

Broken Sinclair

by

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An eighth-grade boy who was born empty - literally - makes his first-ever friend at school the same week that his parents agree to sell him to a collector of oddities for scientific study.

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INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

An empty middle school hallway with an intense crucifix hanging over it. BROKEN SINCLAIR, an awkward 13-year-old boy, walks down the hall with a mindless slight smile as he passes by various uniformed STUDENTS filing in to visit their brightly-colored, equally uniform lockers.

Broken opens his locker with a combination of zeros. Taped inside the door are an empty picture frame and some blank bits of loose-leaf. He grabs a lone "Futile Chemistry" textbook, then stuffs a sandwich onto a shelf full of identical sandwiches. The bell rings.

As most of the students clear the hallway, he closes the door.

Two boys who think they're cool, JAKE and NOAH (13), come out of nowhere and slam Broken violently against his locker.

They bounce him from one locker door to another, grab his hair and smash his face into the vents, until he bounces off a locker so hard he falls to the floor.

They kick him a couple of times, then stuff him inside of a locker, slam it shut, and run off, laughing. The lights turn off in the empty hallway. Time passes.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - AFTERNOON

The bell rings, the lights turn back on, and the hallway fills with middle schoolers. A nice boy named LENNY, 14, opens his locker. He looks at Broken, who waves pleasantly.

BROKEN

Hi.

Lenny grabs a "Fiscally Responsible Algebra" textbook from the top shelf and walks away, leaving the door open. Broken watches Lenny walk away and, still smiling slightly, looks for the best way to extract himself from the locker.

BROKEN (V.O.)

My name is Broken Sinclair. No,
it's not a nickname.

EXT. SINCLAIR BACKYARD - DAY - FLASHBACK

INSERT: BIRTH CERTIFICATE - "Broken F. Sinclair"

BROKEN (V.O.)

See?

A ninja star narrowly misses the birth certificate and lands in the wooden target it's attached to.

MR. SINCLAIR (36), with a slight beer belly and a sleeveless shirt, stands holding a beer and throwing ninja stars, badly.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 My dad always says that my name is
 Broken because I was the result of
 a broken condom.

Mr. Sinclair throws a star, then hands his beer to Broken, who takes a sip in imitation while Mr. Sinclair throws.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 My mom yells at him for saying
 that, but I never heard her say it
 wasn't true.

MRS. SINCLAIR (36), a paragon of maternal piety, takes the birth certificate down from the target, giving Mr. Sinclair a scolding look. She beckons to Broken, and Mr. Sinclair grabs the beer from him as he walks over to her protective arms.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 But she has her own story.

INT. MRS. SINCLAIR'S ANGELIC LAIR - DAY - FLASHBACK

MRS. SINCLAIR (36) prays in heavenly beauty at the feet of a bunch of candlelit angel statues.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 My Mom says I'm broken because I
 have so much angelic spirit in me
 I'm bursting at the seams to break
 out of this tangible world.

Broken walks in behind her and kneels down facing the same wall, which turns out to have a poster of David Bowie on it.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

Broken tilts his shoulders to squeeze out of the locker.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 But I think my name is Broken
 because I was born with a chip on
 my shoulder.

A JANITOR, 50s, preoccupied, walks along and tries to close the errant locker door - only to find Broken blocking it. He looks at Broken - who looks back at him.

INT. HOSPITAL DELIVERY ROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

A DOCTOR and NURSES bustle about Mrs. Sinclair, who lies in a bed looking tired. The doctor looks concerned and hands a NURSE a BABY BROKEN, whom she carries out of the room.

BROKEN (V.O.)
I came out of the womb on the 2nd
of November, and right away they
knew something was a little...off.

INT. HOSPITAL NURSERY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The nurse carries Baby Broken into the nursery and lays him down. She looks at a strange crack in his left shoulder.

BROKEN (V.O.)
My unusually rough baby skin had a
little crack -

The nurse touches the crack, and to her surprise, it buckles and turns into a hole.

BROKEN (V.O.)
- make that a hole. And when the
nurse looked inside...there was...

She looks in the hole to find behind it:

INT. CAVE - DAY - FANTASY

A cavernous, empty cave.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Nothing. No blood, no guts, no
skeleton, no organs, not even a
beating heart to prove my
existence.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

The Janitor tries to pry Broken out of the locker with a mop handle.

INT. HOSPITAL NURSERY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The doctor walks into the nursery, and the nurse turns to him, holding the baby.

NURSE
Doctor, this baby is empty.

INT. HOSPITAL NURSERY - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

The doctor looks at an x-ray, nodding with furrowed brows.

BROKEN (V.O.)
All the expensive tests said the
same thing.

X-ray shows an empty baby.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Born empty.

Baby Broken lies awkwardly in his hospital crib.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Yet there I was, from all outward
appearances breathing and crying
and pooping and everything.

The nurse takes Baby Broken's pulse, then looks up as the
Doctor enters.

The Doctor looks at her, brows still furrowed.

BROKEN (V.O.)
What do you do with an empty baby?

INT. HOSPITAL DELIVERY ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Baby Broken is carried, wearing a bandage on his shoulder.
The doctor hands Baby Broken to Mr. Sinclair, who accepts him
happily.

BROKEN (V.O.)
They bandaged me up, ran a few more
tests - put my parents on a 20-year
payment plan -

The nurse shows a stack of medical bills to Mr. Sinclair,
whose smile immediately fades. In reaching for the bills he
lets go of the baby, whom Mrs. Sinclair catches just in time.

BROKEN (V.O.)
- and sent me on my empty little
way.

Mrs. Sinclair looks at the bills with him, concerned.

EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY - FLASHBACK

The doctor and nurse stand beside each other and wave as Mr.
and Mrs. Sinclair leave the hospital.

INT. BROKEN'S BEDROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

An ELDERLY PRIEST lays his hands on a reclining YOUNGER BROKEN's head and chants wildly in Latin, wielding a crucifix as a YOUNG PRIEST holds a Bible and incense for him.

BROKEN (V.O.)
And mostly, my life has been pretty normal.

Younger Broken raises his head, perplexed, and the Elderly Priest pushes his head down forcefully and sprinkles holy water at him with intense flicks of a wand.

Mrs. Sinclair and several ACOLYTES stand by in anticipation.

INT. ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Amongst CHILDREN in an elementary classroom full of colors a little too bright, a little too controlled, a YOUNGER BROKEN sits at his desk, a big dirty shoeprint on his face.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Besides a few incidents on the playground that involved kids discovering that I don't bleed -

In the same spot, Younger Broken now appears with a dirt-smearred face and paint brushes sticking out of his nostrils.

BROKEN (V.O.)
- or sweat -

In the same spot, Younger Broken has the word "freak" written on his face multiple times in makeup.

BROKEN (V.O.)
- or bruise -

Younger Broken now has windblown hair full of leaves.

BROKEN (V.O.)
- or get tired -

A bell rings.

INT. SCHOOL LOCKER ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

A KID of Younger Broken's age steps onto a balance-beam scale. The beam tips and a hand adjusts the weights. The child steps off.

Next in line, Broken steps up onto the scale, and nothing happens to the beam.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 I've managed to basically maintain
 the appearance of being human.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

Broken stands awkwardly in the locker while multiple FACILITIES WORKERS, aged 40-70 and perturbed, bustle around him trying to pull at his arms.

The Janitor re-enters with the Jaws of Life.

INT. ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

As the children run out the classroom door, Younger Broken, shoeprint still on his face, turns and searches through people's backpacks.

He finds a cute keychain in one, examines it, and puts it back. In another bag, a book about dinosaurs.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 But just beneath my outer rind I
 know there's nothing for me in the
 world, just like I have nothing
 inside me to offer the world.

He hears someone coming, puts the book back, gets up.

INT. TRINKET SHOP - EVENING - FLASHBACK

Younger Broken goes up to the cash register and puts some money on the counter.

Moments later, he nods and leaves with his purchases while the half-awake CHECKER, 21, looks at him in confusion.

INT. ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

The students in the classroom watch Younger Broken in awe as he walks in, goes to his desk.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 I do things, to try to blend in,
 but I can't feel like humans feel.
 I can't want or care about the
 things they do.

His backpack plunks down next to his desk, with a plethora of cute keychains hanging every which way from it.

Broken sits down, wearing a graphic T-shirt that reads: "I Dig Dinosaurs."

YOUNGER LEIGH, a nerdy girl wearing a "Geology Rocks" t-shirt, smiles a puzzled, fascinated smile at him.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

The facilities workers wrap a few ropes around Broken in the locker and pull them taut.

BROKEN (V.O.)
I almost wanted something once.

INT. SINCLAIR DINING ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Younger Broken stands with few balloons around him and a bundt cake in front of him, 10 flaming candles on top. Looming, Mrs. Sinclair encourages him, and Mr. Sinclair holds a large knife and stares at the cake.

BROKEN (V.O.)
My mom kept telling me to make a wish, make a wish, and I couldn't think of anything to wish for - but when I closed my eyes...

Younger Broken closes his eyes, and it all goes dark.

BROKEN (V.O.)
There it was.

INT. EMPTY SPACE - NIGHT - FANTASY

Younger Broken floats, eyes closed, in darkness.

BROKEN (V.O.)
It was like the whole world was gone. No expectations, no one's life being affected by me, no one waiting on me or asking if I'm okay - nothing to see, or hear, or pretend to feel...just-

Younger Broken's eyes open.

YOUNGER BROKEN
Quiet.

Firelight grows on Younger Broken's face. He looks down.

INT. SINCLAIR DINING ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Younger Broken looks down at the candles.

BROKEN (V.O.)
But then...well...

He blows with all his might at the candles. The flames remain completely undisturbed. Broken stares forward as Mrs. Sinclair pops confetti and kisses him on the temple.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Luckily, I don't really feel
disappointment. Or...anything.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

On the couch, Mrs. Sinclair cuddles Broken and kisses him on the temple, while Broken sits stiff and stares, with his usual mindless semi-smile. Mr. Sinclair sits beside them with a remote, watching TV.

BROKEN (V.O.)
I can't love, not even my parents.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

Broken stands in front of the class and reads a speech from a piece of loose-leaf.

BROKEN (V.O.)
My speech will never be more than
echoes -

INT. BROKEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Younger Broken walks into his fairly blank bedroom. He unmakes his bed, puts a retainer in, and takes off his shirt to reveal the bandage still wrapped around his shoulder.

BROKEN (V.O.)
- my skin will never be more than a
thin candy shell -

As he looks at the bandage, he becomes Broken of the present.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY - BACK TO PRESENT

Broken looks out of the locker as the facilities workers all give the ropes a big tug -

BROKEN (V.O.)
 - my kisses will never be wet
 enough to say "I love you."

- and Broken falls out of the locker at last -

INT. BROKEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

- straight into his bed, where Broken lies holding onto a
 turtle shell, and stares up into space.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 Because I will never be anything
 other than empty.

The room goes dark.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair walks him up from the car, holding his hand,
 and gives him a kiss on the cheek as he stands stoically with
 his slight smile. She hands him his lunch bag with a glittery
 drawing on it of Bowie as half-man, half-dog.

Mrs. Sinclair opens one of the double doors with giant
 crosses on them, and he steps in. Mr. Sinclair shouts from
 the driver's seat of the car.

MR. SINCLAIR
 Don't come back.

BROKEN
 See you later, Dad.

MRS. SINCLAIR
 I love you sweetie.

BROKEN
 See you later, Mom.

He turns and walks in the door, his expression unchanged.

INT. SCIENCE CLASSROOM - DAY

Broken sits and listens as MS. FOSTER, a harried teacher in
 her early 30s, lectures at the board.

In the corner of the bright, polished classroom, a shifty 8th-
 grade girl, SADIE, writes lines on the board: "I will not tie
 seventh graders to railroad tracks."

MS. FOSTER
 When an ionic compound and a
 covalent compound are mixed -

Broken takes a notebook out of his nearly empty desk, leaving the remaining pair of scissors all alone.

LEIGH, still nerdy at age 13, looks over at Broken, smiling.

Noah, behind her, takes out a marker, motions to his friend Jake with a mischievous grin and makes a mark on the back of Leigh's neck. She swats him away.

Jake, in a nearby desk, sharpens a pencil deviously.

MS. FOSTER

- the two elements of the ionic compound break their bond for the elements of the covalent compound because the covalent bond is stronger.

Broken then opens his mostly empty backpack to grab a lone pencil. He takes his time in fishing it out, trying to appear as if the bag is full. When it emerges, it's broken. He puts it back.

MS. FOSTER

This is because a covalent bond is based on sharing, while an ionic bond is based on attraction.

Noah points to the mark on Leigh's neck, and Jake aims carefully with the pencil as if it were a dart. Leigh takes another glance at Broken.

MS. FOSTER

So the elements of the ionic compound leave each other for better-looking atoms with stronger bonds.

Jake throws the pencil, which hits the target on Leigh's neck and falls down. She winces and turns, gives a mean look to Jake and Noah. Broken notices and looks down at the pencil. He leans down to pick it up.

MS. FOSTER

It's actually a little like human relationships. Don't you think, Mr. Sinclair?

Broken pops back up from the floor with the pencil. He hesitates.

BROKEN

So, you're saying that people with relationships based on attraction will leave each other, but people with relationships based on sharing will stay together and each have another atom on the side?

The class chuckles. Leigh's laugh, however, is particularly loud and high-pitched. A few people look at her, including Broken. She smiles at him and wipes her eye.

He looks quickly away, and watches her out of his peripheral vision, until she looks away.

MS. FOSTER

I never said it was a perfect theory, but yes, that's kind of what I meant. Thank you, Broken.
Now -

He uses the new sharp pencil in his hand to take notes.

MS. FOSTER

- as we remember, the law of conservation of mass states that the mass of a closed system remains constant -

Leigh drops her pencil. Broken looks without moving his head.

She looks at him, looks down at the pencil, *stares* at him - for a long time. Broken looks back at his notes and writes.

MS. FOSTER

- that matter cannot be either created or destroyed, though it can be rearranged.

At last, Leigh bends down and picks up her pencil for herself, awkwardly.

Ms. Foster turns to draw on the board. Leigh continues to stare at Broken, and taps his desk with her pencil.

No reaction but an eye twitch from Broken. She writes "hey" on his notebook page, and he brushes her pencil from his desk with his hand.

MS. FOSTER

I'm not very good at art, that's why I'm a science teacher. . .

Leigh tries a "psst," then taps him on the shoulder with her finger. He shudders and draws away slightly, finally looks at her in curiosity.

LEIGH

I like your hair today, Broken.

Broken smiles at her accommodatingly and turns back to his desk, from which he takes scissors and cuts a chunk off of his hair, making it weird-looking. The chunk falls onto his desk, and Broken goes on taking notes as if the matter is finished.

Leigh pauses, then takes out a gossamer bag, grabs a fistful of Broken's hair from his desk, and puts it delicately into the bag.

As Broken watches, she ties the bag with a ribbon and puts it in her pocket.

LEIGH

(whispers)

Thank you.

She turns back to the teacher. Now it is Broken's turn to stare, looking weird with his new hairdo.

BROKEN (V.O.)

So there's this girl who's been bothering me lately. Her name is Leigh.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - DAY

A line of boys, most of whom look strong and tall and ready to play! - and Broken, who stands inattentively at the end.

BROKEN (V.O.)

She seems to want to stand next to me wherever I go -

Leigh points at Broken, who steps forward.

BROKEN (V.O.)

- in gym class -

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Broken gets potato skins at the lunch counter, and Leigh suddenly appears beside him, shoving someone out of the way to get there. She smiles innocently and grabs a plate.

BROKEN (V.O.)

- at lunch - she's becoming a nuisance.

Broken sits at an empty table, and Leigh passes by with her nerdy FRIENDS.

She puts a cup of pudding on Broken's tray as she passes. Broken stares at the pudding.

