

**THE TIN MAN**

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INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A hand, slick with blood.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY - PRESENT

A haggard man, ISAAC BAUM, late 40s, sits in a plastic chair. His clothes are neat, his hair tidy, but his face is blank. A teacher, he returns the wave of some of his departing pupils.

The hall is full of chairs, but only a few students and parents are in them. Around a wooden stage, students (age 11), hover by their instructor with excited energy.

Isaac's gaze lands on the teacher, EM, early 50s and frail. She sips a glass of water, sets it on the floor, and begins.

EM

Now, have any of you ever tried acting before?

Most of the children shake their heads.

EM (CONT'D)

That's okay. We're all going to have some fun today then. Do any of you know 'The Wizard of Oz'?

The hand of one child, a blond tousled youngster, HARRISON (11), shoots up in the air.

HARRISON

I do!

EM

Okay, Harrison, do you want to tell everyone what it's about?

HARRISON

My mum read it to me!

Em's hard face softens. She looks younger, warmer.

HARRISON (CONT'D)

It's about a girl, and a witch, and there's a scarecrow, and a lion...

Isaac eyes Em as if seeing her for the first time in years.

EXT. BEACH - SUNSET - FLASHBACK

Isaac and Em are on a picnic rug in the dunes on a windy day. A basket holds champagne, sandwiches, chocolate-covered strawberries. They kiss. Isaac presses a strawberry into Em's lips. They lean back in the sand and embrace passionately, hands everywhere, soon shirtless, a flurry of movement.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY - PRESENT

Isaac shifts slightly in his seat.

TERRY (O.S.)  
Which one's yours?

Isaac turns to see a man, TERRY, 40s, now in the seat beside him. He takes a breath, and gestures towards Em.

ISAAC  
The old one.

TERRY  
Ah.

The two men watch the kids, now being given roles and outfits by their teacher. Harrison has donned a furry lion's mane and is prancing about with the others. Eventually, Isaac speaks.

ISAAC  
Yours?

TERRY  
The lion.

Terry proffers a hand.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
Terry.

ISAAC  
Isaac.

They shake. As Terry releases, Isaac stares at the bare palm of his own hand.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A hand, slick with blood. Another hand meets it, and pulls the attached body up and out of a bed. The injured person groans in pain. The sheets are dashed with red.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY - PRESENT

The kids are in costume. There are winged monkeys, witches, and Harrison as the lion. One child pulls at an itchy straw vest. Another is wrapped in aluminium foil. Em hands out pages for the kids to read.

EM  
Acting is an escape. It's like pretending to be someone else. You get to dress differently, speak differently. Be different.

She pauses, takes a sip from her glass, and replaces it on the floor. As she walks through the crowd, her posture changes. She seems taller, stronger.

EM (CONT'D)

You can leave every part of the  
real you behind.

(beat)

You can live another life.

But by the time she returns, she's her original self, hunched and quiet. Harrison runs about pretending to faint like the Cowardly Lion, his tail dangling, semi-detached. Em's gaze meets Isaac's, and she looks away.

EM (CONT'D)

Come here, Harrison. Let me fix  
that for you.

FLASHBACK TO:

INT. ISAAC AND EM'S HOUSE - DAY

Isaac, tall and handsome, stands in the hallway, fumbling with a bow tie.

EM (O.S.)

Come here. Let me fix that for you.

Isaac turns to see Em in the hall, pregnant, and meets her halfway. An unflattering pink gown hugs her rounded belly. She ties the knot easily and pats his suit with satisfaction.

EM (CONT'D)

Please tell me I look okay.

ISAAC

You look ridiculous.

He grins. Em slaps him on the shoulder in mock outrage.

EM

You really know how to make a lady  
feel good about herself.

They both laugh.

ISAAC

Let's get this over with. I've got  
a date with a bridesmaid.

He grabs his keys and opens the door for Em.

ISAAC (CONT'D)

And it's not you.

There's another shriek of laughter as it shuts behind them.

INT. FUNCTION HALL - NIGHT

A lavish wedding reception, with white linen tablecloths, towering floral displays, and loud buzz of chatter. Em, seated at the bridal party table, is approached by Isaac.

ISAAC  
May I have this dance?

EM  
Always.

The two move to the dance floor, where, amidst other couples, they kiss and gently sway.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Em and Isaac lie on the bed in their dishevelled wedding wear. She groans. Isaac rolls over, and feels a dampness in the bed. Em moans again, louder. She sits up. Her hand is slick with blood. Isaac, shocked, leaps out of bed. His footsteps echo down the hall and return a few moments later.

ISAAC (O.S.)  
...yeah, it's everywhere.  
(beat)  
No, I'll take her. Let them know  
we're coming.

He reaches for Em's hand and picks her up. Blood has soaked all through her pink gown. His suit is smeared with it.

EXT. ISAAC AND EM'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Isaac, with Em in his arms, staggers towards their car.

INT. CAR - NIGHT

Isaac, crying, drives furiously as Em slumps in the passenger seat, head resting against his shoulder, hand clutching his.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY - ONE WEEK LATER

Isaac and Em face each other across a table. They both look devastated. Em isn't pregnant. Eventually, she speaks.

EM  
I need to go back to work.  
(beat)  
I can't sit here any more.

Isaac can barely look at her. There's another long pause.

ISAAC  
How do we do it?

Em wrestles with the question for a long time.

EM  
We pretend.

Isaac looks up.

EM (CONT'D)  
We pretend it never happened.

END FLASHBACK.

INT. SCHOOL HALL - DAY - PRESENT

Em is offering advice to the tin man, scarecrow, and Harrison, who is looking fidgety as the lion.

EM  
Try to imagine you're missing something. Something so valuable you can't imagine life without it.

Harrison runs about, practicing fainting, but clips Em's glass of water. Tripping on the wet floor, he collides headfirst with the sharp wooden edge of the stage. Dazed, he turns to reveal a large cut that soon bleeds profusely down his forehead. He starts to scream, as do the other kids.

Isaac and Terry are up in seconds. Isaac gets there first and picks the kid up, cradling him in his arms. Em, horrified, finally snaps out of it and runs to a phone on the wall. Isaac starts to run to the door, but is intercepted by Terry.

TERRY  
Give him to me.

Isaac can't quite process it, and clutches Harrison tightly.

TERRY (CONT'D)  
He's my son. Give him to me.

Terry reaches into Isaac's arms, wrenches Harrison from his grasp and runs to the door. Isaac stares at his empty, bloodied arms. Em hangs up, and slumps to the floor.

INT. CAR - NIGHT - PRESENT

Isaac drives Em home. She leans away from him, against the passenger side window, and cries.