can’t lave till me mother comes. I’d hoped she’d have come by now and it wouldn’t come to this. Don’t make me lave this place or somethin’ terrible’ll happen. Don’t.
XAVIER: We’ve had enough of your ravin’, Swane, so take yourself elsewhere and let us try to recoup these marred celebrations.
JOSIE: I’ll go with ya, Mam, and ya look gorgeous in that dress.
CARTHAGE: Stay where ya are, Josie.
JOSIE: No, I want to go with me Mam.
CARTHAGE: (stopping her) ya don’t know what ya want. And reconsiderin’, I think it would be better all round if Josie stays with me till ya’ve moved. I’ll bring her back to ya then.
HESTER: I’ve swallowed all me pride over you. You’re lavin’ me no choice but a vicious war on ya. (Takes bottle of wine) Josie, I’ll be back to collect ya later. And you just try keepin’ her from me! (exit Hester)
(Dusk. Hester in wedding dress, charred and muddied. House in flames behind her. Joseph in the flames watching her) **WILL NEED TIME FOR THE ACTION OF THIS TRANSITION. MAY NEED TO ADD IN SOME OF HESTER'S DIALOGUE**

HEST: Well, Carthage, ya think them were only idle threats I made? I’d burn down the world if I’d enough diesel – Will somewan not come and save me from meself before I go and do worse. (Joseph starts to sing)

JOE: By the Bog of Cats I finally learned false from true,
Learned too late that it was you and only you
Left me sore, a heart brimful of rue
By the Bog of Cats in the ---

HEST: Who’s there?

JOE: I think ya know me, Hester.

HEST: It’s not Joseph Swane, is it?

JOE: It is alright.

HEST: I thought I done away with you. Where are ya? I can’t see ya. Keep off! Keep away! I’m warnin’ ya.

JOE: I’m not here to harm ya.

HEST: Is it an apology you’re after? Well, I’ve non for ya. I’d slit your throat again if ya stood here in front of me.

JOE: Would ya? What’re ya so angry about?

HEST: You’ve a nerve singin’ that song. That song is mine! She made it for me and only me.

JOE: I didn’t know it was yours. She used to sing it to me all the time.

HEST: You’re lyin’! Where is she? Have you come across her where you are?

JOE: Death’s a big country,, Hester. She could be anywhere in it.

HEST: If ya see her tell her I won’t be hard on her, will ya?

JOE: Aye, if I see her.

HEST: I just want to know why, that’s all.

JOE: Why what?

HEST: Was it somethin’ I done on her? There isn’t anything; in this wide world that Josie could do that’d make me walk away from her.

JOE: Ya have a daughter?

HEST: If it weren’t for you, me and Carthage’d still be together!

JOE: So it’s my fault ya killed me, that what you’re sayin’?

HEST: He took your money after we killed ya –

JOE: To my memory Carthage did nothin’ only look on. I think he was as shocked as I was when ya came at me with the fishin’ knife –

HEST: He took your money! He helped me throw ya overboard! And now he wants to put it all on me.

JOE: Ya came at me from behind, didn’t ya? Wan minute I’m rowin’ and the next I’m a ghost.
HESTER: If ya hadn’t been such an arrogant git I may have left ya alone nut ya just wouldn’t shut up talkin’ about her as if she wasn’t my mother at all. -- Didn’t she ever tell ya about me?

JOSEPH: She never mentioned ya.

HESTER: She must’ve.

JOSEPH: If it’s any consolation to ya, she left me too and our father. Josie Swane hung around for no wan.

HESTER: What was she like, Joseph? Every day I forget more and more. If it wasn’t for this auld caravan I’d swear I only dreamt her.

JOSEPH: She was fierce silent – gentle I suppose in her way.

HESTER: Gentle? She’s a vicious whiskey temper on her and a whiplash tongue and fists that’d land on ya like lightnin’.

JOSEPH: She never laid a hand on me – though I remember her fightin’ with me father alright. It wasn’t his fault, Hester, she told him ya died, that ya were born with your heart all wrong.