BROKEN (V.O.)
I think she wants to be best
friends or something.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Everyone around Broken shakes hands and fist bumps, saying "peace be with you." He shakes a SEVENTH GRADER's hand, then turns around to find Leigh with her hand outstretched.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Broken sits down in an empty classroom as classmates file in. Leigh sits right beside him. He gets up and moves.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Lately she's been trying to strike
up a conversation.

When he sits in his new seat, Leigh is already beside him in another seat. He gets up and moves again, only to find Leigh sitting next to the only empty seat left in the room.

BROKEN (V.O.)
I keep trying to put her off. She
tells me she likes my T-shirt, the
next day I'm wearing a sweater.

He looks around, finds nowhere else, and sits down. Leigh looks away innocently.

BROKEN (V.O.)
She asks me for a pencil, I give
her a marker.

As she looks away, she continues drawing in her notebook, etchings like "Broken Sinclair," weirdly good sketches of him, and "Broken + Leigh = best friends."

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE RECESS PARKING LOT - DAY

A MYSTERIOUS MAN dressed all in white smokes and watches the parking lot from across the street.

He pulls out a curious spyglass and puts it to his eye.

BROKEN (V.O.)
I mean, what can I do?

EXT. RECESS PARKING LOT - DAY

Broken walks past the KIDS playing kickball on the playground and sits on a grassy area, picks up a stick to dig a hole.

BROKEN (V.O.)

I don't usually have to deal with problems like people trying to make friends with me. Mostly I just go about my business, trying to be normal.

Two kids, Noah and Sadie, 13, come up to Broken, laughing between themselves.

NOAH

Hey, Broken, how much do you weigh?

BROKEN

Seven pounds, two ounces.

The kids laugh, looking at each other.

SADIE

What??

NOAH

Okay, wait for it, wait for it-why are you so light, Broken?

BROKEN

That's actually pretty average for the weight of human skin.

The two kids try to stifle their laughter. Sadie settles herself and bends down to Broken.

SADIE

So, if you don't have any insides, then how do you poop?

An audible snort comes from Noah.

BROKEN

Isn't that kind of a personal question?

The two kids laugh, and Sadie pulls her leg back to kick him down. As the foot makes contact with Broken's head, everything freezes.

BROKEN (V.O.)

This kind of happens a lot.

MONTAGE

Flowers are tattered apparently by the wind, and buildings are knocked down.

BROKEN (V.O.)

One of the perks of having a weird kid who doesn't bruise in your middle school class is that when you beat him up, nobody finds out.

A spoon is melted by a lighter. Spackle crumbles from a wall.

BROKEN (V.O.)

It's funny, though, just before I get hit, I always wonder if I'm going to die.

An Erlenmeyer flask explodes. A hand flips through a flipbook of a firefly having its wings ripped off.

BROKEN (V.O.)

I don't honestly know what would finish me off. I could get another crack, I could even just crumble.

Water swirls down a drain. A cave begins to crumble.

BROKEN (V.O.)

I wouldn't really mind dying, I just...wonder.

END MONTAGE

Sadie finishes kicking Broken. He falls, and Noah breaks his digging stick and throws it at him, kicks the pile of dirt, and walks away laughing with Sadie.

Broken finds another stick and digs a new hole.

Leigh enters. She sits on a rock nearby and watches Broken dig. After a moment of hesitation, she formulates a thought.

LEIGH

You remind me of the Mendelstick Wardsman from Evernost 5.

Broken stops digging and interrupts.

BROKEN

Look, I'm sure you're very interesting, but would you mind leaving me alone? I'm kind of busy.

He indicates the hole in the ground.

LEIGH

What are you doing that's so important?

BROKEN

It's a natural human tendency to want to create something in one's image. So I'm creating emptiness.

Leigh looks pensively at the hole in the ground.

LEIGH

But you know you can't create more emptiness, right? You can only displace matter. The dirt has to go somewhere.

Broken listens, distracted from his task.

LEIGH

So you end up with the same amount of dirt and the same amount of emptiness as you started with, just in different places. It's the law of conservation of matter. You can't make something out of nothing.

BROKEN

What about nothing out of something?

LEIGH

That either. You should really listen in class.

Broken rests his stick hand on the ground.

BROKEN

What do you want?

LEIGH

I want to know you better. I want to find out what you're like, what you dream of, what's going on inside that-

BROKEN

Why?

LEIGH

Because that's what friends do.

BROKEN

There's nothing to know.

LEIGH

Sure there is.

Broken looks up and watches her go, then looks down at his hole to find a violet sticking out of it.

The clouds part, and an isolated beam of pure sunlight shines just on that violet. He looks aggravated.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE RECESS PARKING LOT - DAY

The mysterious man puts away his spyglass, smugly stops leaning, and gets in his car.

EXT. SCHOOL - AFTERNOON

As students file out, Broken walks past Lenny, who sits on the front gate ledge reading a book called *Codependent Imaginary Friends*. Lenny looks up to see Mrs. Sinclair jumping out of her car, already parked. She opens the door for Broken, then closes it behind him and goes back around to the driver's seat.

They drive away, and Lenny goes back to his book.

INT. SINCLAIR DINING ROOM - EVENING

Broken sits at the dinner table with Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair in the lower-middle-class ideal of a family dining room, full of wood touches and secondhand charm. All three fold their hands and bow their heads.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Great Thin White Duke, Our Starman waiting in the sky - we'd like you to come and meet us, but we think you'd blow our minds. May all the strangers come today, and may Major Tom find his way home again. Thank you for this food before us, for our precious Broken, and for *The Rise and Fall of Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*.

She opens her hands to receive the blessing. A light seems to illuminate her head from nowhere.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Let the children lose it, let the children use it, let all the children boogie, Amen.

The Sinclairs unfold their hands. Mr. Sinclair serves himself. Mrs. Sinclair then takes Broken's plate and fills it.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Sweetie, tell your father all about your day. Did you have a good day at school?

BROKEN

Sure.

She puts his plate in front of him. He picks at it.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Nobody hit you today, did they?

BROKEN

Nope.

He gives her his slight closed-mouthed smile.

MR. SINCLAIR

That's too bad. We should have sent you to public school - if you'd passed the damn physical.

Mrs. Sinclair gives her husband a look.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Oh, come on, Jack. It's not his fault he doesn't have a pulse.

MR. SINCLAIR

Aren't you going to ask me how my day was?

MRS. SINCLAIR

How was your day, dear?

MR. SINCLAIR

It was great. Someone jumped off the roof of our building so we got the rest of the day off.

Mrs. Sinclair nods, concentrating on her food. Mr. Sinclair takes a look at her.

MR. SINCLAIR

You look kind of pale. You all right?

MRS. SINCLAIR

I'm fine, I just gave platelets today.

MR. SINCLAIR

You went to the blood bank again? They're sucking you dry.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Well, mothers do what they can to feed their family. And they pay double if you come twice in a week.

BROKEN

I told you, you don't have to feed me.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Nonsense. Eat up, darling.

There is a sudden odd ring of the doorbell, as if someone were trying to make a strange song with its single tone.

MRS. SINCLAIR

You two weren't expecting anyone, were you?

They both look at her blankly. Mrs. Sinclair puts her napkin down and gets up.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The door opens to reveal a man, mid-40s, all in white with a strange hat and white spats - called, for lack of a better word, the COLLECTOR. He looks delicately superior to all in the room.

COLLECTOR

Mrs. Sinclair. How nice it is to finally meet you.

The Collector steps inside past a speechless Mrs. Sinclair, and sees Broken, who along with Mr. Sinclair has just entered the room.

COLLECTOR

And this must be Broken. How thrilling. May I shake your hand?

Broken stands and stares, then slowly puts out his hand.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - EVENING

The three Sinclairs sit on a loveseat, and across from them, taking up a whole couch, is the Collector, sipping a cup of coffee.

As he speaks, he takes out a little bag of dried leaves and puts them into his coffee. He then takes out a tiny rubber tugboat and floats it on top.

COLLECTOR

You see, I am something of a collector. I travel the world seeking little oddities and objects of some significance to me. Things that are unique in all the world. For example, I own the only known taxidermized specimen of a dodo bird. I keep it on my mantel.

He takes a big gulp of coffee, and Broken notices that the tugboat has disappeared. The Collector stands and strolls about the room, taking his time.

COLLECTOR

Haunted objects are often of special interest to me, and exotic pets. I once paid millions of dollars for the tentacle of a giant squid. It made quite a nice railing for my patio.

The Sinclairs make weirded- and grossed-out faces. He fiddles with a sharp animal tooth from his pocket.

COLLECTOR

One passion of mine is mutants. Have you ever seen a two-headed cobra, Mrs. Sinclair?

MRS. SINCLAIR

No, I can't say I have, Mr...uh...

COLLECTOR

Well, I assure you, they're no kinder for having two sets of teeth.

The Collector sighs.

COLLECTOR

You see, Mrs. Sinclair, these found objects are all well and good, but exotic animals don't live very long, and haunted cookie jars, well, they get boring. I'm beginning to feel there's nothing left in the world that's truly special enough to add to my collection.

MR. SINCLAIR

Look, this is all very interesting, Mr...uh...

He stares at the Collector. The Collector waits attentively.

MR. SINCLAIR

But what does this have to do with us?

COLLECTOR

I've been reading up on your son, Broken, for quite some time now.

I've found hospital records and test results that all say the most curious thing - that this child, an otherwise perfectly normal and healthy baby, was born empty.

MRS. SINCLAIR
I thought those records were private.

COLLECTOR
Oh, Mrs. Sinclair. On the list of things money can buy, privacy is cheap.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Broken is a miracle child.

COLLECTOR
Oh, I quite agree, Mrs. Sinclair. A living mystery. A testament to the limitless endurance of mankind. I mean, here he sits, breathing - or, feigning breath - before my very eyes, a child with no lungs, no heart, no logical explanation for why he's alive. Yet he lives.

Mrs. Sinclair stands.

MRS. SINCLAIR
I think it's time for you to leave, Mr...

The Collector stands.

COLLECTOR
I'm willing to offer you ten million dollars in exchange for your son.

Everyone freezes.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - LATER

Broken and the Collector sit directly across from each other in the living room, pretending not to listen to the muffled arguing coming from the next room.

MRS. SINCLAIR (O.S.)
We are not even talking about this. Absolutely not.

MR. SINCLAIR (O.S.)
It's ten million dollars, Carolyn.

MRS. SINCLAIR (O.S.)
He's our son, Jack.

MR. SINCLAIR (O.S.)
And what exactly is he worth to you? Our house? A lifetime of debt? Exactly what kind of good things has he brought on our lives?

MRS. SINCLAIR (O.S.)
He's our son, Jack.

MR. SINCLAIR (O.S.)
You said that already.

Broken stares at other stuff while the Collector is entertained by Broken's awkwardness. The Collector reaches into his pocket.

COLLECTOR
Have you ever seen a zero bubble?

Broken looks confused.

BROKEN
No.

The Collector produces what looks like a paperweight of colored glass, with a bubble in the center. Suspended in the glass are warped, beautiful shapes.

COLLECTOR
At first glance it just looks like a badly made paperweight. But the mystery is just this: the bubble in the middle, it's not really a bubble.

The Collector holds the paperweight out and Broken looks closely into the bubble.

COLLECTOR
It's a void. It's completely empty, even of air. And because that space is empty, and the space around it is so densely filled, the way of nature is to try to balance the pressure.

The Collector spins the glass around slowly in his hands.

COLLECTOR
So the emptiness tries to fill itself, and over time the glass, being a very slow-moving liquid, accommodates and begins to fill that bubble's emptiness.

And as you can see, as that glass is sucked in, the beautiful shapes inside of it are warped and changed, and made ugly because of it.

The Collector leans in and speaks directly to Broken, but Broken continues to stare at the bubble.

COLLECTOR

You see, the vacuum inside is made up of nothing, and nothingness isn't meant to take up space in a matter-filled world.

He twirls the ball in his hand.

COLLECTOR

So it inevitably leeches off of the somethings that surround it, leaving those somethings warped and incomplete, never to be the same again. Do you understand?

Broken nods.

COLLECTOR

Do you want to hold it?

Broken reaches out, receives, examines the bubble.

COLLECTOR

Imagine if we could find a way to make space for that nothingness, to let it be what it's meant to be... or not be...without the pressures of the matter around it.

Broken gazes into the transparent object.

INT. SINCLAIR KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair stand in the kitchen, fighting. Mrs. Sinclair clings to a small crucifix.

MR. SINCLAIR

This guy has a lot more to offer our son than we have.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Were you even listening? He doesn't want Broken so he can give him a good education. He wants to put him on a shelf, taxidermalize him or worse.

MR. SINCLAIR

Stop exaggerating. That's not even legal.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Neither is selling your son, Jack.

MR. SINCLAIR

Look, I'm not saying I don't care about him. I mean, I can't say I do, but I'm just saying let's think about it. Maybe it could end up being the best thing for all of us.

BROKEN (O.C.)

It could be.

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair start guiltily as they see Broken in the doorway. Mrs. Sinclair goes to him, puts down the crucifix, and puts her arms around him.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Sweetie, you're not going anywhere.

BROKEN

I just came to say, I don't mind. You guys can take the deal. I mean, I don't think anyone's going to be losing anything. I was never really anyone of consequence, at school or at home.

MRS. SINCLAIR

But someday you will be.

BROKEN

You can't make something out of nothing, Mom. It's the law of conservation of mass.

Broken's parents stare at him. The Collector enters. All eyes go to him.

COLLECTOR

Good friends, I can see your decision is already made. You just don't know it yet. I'll be back in exactly one week with your payment and all the necessary papers. Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair, it's been a pleasure. Broken.

He nods, puts his hat back on smoothly, and exits.

The Sinclairs all look at each other in a cautious confusion.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 And that's all it took to put my
 house in limbo.

EXT. SCHOOL - MORNING

Mrs. Sinclair stands beside Broken in front of the school's double doors, staring into space. Broken struggles to open the school door, which is apparently way too heavy for him.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 The Collector had left a dark cloud
 of doom to watch over our house
 until he got back.

Broken's grip slips and he nearly falls over. Mrs. Sinclair finally snaps out of her trance and opens the door easily for him. He nods, grabs his plain lunch bag, and walks in.

INT. SINCLAIR BEDROOM - DAY

Mr. Sinclair lifts up the corner of the mattress and pulls out an envelope of cash, from which he extracts a few small bills and counts them.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 No arguments left to have, no
 promises to make -

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Broken takes the zero bubble out of his backpack and stares deeply into it.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 Just a vague sense of uncertainty.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair sit on opposite ends of the couch, where they silently watch television.

Broken comes in, grabs a half glass of water from the coffee table, and leaves. Mrs. Sinclair grows increasingly uncomfortable.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 Until...

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair are startled by a crash of breaking glass.

MR. SINCLAIR
 Julia Child!

BROKEN (V.O.)
The storm broke.

They find a brick on the floor beside their shattered window, with an envelope tied to it.

Mr. Sinclair glances out the broken window as a car peels out on the street.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Who would do this?

MR. SINCLAIR
Open it up.

Mrs. Sinclair opens the envelope and pulls out a letter and another envelope. She skims it.

MRS. SINCLAIR
It's a letter from the principal.
He says we're behind on our tuition
payments and we'd better catch up
immediately or else.

MR. SINCLAIR
Or else what?

Mrs. Sinclair hands him the letter. He reads it.

MR. SINCLAIR
Oh.

MRS. SINCLAIR
They've even included a self-
addressed stamped envelope.

MR. SINCLAIR
Damn private schools. You'd think
it'd be enough, sending his
enforcers after me at work.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Those were just boy scouts, honey.

MR. SINCLAIR
You weren't there! You didn't see
what happened!

The phone rings. They look at one another intensely.

MR. SINCLAIR
We're not home.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Don't be silly. It's probably just
the neighbors wondering about the
noise.

INT. SINCLAIR KITCHEN - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair enters and answers the phone, still holding the brick and envelopes. Mr. Sinclair lingers in the doorway.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Hello?

