

THE BREAK IV - WINGS

By

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INT. HOSPITAL, RELATIVES ROOM - AFTERNOON

THREE X-RAYS of broken bones on table. RYAN (17) scruffy, SOCIAL WORKER and NURSE sat awkwardly round table. Camera angles make the room feel claustrophobic, as if the walls are coming in.

RYAN (TO THEM)
I never laid a finger on her.

NURSE pushes the X-RAYS towards RYAN, looks skeptically at him. RYAN looks at SOCIAL WORKER forces his face to smile.

RYAN (TO THEM)
Sure, you know what kids are like,
into everything.

RYAN spreads the X-RAYS out. Runs his hands nervously through his hair as if playing for time. Points at each in turn. Thinking as he speaks.

RYAN (TO THEM)
That one's a sprained ankle from
jumping off the garden wall. Let me
think a minute... that one's from
when she fell off a chair and
cracked her head on the table.
Three stitches and a black eye.
(To us)
She told the doctor she walked into
a door. Six years old and lying
like a pro. I didn't tell her to
lie. She just knew she had to.
(To them)
That one's today. Sure, youse know
about today. Fractured wrist.
(RYAN smiles like
something's funny)
She only went and threw herself out
of a tree. She's a madhead is our
Emma.

RYAN sees they're alarmed at his flippancy. He knows he has to give them something more.

RYAN (TO THEM)
(under breath)
See, she thinks she can fly.

They stare. RYAN pauses like he's thinking what to say. He speaks slowly like he's considering every word or is he making it up as he speaks?

RYAN (TO THEM)

(slowly)

I know it sounds mad, but it's all true. It started when Mum fell down the stairs. I was already looking after my sister. You lot just hadn't made it official yet. I hadn't the heart to tell Emma the truth. Mum was always falling down back then.

(faster now, gathering momentum)

Emma was too wee to understand. I made up a story. Mummy was flying about and crashed. Her legs didn't work anymore. It was a stupid thing to say. Em believed every word of it. Ever since she's been trying to fly. That's why she's always in here. It's not my fault.

RYAN thinks for a moment, lifts the broken arm X-RAY and sets it in front of the SOCIAL WORKER.

RYAN (TO THEM)

Actually... this one is my fault. See, last week this wee girl in her class told Em people couldn't fly. She came home in a right state. She's getting older, starting to care what other kids think. So I got her those crappy wings from the Pound Shop. I thought they'd help keep her believing a bit longer.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Emma in dress-up wings, helmet, knee pads looking at an enormous tree. Dreamlike shot: unclear if it's real or RYAN's imagination.

RYAN (V.O.)

Daft move. Them wings worked too well. She's never jumped off anything that high before.

INT. HOSPITAL, RELATIVES ROOM - DAY

RYAN (TO THEM)

If Emma thinks she can fly, I'm not for telling her she can't. She'll find out soon enough.

(MORE)

RYAN (TO THEM) (CONT'D)
 But, do you know what? It wouldn't
 surprise me at all if the same wee
 girl managed it. She's pretty
 amazing. Sure, youse know that.
 You've been with her all afternoon.
 (agitated, as if realising
 what he's just said)
 Here now, what have youse been
 asking her? Did she say something
 about me? I need to talk to Em.

Door is knocked. SOCIAL WORKER opens door and is handed a
 FORM by SENIOR SOCIAL WORKER. She signals to the NURSE. They
 step into corridor to chat, closing the door behind them.
 RYAN begins to look worried.

RYAN (TO US)
 I didn't ask for any of this. I'm
 not a Saint. I'm the same Ryan I
 always was, except I'm knackered
 and I never get to see my mates.
 But I've Emma to think about now.

RYAN looks down at the X-Rays.

RYAN (TO US)
 There's nobody like our Emma. She's
 class. I get it wrong all the time,
 but I do love her. She was that
 small when Mum's accident happened.
 When your mum drinks, you grow up
 fast. I never really got to be a
 kid. I don't want that for Emma.

RYAN looks towards the door anxiously.

RYAN (TO US)
 They've seen enough young carers to
 know the whole selfless routine
 doesn't last. Especially with young
 lads. Caring doesn't come natural
 in boys. I get it. Them three X-
 Rays say our Emma's not safe.
 Still, you'd think they might
 listen, support me a bit, not just
 try to take her off me. It's like
 we're not even on the same team.

SOCIAL WORKER and NURSE enter room, holding door open. RYAN
 looks through to the corridor beyond. Far down the corridor
 EMMA (6) sits at a table. Her arm is plastered. She wears
 headphones and draws with her good arm. RYAN waves at EMMA,
 trying to get her attention.

