

## **My toilet is a murderer! (Paul Delaney)**

### **Chapter ONE**

I had only just walked into the house when I clapped eyes on it for the first time. I remember the day - bright and sunny, a gentle breeze tickling my face. 'Jimmy, go and help your Dad,' ordered Mum, working her way through a mountain of ironing. 'He's installing the new toilet.'

I imagined it to look like any ordinary toilet at first. I mean, toilets are toilets, aren't they? But this one was supposed to be special. Dad had been talking about it for weeks before it arrived. And he'd shoved that glossy brochure under our noses countless times.

### **The computer controlled LAV 620. Tomorrow's technology - today!**

He'd ordered it from some dodgy Japanese website, Mum had said.

I darted upstairs, two steps at a time. There he was, sitting on the floor, studying the instructions. 'Pass us me big screwdriver, Jimmy,' Dad said. 'And don't you touch anything.'

As he twisted six long, silver screws into the base, I pulled my glasses from my pocket. Peering through them, I had a good look at the new machine.

It did look impressive. For a start it was black, not white, with a shiny silver lid trapping the deadly smells below. On the top, a large computerized LCD control panel sat, surrounded by an oval of bright silver buttons. Two small loudspeakers jutted out from the sides of it and tangled, coloured wires dangled from the top like soft spaghetti.

Grinning, Dad looked up, flashing those stained teeth of his. 'It's even got its own remote control and computerized speech,' he beamed, thrusting a black plastic box into my hand.

Staring at it, my eyes widened reading the words underneath the little buttons. 'Seat up/down' said one. 'Seat heater' said another. 'Super flush' and 'Atomic bottom wash' said others. 'Space-age technology' Dad had said. True, I thought.

'Give us a hand, Jimmy,' Dad said, pushing three long, silver pipes into holes on the top. I was allowed to screw a large red bulb into the end of the middle pipe, which was a little taller than the others. Into the ends of the outer pipes, I screwed blue and green bulbs. The pipes stood tall like three spying 'eyes', I thought.

Dad stood up, rubbing his back. 'I'll need a bigger spanner,' he said, running his hand over his shaved, balding head. 'This one's hopeless!'

I was soon following Dad up the aisle of 'Trevor's tools', our local D.I.Y. Superstore. Gemma, my annoying little sister, trailed behind us, clutching Billy, her fluffy bunny rabbit.

Dad lifted a huge chrome spanner from its display hook. He failed to notice Gemma dragging out a heavy sledgehammer from a display stand. 'Fancy a game of gladiators?' she asked.

'Why not?' I replied, picking up a heavy axe. We had great fun pretending to fight until Dad turned his back.

'You two!' he bawled. 'Put those down!'

Gemma did as she was told and walked towards him. But I couldn't resist. Gripping the axe with two hands, I charged at them both, like a brave warrior, screaming a loud battle cry. 'Kill, kill! Your bunny or your life!'

Gemma giggled, clutching Billy close to her chest. But Dad couldn't see the funny side of my axe antics and disarmed me. 'I can't take you two Vikings anywhere, can I?' he said, huffing before shaking his fat head. 'Now come on, we've got work to do, remember.'

Whilst Mum and Gemma prepared lunch, Dad and I worked upstairs. 'This spanner's getting on my nerves,' he gasped. 'It seems to have a mind of its own.'

Now my dad wasn't exactly the world's greatest D.I.Y. expert, but he did try his best. Mum didn't call him the 'destroyer' for nothing!

So two aching necks later, we both stood up in front of the slick, new machine. 'Bet nobody's got one of these in this town, Jimmy!' Dad said, gathering up his tools. 'Hey, we'll have to charge people to use it,' he added. 'It'll make us a fortune!'

Gemma's booming high pitched voice flew upstairs, carried up by a delicious aroma. 'Lunch is ready!' she bellowed, her voice grating as usual.

'Come on, Jimmy,' Dad said. 'I'm so starving I could eat a box of sawdust.'

He leapt down the stairs as if the landing was on fire, almost leaving skid marks from the soles of his slippers on the carpet. I peered at the LAV 620, unable to peel my eyes away from its shining, space age shape.

I stroked the three tall, chrome pipes. I ran my fingers over the smooth, silver seat. Grabbing the remote control, I pressed a few tiny, shiny buttons. *'Wait until my friends see this thing,'* I thought.

I gazed at the marvellous, magical machine, almost foaming at the mouth. That slogan, 'Tomorrow's technology today!' constantly revolved around my head. I seemed to be hypnotized by the LAV 620's sleek, black and silver metals. My eyes fixed, I stood still, unable to move a muscle.

Gemma suddenly snapped me out of it.

'Jimmy, your dinner's going cold!' she yelled.

So I dashed downstairs, my nose locked onto a strong 'bacon and beans' smell.