She glances down at the brick.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Yes, we did get your message.
We're doing our best, you know.
You'll get your money.

(beat)

Oh yeah? Well, I know where you
live too! Bad choice leaving your
address on the envelope!

(beat)

Oh, of course it's the school
address. That makes sense.

She exudes indignation.

MRS. SINCLAIR

No, *you* have a week!

Mrs. Sinclair hangs up the phone. They look at one another.
Mrs. Sinclair sits down in silence.

MR. SINCLAIR

We'll figure it out. You always
find ways of bringing extra money
in.

Mrs. Sinclair looks at Mr. Sinclair hopelessly.

MR. SINCLAIR

What's wrong?

MRS. SINCLAIR

I went to the doctor the other day.

He stares at her.

MRS. SINCLAIR

I have to stop donating my eggs.

MR. SINCLAIR

Eggs? Like, your eggs? Like your
girl-sperm?

MRS. SINCLAIR

Yes.

MR. SINCLAIR

You've been donating them?

MRS. SINCLAIR
Selling them, yes.

MR. SINCLAIR
To who?

MRS. SINCLAIR
To fertility clinics.

MR. SINCLAIR
When were you going to tell me
this?

MRS. SINCLAIR
Well, we weren't really using
them...

Mr. Sinclair stands and paces in frustration.

MR. SINCLAIR
So you decided throwing them out
there for other people to have your
babies was a good idea?

MRS. SINCLAIR
People who can't have babies...

MR. SINCLAIR
Does anyone really need babies?

MRS. SINCLAIR
I don't see what you're so upset
about.

MR. SINCLAIR
It's sick, Carolyn. It's one step
away from adultery.

MRS. SINCLAIR
It's also been half our income for
awhile now. And it's going to stop
coming in.

This halts Mr. Sinclair.

MR. SINCLAIR
Why?

MRS. SINCLAIR
I'm out of eggs.

Mr. Sinclair sits beside her again.

MR. SINCLAIR
But...you'll make more, right?

The Sinclairs look at each other for a moment.

EXT. SINCLAIR HOUSE - DAY

The sunset colors the background of the Sinclair house, but just over the house floats an isolated cloud of doom.

INT. BROKEN'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The sun is setting. Broken takes off his shirt and picks up some pajamas. He glances into the mirror and half-notices his old-looking bandage, but continues to dress anyway. Mrs. Sinclair appears in the doorway.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Does it need changing?

BROKEN
No. It's fine.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Broken, look at it. It's been
awhile. It's time for a change.

BROKEN
All right.

Broken sits on his bed as his mother comes out of the bathroom with bandage tape and a washcloth. She comes to him and unwraps the old bandage, uncovering the hole on his shoulder.

She stares at it a moment, then wipes at it with the damp cloth, feels it.

BROKEN
How is it? Any different?

MRS. SINCLAIR
No change. It looks the same as
always.

She begins to wrap it in the new bandage.

BROKEN
So, when am I leaving?

Mrs. Sinclair, drained of all resistance, responds.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Thursday.

Broken nods and Mrs. Sinclair wraps him, head bowed.

INT. SCIENCE MUSEUM - DAY

Broken and his class walk into a science museum on a field trip. On display, a huge collection of butterflies and animal skeletons lie everywhere.

MS. FOSTER

Make the most of the time you have,
kids - these fossils are from
millions of years ago-

The Ecclesiastical INTERPRETER, a priest (60s) comes up behind Ms. Foster, standing beside a box of goggles.

MS. FOSTER

Oh - and don't forget to pick up
your interpretive goggles from our
Mandatory Ecclesiastical
Interpreter!

Broken and the other kids grab goggles. He looks up at the "Evolution of the Natural World" sign as he puts on his goggles, which blot out the words "Evolution of" from the sign.

EXHIBIT VOICE (O.S.)

The first-known butterfly fossils
date back over 40 million years, in
the Eocene Epoch -
(voice changes)
-the 5th day of creation, which
means butterflies have been around
a whopping 6,020 years.

Broken looks closely at the many butterflies pinned to the wall as Leigh comes up to him, also with goggles.

LEIGH

Does being in the room with all
these skeletons make you jealous?

BROKEN

No. They're dead.

LEIGH

Yeah - no, yeah. I just thought-

The teacher comes up to Broken and pulls him aside.

MS. FOSTER

Broken, can I speak to you a
moment?

Broken follows her, much to Leigh's chagrin.

MS. FOSTER
Hey, buddy, is everything okay at home?

BROKEN
Um...

MS. FOSTER
It's just, I'm afraid Mr. Hasser, your health teacher, says your current grade is an incomplete.

BROKEN
Oh.

MS. FOSTER
I've noticed you don't seem very happy or engaged in school, and I'm a little concerned about you. I see the other kids picking on you sometimes, are they hurting you?

BROKEN
No, I'm okay.

MS. FOSTER
And at home, has anyone ever harmed you? Your parents -

BROKEN
Nope, no one's ever done me harm.

MS. FOSTER
Because you know, if you ever need someone to talk to, you can tell me these things. The school has resources; I can get you the help that you need. To thrive. I want my students to thrive.

BROKEN
I'm doing fine. Thanks, Ms. Foster.

She pats him on the shoulder, and he flinches.

MS. FOSTER
If you say so, Broken. Just remember, you can always confide in me.

He smiles and nods, then walks on down the hallway into the space exhibit. She watches with a furrowed brow.

Broken looks around at passing exhibits with words and sometimes images censored out via his goggles. He looks down a hallway with no kids - the end of which is so censored that it looks like a cave into total darkness.

INT. SPACE EXHIBIT ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

At the entrance to the space exhibit, Broken walks past Leigh, who works on a complex-looking build-it-yourself exhibit to the protests of her friends, JACKIE and ELLA.

JACKIE
Leigh! Come on-

ELLA
This is lame-

LEIGH
What? I'm just gonna finish-

They sigh and leave her behind, and Leigh, frustrated, continues building a scale model of a molecular structure.

Broken looks ahead of him and finds a life-size cave display with a living "CAVEMAN" dressed in animal skins making mime-like motions, looking up into a starry sky behind him and carving constellations into a mammoth tusk.

In the goggles, Broken's vision gets darker and distorts the view, and the interpreter voice becomes garbled.

EXHIBIT VOICE (O.S.)
Humans are all descended from 2
people - before Noah, some humans
lived in caves - rode dinosaurs -
rocks only *look* old -

Static and an angel choir overtake the headphones, and Broken takes off the overwhelming device so he can see and hear.

EXHIBIT VOICE (O.S.)
- and as early as 33,000 years ago,
homo sapiens...

Below the display is a sign that reads "The First Astronomer." The caveman turns silently to Broken and puts his finger to his lips. The sound of crickets chirping crescendoes to make it feel like night. Broken walks into the cave mouth.

INT. PLANETARIUM - CONTINUOUS

He finds himself in a small, empty planetarium. Above him are the stars, and around him are various telescopes.

He walks up to one telescope and looks at the eyepiece, which shows the Milky Way.

VOICE (V.O.)

The Milky Way, our home galaxy,
consists of hundreds of billions of
stars and planets revolving around
a supermassive black hole.

Broken wanders some more.

VOICE (V.O.)

While the sky looks positively full
of stars, the majority of the
universe is made up of empty space.

A spotlight shines on another telescope.

VOICE (V.O.)

Take, for instance, the Canes
Venatici Void.

Broken steps over to the spotlit telescope and looks in.

INSERT: A telescope view of a hole in the universe surrounded
by stars and galactic filaments.

Broken's eyes widen.

VOICE (V.O.)

Spanning a diameter of 1.3 billion
light-years, the Canes Venatici is
a huge sphere of empty space
consisting of wide swaths with no
galaxies, gasses, or even matter.
As the universe expands, there are
more and more such stretches of
nothingness growing ever wider in
between galaxy clusters.

Broken's lips part in awe.

VOICE (V.O.)

You could say that the most common
thing in the universe...is nothing.

Broken pulls his jacket around himself and watches the
vastness expand all around his vision, at peace for a long
moment by himself.

LEIGH (O.S.)

Hey Broken.

Broken starts out of his reverie at Leigh's voice right
behind him.

LEIGH

So I have this theory to talk to
you about. You're going to love it.

You see, I think your insides are
in another dimension.

INT. SCIENCE MUSEUM HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Surrounded by chatty classmates, Broken walks down the hallway with his backpack on - and counterweights in front so he doesn't tip backward - and Leigh continues her theory, hurrying to keep up.

LEIGH

It happens in books all the time. Someone's trying to overcome the space-time continuum, and they end up in a parallel dimension where - bugs rule the earth or people are made of clay - or worse yet, where their family and friends don't recognize them.

Broken stops, and Leigh places herself directly in front of him. They're near Leigh's incredibly elaborate molecular model. Broken glances ahead impatiently.

LEIGH

I've even heard of someone's arm or leg getting mistakenly stuck somewhere in time, and they had to find the exact moment where it got stuck to get it back.

BROKEN

You're a bit of a geek, aren't you?

LEIGH

So?

A MUSEUM EMPLOYEE passes by, herding the students.

MUSEUM EMPLOYEE

Hallways are for walking, people.

Broken walks on, still wearing his usual smile.

LEIGH

I'm just saying, whenever you feel incomplete, just picture that other dimension, where your innards are walking around just like you are now, but without your skin.

Broken walks a little faster.

LEIGH

They're probably dripping everywhere, and I bet they have more trouble fitting in at school than you do. That should make you grateful for what you have. Maybe they'll catch up with you someday, get unstuck and find you. Maybe...I could even help. We could go on a quest-

BROKEN

Look, Leigh, have I ever given you any indication that I was looking to be your friend? If I did, I didn't mean to, and that's a really interesting theory about my innards, but you should spend your energy on people who are worth knowing. Meanwhile, hallways are for walking.

Broken walks on, adjusting his backpack. Leigh stands still as a trembling statue. Broken freezes as he suddenly hears a large sniff.

His face falls, and far behind him Leigh stands crying where she stood. He turns back and returns to her unwillingly.

BROKEN (V.O.)

Oh no, I broke her.

BROKEN

Um, I - I -

Broken awkwardly tries to reach out, pat her on the back, something.

BROKEN (V.O.)

I was suddenly very aware of how much space I take up in the universe. How the presence of my talking skin can be enough to get in everyone's way whether I try to blend in or not.

BROKEN

You're - a very nice person...

As he tries, Leigh's friend Jackie appears at her side, tall, caring, and confident, and puts an arm around her.

JACKIE

Sweetie, what's wrong?

Jackie turns to Broken.

JACKIE
What did you say to her?

BROKEN
I was just - short with her.

JACKIE
I can't believe you made her cry!

BROKEN
Well, I didn't mean to.

JACKIE
Say you're sorry!

BROKEN
Oh - look, Leigh, I'm so sorry I was rude to you. What can I do to make it stop? Is there any way I can make you...feel better?

LEIGH
Anything?

BROKEN
Anything.

LEIGH
Will you come to my birthday party next Saturday?

BROKEN
You...you really want me to come to your birthday party?

LEIGH
Yes.

They look each other in the eyes for a long moment.

LEIGH
It's fine, if you don't want to, it's...

BROKEN
No, no, I'd like to come - only - I can't.

LEIGH
Oh.

BROKEN
I really really would, but I won't be going to school anymore. I'm being sold to a collector next week.

Leigh starts crying again. Jackie gives Broken a venomous look.

LEIGH
It's okay, you don't have to make things up. Forget I even asked.

BROKEN
I'm not making it up, I-

Jackie turns Leigh away from him, and they begin to walk away. Broken stands watching awkwardly, unsure what to do.

JACKIE
Don't worry about him, Leigh. Think of tardigrades, think of Fraggles - think of -

Broken half turns away, stops, turns back to Leigh.

BROKEN
Leigh - I'll come.

Leigh looks back at him and starts to smile.

BROKEN
I'll find a way.

The bones of extinct dinosaurs loom over them.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY

Broken walks up to the front gate of the school, where Lenny's sitting reading his book, *Transcendental Meditation for Jazz*. Mrs. Sinclair sits in her car, idling, clasping a red rosary. After waiting awkwardly for a moment, Broken walks to the passenger side and opens the door for himself.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair hurries in the door and whisks off to her angelic lair.

Broken takes off his backpack and walks on towards his room as Mr. Sinclair's muffled voice sounds from the kitchen.

MR. SINCLAIR (O.S.)
Yep, that's right. We've been waiting years to get a new one.

INT. SINCLAIR KITCHEN DOORWAY - DAY

Broken walks in and fills a glass halfway with water. Mr. Sinclair does not stop talking on the phone.

MR. SINCLAIR

Well, you know how it is. Bills tend to pile up when you're trying to support a kid...yeah, ain't that the truth. Well, the check will be in the mail in a week. Thanks. Pleasure doing business with you.

Broken grabs his glass of water and exits.

INT. MRS. SINCLAIR'S ANGELIC LAIR - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair kneels before her angels and David Bowie poster, prays more fervently than ever before. She reverently places a Ziggy Stardust wig on the head of one of her angel statues.

Broken, passing by, stops in the doorway to look at her. She meets his eyes, then looks back up to her shrine without a second glance. He moves on.

INT. SINCLAIR DINING ROOM - DAY

The three Sinclairs eat silently around the table, hardly venturing glances at one another. After a long moment, Broken speaks up.

BROKEN

I've changed my mind.

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair stop eating. Mr. Sinclair stops midway through a sip of beer.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Sorry, what was that, dear?

BROKEN

I've changed my mind. I don't want to go with the Collector.

MR. SINCLAIR

What do you mean you've changed your mind?

BROKEN

I need to stay here and keep going to school. At least for a little while.

MR. SINCLAIR

Listen, son, I don't know if you heard him right, but he's offering us ten million dollars for you, and suddenly you want to keep going to school?

MRS. SINCLAIR
Honey, it's not like it's an unreasonable request to want to stay with his parents.

BROKEN
I just need an extra week.

MR. SINCLAIR
What do you need an extra week for?

BROKEN
I have to go to a birthday party.

MRS. SINCLAIR
You got invited to a birthday party?

Broken nods. His mother melts momentarily as both his parents stare in a sort of regretful shock. Mrs. Sinclair hesitates.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Sweetie, I don't know if this collector man is going to let us change our minds. He seems to have a lot of power, and he's already gotten hold of all the paperwork he needs to do this semi-legally.

BROKEN
You mean you've talked to him since last time?

MRS. SINCLAIR
Yes, baby, he stopped by earlier and had us sign a few things.

BROKEN
I see. So I just need to explain it to him.

Broken continues eating as Mrs. Sinclair loses her appetite.

INT. SCHOOL GYM - DAY

Broken's class files into the gymnasium, and all the boys rush in the direction of the locker room, holding their gym clothes. Broken breaks away and steps into the bathroom.

INT. BOYS' BATHROOM - DAY

Broken changes into his gym clothes alone in the boys' bathroom. He takes off his uniform shirt and T-shirt.

As the T-shirt is over his face, Leigh sneaks in the bathroom door, peeking at Broken curiously.

As soon as Broken's shirt is off, he sees Leigh in the mirror and starts, holding the shirt in front of him as he wheels around to face her.

BROKEN
Leigh!

LEIGH
Hey.

BROKEN
This is the boys'-

Broken hesitates a moment, then softens, trying to accommodate her as if she were still crying.

BROKEN
How are you? Are you feeling better?

LEIGH
What? Oh. Yeah. I'm sorry about the crying the other day. I know it was weird.

BROKEN
It was - but - I just hope I didn't hurt you too much.

LEIGH
It wasn't just you. School kind of sucks. You know, there are days I think I'm an alien sent to earth on some exploratory mission. But they sent me by myself. It gets to be kind of a lonely thought.

BROKEN
I'm sorry.

He thinks a moment.

BROKEN
But at least, if you are an alien, then you know there's people waiting for you somewhere.

LEIGH
Hmm...that's true...

