

Katurian There was a little car there, and a little toy dog and a kaleidoscope.

Michal There was a little toy dog?! Did it yap?

Katurian Did it what?

Michal Did it yap?

Katurian Er . . . yes. Anyway, there was, there was a little caravan nearby, and the Pillowman heard the door open and little footsteps come out, and he heard a boy's voice say, 'I'm just going out to play, Mum,' and the Mum said, 'Well don't be late for your tea, son.' 'I won't be, Mum.' And the Pillowman heard the little footsteps get closer and the branches of the willow tree parted and it wasn't a little boy at all, it was a little Pillowboy. And the Pillowboy said, 'Hello,' to the Pillowman, and the Pillowman said, 'Hello,' to the Pillowboy, and they both played with the toys for a while . . .

Michal With the car and the kaleidoscope and the little toy dog what yapped. But I bet mostly with the little toy dog, ay?

Katurian And the Pillowman told him all about his sad job and the dead kids and all of that type of stuff, and the little Pillowboy understood instantly 'cos he was such a happy little fella and all he ever wanted to do was to be able to help people, and he poured the can of petrol all over himself and his smiley mouth was still smiling, and the Pillowman, through his gloopy tears, said, 'Thank you,' to the Pillowboy, and the Pillowboy said, 'That's alright. Will you tell my mummy I won't be having my tea tonight,' and the Pillowman said, 'Yes, I will,' lying, and the Pillowboy struck a match, and the Pillowman sat there watching him burn, and as the Pillowman gently started to fade away, the last thing he saw was the Pillowboy's happy smiley mouth as it slowly melted away, stinking into nothingness. That was the last thing he saw. The last thing he heard was something he hadn't even contemplated. The last thing he heard was the screams of the hundred thousand children he'd helped to

commit suicide coming back to life and going on to lead the cold, wretched lives that were destined to them because he hadn't been around to prevent them, right on up to the screams of their sad self-inflicted deaths, which this time, of course, would be conducted entirely alone.

Michal Hm. (*Pause.*) I don't really get the end bit but, ah, so the Pillowman just faded away? Ah.

Katurian He just faded away, yeah, like he never existed.

Michal Into the air.

Katurian Into the air. Into wherever.

Michal Into Heaven.

Katurian No. Into wherever.

Michal I like the Pillowman. He's my favourite.

Katurian It's a bit downbeat, I'll admit. Is your itchy arse alright now?

Michal Oh, it was till you reminded me! Arrgh! (*Adjusts himself.*) Hmm. But I still can't figure it out.

Katurian Figure what out? Figure out 'The Pillowman'?

Michal No, I thought I'd hidden it really well.

Katurian Hidden what really well?

Michal The box with the little boy's toes in it. I thought I'd hidden it really well. I mean, first I'd put it under all my socks and pants in the drawer, which, alright, wasn't very well hid, but then when they started to smell I hid 'em under the dirt in the Christmas tree pot in the attic, 'cos I knew we wouldn't be getting the Christmas tree pot out again for ages. Like, till Christmas. And that'd give 'em plenty of time to go mouldy. They were already a bit mouldy. Were they mouldy when you saw 'em?

Katurian nods, the life drained out of him.

They must've used sniffer dogs or something. You know those sniffer dogs? They must've used them. Because, no way, I hid them brilliant. Christmas tree pot. You only see it once a year.

Katurian You just told me . . . You just told me you didn't touch those kids. You just lied to me.

Michal No I didn't. I just told you the man came in and said he'd torture me unless I said I killed those kids, so I said I killed those kids. That doesn't mean I didn't kill those kids. I did kill those kids.

Katurian You swore to me, on your life, that you didn't kill those three kids.

Michal Ohh. See with that one, the 'Swear to me on your life you didn't kill those three kids', yeah, I was kind of playing a trick on ya. Sorry, Katurian.

Katurian backs away from him to the mattress.

I know it was wrong. Really. But it was very interesting. The little boy was just like you said it'd be. I chopped his toes off and he didn't scream at all. He just sat there looking at them. He seemed very surprised. I suppose you would be at that age. His name was Aaron. He had a funny little hat on, kept going on about his mum. God, he bled a lot. You wouldn't've thought there'd be that much blood in such a little boy. Then he stopped bleeding and went blue. Poor thing. I feel quite bad now, he seemed quite nice. 'Can I go home to my mummy, now, please?' But the girl was a pain in the arse. Kept bawling her eyes out. And she wouldn't eat them. She wouldn't eat the apples, and I'd spent *ages* making them. It's really hard to get the razor blades inside. You don't say how to make them in the story, do ya? I checked. So, anyway, I had to force 'em down her. It only took two. Not being mean, but at least that shut her up. (*Pause.*) It's really hard to get out of your clothes, isn't it, blood? You try washing your shirt tomorrow. It'll take

ages. You'll see. (*Pause.*) Katurian? (*Pause.*) I'll wash it for ya, if you want. I'm getting quite good at it.

Katurian (*pause. Quietly*) What did you do it for?

Michal Huh? You're mumbling.

Katurian (*tears*) What did you do it for?

Michal Don't cry, Katurian. Don't cry.

Michal goes over to hold him. Katurian backs away in disgust.

Katurian What did you do it for?

Michal You know. Because you told me to.

Katurian (*pause*) Because I what?

Michal Because you told me to.

Katurian (*pause*) I remember telling you to do your homework on time. I remember telling you to brush your teeth every night . . .

Michal I *do* brush my teeth every night . . .

Katurian I don't remember telling you to take a bunch of little kids and go butcher them.

Michal I didn't butcher them. 'Butcher them,' it'd be more like . . .

Michal imitates viciously hacking at someone.

Mine was more like . . .

Michal imitates a gentle, single hack onto imaginary toes, then delicately throwing the toes away . . .

And . . .

Michal imitates placing two apples inside a little mouth, then swallowing.

'Butcher them.' That's a bit strong. And I wouldn't have done anything if you hadn't told me, so don't you act all the innocent. Every story you tell me, something horrible happens to somebody. I was just testing out how far-fetched they were. 'Cos I always thought some of 'em were a bit far-fetched. (Pause.) D'you know what? They ain't all that far-fetched.

Katurian How come you never acted out any of the nice ones?

Michal Because you never wrote any nice ones.

Katurian I wrote plenty of nice ones.

Michal Er, yeah, like, two.

Katurian No, I'll tell you why you never acted out any of the nice ones, shall I?

Michal Alright.

Katurian Because you're a sadistic, retarded fucking pervert who *enjoys* killing little kids, and even if every story I ever wrote was the sweetest thing imaginable, the outcome'd still be the fucking same.

Michal Well . . . we'll never know, will we, 'cos you never did. (Pause.) And I *didn't* enjoy killing those kids. It was irritating. It took ages. And I didn't *set out* to kill those kids. I just set out to chop the toes off one of them and to put razors down the throat of one of them.

Katurian Are you telling me you don't know that if you chop the toes off a little boy and put razors down the throat of a little girl, you don't know that they're gonna die?

Michal Well, I know *now*.

Katurian puts his head in his hands, trying to think of a way out of this.

Well, the torture man certainly seemed to be on my side. He seemed to agree it was all your fault. Well, mostly your fault.