HESTER: The lyin’ tongue of her. And he just believed her.

JOSEPH: Didn’t he send me lookin’ for ya in the end, see was there any trace of ya, told me to split the money with ya if I found ya Hester. I was goin’ to split it with ya when we reached the shore, ya didn’t have to cut me throat for it.

HESTER: Ya think I slit your throat for a few auld pound me father left me?

JOSEPH: Then why?

HESTER: She stole my life from me.

JOSEPH: So you stole mine.

HESTER: Well somewan had to pay.

JOSEPH: If ya knew what it was like here ya’d never have done what ya done. It’s not one bit romantic bein’ dead, let me tell ya.

HESTER: I never thought it was.(exit Joseph. Monica shouts from off stage)

MONICA: Hester! Hester! Your house! It’s on fire! Hester! (enters) Come quick, I’ll get the others!

HESTER: Don’t bother.

MONICA: Ya set it yourself?

HESTER: I did.

MONICA: That’s what tinkers do, isn’t it, burn everythin’ after them?

HESTER: Aye.

MONICA: They’ll skin ya alive, Hester, I’m tellin’ ya, they’ll kill ya.

HESTER: And you with them.

MONICA: I stood up for ya as best I could. I’ve to live round here, Hester. I had to pay me respects to the Cassidy’s. Sure Xavier and meself used walk to school together.

HESTER: Sit down, have a drink with me, I’ll get ya a glass. (goes into caravan)

MONICA: We’ll go off in this yoke, you and me.
HESTER: Will we?

MONICA: Flee off from this place, flee off from Eden.

HESTER: Eden – I left Eden, Monica. It was on account of a look from a pair of nonchalant eyes, the colour of which I’m still not sure of.

MONICA: And who was it gave ya this look, your mother, was it? Josie Swane?

HESTER: Oh aye, Monica, she was the wan alright, who looked at me so askance and strangely – Who’d believe a look could destroy ya? I never would’ve ‘cept it happened to me.

MONICA: She was a harsh auld yoke. I was never comfortable with her. There was somethin’ cold and dead about her except when she sang and then I declare ya’d fall in love with her.

HESTER: Would ya now?

MONICA: There was a time round here when no celebration was complete without Josie Swane. She’d make up songs for each occasion. And it wasn’t so much that they wanted her there, more they were afraid not to have her.

HESTER: I used to go with her on some of them singin’ sprees before she ran off. And they never axed us to stay, these people. I don’t think it bothered her, it did me – and still rankles after all these years.

MONICA: You’re still waitin’ on her, aren’t ya?

HESTER: This thirty-three years and it’s still like she only walked away yesterday.

MONICA: She’s not comin’ back, Hester. I know what it’s like to wait for somewan who’s never comin’ through the door again. But this waitin’ is only a fancy of yours.

HESTER: I made a promise, Monica. I swore to meself that wan day I’m comin’ back to the Bog of Cats to wait for her there and I’m never lavin’ again.

MONICA: Well, I don’t know how ya’ll swing to stay now, your house in ashes, ya after appearin’ in that dress.

HESTER: The only way I’m lavin’ this place is in a box and if it comes to that I’m not lavin’ alone.

MONICA: Stop this wild talk. I don’t like it.

HESTER: Carthage still at the weddin’?

MONICA: And where else would he be? Don’t waste your time over a man like him, faithless as an acorn on a high wind – wine all gone?

HESTER: Aye.

MONICA: I’ll go up to the feast and bring us back a bottle unless you’ve any objections.

HESTER: I’ll drink the enemy’s wine. Not the wine’s fault.

MONICA: I’ll be back in a while. (exit Monica)

HESTER: Well, it’s dusk now and long after and where are ya, Mr. Ghost Fancier. I’m here waitin’ for ya, though I’ve been tould to flee. Maybe you’re not comin’ after all, maybe I only imagined ya. (enter Josie)

JOSIE: Mam! – Mam! I’m goin’ on the honeymoon with Daddy and Caroline.