She considers this.

BROKEN
Why are you in the boys' bathroom?

LEIGH

Well, I always see you come in here to change for gym, and I just wanted to find out why.

BROKEN

Oh. There's just not a lot of space in the locker room. I try to stay out of the way.

LEIGH

You really don't take up that much room, Broken. What is it about the locker room? It can't be that you get picked on there any more than anywhere else.

She hesitates.

LEIGH

Is it this?

Leigh reaches for the bandage on Broken's shoulder.

INT. CAVE- DAY - FANTASY

For a flash, water and earth pour into the hole in the cave's roof.

INT. BOYS' BATHROOM - BACK TO SCENE

Broken recoils.

BROKEN

Don't-

LEIGH

I guess it is.

Awkward silence.

LEIGH

What happened?

BROKEN

Nothing. It's been there since I was born.

LEIGH

What has?

BROKEN

The hole.

LEIGH

The...hole. Do you always keep it bandaged up? What, are you afraid you'll leak out?

BROKEN

No, I'm more concerned everything else is going to leak in.

LEIGH

Can I see it?

BROKEN

No.

LEIGH

Why not?

BROKEN

What would you say if I asked you if I could take a peek down your throat to see what's inside?

LEIGH

Oh, you can - oh. Fair enough.

She half-turns to the door, then turns back to Broken.

LEIGH

You know, I was thinking, the other day, when I was...upset, you were being really nice to me. Were you trying to make me feel better?

BROKEN

Yeah.

LEIGH

Because if you were trying to make me feel better, you should have given me a hug. That's what you do when people are sad.

BROKEN

Oh. Thanks.

Leigh smiles and nods.

BROKEN

Do you want one now?

LEIGH

Yeah.

BROKEN

Can I put my shirt on first?

Leigh nods. Broken puts on his shirt. They hug.

EXT. SCHOOL GATE - DAY

The school day is over, and Lenny sits and reads *Letting Go of Gravity* on his stone pillar at the front entrance to the school grounds.

Broken is far off, walking with books, and gets "booked" by a group of BOY SCOUTS in uniform. He then gets shoved and kicked around, rag doll style, until he gets thrown down disheveled in front of Lenny's perch.

Lenny shifts uncomfortably and glares at the boys, who walk on, laughing. So far, not a sound has come from Broken.

LENNY
You okay, Broken?

Broken gets up. His shirt is ripped, and he is dirty. He picks up his books and gives Lenny his usual slight smile.

BROKEN
Yeah, I'm fine. Thanks.

Broken brushes off and walks on. Lenny, after a concerned moment, returns to his reading. Moments pass. Broken returns and casually sits on the next pillar beside Lenny. Lenny looks up.

LENNY
Hi.

BROKEN
Hi, Len.

Broken stares out into the street.

LENNY
Is something wrong?

BROKEN
Nope. Thanks for asking, though.
Is something wrong with you?

LENNY
No, I'm just waiting for my ride.

BROKEN
Yeah, I know.

Broken sits still for a moment, watching the street intently.

LENNY
Isn't your mom usually here by now?

BROKEN

Yeah.

LENNY

So, are you walking home today?

BROKEN

Yeah.

Broken watches a car drive by in silence.

LENNY

Well...

BROKEN

So-

Lenny half-closes his book.

BROKEN

Birthday parties.

LENNY

Huh?

BROKEN

You've been to a lot of them,
right?

LENNY

Well, I guess so. I haven't
actually been to one in a few
years. They're not really cool
anymore.

BROKEN

Oh. Nice.

Lenny looks at him curiously.

LENNY

You?

BROKEN

Me?

LENNY

Have you been to many?

BROKEN

No, never been to one.

LENNY

Never?

Broken shrugs. Lenny nods and slowly goes back to reading.
Broken nods for a moment, then speaks up again.

BROKEN
So - how do you do it?

LENNY
What - birthday parties?

BROKEN
Yeah.

LENNY
Well...if I remember right,
everybody wears pointy hats and
brings presents - something silly
and useless - and everybody eats
cake and hits a piñata and plays
pin the tail on the donkey.

BROKEN
Pin the tail on the donkey?

LENNY
Yeah. Oh, and last time I went to
one there was a clown. He was kind
of creepy.

BROKEN
Creepy clown. Got it.

LENNY
The really important part is
getting a present that they'll
like. Something personal.

BROKEN
Something personal that she'll
like.

Broken gets down from the pillar. He turns to Lenny.

BROKEN
Thanks, Lenny.

Broken holds up his hand for a high five. Lenny doesn't see
it - he smiles at Broken and goes back to his book.

LENNY
No problem, Broken. Have fun at the
party.

Left hanging, Broken mimes a high five anyway and walks off
towards home.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair sit uncomfortably on the couch across
from the Collector.

MR. SINCLAIR
Can I get you a drink? Anything?

COLLECTOR
No, thank you, I don't plan to be here long.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Just here to collect what you came for and go, huh?

COLLECTOR
Precisely. There is much to do once he gets to my lab.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Your lab.

MR. SINCLAIR
So you're, what, going to run some tests on the kid? Dunk him in water and see if he drowns?

COLLECTOR
It's a bit more complicated than that, I'm afraid.

MR. SINCLAIR
Because he doesn't drown. Trust me.

The Collector takes note of the look in Mrs. Sinclair's eyes.

COLLECTOR
You know, on second thought, Mr. Sinclair, I would love some coffee.

Mr. Sinclair nods and looks at Mrs. Sinclair expectantly. She notices his look, sighs, gets up to go to the kitchen.

The Collector looks slightly thrown when Mrs. Sinclair gets up, but smiles and turns back towards Mr. Sinclair to continue the conversation.

INT. SINCLAIR KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Mrs. Sinclair enters the kitchen tensely. She takes the hot coffeepot off the coffee maker and pours two cups. The muffled voices of the men in the next room are just audible through the wall. Only the occasional word can be understood.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)
. . . team of scientists . . .
machine . . . wretched sight . . .
animals . . .

As she pours, she spills a bit on the counter. She goes under the sink, gets a paper towel, and wipes it off.

She looks at the cup of coffee, glances up toward the living room, considers.

COLLECTOR (O.S.)
 . . . children . . . edible . . .

She disappears for a moment, then emerges with a medicine bottle. She takes a pill out, crushes it up, and puts it in one of the cups.

She grabs the sugar bowl, puts a generous amount of sugar in, and exits with the two cups.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The men erupt into a fit of laughter just as Mrs. Sinclair emerges and sweetly hands one cup to the Collector and one to her husband. She sits back down on the chair next to the couch and smiles politely as the laughter calms.

COLLECTOR
 Oh, it was a mess. Parts everywhere. Ah - thank you, Mrs. Sinclair.

Mr. Sinclair points to the Collector, still wiping his eye from the laughter.

MR. SINCLAIR
 You know, you're all right.

COLLECTOR
 Well, I suppose "all right" will have to do, then.

The Collector puts his cup down on the table and takes out his bag of dried leaves. Mr. Sinclair takes a long drink of his coffee.

COLLECTOR
 Now, before Broken gets home, I wanted to make sure that there's no bad blood between us.

He opens the bag and pours the dried leaves into the cup.

COLLECTOR
 Everything is signed and paid for, all of our paperwork is in order, and as far as I'm concerned, very few people on earth will have known that you ever had a son.

He stirs his coffee.

COLLECTOR
 And they'll forget quickly enough.

MR. SINCLAIR
I know I will.

The Collector lifts the cup to his face and smells it luxuriously. Across from him, Mr. Sinclair takes another large drink of his coffee, nodding.

COLLECTOR
Mmm - this coffee smells positively toothsome.

The moment the cup leaves Mr. Sinclair's lips, he falls unconscious on the couch. Just as his hand relaxes, Mrs. Sinclair catches the cup so it doesn't spill.

MRS. SINCLAIR
It's a new gourmet blend.

The Collector remains frozen with the cup of coffee just near his lips. He slowly puts it down, eyeing the unconscious Mr. Sinclair.

COLLECTOR
Is he . . .

MRS. SINCLAIR
Just passed out. I needed to be able to speak to you alone.

The Collector, taken aback but enjoying himself thoroughly, picks up his cup.

COLLECTOR
Why, Mrs. Sinclair, I'm surprised at you. Should I expect the same treatment, or may I . . .

MRS. SINCLAIR
Go on. I need you awake for this.

COLLECTOR
Very well.

He takes a drink of his coffee, looking at Mrs. Sinclair attentively.

MRS. SINCLAIR
What can I do to keep you from taking Broken?

COLLECTOR
I'm afraid there's nothing you can do.

MRS. SINCLAIR
I'll give you all the money back. And more.

You can take my eggs and see if there's anything genetic in it. You can come and conduct tests here. You can . . .

COLLECTOR

I have made you my offer and you've accepted. I'm afraid it's done.

MRS. SINCLAIR

I will come and sit on your shelf. You can have me.

COLLECTOR

A mother who loves her son? Not terribly rare or interesting.

This hurts Mrs. Sinclair. She clings to the sides of her seat in frustration.

COLLECTOR

You may as well relax, my dear. You're not going to stop this from happening.

MRS. SINCLAIR

But I don't understand. Why Broken? There must be plenty of other children out there that you would find just as...interesting.

The Collector puts his cup down.

COLLECTOR

Mrs. Sinclair - Carolyn - may I call you Carolyn?

She nods reluctantly. He takes out the sharp animal tooth from his pocket and fiddles with it.

COLLECTOR

Carolyn, do you know what is the source of all the suffering and hardships of humanity? What fills the world with foul diseases, war, injustice?

MRS. SINCLAIR

What is it?

He leans forward intently.

COLLECTOR

Something.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Something?

COLLECTOR

Something.

He waits for this to sink in. It doesn't.

COLLECTOR

That is, somethingness. Matter. Substance. The presence of something. We are all subject to it. It muddles our thoughts and suffocates us with its constant presence. It's everywhere.

She starts to understand. The Collector continues.

COLLECTOR

Yet this boy manages to live without it. To go through life free from troublesome little emotions like love, sadness, fear.

He picks up his cup of coffee and gestures with it.

COLLECTOR

Grief. He's never been sick, never grown violent, and he can choose to become whatever kind of person he'd like to be - because he isn't limited by what he is already.

She nods, slightly touched.

COLLECTOR

Don't you see, Carolyn, what could be achieved if more people could be like Broken? Imagine what one might do if one could figure out how to make nothing out of something. How the world might change. Nothing can be powerful indeed. Don't you think?

He leans in.

COLLECTOR

Carolyn, this venture isn't just for my curiosity. It may well be for all of us.

Mrs. Sinclair stares a moment. The Collector sips his coffee. The front door opens.

Broken enters and halts when he sees his parents seated on the couch across from the Collector, Mr. Sinclair still unconscious. Mrs. Sinclair gets up uncomfortably upon seeing Broken, and the Collector stands as well, putting down his cup of coffee.

COLLECTOR

Broken. How pleasant to see you again.

BROKEN

Is it that time already?

MRS. SINCLAIR

Hey, sweetie. I was just telling our collector friend that you had a question for him.

COLLECTOR

Do you now? A question for me?

MRS. SINCLAIR

Come, sit with us.

Broken stays where he is.

BROKEN

Actually, I have something to tell you. I've changed my mind. I'd like to stay here and keep going to school.

COLLECTOR

You've changed your mind, eh? I didn't realize your mind was made up in the first place, champ.

BROKEN

Well, now you know. And I'm sorry for the trouble you took to come out here, but I can't go with you. I need to stay here.

COLLECTOR

I see. That's how it is, then. Well, I suppose if you feel you need to stay, then I'll simply have to make this a legal issue.

BROKEN

...what...?

COLLECTOR

Broken, I don't think you understand the terms of our arrangement here. I've already paid a good deal of money for you. And I've already become your legal guardian. It's good that you have a firm resolve, but I'm afraid it's not your choice to make.

BROKEN

But I've read up on adoption. I'm 13; you have to have my consent to become my guardian.

COLLECTOR

Oh, but I'm not adopting you at all. Here, let me show you something.

The Collector opens a briefcase, takes out a piece of paper, and hands the paper to Broken. Broken looks at it.

BROKEN

What's this?

COLLECTOR

It's your death certificate. The doctors signed it less than an hour after your birth, once they found you had no vital signs. Legally, you're dead; you have no rights to consent in anything. And your parents -

He indicates Mrs. Sinclair, who looks away guiltily.

COLLECTOR

- have selflessly agreed in writing to donate your body to scientific research. Fortunately, I happen to run a laboratory that specializes in cryptozoology. The point, Broken, is that you belong to me now.

BROKEN

Could you just wait a week?

COLLECTOR

Whatever do you want a week for?

BROKEN

I need a week.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Please, sir, he's supposed to be going to a birthday party. It's the first one he's ever been invited to.

COLLECTOR

A birthday party . . .

The Collector deliberates for a long moment.

COLLECTOR

I don't like it. I fear he's had too much exposure to his peers already. I can't wait another week.

BROKEN

Three days, even . . .

MRS. SINCLAIR

It's just one last hoorah before he says goodbye to his friends-

COLLECTOR

No birthday parties!

Silently, Mrs. Sinclair sits back down as the Collector recovers from his outburst. He takes a deep breath and starts to walk toward Broken and the door.

COLLECTOR

Broken, what do you think you'll be able to contribute to a birthday party that would outweigh what you could do for the *world* by allowing us to do our research?

Broken goes quiet, considering this. The Collector bends to Broken's level.

COLLECTOR

You're not made of the stuff that makes up everyone else, Broken. You're made of the very fabric of the universe.

BROKEN

Can I bring my backpack?

COLLECTOR

Of course you may.

The Collector straightens up and puts his hand on Broken's bad shoulder. The sound of rocks crackling and a cave collapsing can be heard vaguely.

COLLECTOR

Now please. It's time to say your goodbyes and we'll-

Broken recoils.

BROKEN

I'm not dead. My insides are just in another dimension.

The Collector looks at him, and Broken suddenly tears out the door.

EXT. SINCLAIR HOUSE - DAY

Broken bursts out to the yard and runs across the driveway into the street, pursued by the Collector.

COLLECTOR
Catch him!

His DRIVER, 45 and startlingly built, jumps out of the Collector's car and pursues Broken - fast.

BROKEN (V.O.)
I don't even know what came over me.

Broken runs on, weightlessly jumping fences and cutting through yards. The Driver falls behind, then takes out a Taser and shoots wildly after Broken. He misses, narrowly.

BROKEN (V.O.)
I figured I'd make it up to the Collector eventually.

Broken ducks behind a wall just as a ninja star shoots past him. He jumps over a shrub.

BROKEN (V.O.)
But I ran like some time traveler trying to catch up with himself. And then something funny happened.

Broken slows to a halt and catches his breath.

BROKEN (V.O.)
It's not like this is some monumental event -

Broken leans against a wall, then scoots around the corner just as the Collector's car drives past behind him.

BROKEN (V.O.)
It's not like I'd ever been able to run and run and run without ever getting tired, but that's the thing.

He pants and holds his chest, confused.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Till then, I'd never tried before.

EXT. SCIENCE MUSEUM - NIGHT

Broken walks aloof in front of the museum. From a distance, a SILHOUETTE does a mime routine. Broken walks up to him, engages him in conversation, and hands him something.

INT. SCIENCE MUSEUM - NIGHT

Broken walks into a museum where some JANITORS are sweeping up for the night. No one takes much notice of him. He walks up and looks at the bones of a dinosaur.

He walks through the dinosaur exhibit, finds a dark corner, and curls up to sleep, the zero bubble in his hand.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Broken sits in class, feigns listening while his ENGLISH TEACHER diagrams sentences on the board. Leigh sits near him.

ENGLISH TEACHER

The last preserved specimen...of a
dodo bird...resides...at the
Santino Laboratory...of
Cryptozoology.

Broken takes a folded piece of loose leaf out of his pocket. Leigh leans over to whisper to Broken.