## Chapter TWO

Two bursting bellies later, we were at it again. Dad grappled with a length of shiny copper pipe, bending and twisting it with a heavy wrench.

'Just got to squeeze this under the floorboards, now Jimmy,' he said, pulling up a long, timber plank with his claw hammer.

'What's this?' he said, as he thrust his hand into a dark, dusty space under the floor. He pulled out a little box, hand-crafted out of solid wood. 'Looks like a name's carved on it,' Dad said, inspecting his treasure. 'Victoria Barker 1857!'

Pulling open the box's lid, Dad held his breath. Our eyes locked onto its precious, undiscovered contents. A tiny piece of parchment dropped out onto the floor, revealing a small, golden ring underneath. 'Read it, Jimmy,' Dad said. 'What does it say, son?'

Picking it up, I unfolded it, holding it up to my eyes:

*'My beautiful Victoria, I give you this ring as a sign of my undying love for thee. My love pours from my broken heart. I will never forget you, my dearest.'*

*Walter Barker 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1857'*

'Wow, a little bit of history, Dad,' I said. 'Sentimental too, eh?'

'A load of old codswallop, if you ask me, Jimmy,' Dad replied. 'Anyway, I wonder how much I'll get for it?' he asked. 'I could do with a new set of darts.'

'I don't think you should sell it, Dad,' I said. 'Anyway, let's show it to Mum.' We both dashed downstairs. Peering at the crumpled love letter, Mum's eyes widened. 'How sweet,' she said, holding the plain, golden band against the sunlight. 'A Victorian ring.'

'Do you think we should sell it?' Dad asked.

'Well we could do with a little holiday, Clive,' Mum answered. 'But I don't think this Walter Barker fellow would be very happy about it, do you?'

Mum and Dad laughed together in a chorus of childish giggles. 'I'll take it down to the Labrador then,' Dad said. 'See how much I can get for it.'

'Aren't you going to have it valued first?' I asked, narrowing my eyes.

'I'm not an 'Antiques Road-show' man,' Dad chuckled, putting on a silly, posh voice. 'I'd rather watch a jelly set!'

'Anyway, how will you sell it?' I asked.

'Kenny's into antiques and all that, Jimmy,' Dad replied. 'He's even got a collection of Antique toothbrushes, so he'll know what to do with it.'

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Dad uncoiled a long, red wire. 'Hold the end of this please, Jimmy,' he said. Clamping my fingers around it, I pulled it tight. As Dad was snipping it with his heavy pliers, Gemma trounced into the bathroom.

'Mum said I could help,' she announced, twirling her long mousy brown curls with her finger. So she was put on 'cardboard' crushing duty straight away.

'Thick, that cardboard packaging,' Dad said as he connected the toilet's wires together. 'Dad,' I asked. 'What's that red light in the middle for?'

'How do I know?' he replied, not even raising his head. 'I think it's for the super flush or something.'

Dad stood up, massaging his wide neck. 'Thirsty work this, Jimmy,' he said. 'Any chance of a brew?'

'Let's finish the job, eh Dad?' I said, shaking my head.

'This job's puzzling me, son,' Dad replied. 'But I'll get to the bottom of it!' He pointed to his own bottom as he said it and we both burst out laughing.

'Anyway, pass me the instructions.'

Gathering them up from the floor, I handed Dad a small paper booklet, which he scanned for several seconds. 'Right,' he announced. 'Pass us me pincers. I think I've connected the yellow wire up wrong.'

Rummaging around inside Dad's toolbox, I found a small pair of pincers and handed them to him. With a gentle click, he cut through a long, yellow wire.

Dad was peering at the end of the wire when Gemma skipped back into the bathroom. 'It's all crushed,' she grinned, brushing tiny cardboard pieces from her pink woolly top. 'She'll be pestering your mum next,' Dad said as Gemma vanished through the door. 'You know what she's like!'

Dad bent down. He reconnected the yellow wire at the back of the control panel, forcing it through a tiny hole. Then he checked the pipes again. 'Nearly finished, I think, Jimmy,' he said as a satisfying smile stretched across his face. 'Just these little screws, now, that's all.'

'Can I screw them in, Dad?' I asked, grabbing a small screwdriver.

'Save me a job,' he replied. 'Anyway, I'll just tidy up and then we're done.'

One by one, I twisted the four screws into place.

Struggling to turn the final one, a sudden scream crashed into my ears. I looked up and Dad was dancing around the bathroom, holding his throbbing thumb. Blood was gushing out of a jagged cut. 'What's happened now?' I asked.

He was whimpering like a pained puppy. 'I just reached into me toolbox and something cut me!'

I shouted down for Mum but there was no answer.