HESTER: You’re goin’ no such where.

JOSIE: I want to go with them It’s only for five days, Mam.
HESTER: There’s a couple of things you should know about your precious Daddy, ya should know how he has treated me!

JOSIE: I’m not listenin’ to ya givin’ out about him.

HESTER: That’s right, stand up for him and see how far it’ll get ya. He swore that after you’d been born he’d marry me and now he plans to take ya off of me. I suppose ya’d like that too.

JOSIE: I said I’m not listenin’.

HESTER: You’ll listen to me, Josie Swane, and you listen well. Another that had your name walked away from me. Your perfect Daddy walked away from me. And you’ll walk away from me too. All me life people have walked away without a word of explanation. Well, I want to tell ya somethin’, Josie, if you lave me ya’ll die.

JOSIE: I will not.

HESTER: Ya will! Ya will! It’s a sort of curse was put on ya be the Catwoman and the black swan. Remember the black swan?

JOSIE: Aye.

HESTER: So ya have to stay with me, d’ya see, and if your Daddy or anywan else axes ya who ya’d prefer to live with, ya have to say me.

JOSIE: Mam, I would’ve said you anyway.

HESTER: Would ya? – Oh, I’m sorry, Josie, I’m sorry, sweetheart. It’s not true what I said about a curse bein’ put on ya, it’s not true at all. If I’m let go tonight I swear I’ll make it up to ya for them awful things I’m after sayin’.

JOSIE: It’s alright, Mam, I know ya didn’t mean it – Can I go back to the weddin’? The dancin’s not over yet.

HESTER: Dance with me. (begin waltzing – music) Come on, we’ll have our own weddin’. Ya beautiful, beautiful child, I could ate ya.

JOSIE: Can I go back to the weddin’ for a while?

HESTER: Ya can do anything; ya want ‘cept lave me. G’wan then, for half an hour. (Josie give H cake and exits)

(Heater eats cake – Xavier enters)

XAVIER: Ya enjoyin’ that, are ya, Swane, me daughter’s weddin’ cake?

HESTER: Oh, it’s yourself, Xavier, with your auld gun. I was wonderin’ when I’d see ya in your true colours.

XAVIER: Ya burnt the bloody house to the ground.

HESTER: Did ya really think I was goin’ to have your daughter livin’ there?

XAVIER: Ya won’t best me, Swane, ya know that. I ran your mother out of here and I’ll run you too.

HESTER: It’s got nothing; to do with ya, Cassidy, it’s between me and Carthage.

XAVIER: Got everythin’ to do with me and ya after makin’ a mockery of me and me daughter in front of the whole parish.

HESTER: No more than yees deserve for wheedlin’ and cajolin’ Carthage away from me with you promises of land and money.

XAVIER: He was aisy wheedled.

HESTER: He was always a feckless fool.
XAVIER: Aye, in all respects bar wan. He loves the land and like me he’d rather die than part with it wance he gets his greedy hands on it. With him Cassidy’s farm’ll be safe, the name’ll be gone, but never the farm. And who’s to say but maybe your offspring won’t be farmin’ my land in years to come.

HESTER: Josie’ll have nothin’ to do with anythin’ that’s yours. I’ll see to that. And if ya’d looked after your own son better ya wouldn’t be covetin’ Josie nor any that belongs to me.

XAVIER: Don’t you talk about my young fella.

HESTER: Wasn’t it me that found him, strychnine to the eyeballs, howlin’ ‘long the bog and his dog in his arms.

XAVIER: How was I supposed to know he’d go and dig the dog up?

HESTER: You’re not a farmer for nothin’, somethin’ about that young lad bothered ya, he wasn’t tough enough for ya probably, so ya strychnine his dog, knowin’ full well the child’d be goin’ lookin’ for him.

XAVIER: My son died in a tragic accident of no wan’s makin’.