LEIGH

Psst-

Broken looks up, trying to keep the loose leaf under wraps.

LEIGH

You're still coming tomorrow,
right?

Broken nods, smiling slightly. Leigh smiles back. Broken goes back to his piece of paper. He unfolds it and looks at it. It reads:

To Bring

-Creepy clown

-Pointy hat

-Birthday present - something personal

Broken checks off the first two items on the list, then taps his pencil on the desk, concentrating on the third.

He looks around at his classmates. He catches a glimpse of Jake sitting nearby reading a book, The Man in Search of his Skin by K. Trout, under wraps.

The bell rings. The teacher tries to maintain some order as all the children except Broken leave their book bags behind and file out of the room.

ENGLISH TEACHER

Single file, please - leave room
for Jesus, you two...

Broken lingers behind. As soon as the last classmate is out of sight, he goes back to his list, taking a second look at the words, "something personal."

Broken thinks, then looks across the room to Jake's backpack. He crosses the room in mere moments and rifles through. He takes out Jake's book, The Man in Search of his Skin.

He almost gets it into his own bag when he is interrupted by a yell.

JAKE (O.C.)

Hey!

Jake enters through the doorway. Broken stands up, looking guilty.

JAKE

Are you stealing my stuff?

BROKEN

Sorry, Jake, I was just looking at it.

JAKE

What the hell are you stealing from my backpack?

BROKEN

I'll put it back, I just-

JAKE

You little shit!

Jake hits Broken in the stomach. Broken gasps. Jake continues kicking and beating at him.

JAKE

You're always looking through people's stuff like it's yours!

BROKEN

Wait!

Jake is so startled by Broken yelling that he pauses a moment. Broken breathes slowly, then looks up to Jake.

BROKEN (V.O.)

Every time anyone's ever hit me,
I've wondered if I was going to
die. But I'd never actually been
afraid for my life. It never
mattered before.

Broken, on his knees, looks pleadingly up to Jake.

BROKEN

Please stop. I can't die today. I
have to live - I...have plans
tomorrow. Please let me live.

BROKEN (V.O.)

That may have weirded Jake out.

JAKE

Fruit!

Jake kicks Broken one more time, which sends him to his hands
and knees. Jake exits.

Broken slowly catches his breath and gets up from the floor,
but unbeknownst to him, a tiny clear droplet falls from his
face as he rises.

Slowly, Broken collects himself, dusts himself off, and picks
up the book. He hesitates for a moment, looks around, shrugs.

As he grabs his bag and turns to leave, he finds Ms. Foster
in the doorway.

MS. FOSTER

Broken?

He stops short.

MS. FOSTER

Is it true you ran away from home
last night?

Broken is silent.

MS. FOSTER

Your uncle's here to see you.

BROKEN

My uncle?

The Collector enters from behind the teacher, smiles
knowingly at Broken.

MS. FOSTER

I'm glad you have at least one
stable figure in your life. He's
taking you home for the day.

COLLECTOR

We've been worried about you,
Broken.

Broken looks at him, then makes a break for the window and opens it. He pokes his head out, sees the distance to the ground, and reels.

BROKEN (V.O.)

Of all the things I'd taught myself
about being human, I had never
known how fear could paralyze you.

Ms. Foster and the Collector surround Broken. When he quails and turns away from the window he looks from one to the other, cornered.

BROKEN (V.O.)

And even after the hope that got
you clinging to life in the first
place is gone -

INT/EXT. COLLECTOR'S CAR/SINCLAIR HOUSE - DAY

Broken holds the book and stares longingly out the window as the car drives down his street, where a black cloud still hangs exclusively over the Sinclair house.

BROKEN (V.O.)

The fear stays with you.

The car moves on.

The dark cloud of doom which lingers over the house begins to blow as if from a soft wind in the direction the Collector's car has gone.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair sits by the front window and watches the Collector's car pass by down the street and out of sight.

Mr. Sinclair enters, carrying a silver tray with a sandwich on it, and a silver goblet.

MRS. SINCLAIR

There they go.

MR. SINCLAIR

Finally.

Mrs. Sinclair looks at him and exits towards Broken's room.

INT. BROKEN'S BEDROOM - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair enters sentimentally, only to find a giant anchor leaning against the wall. It is inconceivable how this anchor even got into the room.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Jack!

Mr. Sinclair enters, confused and still holding his goblet.

MR. SINCLAIR

What's the matter?

MRS. SINCLAIR

Our son's been gone one day, not even one day, and you've already replaced him with an anchor?

MR. SINCLAIR

It's not just an anchor. It's the first piece of my ship.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Your ship?

MR. SINCLAIR

Sorry. Our ship.

MRS. SINCLAIR

I thought we agreed we would leave his room the way he left it.

MR. SINCLAIR

Carolyn, he didn't leave it any different from how he found it. He didn't do anything with it.

MRS. SINCLAIR

That's what I mean. It's like he left a little bit of himself behind.

MR. SINCLAIR

By leaving nothing behind?

MRS. SINCLAIR

Exactly.

Mrs. Sinclair exits, picking up Broken's turtle shell on the way out.

INT. SINCLAIR DINING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair walks aimlessly into the dining room, holding the shell. Mr. Sinclair follows her.

MR. SINCLAIR
What's so wrong?

MRS. SINCLAIR
The house is just so...empty
without him.

Leaving Mr. Sinclair abashed, Mrs. Sinclair sighs and wanders into the living room.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair opens a drawer in the coffee table to put the shell into, and finds a pointy cardboard party hat inside the drawer. She pulls it out and stares.

INT. COLLECTOR'S CAR - DAY

Broken stares out the window as houses and trees pass by. The Collector sits in the front passenger seat, staring mesmerized into the zero bubble.

COLLECTOR
Pure, unspoilt emptiness; in here
could be whispered the secrets of
the universe . . .

BROKEN
But no one would hear them. Sound
waves can't travel in a vacuum.

COLLECTOR
You're very smart, Broken. Can you
tell me . . . why nothing can never
remain nothing for long, before it
is encroached upon, and utterly
ruined by the something around it?

BROKEN
You told me yourself, it's because
nothing isn't meant to take up
space in the world.

COLLECTOR
Oh, but it is, Broken. Even if the
bubble exists only for a short
period of time, it exists. I can't
fathom why it should be inevitable
that it slowly is filled by the
world around it.

BROKEN
Is that what you're going to do?
Are you going to fill me with
something from the world?

COLLECTOR
Why, Broken? Do you want me to?

BROKEN
No. I won't let you.

The Collector turns his visor mirror to examine Broken.

COLLECTOR
Is that so? Well, fortunately, my intention is quite the contrary.

The Collector raises the headrest of his seat and turns to look at Broken through the gap.

COLLECTOR
Imagine for a moment that everyone in the world could be like you. Could be free of pain, of desire, of hunger, anger, ambition - imagine how many species would be saved, how the earth would heal, how suffering would cease, how life would thrive if everyone could just...stop. And be content. *Nothing* could save everything.

Broken turns his head back to the window, his eyes looking around at passersby.

COLLECTOR
The people out there, as they are, will always want more from you than you can give them, Broken. But if our research is successful, you can help them all. Just by being you, just as you are.

BROKEN
May I have the zero bubble back?

The Collector looks at Broken, entertained, then looks to the zero bubble and hands it back to him. Broken stares at it in the light from the window.

The Collector smiles.

COLLECTOR
We stand to learn a lot from you, Broken. We all do.

EXT. COLLECTOR'S HOUSE - DAY

The Collector's car pulls into the driveway. The driver gets out, takes out a very light suitcase, lets the Collector out, then lets Broken out, keeping his hand clapped on Broken's good shoulder.

The front of the house looks like a grand pillared mansion, but the pillars seem to be made of spinal cords that may well have come from the skeletons of dinosaurs.

Their procession passes under the looming shadow of the house. Broken passes a large cage that houses what seems to be a disembodied tiger tail, still curling and wagging naturally in place.

They ascend some stairs up toward the front doors.

INT. COLLECTOR'S FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

The Collector enters grandly through two large, heavy doors, followed by Broken and the Driver, who still holds Broken's shoulder. Broken looks at the driver's hand, then takes in the interior hallway.

COLLECTOR
Welcome to your new home.

The doors close behind them with a resounding clang, followed by several elaborate locking sounds. Broken looks back at them, then looks forward again.

Everywhere around them is strange décor and architecture, the effect of which is slightly unsettling. The interior of the house looks like it is made of different buildings collected from around the world - pieces of ancient ruins, prisons, thatched houses, churches, even planes and cars.

COLLECTOR
I hope you will find it as
comfortable as it is fascinating.

They climb a large staircase. Broken puts his hand on the banister to find a small ball of fur resembling a tribble not far from where it rests. He puts his hand toward the thing curiously.

COLLECTOR
You can feel free to touch
anything, but be aware that
anything is just as free to touch
you back.

The furball shudders, and Broken draws his hand away without touching it.

They reach a point where the stairs ascend into the apparently solid ceiling, and the Collector punches a code into a keypad on the banister. The ceiling opens with another unlocking noise. The Collector leads Broken and the driver onto the next floor.

INT. COLLECTOR'S THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

This floor more closely resembles a sterile psych ward. They climb up onto the landing, and Broken hears a noise from a wall nearby with a window in it.

Broken turns toward the noise and sees that a muntjac (miniature deer) has seemingly just emerged from a doggie door in the exterior wall.

BROKEN
Isn't this the second floor?

COLLECTOR
Actually, it's the third floor. I had the second one removed last year.

Broken looks out the window, where the ground is dauntingly far below. The muntjac nuzzles against his leg like a cat and looks up at him. He stares back at it as the driver closes the floor.

COLLECTOR
This is the wing where I keep several of my subjects for deep study.

The three move down the hall. Broken looks into an open door as they pass to see a SCIENTIST observing what looks like a dragon fetus in a jar.

COLLECTOR
Of course, you won't be disturbed by any of these neighbors; they're mostly harmless -

Another door reveals an identical scientist watering what looks like one of Dr. Seuss's truffula trees in the flesh growing from a large pot.

COLLECTOR
- but none of them quite so special or unique as you.

The Collector unlocks a door and gestures Broken in before entering himself.

INT. BROKEN'S CHAMBER - DAY

They enter a cheery, ornate, monochromatic dorm room with two single beds and a barred window. Two RESEARCHERS in lab coats wait for him there.

The driver drops off Broken's suitcases and exits.

As soon as Broken enters, one researcher gently lifts his backpack from his good shoulder and scans it with an instrument that lights up. Broken is barely responsive.

COLLECTOR

These are the quarters in which you'll spend most of your time.

The researchers take his jacket and surround him. One sticks a thermometer in his mouth - it falls in and disappears. The second clips a small lock of his hair and puts it in a vial.

COLLECTOR

I'm sure you'll find it quite comfortable and even, perhaps, homey.

One researcher puts a needle into his arm and draws out emptiness. The two also put a few small suction cups, sensors, and devices on him.

COLLECTOR

This bed is yours, and over here, this is your roommate.

The Collector indicates a plate of waffles sitting on the second bed.

COLLECTOR

You'll find he's quiet, and spends a lot of time resting. Amiable enough, if you don't mind the smell.

The Collector watches Broken for a reaction.

COLLECTOR

The facilities are just through that door; and I won't force food on you until you ask for it.

A researcher tries to investigate the bandage on Broken's shoulder under his shirt, and Broken recoils. The researcher writes a note on his clipboard.

The Collector comes over, holds out his hands to the other researcher, who sprays something on them, and places a hand on Broken's good shoulder.

COLLECTOR

Now, I think it's time we all clear out and let our subject have some space to himself. Anything I can get you, Broken?

The researchers file out of the room with clipboards and instruments.

BROKEN
Sure, half a glass of water.

COLLECTOR
Lucien!

At this lackadaisical call, an elegant servant, LUCIEN, enters with a full glass of water and pitcher on a tray.

Upon exchanging looks with the Collector, he pours half the water backwards into the pitcher, then hands the glass to Broken.

BROKEN
Thanks.

COLLECTOR
Broken, this is Lucien. If you need anything, he will be right outside your door at all times, so feel free to just call his name, or even whisper it. He'll hear you.

Lucien bows and exits, raising the newly half-full pitcher to his lips as he leaves.

COLLECTOR
Remember what I said, Broken, there's no pressure on you here to be or to do anything. My advice to you is this: just have a rest from people looking at you and expecting to see something. For once, no one's watching.

The Collector almost leaves, but adds:

COLLECTOR
And Broken - the world will thank you one day.

The Collector exits, and the door closes with a hiss.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Here it was, for the first time ever, a chance to just...let go.

Finally left alone, Broken takes a glance around the room. He puts down the glass of water and goes over to the door, pushes it a few times, finds it sealed shut.

Broken goes over to his backpack, searches inside, and takes out the zero bubble.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 No expectations, no love, no one
 hanging around hoping for me to be
 anything other than what I was.

Broken carries the zero bubble over to the window, examines it in the light, looks at it for a long moment - and throws it through the glass.

INT. HALLWAY TO UNDERGROUND LAB - DAY

The Collector dismounts a staircase and walks down a dark hallway towards his underground lab.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 But I wasn't about to disappear.

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - DAY

The Collector enters the underground lab, where the researchers from upstairs bustle around tubes, flasks, burners, clamps, and a beaker with a sandwich inside, along with NILS, a very serious man in his 40s who sits in front of a lot of surveillance technology, and several other ASSISTANTS who look busy.

NILS
 Sir, he's trying to escape.

COLLECTOR
 Of course he is, Nils; tell me if
 anything interesting happens.
 Twelve?

TWELVE, a fascinated scientist in her 50s in a lab coat, looks up.

COLLECTOR
 What have you found so far?

TWELVE
 Sir, this child is a living
 paradox. Look at this.

Twelve shows the Collector a printout.

TWELVE
 We took a sample of his skin. He
 has skin cells, but inside the
 membrane they're filled with
 nothing. He has saliva, but no
 glands. It comes from nowhere.

COLLECTOR
 Yes, yes, what else?

TWELVE

Let me show you something. We took a sample of whatever is underneath his skin just before we left the room.

Twelve leads the Collector to a microscope on a table, and puts a slide underneath it.

TWELVE

This is what the sample looked like as soon as we got it back to the lab five minutes ago.

The Collector puts on a pair of 3-D glasses and looks in the microscope.

COLLECTOR

Right . . . that makes sense.

TWELVE

All right, now this is what the sample looks like now.

Twelve puts another slide into the microscope. The Collector pulls away from the microscope with a start. His face hardens.

COLLECTOR

Double his guard.

INT. COLLECTOR'S THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Lucien stands outside Broken's door. LUCIEN #2, identical to Lucien, steps up next to Lucien and joins him in guarding the door.

INT. BROKEN'S CHAMBER - DAY

Broken finishes tying a rope of tied-together sheets to one of the bars on the window. He then examines the bars.

BROKEN (V.O.)

I had started something by choosing to live.

He determines that he cannot even fit his head between them, and considers a moment.

BROKEN

Lucien!

The door opens and Lucien enters. Lucien #2 lingers in the doorway.

BROKEN

Could you bring me a saw?

LUCIEN
 Certainly. I'll be back in two
 flashes.

Broken watches the Luciens exit.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 A few bars couldn't get in my way.

Broken grabs his phone from his bag and opens his contacts.
 His contact list just has one name: "Mom." He dials.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr. Sinclair sits alone on the couch, petting a bear cub. A
 phone on the end table rings. He looks over to it, answers
 lackadaisically.

INTERCUTTING

MR. SINCLAIR
 Hello?

BROKEN
 Dad? It's Broken.

MR. SINCLAIR
 What's broken? Who is-oh. It's
 you. What, did you forget
 something?

BROKEN
 I'm going to break out. Can you
 come pick me up?

MR. SINCLAIR
 Pick you up? What are you breaking
 out for?

BROKEN
 I told you guys before, I have
 plans tomorrow.

MR. SINCLAIR
 So wait till tomorrow!

