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# Broken



*Par Daniel Clay*  
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le: 2009-03-20Sorti le: 2009-03-20Format: Ebook Kindle

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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurYou thought your neighbours were bad? Wait till you meet the Oswalds. They're crass, cruel and seemingly untouchable. Until, that is, they go one step too far and the results begin to tear an entire community apart.Skunk Cunningham is an eleven-year-old girl in a coma. She has a loving dad, an absent mother and a brother who plays more XBox than is good for him. She also has the neighbours from hell: the five Oswald girls and their thuggish dad Bob are vicious bullies whose reign of terror extends unchallenged over the otherwise quiet suburban square in which the two families live.And yet, terrifying though they are, the cider-swilling, dope-smoking Oswald girls are also happy to put it about so when Saskia asks shy, virginal Rick Buckley for a ride in his new car, he cant believe his luck. Too bad, then, that Saskia cant keep

her big mouth shut. When, after a disastrous fumble, she broadcasts Ricks sexual deficiencies to anyone who will listen, it puts an idea into her younger sisters' heads: an idea that sees Rick arrested for a crime he never committed. From her hospital bed, Skunk tries to make sense of the events that follow, as Saskia's small act of cruelty spreads through the neighbourhood in a web of increasing violence. As we inch closer to the mystery behind her coma, Skunk's innocence becomes a beacon by which we navigate a world as comic as it is tragic, and as effortlessly engaging as it is ultimately uplifting, in this brilliant and utterly original debut novel.

**About the Author ~ Daniel Clay** Daniel Clay is thirty seven years old and married with no children. He lives in Hampshire in the UK.

**Exclusive .co.uk Interview with Daniel Clay** **What is Broken. A Novel about?** Part narrated by Skunk Cunningham, an eleven-year-old girl in a coma, **Broken. A Novel** tells the intertwining stories of three families who live in a suburban square in the south of England. The Oswalds Bob and his five daughters are the neighbors from hell. They lie, steal, cheat, bully and intimidate anyone unlucky enough to be anywhere near them, including Rick Buckley, a geeky but harmless nineteen-year-old boy who lives with his mum and dad on the other side of the square. Humiliated publicly by the Oswalds in the early stages of the novel, Rick descends into madness and becomes the Broken of the title. Skunk, her brother Jed and their new friend Dillon become fascinated with what happened to Broken which, in turn, leads to Skunk ending up in the coma from which she narrates the story.

**What inspired you to write it?** My starting point were the family structures in Harper Lees *To Kill A Mockingbird* and how much society has changed in the eighty or so years since the events depicted in that novel took place. Once I had that starting point, I wanted to write about life as I saw it at the time I was writing: mad and cruel and random, yet always capable of surprising you, and always somehow worthwhile.

**Who are your literary influences?** As a teenager, James Herbert and Stephen King were huge influences because they created characters I believed in and cared about. Since then, I've tended to love individual novels rather than particular authors. Orwells 1984, Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, Mark Haddon's *The Curious Incident Of The Dog In The Night-time*, and Kem Nunn's *Tapping The Source* are all novels I've now read several times (and wish I had written).

**If you could recommend just one "must-read book" to anyone, what would it be and why?** Clive Barker's *Weaveworld*. The same as the Harry Potter series, it has that knack of layering the fantastical over everyday life, but it's darker and sexier and tinged with more horror as well. A magical read.

**What top tips do you have for anyone looking to write their first book?** Write for the thrill of it and write for yourself. Try to surprise yourself. Try to shock yourself. Never try to write something that doesn't excite you right from the outset. Never try to write what you think an editor or agent wants you to write. Think about how you can grab a reader's attention and then not let them put your work down. Look at the writers who do this to you and compare their style to your style. Try to understand why they're different. Try to do something about it. Read as widely as you can. Polish as hard as you can. And, most of all, have fun, enjoy yourself, challenge yourself, and never let the rejections stop you from writing.

**s for Broken. A Novel** We are not the only ones to love this book. Check out a selection of reviews below. As you can see a lot of the reviews have been written by our own customers. These are reviewers from our Vine programme. Scroll down to the customer review section to see all of the reviews submitted.

**Bold, prescient, engaging, and oddly touching. Guardian** A stunning first book I'd be amazed if it doesn't get short-listed at awards time.

**Murray, Vine top reviewer** Daniel Clay has managed to weave a tale that simultaneously highlights some of the more disturbing aspects of contemporary British society whilst capturing some of the sweet innocence of a child's mind... gripping.

**H. Pierce, Vine top reviewer** Reminiscent of Angela's Ashes set in the present day there is humour and warmth, and a surprisingly upbeat, satisfying ending. I think this is probably the best new fiction I have read in the last year.

**P. M. Fernandez, Vine top reviewer** This book grabbed me and I could not put it down It will make you laugh, cry and gasp with horror.

