

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-smeared 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.

END OF SAMPLE