BROKEN
 No, now's my chance. They've left
 me alone. I already broke the
 window.

MR. SINCLAIR
 I'm not paying for that, you know.

BROKEN
 I need to break out tonight.

MR. SINCLAIR

Broken, what are you doing going to a birthday party? Do you really think with this one event you're finally going to fit in? Just relax. You are where you belong now.

BROKEN

I promised Leigh-

MR. SINCLAIR

Leigh doesn't need you taking up space in her life. I'm sure what she imagines you are is a lot more interesting than the real thing.

Broken hesitates, no response coming to mind.

MR. SINCLAIR

Though I guess that's true of most relationships.

END INTERCUTTING

INT. SINCLAIR HALLWAY - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair hears Mr. Sinclair's muffled talking, goes to investigate.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr. Sinclair contemplates what he has just said.

MR. SINCLAIR

Look - son -

INT. BROKEN'S CHAMBER - DAY

Broken listens.

INTERCUTTING

MR. SINCLAIR

-I still don't know how you managed to be enough for your mother when I never was - but since the day you first came into our lives I've been waiting for the day you'd leave, and now that you have, it'd be unfair to ask me to come and take you back.

Broken opens his mouth to say something, has no idea what it is.

MR. SINCLAIR
 If anyone asks, I never heard word
 of you escaping. That's the best I
 can do for you.

BROKEN
 Thanks, Dad.

MR. SINCLAIR
 Be a good little collectible, and
 enjoy the rest of your life.

Broken just stares.

BROKEN
 Bye.

MR. SINCLAIR
 Bye.

END INTERCUTTING

Broken hangs up the phone. Lucien enters and puts a bone saw
 in his hand. He pulls out a syringe and draws an emptiness
 sample from Broken's arm, then exits. Broken holds the saw a
 moment, not even noticing this has happened.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 So, I was going to have to walk.

Broken looks at the saw, then goes to the window and starts
 sawing at one of the bars, still smiling slightly.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr. Sinclair hangs up the phone. Mrs. Sinclair creeps around
 the corner.

MRS. SINCLAIR
 Who was that?

MR. SINCLAIR
 It was just Mike. Our volcano gets
 installed first thing Monday.

MRS. SINCLAIR
 Oh. Right.

MR. SINCLAIR
 And Carolyn?

She looks at him again.

MR. SINCLAIR
 He says hi.

She smiles vaguely. He goes back to petting his bear cub, and Mrs. Sinclair stares at him suspiciously.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Jack?

MR. SINCLAIR
Eh?

MRS. SINCLAIR
What did I ever like about you in
the first place?

He tilts his head toward her.

MR. SINCLAIR
If you needed a list of reasons,
you probably never really did.

He goes back to petting his bear.

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - DAY

The Collector stands behind Nils's chair and sighs through his fingers.

COLLECTOR
Nils. Vitals?

NILS
We're getting a faint heat
signature. It's remained constant
since he arrived.

COLLECTOR
Good. Keep monitoring it. Twelve,
what is our status now?

TWELVE
I'm just drawing up the new sample.

She shows the Collector to the microscope. The Collector puts on the 3-D glasses and looks.

COLLECTOR
It's getting worse.

TWELVE
Yes.

COLLECTOR
Now, Dr. Twelve, this is what I
brought you all this way for. A lot
rests on your shoulders. How can we
stop this?

TWELVE

Sir, I have been looking into his environment, and there are still a lot of unnecessaries surrounding him. If we could - somehow isolate him - maybe remove his roommate, the furniture -

COLLECTOR

And Dr. Scott, do you agree with this course of action?

The Collector looks at DR. SCOTT, a Shetland pony standing across the room in a lab coat. Dr. Scott looks inconclusive.

TWELVE

Dr. Scott and I have discussed this at great length and have come to this conclusion together.

The Collector walks over to the wall and takes down a framed picture of a Thylacine (Tasmanian tiger), its jaw fully extended in a yawn. He strokes the picture, holding the animal tooth from his pocket, and a tear comes to his eye.

COLLECTOR

You know what took her from me? What took everything worth keeping around. What takes and takes -

Twelve comes up and looks at the picture curiously. The Collector stands on the brink of tears and grits his teeth.

COLLECTOR

Something.

The Collector puts the picture down on a panel of instruments facing the surveillance monitor and steels himself.

COLLECTOR

It's time.

TWELVE

No, sir-

COLLECTOR

Oh, yes, Twelve, it is. This is what results when he's surrounded by something. We need to observe him in a controlled environment, before it's too late.

TWELVE

We could try other options first-

COLLECTOR

Twelve. Prepare the Anti-room.

INT. BROKEN'S CHAMBER - DAY

The sun is almost finished setting, and Broken still sits tirelessly at the same bar on his window, having made no progress.

The door opens, and the Collector enters, accompanied by two researchers. Broken looks up at them.

The researchers hand Broken a plain white hospital gown and scrub pants.

COLLECTOR

Put this on and come with us.

INT. THE ANTI-ROOM - NIGHT

An airlocked door opens to a room with all white walls, no windows, and a white nondescript block shape in the center that is vaguely the size of a bed.

Broken, now wearing the hospital gown, enters, followed by the two researchers and the Collector. Twelve stands inside already and looks up from a clipboard when they enter.

COLLECTOR

I do hope you'll be a bit more at ease here, Broken. We call it the Anti-room; I suppose it pretty much speaks for itself.

The researchers take skin and emptiness samples from Broken. Twelve looks increasingly uncomfortable with the situation.

COLLECTOR

You'll be in here indefinitely as we continue our research. I know it looks boring, but - after all, that's the idea.

Broken turns all round, already looking for an escape route.

COLLECTOR

You'll be deprived of all possible stimuli, including air, so if you find yourself dying, please bang on the door or find a way of letting us know. All right?

Broken nods haltingly. The Collector gestures to the others, and all three exit, Twelve taking the longest.

BROKEN

Is this a punishment for trying to escape?

The Collector hangs in the doorway. Twelve, still lingering to the side, is visibly upset by this question.

COLLECTOR

No, Broken. This is the best thing I can do for you. All you have to do is give in to what you are. Just let go, and the world will be better for it.

He smiles and closes the door. The door seals with an audible air lock. Broken is left alone, staring around the perimeter of the room.

The lights turn off with a decisive click. Broken is enveloped in darkness.

A sound like air being sucked out through a vent. A few gasps from Broken.

BROKEN (V.O.)

As the air left the Anti-room, so did the reality of the world where my emptiness was something I had to hide or explain.

Broken, small and alone, is dimly visible in the darkness. He gets progressively larger.

INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS - FANTASY

Broken continues to get larger, and the dim starlight through gaps in the roof of the cave reveals the dark stone walls that now surround him.

BROKEN (V.O.)

It was like being inside of myself.

Broken feels his way over to a cold stone that looks like a tomb.

He lies atop the large stone, arms crossed.

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

The two Researchers are already hard at work. The Collector and Twelve enter arguing.

TWELVE

Sir, I still think it's a mistake to take measures this extreme-

COLLECTOR

I disagree; it's not worth the risk of losing-

TWELVE

And what if we lose our subject?

COLLECTOR

That won't happen. We've taken precautions-

TWELVE

We could have waited-

COLLECTOR

It's happening too quickly for us to wait! We cannot lose our only shot at nothing. Don't you understand? The man who can harness the power of nothing can cure disease, can end hunger - not by feeding, but by removing the very need for food.

The rest of the room grows hushed.

COLLECTOR

The man who can himself become nothing, can make choices free of muddled thoughts - can rule the world as a true leader, impartial, unaffected, unthreatened, without a thought for himself.

TWELVE

If I may, sir, the man who has become nothing has no desire to rule the world.

COLLECTOR

If we can figure this boy out, think how many people can at last have...peace. Isn't that worth the risk?

A tense moment between Twelve and the Collector. Nils watches the heat signature screen closely.

NILS

Sir, the heat signature is settled on the bed.

The Collector looks at Twelve positively, then sits in a chair in the center of the room as Twelve gets to work.

INT. THE ANTI-ROOM - NIGHT

Broken lies dazed, not breathing, eyes open atop the block in the room.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 Ultimately, I had taken the
 Collector's advice - to
 just...rest, enveloped in
 nothingness for a while.

Broken closes his eyes, finally looking completely relaxed. A
 light begins to flicker over his face.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 But blank as I was...

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - NIGHT

Nils, still watching his screens intently, is surprised by
 something he sees and motions to the Collector.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 Somehow, I dreamed.

The Collector comes over to him, and Nils points at the
 screen.

What he sees visibly upsets and befuddles the Collector.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 I dreamed of what everyone's life
 would be like if I never came back.

The Collector turns to Twelve, who looks up from the
 microscope, takes off the 3-D glasses, and shakes her head
 bleakly.

INT. ANTI-ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Broken's eyes dart from side to side under his lids.

EXT. LEIGH'S HOUSE - DAY - DREAM

Broken opens his eyes, now standing outside Leigh's house.

Through the window, he sees Leigh sitting on a big armchair
 in her living room, surrounded by presents and enveloped in
 the hugs of numerous FRIENDS.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY - DREAM

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair sit on the couch, with a space where
 Broken usually sits. A butler comes up to them with a silver
 platter, which he uncovers to reveal a large pile of cash.
 They move over, erasing Broken's usual spot, to reach for the
 cash together.

INT. SCHOOL - DAY - DREAM

Jake and a group of BOYS stand in a clump punching and kicking at what turns out to be an inflatable dummy.

EXT. HILLTOP- DAY - DREAM

The Collector stands atop a hill overlooking a sprawling city, with Broken unconscious on a gurney in front of him. He raises a scalpel, starting at Broken's chest, and begins to open him up.

As Broken's incision opens to reveal darkness and nothingness, a wind picks up, and flowers begin to grow all around them on the hill. The flowers grow more plentiful and fantastical and begin to spread down the hill.

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

The screen shows an outline of an empty human head with colorful lights swirling inside.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT - FANTASY

Broken stirs in his sleep, his face contorting into actual facial expressions as strange light continues to fluctuate on his face.

EXT. SINCLAIR HOUSE - DAY - DREAM

Broken stands outside his home and observes flowers and plants overgrowing the house.

Through the window, he sees Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair with mindless slight smiles on their faces, plants growing up around their couch.

EXT. SCHOOL - DAY - DREAM

Broken sees flowers and plants overgrowing the school.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY - DREAM

In his classroom, rows of classmates sit with the same slight smile on all their faces, staring straight ahead as plants and flowers overtake the room around them.

EXT. LEIGH'S HOUSE - DAY - DREAM

As flowers and plants grow toward Leigh's house, she looks up from her friends' hugs and sees Broken through the window.

The flowers and plants stop. She opens the window and smiles. Broken, to his surprise, smiles back.

BROKEN (V.O.)
But then I dreamed a third option.

EXT. HILLTOP - DAY - DREAM

Broken opens his eyes in shock, much to the surprise of the Collector, who still stands over him with the scalpel. Broken looks up at the Collector and wipes tears from his own face.

Broken grabs the Collector's arm and pushes off from him, sending his gurney rolling down the hill. As the wind whips past Broken, his face begins to take on many new and different facial expressions, in many different contexts.

BROKEN (V.O.)
I dreamed that I did things I'd
never done before -

MONTAGE

Broken runs outdoors, his face contorting and breathing heavily.

Broken's face emerges from underwater and takes a breath.

Indoors, he laughs hysterically.

BROKEN (V.O.)
- spoke words I'd never heard -

Broken's face, in a crowd, covered in tears, forms a pained scream.

In the middle of a fire, he looks around with a dog slung over his shoulder.

BROKEN (V.O.)
- felt things I had never even
pretended to feel.

Broken sits at a table, shoves a big bite of waffles into his mouth.

The wind continues to whip past Broken's face as he rolls on the gurney.

Broken's face ranges a multitude of as yet unseen contexts and emotions.

The cave becomes illuminated once again around the sleeping Broken, this time by the light of a strange sunrise coming in through cracks in the walls.

END MONTAGE

INT. THE ANTI-ROOM - NIGHT - BACK TO PRESENT

Broken's brows furrow over his closed eyes.

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - NIGHT

The Collector and Twelve stand poring over a computer screen, pointing and discussing with rapt attention and excitement.

COLLECTOR
This could be exactly what we've
been looking for.

The two share a meaningful glance.

INT. SINCLAIR BEDROOM - NIGHT

A dim twilight falls into the room as Mrs. Sinclair, unsettled in bed, opens her eyes.

She rolls over, turns on a small lamp, and opens a drawer in the bedside table, from which she takes the party hat.

She sits up, looks behind her at Mr. Sinclair, who lies fast asleep snuggling with a new crossbow.

She puts her head in her hands, and a little chunk of hair falls out. She looks at it, then gets up.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Maybe it's true what they say:

EXT. SINCLAIR HOUSE - NIGHT

Mrs. Sinclair walks toward the mailbox in front of the house under the clear dim sky. She can still see a few stars overhead.

She opens the mailbox and pulls out a pelt of unidentified animal hide with some blood dripping off it. She drops it and reads the note.

INSERT: Note with a scout insignia - "Courtesy of Troop 316"

Mrs. Sinclair crumples it up angrily and wipes her gooey hand off on her clothes.

She looks out longingly in the direction of the Collector's house, then slowly brings her gaze up.

In the distance she sees the dark cloud that had previously been lingering over the Sinclair house.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Nothing doesn't last forever.

The sound of a car starting as glimpses of the sunrise peek around the dark cloud.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Had I ever dreamed before that night? I don't remember.

INT. THE ANTI-ROOM - NIGHT

Broken wakes with a start. He sits up on the block, breathing heavily, still surrounded by darkness. There is something like determination on his face. His breathing slows.

BROKEN (V.O.)
But I'd never dreamed anything like this.

Out of nowhere, Broken coughs. Urgently, he gets up, goes to a wall, and starts banging on the wall until he feels his way to the door.

BROKEN (V.O.)
- and I wasn't sure if I ever would again.

He bangs loudly on the door, coughing and choking as he does.

BROKEN
Lucien! Help me!

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - NIGHT

The Collector straightens up to make a speech to the researchers.

COLLECTOR
Ladies and gentlemen-and geldings-

He tilts his head at Dr. Scott, who tuts graciously.

COLLECTOR
-we have managed to prove this very night that Lavoisier's law of conservation of mass...is wrong.

As the Collector speaks, Nils grabs his earpiece, where he is hearing something unusual, checks his screen, and looks to the Collector.

NILS
 Sir, something is awry.
 He's...calling for help.

The Collector comes over and listens to Nils' earpiece, looks confused, and takes off toward the door. The others follow.

INT. THE ANTI-ROOM - NIGHT

Darkness and banging. The lights turn on, and Broken is halfway down the door, kneeling and gasping as he bangs at it madly.

BROKEN
 Help! I'm going to...I can't...

The door opens, and Lucien, Twelve, Nils, and the Collector pour in. As he is shoved backwards by the door, Broken collapses on the floor. With a few more convulsions, he goes limp, his eyes open and staring.

Twelve bends over him and examines him.

TWELVE
 I think he may be dead.

NILS
 How do you tell?

COLLECTOR
 He can't have survived all night in this room only to die in the morning.

TWELVE
 Then what do you call it when he's not breathing or moving and has no pulse?

COLLECTOR
 I'd call it normal for someone who's been legally dead since birth.

INT. THIRD FLOOR HALLWAY - DAY

Twelve, Nils, and Lucien wheel Broken out on a gurney, followed closely by the Collector.

COLLECTOR
 Let's get him to the upstairs lab; you should have all you need to treat him there.

TWELVE
 How do you propose I treat him?

The Collector's muntjac rounds the corner and follows the gurney as they roll it down the hallway. The muntjac barks at the gurney along the way.

COLLECTOR

Just as you would any other patient in a similar condition; his behavior is merely an imitation of the human behaviors he has witnessed.

Twelve slows the gurney. As they speak, Broken's eyes look around subtly.

