

The Writer and The Writer's Story

By C. Cronin Cronin

Once upon a time in a not-so-magical land far far away, a man finds himself handcuffed to the sharp frame of a metallic chair and blindfolded in a strange room thick with the coppery scent of untold pain, suffering, and burnt coffee. In a dizzying flash, another man restores his sight and a grimy room slowly comes into focus. Our hero can just barely make out the off-colored stains spattered on rough-hewn walls and in half-dried puddles on the floor. The glaring lamp overhead sears his eyes and casts scattered rays throughout the room. He is clearly in danger as the ominously uniformed men begin their bad-cop/worse-cop interrogation.

Their search for the truth leads us on disturbing journey through Katurian's storied past and the narratives of some of the more twisted tales born of his own childhood trauma. While he insists that his writings have no morals or hidden messages, it is clear that they are a vital part of his self-identity; and what is a man if not a personified collection of his own stories and experiences? The events that seem to define each of these men are as similar as they are traumatic; the deviation falls with how they choose to deal with it.

Ariel and Tupolski are devoted to a twisted sense of justice in a cruel and unusual world, through any means they can justify to themselves as necessary. Katurian has found an outlet through the very thing that created him- writing stories. And in a gruesome twist of irony, Michal's physical and mental trauma manifest into the literal realizations of Katurian's grimm tales. While Katurian may be the brother that works in a slaughterhouse, it is Michal who is the butcher of the family.

We find ourselves grappling with the idea of truth and our (and their) perception of it throughout the play. The characters are constantly lying to each other, themselves, and the audience. One example is the brothers' "origin story" which graphically presents their horrid upbringing and has a double-ending that hides an even more horrifying (and incriminating) truth while giving a new meaning to "The Pillowman". While the allegorical representation of The Pillowman carries a warped mission of comfort to children who face a nightmarish future, Katurian's pillow-wielding actions are thick with vengeance toward his parents but softer and more merciful toward his brother, saving Michal from a worse death at the hand of the police.

When faced with the final chapter of his own story, Katurian is willing to sacrifice everything, including his life, to protect the legacy found in his stories. Above all else, he needs to know that a small part of himself will outlive his body. In a single character-defining action, Ariel grants his dying wish.

And his stories lived happily ever after. The End.