RYAN
(shouting)
Emma! Hey Em. You ok?

EMMA looks up, sees RYAN. He gives her a thumbs up. Before RYAN sees EMMA's reaction his view's blocked by the SOCIAL WORKER closing the door. She returns to the table looking serious, carrying a FORM.

RYAN
(To us)
I must have one of them faces
nobody trusts. They never believe a
word I say.

INT. HOSPITAL, CORRIDOR - AFTERNOON

EMMA drawing a picture of a woman and 2 kids. We hear the loud music from her headphones.

INT. HOSPITAL, RELATIVES ROOM - AFTERNOON

SOCIAL WORKER places X-RAYS inside folder, drawing the meeting to a close. RYAN is increasingly panicked.

RYAN (TO THEM)
I'm not a lunatic. I wouldn't tell
a six year old to jump out of a
tree. I play with her whenever I
can. She calls it practicing.
The thing is I can't be everywhere
at once. There's not enough hours
in the day. I'm seeing to Mum,
cooking, cleaning making sure
Emma's keeping up at school.
Sometimes I snap. But I am good to
her. I don't care what she's said.
I'd never hurt her on purpose.

INT. HOSPITAL, CORRIDOR - AFTERNOON

EMMA's finished drawing. She wants to show RYAN. She removes headphones and hears his angry voice from the relative's room. EMMA stands and walks towards the door.

INT. HOSPITAL, RELATIVES ROOM - AFTERNOON

RYAN (TO THEM)
She's six. She has no idea how much
pressure I'm under.
(MORE)

RYAN (TO THEM) (CONT'D)
Some days she never stops. She
follows me round looking attention.
There's days I'm so tired, I just
lose the head.

SOCIAL WORKER writes on notepad.

RYAN (TO THEM)
Here now, I know what you're doing,
trying to catch me out.

SOCIAL WORKER slides FORM across the table to RYAN. He lifts
it, glances at it, shoves it back across the table.

RYAN (TO THEM)
(raging)
No way am I signing that. I know
youse say it's only respite, for a
day or two. I'm not an eejit. I
sign that and I'll never get her
back.

We see EMMA horrified, frozen in doorway. RYAN can't see her.

RYAN (TO THEM)
(pleading)
It won't happen again. The flying
things's not safe. I'll tell Em it
was just a game, for babies. That
it's time to grow up now. She'll be
gutted but if it stops youse taking
her off me...

EMMA opens door fully. We see she's wearing dress-up wings.
RYAN turn to look at her. EMMA drops her drawing and runs.

RYAN
Come back, Em. I'm not going to let
them take you.

RYAN gets up and runs after EMMA. The others follow. Shot of
EMMA's drawing on floor. She's added wings to all her people.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY

EMMA standing on an ambulance/hospital roof/location
dependent, looking down.

RYAN
Hold on a wee second Emma.

RYAN begins slowly moving towards her.

RYAN
(whispering)
I'm sorry. You weren't meant to hear that. I just made it up to get these two eejits off our back. I totally believe you can fly. Come on down, before you hurt yourself. We can talk to them when you come down. You don't have to prove anything.

RYAN smiles reassuringly at EMMA, nods as if to say, you can come down now. He's trying to stay calm but he looks scared. EMMA defiantly puts her hands on her hips and stays put.

RYAN
You want to show them?

EMMA nods defiantly.

RYAN
Look how high you are, Em. You're absolutely sure about this?

EMMA nods again.

RYAN
Ok well, you're the boss.

RYAN smiles at EMMA, extends his arms. All of a sudden EMMA looks a bit unsure.

RYAN
(Whispering)
I've got you. I've always got you.

RYAN looks over shoulder at SOCIAL WORKER and NURSE. He knows he has to be overly confident to help EMMA be brave.

RYAN (TO THEM)
See, she can fly.

RYAN smiles falsely over shoulder, then genuinely at EMMA. He braces himself to catch her.

RYAN
Ignore them. Keep your eyes on me.
3. 2. 1. Lift off.

EMMA smiles, lifts arms and goes to jump. RYAN smiles back, raises arms but EMMA doesn't jump to him.

Camera follows EMMA as she rises up off the ambulance, flying.

RYAN is confused, then his face fills with wonder. He smiles proudly as if he's always known she could fly.

RYAN (TO US)
See, I told you. She's class isn't
she? There's nobody like our Emma.

THE END