TWELVE

But this isn't a behavior. He's dead.

COLLECTOR

If that's the case, then you should have all you need in the upstairs lab to perform the autopsy.

The muntjac continues to bark. Broken's eyes manage to settle on the doggie door not far from the gurney. The corners of his lips turn up slightly.

They get closer and closer to a double door at the end of the hallway, which begins to open for them. Twelve and the Collector continue to discuss, slowing the gurney even more.

As they argue, Broken suddenly leaps up off the gurney and makes a break for the doggie door. Lucien grabs his ankle on the way off the gurney. Broken hits the floor face first, but the impact jostles his ankle free. Broken stumbles on until he gets to the doggie door.

He sticks his head out the door. There is a dauntingly long drop to the ground. He looks back inside, and the Collector et al have almost reached him.

Twelve winds up to throw a syringe like a dart. The Collector reaches out as he runs toward him. Broken smiles, takes a deep breath, then sticks his head back out the door and leaps out.

Nils gets to the doggie door first and bangs his fist on the floor. The muntjac still barks at him.

COLLECTOR

Lucien! Nils!

He motions to Lucien and Nils to pursue. They run off down the hallway. The Collector presses a button on the wall, and an alarm begins to go off.

EXT. COLLECTOR'S FRONT YARD - DAY

Broken lands awkwardly on the front lawn and rolls. He rubs his knee a little bit, gets up gingerly, and picks up speed.

Running across the lawn, he comes across the zero bubble on the ground surrounded by broken glass. He picks it up, then runs onward.

As he rushes toward the gates, they start to close. He runs faster, and MORE RESEARCHERS come sprinting out of the house behind him.

He gets to the gates just as they are almost closed, and they shut with him in between them, so he gets momentarily stuck. He sucks in a breath and manages to squeeze out.

One researcher rushes to the side of the gates to punch in a code while the others wait for them to reopen. One aims a taser at Broken.

Broken chooses a direction and starts down the street, when he hears the honk of a car horn from behind him. He turns around.

Mrs. Sinclair, sitting in her car across the street, waves, pulls a wild u-turn, and drives up to meet him, yelling out the window.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Get in the car!

Broken bends down to see her through the open car window.

BROKEN
Mom? What are you doing here?

MRS. SINCLAIR
What do you think? I'm here to bust you out! Now get in - or do you have to think about it?

The taser blast aimed at Broken hits the side of the car. Broken glances back at the researchers, who have made it through the front gate. Some run after him, and some get into their own vehicle.

He gets in Mrs. Sinclair's car, which peels out, pursued on foot by white-coats. The car full of researchers starts up.

INT. MRS. SINCLAIR'S CAR - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair drives like a maniac while Broken buckles up in the car. There is a brightly colored fuzzy cross hanging from the rearview mirror.

BROKEN

Geez, Mom, how did you know I'd be breaking out? Did Dad tell you?

She betrays a flash of anger and shock, quickly disguised.

MRS. SINCLAIR

I didn't know. I was just sitting outside formulating a plan to get you out myself when you just came running out into the street!

BROKEN

But - what about the money? Don't you guys need it?

EXT. ALLEY - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair jumps a curb and turns down an alley.

The researchers' car does the same, a bit farther behind.

INT. MRS. SINCLAIR'S CAR - DAY

MRS. SINCLAIR

We'll see. But you deserve better than this.

BROKEN

I don't deserve anything, Mom.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Well, no one does. Is anyone tailing us?

Broken looks behind them.

BROKEN

It doesn't look like it.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Good.

Just then, Broken sees the researchers' car turn a corner behind them. Broken tries to comment, but Mrs. Sinclair continues talking.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Now, I have a full tank of gas, all my savings, a bag of your things, and a picnic lunch that should tide us over till we get to the border.

BROKEN

The border?

MRS. SINCLAIR
I figure if we drive through the
night we can make it to Mexico by
tomorrow evening.

BROKEN
Mexico?

MRS. SINCLAIR
I need you to be my lookout,
though. I have a gun in the glove
compartment in case we run into any
trouble.

BROKEN
A gun.

MRS. SINCLAIR
You might want to take it out so
you can be ready.

Broken, severely confused, opens the glove compartment, then
closes it.

BROKEN
Why are we going to Mexico?

MRS. SINCLAIR
Sweetie, you don't seriously think
they're just going to let us go, do
you? This man will do anything to
get what he wants.

She makes a sharp turn.

EXT. CITY INTERSECTION - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair's car turns sharply while the researchers' car
makes an even sharper turn, getting closer.

INT. MRS. SINCLAIR'S CAR - DAY

MRS. SINCLAIR
We'll have to live on the run for a
few years, but I figure when things
cool down we can set up a nice life
somewhere. Else.

BROKEN
And what about Dad? Aren't you-
going to go pick him up?

Silence. Carefully:

MRS. SINCLAIR

Broken, there are times in one's life when one has to decide what's important, and what's expendable. Your father has made that choice, and I've just made another.

BROKEN

Mom . . .

MRS. SINCLAIR

I've seen a sign, Broken.

She makes a sharp turn. In the rear window, the researchers' car drifts toward a wall on the same turn.

A horrible crash sounds in the background as Mrs. Sinclair looks over to Broken with an almost heavenly glow in her face.

MRS. SINCLAIR

And it led me to you.

BROKEN

Mom-

Mrs. Sinclair pays attention.

BROKEN

I can't go to Mexico.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Don't worry about school or anything; you've already been withdrawn.

BROKEN

No, Mom, I'm not going to Mexico. I'm sorry, but I didn't break out for you. I made a promise, and I need to keep it. I have somewhere to be.

Mrs. Sinclair's face falls.

MRS. SINCLAIR

But - I was willing to give up everything for you.

BROKEN

I don't want everything. I can't hold everything.

She softens.

INT. COLLECTOR'S FRONT HALLWAY - DAY

The Collector stands stoically, looking out his open front doors.

The on-foot researchers stand around him. Nils listens to communications on a cell phone that looks like an antique telephone receiver.

Nils looks to the Collector.

NILS

He's managed to lose them. Should we send more after-

COLLECTOR

No. Let him go. We know exactly where he's headed. I have a man positioned to watch over him. And this party may prove useful to our research. As it is, we don't need him for the next phase.

Nils regards him inquisitively. Some of the researchers on the lawn recover from the attempted chase, measure the distance between footprints, and swab the ground for samples.

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - DAY

The Collector bursts open the doors to the lab.

COLLECTOR

What have you got for me, Twelve?

Twelve looks serious. She pores over a diagram of test results.

TWELVE

Everything we thought going into this experiment was wrong.

The Collector stands over the test results with Twelve.

TWELVE

What's happened here should have been impossible. The Anti-room only accelerated the process.

COLLECTOR

Then, even on such a small scale, if nature can make nothing into something . . .

TWELVE

Then science can, using the reverse process, turn something into nothing.

COLLECTOR

And every scientific assumption made up to this point has been foundationless.

TWELVE

Every assumption ever made.

COLLECTOR

I've always made it a point to disbelieve assumptions.

TWELVE

Then you're already well on your way to nothingness.

COLLECTOR

Excellent.

EXT. LEIGH'S HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair's car comes to an abrupt stop in front of the house.

INT. MRS. SINCLAIR'S CAR - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair engages the parking brake and turns to Broken as he finishes putting on regular clothes and stuffs the hospital gown in one of the travel bags in the backseat.

MRS. SINCLAIR

Are you ready?

He gets out the zero bubble.

BROKEN

Yeah, I guess this'll have to do as a present, I-oh, no, I left my hat at home-

Mrs. Sinclair draws the cardboard pointy hat out of nowhere and hands it to Broken. He sighs gratefully.

MRS. SINCLAIR

And you can't just give her her gift like that, here-

Mrs. Sinclair takes a long ribbon out of her hair. She gives it to Broken.

MRS. SINCLAIR
So it can look special.

Broken ties the ribbon around the zero bubble.

MRS. SINCLAIR
There. It's perfect now.

BROKEN
Thanks, Mom.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Now, this part is simple. When you
get up to the porch, just ring the
bell and wait to be let in.

She gives him a hug.

MRS. SINCLAIR
You're going to do great, honey.

BROKEN
Mom, why do you always care so much
about me? It would have been so
much easier for you to just...not.

MRS. SINCLAIR
You suffer enough in life, at some
point you realize you'd better have
something worth suffering for, even
if you have to create it for
yourself, even if you create it out
of nothing.

She smiles.

MRS. SINCLAIR
Go on, have fun.

Broken gets out of the car.

EXT. LEIGH'S HOUSE - DAY

BROKEN
And Mom, thanks.

MRS. SINCLAIR
I love you, Broken.

She watches him hopefully.

BROKEN
See you later, Mom.

Broken smiles slightly and walks up toward the porch, putting
on his party hat.

INT. MRS. SINCLAIR'S CAR - DAY

Mrs. Sinclair gives a bittersweet smile and drives off.

EXT. LEIGH'S HOUSE - DAY

Broken stands on the doorstep, tries the door to find it locked. He watches a MAN step up to the house next door, ring the doorbell, wait, and be let in.

Broken then looks for a doorbell beside Leigh's door and cannot find one. He pushes on a few things and hears nothing.

Finally, he notices the subtle noise of the wind chimes on the edge of the porch. He goes up to them and rings them, looking at the door expectantly.

The curtain is drawn, a bit of laughter ensues, and the door opens to reveal Leigh, with Jackie, ELLA, KATHERINE, and DANA behind her. Leigh reaches out and hugs him awkwardly.

LEIGH

Broken. I'm so glad you could come.

BROKEN

Thanks. I brought you a present.

Broken hands her the zero bubble. She takes it, awed and thrilled.

LEIGH

Oh...Broken, is this what I think it is?

JACKIE

What is it?

LEIGH

It's a zero bubble. Supposedly no one knows how the Hemetic priests would get the air out of the middle without damaging the glass, but the vacuum in the bubble slowly pulls and warps the glass and makes the shapes inside into these beautiful designs.

BROKEN

You think it's beautiful?

LEIGH

It is beautiful. These are incredibly rare. Where'd you get one?

BROKEN
 Never mind that. Happy birthday
 present.

INT. LEIGH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Now Broken and the five girls sit around the coffee table playing "truth or dare."

DANA
 Eeew!

Everyone around the table laughs except Broken, who just smiles.

ELLA
 That's all I'm going to tell you.

DANA
 Fine, fine, then it's your turn to
 ask someone, Ella.

ELLA
 Okay. Gosh, I'm bad at this.
 Umm...Leigh. Truth or dare?

LEIGH
 Truth.

ELLA
 Okay. What's your deepest, darkest
 secret?

JACKIE, KATHERINE, AND DANA
 Oooooh . . .

LEIGH
 Are you serious?

KATHERINE
 You have to tell the truth, Leigh.

Leigh heaves an annoyed sigh and rolls her eyes.

LEIGH
 Okay, I'll tell, I'm not ashamed.
 You ready?

She pauses and motions for everyone to come closer. Everyone leans in.

LEIGH
 I was born with a third arm.

Everyone draws back and laughs.

JACKIE

No, come on.

DANA

No, you weren't.

LEIGH

I'm serious. It's a rare birth defect called polymelia. They cut it off as soon as they found out about it. They didn't ask me first, of course.

ELLA

You mean, you would have kept it?

LEIGH

Maybe. How much fun would it be to have three arms? I'd be a really good piano player by now.

ELLA

Eew. Do you still have the scar?

LEIGH

Enough questions; it's not your turn anymore. Now it's my turn.

She turns to Broken.

LEIGH

Broken. Truth or dare?

BROKEN

Do your friends know how lonely you are?

Leigh pauses, flustered.

LEIGH

That's not how it works, Broken. It's my turn to be asking questions.

BROKEN

How can you feel that way so much of the time when you're always surrounded by friends?

LEIGH

Truth or dare?

BROKEN

Truth.

Leigh looks at him pointedly.

LEIGH
When you talk, where does it come
from?

They stare at each other as Leigh's friends react.

KATHERINE
Aww, really?

DANA
Yeah, come on, you have Broken
Sinclair say truth in a game of
truth or dare and that's the best
question you can think to ask him?

ELLA
Yeah, can we vote down someone
else's question?

KATHERINE
Redo! Ask if he's baptized - no,
ask him if he's a demon!

Leigh and Broken have not stopped looking at each other.

The doorbell rings. Leigh looks puzzled.

LEIGH
Was anyone else coming?

The doorbell rings again.

BROKEN
How did they do that?

Leigh opens the front door. At the door stands a MIME, who
looks exactly like the caveman from the museum. He waves.

LEIGH
It's a mime.

She turns to the rest of the party.

LEIGH
Did anyone order a mime?

BROKEN
Oh, I did.

JACKIE
What? Why'd you get a mime?

BROKEN
I thought you were supposed to have
a creepy clown at birthday parties.

DANA
Sure, in like third grade.

ELLA
And don't let him hear you call him
a clown.

Leigh lets the mime in, and he begins a routine. Leigh stands off to the side to watch, while the others stay seated around the coffee table.

DANA
Dude, what's he doing?

BROKEN
I don't know, use your imagination.

The girls continue talking and laughing while the mime gestures. He suddenly takes hold of Broken by the shoulders and pulls him out to the floor with him.

The girls giggle at this and watch as the mime seems to take out surgical instruments, shine and test them, and finally make an "incision" in Broken's chest.

He puts on an invisible rubber glove and digs around for something inside Broken's chest. He finds it and draws out his hand, which seems to hold an invisible beating heart.

Upon seeing the beating of the mime's hand, Broken is mesmerized. He watches as it is held up in front of his face, then slowly the mime walks over to Leigh and places the heart carefully in her hand.

Leigh holds it, chuckling, and also a bit grossed out, as the mime walks away from her and wipes his hands on an invisible towel. She looks up at Broken, who still stares at the invisible heart in her hands.

Broken walks slowly to her and holds out his hands. She kisses the heart and gives it to him; he holds it, still beating, and stares, smiling slightly.

Meanwhile, the mime's routine has turned more philosophically morbid - he seems to be pulling out his own intestines and getting tangled up in them. Leigh wipes off her lips and applauds, hurrying over to that side of the room.

LEIGH
That was really great! Well, I've
got to go finish the icing on the
cake. So, Mr. uh...

The mime listens attentively for her to continue.

LEIGH

Would you like to come into the kitchen and have some coffee with my parents for a bit?

He perks up and follows her into the kitchen.

The girls share one more giggle and try to move on.

DANA

All right, well, that's over. What are we going to do now?

ELLA

Let's see, what other party games are there?

KATHERINE

There's spin the bottle.

ELLA

Eugh. No offense, guys.

KATHERINE

Pin the tail on the donkey.

ELLA

Yeah, but with no tail and no donkey.

JACKIE

We could armwrestle...

KATHERINE

Ooh, I think that might be offensive to Leigh, now.

ELLA

You don't really believe that.

KATHERINE

It was truth or dare, Ella. She can't have been making it up. It's like breaking an oath before God.

DANA

Party games! Focus!

BROKEN

If we had a piñata . . .

JACKIE

A piñata . . .

Jackie looks at Broken pensively.

INT. LEIGH'S DINING ROOM - DAY

Katherine stands on a chair, reaching for something on a high shelf as the other girls surround Broken.

JACKIE

Hey, Broken, you want Leigh to have a good birthday, don't you?

ELLA

Yeah, don't you want to use your unique talents to impress her?

DANA

Everyone at school will be so jealous they missed it.

JACKIE

But Leigh's gonna be so happy you care.

BROKEN

What should I do?

Katherine finally gets down and hands Jackie a large bag of candy, which she holds up.

JACKIE

How much of this bag do you think you can eat?

Broken glances around at their expectant looks. After a long moment of hesitation, he smiles and begins to place each hand carefully on the edge of his bottom jaw, as if preparing to wrench it open.