HESTER: Well, I don’t believe in tragic accidents and especially not where you’re concerned.

XAVIER: If ya could just hear the mad talk of yourself. You’re mad as your mother and she was a lunatic.

HESTER: Nothin’ lunatic about her ‘cept she couldn’t breathe the same air as yees all here by the Bog of Cats.

XAVIER: We often breathed the same air, me and Josie Swane, she was a loose wan, loose and lazy and aisy.

HESTER: If you’re tryin’ to destroy some high idea I have of her you’re wastin’ your time. I have memories your cheap talk can never alter.

XAVIER: And what memories are they, Swane? I’d like to know if they exist at all.

HESTER: Oh, they exist alright and ya’d like to rob them from me along with everythin’ else. But ya won’t because I’m stronger than ya and ya’ll take nothin’ from me I don’t choose to give ya.

XAVIER: (puts gun to her throat) Won’t I now?

HESTER: What’re ya goin’ to do, Cassidy? Ya think I’m afraid of you and your auld gun? G’wan, shoot! Blow me away! Save me the bother meself. Ya want me to do it for ya?

XAVIER: You’re a dangerous witch, Swane.

HESTER: You’re sweatin’. Always knew ya were yella to the bone. Don’t worry. I’ll be lavin’ this place tonight, though not the way you or anywan else expects. (enter Carthage)

CARTHAGE: The cattle! The calves! Ya burnt them all, they’re roarin’ in the flames! The house in ashes! A’ya gone mad altogether! The calves! A’ya gone mad!

HESTER: No,, I only meant what I said. I warned ya, Carthage, ya drove me to it.

XAVIER: A hundred year ago we’d strap ya to a stake and roast ya till your guts exploded.

CARTHAGE: That’s it! I’m takin’ Josie off of ya! I don’t care if I’ve to drag ya through the courts. I’ll have ya put away! I’ll tell all about your brother! I don’t care!

HESTER: Tell them! And tell them your own part in it too while you’re at it! Don’t you threaten me with Josie. Bringin’ a child on a honeymoon, what are ya at, Carthage? Well, I won’t let ya use Josie to fill in the silences between yourself and Caroline Cassidy.

XAVIER: She’s beyond reasonin’ with, if she was mine I’d cut that tinker tongue from her mouth. I’d –
CARTHAGE: Would you just go back to the weddin’ and lave us alone, stop interferin’. If ya’d only let me handle it all the way I wanted to, but no, ya had to push and bring the weddin’ forward to avoid your taxes, just lave us alone, will ya!

XAVIER: I will and gladly. You’re a fiasco, Kilbride, like all the Kilbride’s before ya, ya can’t control a mere woman, ya’ll control nothing; I’m havin’ serious doubts about signin’ over me farm –

CARTHAGE: Keep your bloody farm, Cassidy. I have me own. I’m not your scrubber boy. There’s other things besides land.

XAVIER: There’s nothin’ besides land, boy, nothin’ and a real farmer would never think otherwise.

CARTHAGE: Just go back to the weddin’, I’ll follow ya in a while and we can try hammerin’ out our differences.

XAVIER: Can we? (exit Xavier)

HESTER: All’s not well in Paradise.

CARTHAGE: All’d be fine if I could do away with you.

HESTER: If ya just let me stay I’ll cause no more trouble. I’ll move into the caravan with Josie. In time ya may be glad to have me around. I’ve been your greatest friend around here, Carthage, doesn’t that count for nothin’ now?

CARTHAGE: Will ya just stop tryin’ to drag up them years! It won’t work!

HESTER: Ya promised me things! Just let me stay in the caravan.

CARTHAGE: And have the whole neighborhood makin’ a laughin’ stock of me?

HESTER: That’s not why ya won’t let me stay. You’re ashamed of you part in me brother’s death, aren’t ya?

CARTHAGE: I had no part in it!

HESTER: Ya helped me tie a stone around his waist!

CARTHAGE: He was dead by then!