**Kebs, Vine top reviewer** Beautifully written I couldn't put the book down. It contains humour and is incredibly touching. I will certainly be looking out for Daniel Clay's next book. Recommended to all.

**SM, Vine top reviewer** **Extrait** Skunk, Skunk. Wake up, beautiful darling. Archie, my father, holds both my hands as he says this. I sense his words rather than hear them: Skunk, Skunk. Wake up, beautiful darling. I also sense his life now. It seeps through his palms into my palms. It deadens the blood in my veins. My heartbeat slows. I shudder. Poor old Archie. This is the way that his life is. I see it. I feel it. I know it. Tonight, from midnight through to two in the morning, he will sit all alone in the front room and watch a video of the day I was born. Almost twelve years ago now. There I am. You can see me. A wrinkled pink sack of flesh that does little but lie on its back with tubes feeding into its nostrils. Not a lot different to now then. Here I lie, on my back, with tubes feeding into my nostrils. But tonight I will be a newborn. All that hope. All that promise. Poor old Archie. Hell sit all alone and hell watch

me. Hell drink and hell think, how did it happen? How did it end up like this? Then hell go to the bed that he shares with Cerys and listen to her crying. Hell cry a little himself. Finally, he will sleep and dream that the harsh ringing sound by his bedside is the Royal Hampshire County Hospital phoning to say I am dead. He will sit up, gasping, but it wont be his phone that is ringing, it will be his alarm clock, and it will be time to get up, go to work. In work, Archie will sit at his desk and recoil every time the phone rings, then hell rush here to see me. Skunk, Skunk. Wake up, beautiful darling. Dont you leave me. Dont you dare. All of this will happen. I know for sure it will happen. I know everything now. Especially about Broken Buckley. Poor old Broken Buckley. Hunched over his mothers corpse. Hands pressed to his temples. How and why? Oh how and why? His story started with Saskia Oswald: Broken loved Saskia Oswald. Had. Once. Loved. Saskia. Oswald. But Saskia Oswald never loved him. She just loved his car. She said, Hey, soldier, fancy taking me for a ride? Did he? Oh, did he. Poor old Broken Buckley. He was nineteen years old and a virgin, the sort of guy who spits when he speaks, just little flecks of saliva that hang in the air and distract you from whatever hes saying. Saskia Oswald ate him for breakfast ate him up and then spat him out. Not enough for her though. She had to tell everyone about it, and thats when it started for him. Skunk, please, God, blink, just blink if you can hear me . . . were here, darling. Were all here beside you. It didnt finish there though. It never does with the likes of the Oswalds. Theyre the family in one of the Housing Association properties on the opposite side of the square. Single parent. Lots of children. Music all hours of the night. Bin bags in the front garden. Portsmouth FC flags hanging from the windows. Maori-style tattoos on overdeveloped biceps. This is Bob Oswald. The father. Bob Oswald. The father. The first time I saw him hitting someone, I was coming up ten years old. It was summer, hot, and Rick Buckley was washing the car his father had bought him as a present for passing his driving test. Skunk Cunningham was skipping on the tarmac drive that had once been their front garden. Other than Skunk and Rick, Drummond Square was empty. The attack happened out of nowhere. Skunk didnt hear anyone speaking. She didnt hear anyone shouting. The first thing she heard was the scream: it was high-pitched, like a horse, and before she knew what was happening, Bob Oswald had Rick Buckley in a headlock and was twisting him sideways, like wrestling a bull. The two of them staggered out of the Buckleys front garden and into the otherwise empty square. Rick Buckley shouted, Stop it, I havent done anything wrong. Bob Oswald hit him. Not a punch, but a blow with the point of his elbow. It landed in the small of Ricks back. Rick collapsed to his knees. . . . That bloody Bob Oswald, Mr Buckley continued. Hes reduced my son to a nervous wreck and got away without even a caution. You need to go back to the police, Dave. Archies voice rumbled from deep inside his stomach, A vicious attack on a nineteen-year-old boy . . . no matter what Bob Oswald thought hed been up to . . . they have to do something about that. Mr Buckley laughed in a way I found scary. What like? An ASBO? A caution? Its GBH at least, Archie said after a moment. Bob should be facing prison. Mr Buckleys voice was high and shaky where my fathers was soft and deep. You know better than I do hell be facing no more than community service. Whatll probably happen is the policell decide to charge me with wasting their time. Its been an eyeopener, this has. A real bloody shock. A long silence followed. Finally, Archie broke it. Hows the boy, anyway? Mr Buckleys voice went from shaky to jumpy. Broken, he said. Utterly broken. He reckons hes never leaving the house again. Another silence followed. I was very nearly asleep. It was way, way past my bedtime. Only Archies voice kept me awake. He just needs time, he said to Mr Buckley. Dont worry. Hell be OK. But Archie was wrong. Mr Buckleys son was not OK. Just as hed said to his father, he stayed inside the house. The car he had been cleaning the day Bob Oswald attacked him stood unused on the drive. The curtains to his room stayed shut.