INT. LEIGH'S KITCHEN - DAY

Leigh ices a cake while the mime and LEIGH'S PARENTS appear to be in an animated conversation in the background.

EXT. LEIGH'S YARD - DAY

Katherine finishes throwing a rope over a strong branch of a tree. She pulls and suddenly Broken is lifted feet first off the ground, and dangles from the tree. He looks almost as nonchalant as usual, but cowers physically.

JACKIE

Don't worry, Broken, everybody's going to miss.

Jackie puts a blindfold on Ella, gives her a bat, and spins her around, trying to point her in the wrong direction. But Ella heads straight for Broken.

Leigh emerges from the house carrying the cake, just in time to see Ella clobber Broken with the bat. Broken's face contorts. Everyone gasps - Dana half-giggles. Leigh drops the cake on the grass.

Leigh gets Broken down from the tree, everyone looking extremely guilty - except Broken, who holds his arm like he thinks it's going to fall off, his head bent downward.

ELLA

Leigh - I'm so sorry. I didn't realize I was -

DANA

Yeah, we really didn't mean to -

LEIGH

Enough. Broken, are you all right?

Broken holds his arm with an expression of real pain, and looks around at everyone staring at him.

BROKEN

Why are you looking at me? There's nothing to see. Stop looking.

KATHERINE

Do you think he's okay?

ELLA

Broken, I'm sorry, we didn't mean to let it go that far.

DANA

Yeah, it was just a joke.

BROKEN

Look at something else. Stop looking at me!

Broken gets up to storm off, but since the rope is still around his ankles, he falls. Leigh comes to help, but he stops her.

BROKEN

No, I'll do it.

She backs off. He struggles with the rope and frees one leg.

He then storms off into the house, taking the rest of the rope with him and stepping lithely over the fallen cake.

The girls look at each other; Dana is on the cusp of laughing. Leigh shakes her head at them all and follows after Broken. Jackie yells after her.

JACKIE
Leigh, I'm sorry.

The door shuts behind Leigh. The girls look at one another guiltily.

INT. LEIGH'S KITCHEN - DAY

Broken storms into the kitchen, the rope still trailing behind him, and goes over to the landline phone on the wall, where the mime stands, nodding attentively into the receiver.

BROKEN
Excuse me, may I use the phone? I
lost mine, I need to-

The mime puts his hand over the receiver and holds up a hand to signal for Broken to hold on. He continues to nod into the phone.

BROKEN
It's kind of an emergency.

The mime rolls his eyes, nods with finality, and hands Broken the phone. Broken, confused, puts the receiver to his ear.

BROKEN
Hello?

INT. COLLECTOR'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Collector sits comfortably on a chaise lounge, talking on the phone.

INTERCUTTING

COLLECTOR
Broken! How's your coup going?

Broken halts.

BROKEN
Who is this? Is this...Mr....

COLLECTOR
Who else would it be?

BROKEN
I was just about to call you.

COLLECTOR
Why? Is your party not everything
you hoped it would be?

BROKEN
I need you to come pick me up.

The Collector smiles.

COLLECTOR
Consider me on my way already.

BROKEN
Wait, don't you need the address?

Leigh walks into the kitchen, wiping cake off her feet on the rug in the doorway.

BROKEN
Leigh, what's your address?

LEIGH
No. You're not leaving.

BROKEN
Address. Come on, please.

Leigh crosses her arms.

COLLECTOR
Broken, it's no trouble. We've
already traced the call.

Broken turns away from Leigh.

BROKEN
Oh.

COLLECTOR
Just stay put, and we'll be there
soon to pick you up and bring you
back where you belong.

Broken hesitates.

BROKEN
Okay.

The Collector smiles in luxurious triumph.

END INTERCUTTING

Broken hangs up, looks at Leigh, looks down.

LEIGH
Do you want to wait in my room
until you get picked up?

The back door opens, and the girls come in.

BROKEN
Yeah.

INT. COLLECTOR'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

The Collector, still lounging, looks to Nils and RESEARCHER #1, who await his orders.

COLLECTOR
It's time. Go and get the boy.

Nils nods and leads the researcher out.

Twelve enters holding a clipboard.

TWELVE
Are you ready?

The Collector smiles and stands.

INT. HALLWAY TO UNDERGROUND LAB - DAY

The Collector slowly walks to a door at the end of the hallway and turns toward it, accompanied by Twelve and RESEARCHER #2. Researcher #2 takes his suit coat and hat, so that the Collector reaches for the doorknob wearing his vest.

He opens the door.

INT. THE SOMETHING ROOM - DAY

The Collector enters a room bathed in yellow light, the walls papered with collages of pictures full of people, things, and places from everywhere in the world. Uncomfortable at first, the Collector enters and deliberately soaks in the light.

Twelve crosses her fingers and closes the door behind him. The Collector waits expectantly.

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - DAY

Twelve enters the lab and goes to the computer and surveillance equipment. She inserts a drive and presses a few buttons.

INT. THE SOMETHING ROOM - DAY

The Collector stands with his arms open. Whispers and light music begin to play in the room, which slowly crescendo into a din of white noise, while simultaneously the light in the room grows steadily brighter until it whites out the room and everything is enveloped in its brightness.

INT. LEIGH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Leigh enters, followed by Broken, still holding his arm. He tries to squish himself in a corner behind a dresser.

LEIGH
Are you okay?

BROKEN

Yeah, I'm fine. You can go back down, enjoy your party. Don't worry about me.

LEIGH

I'm not going downstairs. There's only so long before you get picked up - and you're hurt.

BROKEN

Really, it's nothing.

Leigh goes to her closet and gets out a first aid kit. She lingers on her feet as he burrows into the cluttered space under the bed with his good arm.

LEIGH

I'm sorry they were so mean to you.

BROKEN

It's just...it hurt. I don't think anyone's ever really...hurt me before.

LEIGH

What do you mean? People hurt you all the time at school.

BROKEN

It even hurt when they looked at me. I couldn't manage to shrink up and be invisible.

LEIGH

It's called humiliation, Broken. And I'm sorry they did it to you.

BROKEN

It wouldn't have been so bad if you hadn't been so nice to me.

LEIGH

Why?

Broken climbs partway into the messy space under the bed and covers himself with whatever clutter and shoes he can.

BROKEN

I started thinking that I might belong at birthday parties playing truth or dare. When really I'm the piñata. I belong on a shelf, or in a hole somewhere. I'm a vacuous bubble.

LEIGH
Everyone's a vacuous bubble!

She fiddles with the first aid kit in her hand.

LEIGH
I like you, Broken.

BROKEN
What do you like about me?

His face looks out at her from a pile of shoes. She thinks.

LEIGH
It's not really liking someone if
you have a list of reasons for it.

BROKEN
There's nothing to like.

Leigh forcefully throws the first aid kit on the bed, opens it. Pulls out supplies.

LEIGH
I've spent a long time observing
human beings too - my whole mortal
life, in fact - and you know what
I've discovered? They're all half-
empty.

Broken looks up at Leigh.

LEIGH
That's why they do things like have
birthday parties and hit each other
with bats. They're trying to fill
themselves with something
worthwhile. Because if they want
to find anything good in themselves
they have to create it.

Leigh takes the washcloth through a doorway momentarily. Broken ponders this. Leigh returns, wringing out the now-damp washcloth without a care about getting water on the floor.

LEIGH
And if, by some miracle, someone
actually likes you for the cleaned-
out, gutless waste of space you
are, you'd better embrace it,
because no good's going to find you
if you ignore it.

Pause.

BROKEN
Leigh?

LEIGH
Yeah?

BROKEN
I like you too.

Leigh smiles. Broken smiles. She sits on the bed.

LEIGH
Thanks. Now let me see your arm.

Broken looks back to his arm in surprise as if he's forgotten he's holding it, and he sits on the bed and lets go of it, reveals a smallish bleeding wound.

LEIGH
Oh, you're bleeding.

Leigh looks up at Broken's face, which is fixated on the wound in a mixture of amazement and horror. Seeing this, she realizes the enormity of this statement.

LEIGH
Oh . . . oh, you're bleeding. . .

Broken dips his finger in the blood, looks at it in confusion, examines the wound, pokes it with a twinge of pain, gives a sort of semi-experimental laugh.

BROKEN
I'm bleeding.

They laugh together in a sort of deep relief. Leigh, holding his arm, suddenly realizes that the blood is still flowing rather fast.

LEIGH
Oh, right, you're bleeding.

BROKEN
Well, don't let it get out!

LEIGH
It's okay, I'll take care of it.

Leigh gets some gauze and alcohol out of the first aid kit, cleans off the wound, and wraps it in a bandage.

LEIGH
Broken?

He responds, still staring at the newly bandaged arm.

BROKEN

Hmm?

LEIGH

Can I see your shoulder?

He looks up at her hesitantly.

BROKEN

Only if I can see your scar.

INT. THE SOMETHING ROOM - DAY

All is quiet in the room. The Collector lies collapsed on the floor.

Twelve enters and helps the Collector up. The Collector, conscious but blank, walks slowly with her.

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - DAY

Twelve enters with the Collector and sits him down in front of the surveillance equipment.

INT. LEIGH'S BEDROOM - DAY

Leigh stands in front of Broken, readjusting her shirt as if she's just shown him her back.

BROKEN

Weird. So you weren't making it up.

LEIGH

Of course not. So...

Broken tries to look under the bandage on his shoulder, but has to take off his shirt to do so. Leigh helps him take off the bandage, to reveal a fairly gross-looking wound. Leigh takes a moment in awe, and Broken regards her expectantly.

LEIGH

Look-

Leigh picks up a mirror from her dresser and holds it up to Broken, who looks into it, examining his shoulder, speechless.

LEIGH

No hole, no crack, it's just . . . gross.

BROKEN

A real wound. Is it - healing?

LEIGH

Looks like it.

Another almost laugh from Broken.

LEIGH
You know what this means?

She puts a new bandage on his shoulder. Broken examines the blood still on his hand from the arm gash.

LEIGH
It means you've caught up with yourself. You've finally overcome the space-time continuum, and somewhere in some parallel dimension there's an empty space where your innards used to be, because they finally came and found you!

BROKEN
I don't think they came and found me. I think I found them.

LEIGH
Or created them.

BROKEN
Do you mind if I stay at your party?

LEIGH
Of course not - but aren't you getting picked up?

BROKEN
Maybe he won't want me anymore. I'm no longer a collectible.

Leigh looks at him curiously.

BROKEN
I'm a real person.

LEIGH
You're still a pretty weird one, though.

Broken smiles.

BROKEN
Well, so are you.

LEIGH
Thanks.

She goes to the door and opens it.

LEIGH

So, do you want to come play a game? Ooh - we could arm-wrestle!

BROKEN

You don't find that game offensive?

LEIGH

No. Why?

BROKEN

Never mind.

Broken shakes his head and walks through the doorway, followed by Leigh.

Outside the window, two figures dressed like Jehovah's Witnesses approach the house.

INT. LEIGH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Ella, Jackie, Dana, Katherine, and the mime all play a sad game of "Sorry." Katherine mutters over a rosary. Jackie rolls the dice and moves her piece. The mime looks up at her.

The doorbell rings.

The girls all get up curiously to answer the door.

They get to the door just as Leigh and Broken are coming down the stairs. Jackie opens it to reveal Nils and Researcher #1 dressed as Jehovah's Witnesses.

NILS

We are come to collect your empty and broken souls for the-

Leigh and Broken come off the stairs and in full view of the doorway. Nils looks down at Broken's arm, which is still bleeding slightly through the bandage. He reaches for his antique cell phone.

NILS

Hold on-

EXT. LEIGH'S HOUSE - DAY

Nils steps away from the people in the doorway to talk on the phone. He presses a button and puts it to his ear.

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - DAY

The Collector and Twelve still sit quietly at the surveillance wall, Twelve watching the Collector expectantly. Something buzzes on the wall. Twelve looks up, presses a button, and puts a phone receiver up to the Collector's ear.

The Collector stares straight ahead, speaks without taking the phone from Twelve.

COLLECTOR
Yes?

He listens.

COLLECTOR
I see. Bleeding, you say. Mm-hmm.

EXT. LEIGH'S HOUSE - DAY

Nils speaks urgently into the phone receiver. In the background, Researcher #1 gestures grandly, trying to prophesy, but the girls close Leigh's front door on him.

NILS
So, what should we do?

INT. UNDERGROUND LAB - DAY

Twelve watches the Collector's blank face.

COLLECTOR
Nothing.

As the phone is taken from his ear, the Collector stares straight ahead and smiles a slight mindless semi-smile.

INT. LEIGH'S LIVING ROOM - DAY

Leigh and Broken linger at the bottom of the stairs, looking at the other girls, who stand opposite them, expectant.

Self-consciously, Broken moves toward the board game on the ground, and everyone else moves in the same direction with relief.

INT. BLOOD BANK - DAY

Broken and Mrs. Sinclair walk into a blood bank. Broken speaks to a WORKER at the front table.

BROKEN
Hi. I'm Broken Sinclair.

The worker doesn't know what to say.

BROKEN
No, it's not a nickname. See?

Broken holds out his Death Certificate in front of the worker.

INSERT: DEATH CERTIFICATE - "Broken F. Sinclair"

INT. BLOOD BANK - LATER

Broken and Mrs. Sinclair sit in medical chairs side by side, both of their blood platelets getting drawn. Broken reads a book with his free hand.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 My mom says that since I'm legally
 dead I can technically be whoever I
 want to be.

Mr. Sinclair is revealed to be sitting in an ordinary chair at Mrs. Sinclair's side, holding a glass, from which she drinks out of a very long swirly straw. In the other hand, he reads a book entitled "Kitten Fighting Weekly."

To Broken's other side sits Leigh, also reading a sci-fi book. Leigh looks up from her reading and suddenly exchanges books with Broken. Both go back to reading.

EXT. BLOOD BANK - DAY

Broken, Leigh, Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair walk out of the blood bank to the Sinclairs' car. As the kids get in back, Mr. Sinclair gets into the driver's seat.

BROKEN (V.O.)
 Dad says I should get a famous
 person's name and then collect on
 their checks.

Mrs. Sinclair walks over and leans onto the driver's side window, looking in at Mr. Sinclair. He moves over to the passenger seat, and Mrs. Sinclair gets in the car. She buckles up, then peels out.

INT. CAR - DAY

Broken looks back out the window, where an empty public fountain passes his view.

MR. SINCLAIR
 I could see you as a Tom Hardy.

LEIGH
 Ooh - or Jules Verne.

Mr. Sinclair turns to Mrs. Sinclair.

MR. SINCLAIR
 There's two of them.

She gives him a look, and he shuts up. She speeds around a corner. Broken and Leigh smile at each other - real smiles.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Leigh thinks Cerulean would be a
fitting name for a new identity.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Still sharing the same friendly smile with him, Leigh gets Broken up from his desk and urges him to "put up his dukes." Ultimately he does, and Leigh repositions his fists.

EXT. SCHOOL PLAYGROUND - DAY

A group of KIDS teases Broken. Sadie shoves him. Broken "puts up his dukes." Sadie punches him in the face.

She frowns. On the ground, Broken wipes blood from his nose.

BROKEN (V.O.)
I guess I could pick anything.

EXT. SINCLAIR HOUSE - DAY

Twelve looks on, holding her clipboard, as a large truck with Mr. Sinclair's anchor on it pulls away from the house.

Mr. Sinclair sees it off. He takes off his captain's hat dejectedly and waves goodbye.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair sit together on the couch. Broken joins them.

BROKEN (V.O.)
But look at us.

The doorbell rings. They look at each other.

EXT. SINCLAIR FRONT DOOR - DAY

Four boy scouts stand outside, waiting for the door to open.

INT. SINCLAIR LIVING ROOM - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Sinclair sneak cautiously up to the doorway. Broken comes up behind them and hands them a bat.

BROKEN (V.O.)
Why would I want to pretend to be
anything other than Broken?

Broken's parents nod to him knowingly, take the bat, and reach for the doorknob.

THE END