HESTER: He wasn’t! His pulse was still goin’!

CARTHAGE: You’re only sayin’ that no to torture me! Why did ya do it, Hetty? We were doin’ fine until then.

HESTER: Somethin’ evil moved in me blood – and the fishin’ knife was there in the bottom of the boat – I looked across the lake to me father’s house and it went through me like a spear that she had a whole other life there – How could she have and I apart of her>

CARTHAGE: Ya never said any of this before – I always thought ya killed your brother for the money.

HESTER: You rose in the world on his ashes. And that’s what haunts ya and that’s why ya want to forget I ever existed. Well, I won’t let ya. Ya’ll remember me when ya walk them big empty childless rooms in Cassidy’s house. Ya think now ya won’t, but ya will.

CARTHAGE: Ya always had a high opinion of yourself. Aye, I’ll remember ya from time to time. I’ll remember ya sittin’ at the kitchen table drinkin’ till all hours and I’ll remember the sound of the back door closin’ as ya escaped for another night roamin’ the bog.

HESTER: The drinkin’ cane after, long after you put it into your mind to lave me. If I had somewan to talk to I mightn’t have drunk so hard, somewan to roam the bog with me, somewan to take away a tiny piece of this guilt I carry with me, but ya never would.
CARTHAGE: Seems I done nothin’ right.

HESTER: No, ya done nothin’ right. What I wanted was somewan to look me in the eye and know I was understood and not judged. Didn’t it ever occur to ya, that however harshly ya judged me, I judged meself harsher. Couldn’t ya ever see that.

CARTHAGE: I’m takin’ Josie, Hester. It’s plain as day to everywan ‘cept yourself ya can’t look after her. If you’re wise ya’ll lave it at that and not take us muckin’ though the courts. I’ll let ya see her from time to time.

HESTER: Take her then, take her, ya’ve taken everythin’ else. In me stupidity I thought ya’d lave me Josie. I should’ve known ya always meant to take her too. (enter Caroline with wine)

CAROLINE: (to Carthage) Oh, this is where ya are.

CARTHAGE: She’s after burnin’ all the livestock, the house, the sheds in ruins. I’m away up there now to see what can be salvaged. G’wan back home, I’ll be there in awhile. (exit Carthage)

CAROLINE: Monica said ua wanted wine, I opened it for ya.

HESTER: Take more than wine to free me from this place. Take some kind of dark sprung miracle (takes wine. Caroline goes to exit, stops)

CAROLINE: I jjust wanted to say –

HESTER: What? Ya wanted to say what?

CAROLINE: Nothin’ – Only I’ll be very good to Josie whenever she stays with us.

HESTER: Will ya now?

CAROLINE: I won’t let he out of me sight – I’ll go everywhere with her – protect her from things – That’s all (goes to exit)

HESTER: Didn’t ya enjoy your big weddin’ day, Caroline?

CAROLINE: No, I didn’t – Everywan too loud and frantic – and when ya turned up in that weddin’ dress, knew it should’ve been you – and Daddy drinkin’ too much and shoutin’ and Carthage gone away in himself, just watchin’ it all like it had nothin’ to do with him. Ad everywan laughin’ behind me back and pityin’ me – none of it was how it was meant to be, none of it.

HESTER: He’s takin’ Josie from me.

CAROLINE: He’s not, he wouldn’t do that , Hester.

HESTER: He’s just been tellin’ me.

CAROLINE: I won’t let him, I’ll talk to him. I’ll stand up for ya on that account.

HESTER: Ya never stood up for nothin’ yet, I doubt ya’ll stand up for me. Anyway, they won’t listen to ya. G’wan back to your weddin’ and lave me be.

CAROLINE: I promise ya I’ll do everythin’ I can about Josie.

HESTER: G’wan, g’wan. (exit Caroline. Hester teases the fishing knife across her throat) Come on, ya done it aisy enough to another, now it’s your own turn. (enter Josie)

JOSIE: Mam – What’s that ya’ve got there?

HESTER: Just an auld fishin’ knife.

JOSIE: And what are ya doin’ with it>
HESTER: Nothin’, Josie, nothin’

JOSIE: I came to say goodbye, we’ll be goin’ soon.

HESTER: Goodbye, sweetheart – Josie, ya won’t be seein’ me again now.

JOSIE: I will so, I’m only goin’ on a honeymoon.

HESTER: No, Josie, ya won’t see me again because I’m goin’ away too.

JOSIE: Where?

HESTER: Somewhere ya can never return from.

JOSIE: And where’s that?

HESTER: Never mind. I only wanted to tell ya goodbye, that’s all.

JOSIE: Well, can I go with ya?

HESTER: No, ya can’t.

JOSIE: Ah, Mam, I want to be where you’ll be.

HESTER: Well, ya can’t, because wance ya go there ya can never come back.

JOSIE: I wouldn’t want to if you’re not here, Mam.

HESTER: Don’t ya want to be with your Daddy and grow up big and lovely and full of advantages they tell me I have not the power to give ya.

JOSIE: Mam, I’d be watchin’ for ya all the time ‘long the Bog of Cats. I’d be hopin’ and waitin’ and prayin’ for ya to return.

HESTER: Don’t be sayin’ those things to me now.

JOSIE: Just take me with ya, Mam.

HESTER: No, ya don’t understand. Go away, get away from me, g’wan now run away from me quickly now.

JOSIE: No, Mam, stop! I’m goin’ with ya!

HESTER: Would ya let go!

JOSIE: No, Mam. Please!

HESTER: Alright, alright! Shhh! It’s alright, I’ll take ya with me, I won’t have ya as I was, waitin’ a lifetime for somewan to return, because they don’t, Josie, they don’t. It’s altight. Close your eyes. Are they close tight?

JOSIE: Yeah (Hester cuts her throat). Mam – Mam – (Josie dies)

HESTER: It’s because ya wanted to come, Josie. (begins to wail. Enter Catwoman)

CAT: Hester, what is it? What is it?

HESTER: Oh, Catwoman, I knew somethin’ terrible’d happen, I never thought it’d be this.

CAT: What have ya done, Hester? Have ya harmed yourself?

HESTER: No, not meself and yes meself.

CAT: Not Josie, Hester? Hester, not the child. I though yourself, maybe, or Carthage, but never the child. Help, somewan, help! Hester Swane’s after butcherin’ the child! Help! (enter Carthage)

CARTHAGE: What is it, Catwoman? Hester? What’s wrong with Josie? There’s blood all over her
HESTER: Lave off, you. Lave off. I warned ya, and I tould ya, would ya listen, what’ve I done, what’ve I done? (the others drift in)

CARTHAGE: Give her to me.

MONICA: Hester –

CARTHAGE: Will somewan go and get somewan. You’ve killed her, ya’ve killed her.

HESTER: Yees all thought I was just goin’ to walk away and lave her at yeer mercy. I almost did. But she’s mine and I wouldn’t have her waste her life dreamin’ about me and yees thwartin’ her with black stories against me.

CARTHAGE: You’re a savage! (enter Ghost Fancier – Hester sees him, other don’t)

HESTER: You’re late, ya came too late.

CARTHAGE: What’s she sayin’? What? Give her to me, come on now (takes Josie)

HESTER: Ya won’t forget me now, Carthage, and when all of this is over or half remembered and ya think ya’ve almost forgotten me again, take a walk along the Bog of Cats and wait for a purlin’ wind through your hair or a soft breath be your ear or a rustle behind ya. That’ll be me and Josie ghostin ya. (goes to GF) Take me away, take me away from here.

GF: Alright, my lovely. (they dance – Hester dies)

HESTER: Mam – Mam – (Monica goes to her)

MONICA: Hester – She’s gone – Hester – She’s cut her heart out – it’s lyin’ there on top of her chest like some dark feathered bird.

END OF PLAY