Glancing into Dad's toolbox, I noticed the culprit. A large carpet knife was hidden under a big pile of tools, its razor sharp blade sticking up without its plastic cover. 'It's a blooming deep cut,' Dad said, peering at his blood soaked thumb. 'Just my luck isn't it?'

Thick drops of blood landed on my sweatshirt as Dad sprung up and down, jumping around as if an army of hungry ants had invaded his underpants. I dashed towards the toilet roll holder; yanking out handfuls of soft, white tissue. 'Wrap this around it,' I cried.

'Sorry son,' he huffed. 'I've never liked the sight of blood since your Mum sat on that hedgehog years ago.'

Breaking into a forced smile, I shook my head. Was he joking? Was he serious? You never quite knew with my dad. He was that type, if you know what I mean.

Eventually, the cut decided to stop bleeding; helped by three thick plasters that I'd stuck over it. 'I'm gagging for a brew,' Dad gasped, making a funny, painful sort of face. 'I've had a nightmare this morning, Jimmy!'

'You always have a nightmare when you're doing D.I.Y., Dad,' I chuckled. 'Anyway, we've only just had our lunch!'

'Tell you what then, Jimmy,' he said. 'I'll put the kettle on if you tidy up.'

‘Oh all right then,’ I nodded, puffing out a long breath.

Dad always had a knack of getting out of work and he’d coned me once again. One by one, I gathered up the tools and placed them into his toolbox. I then picked up the other packaging from the LAV 620 and piled it all into a huge black bin-bag.

I was just about finished when the toilet’s seat lifted up and down all by itself.

Immediately, the toilet’s bowl filled up with flushing water, like a boiling, bubbling witch’s cauldron. Then, a loud gurgling, squelching sound rose up from the depths. Next, the red ‘eye’ bulb flashed twice, followed by the blue and green bulbs.

‘Super flush activated,’ announced a computerized voice. ‘Bottom not detected.’

Drawing in a sharp gasp of cold air, I shivered. My wide eyes locked onto the marvellous, mysterious machine. I peered at my reflection squashed into its silver seat. My wiry brown hair stood tall like an army of thin twigs, frozen by fear.

And that’s when Dad burst out laughing on the landing. He’d crept upstairs with the remote control. ‘I will scare you to death,’ he said in a deep, silly voice, sounding rather like a robot.

‘Oh grow up, Dad,’ I snapped, clenching my fists but feeling relieved all the same. ‘And go and make the tea. Or I’ll tell Mum about the blood all over her new rug.’

‘Can’t you take a joke?’ he said, screwing up his eyes and lips to make the saddest face possible. As usual it worked, because as usual, I laughed. ‘Don’t forget the chocolate biscuits,’ I shouted as I hauled the bursting bin-bag across the tiles.

Collecting odd bits of rubbish, I couldn’t stop staring at the LAV 620. It was like a powerful magnet, dragging my eyes towards it. I was looking forward to testing out its features properly. Dad said he’d give us all a demonstration later on. Of course, I couldn’t wait...

## Chapter THREE

That evening, Dad crowded us all into the cramped space of the bathroom. ‘The LAV 620 is a powerful piece of equipment,’ he explained, waving his big, bandaged finger through the air. ‘In fact, it’s the ‘Rolls Royce’ of toilets and...’

‘Get on with it, Clive,’ Mum snapped, interrupting Dad’s flow. ‘Hartington hospital’s on in ten minutes.’

‘Yes; hurry up, Dad,’ Gemma chorused, thrusting her hands onto her hips. ‘We’re not in school you know.’

‘Give him a chance,’ I said. ‘He’s worked hard on this project.’

‘It’s fairly simple to be honest,’ Dad said, holding the remote control in front of our eyes. ‘Simply press the buttons and away you go. If the battery’s flat in the remote, just use the control panel on the top.’

Looking into the bowl, Gemma piped up. ‘Who’s going to test it out first then?’

‘Go on Jimmy,’ Mum said, a wry smile stretching her lips.

‘I’m not doing my business in front of you lot,’ I said, scrunching up my eyes. ‘No chance!’

‘Look,’ Dad said, snatching the remote from Mum’s grasp. ‘It’s easy. Watch this.’

Standing over the LAV 620 like an overzealous salesman, Dad did his stuff.

‘Green light’s on. That means everything’s ready to roll! Or ready to ‘Toilet roll’ as they say!’

He turned to us all, hoping for a laugh, but nothing happened. We all remained tight-lipped. The three of us just stood there, like silent, stone statues in a miserable museum.

‘Blue light means it’s flushing,’ Dad continued. ‘Red light means something’s faulty.’

‘No, red light means your poo’s too heavy,’ sniggered Gemma.

‘This is serious stuff,’ Mum said, biting her lip to stop a high explosive laugh escaping.

‘Anyway,’ Dad said. ‘There’s three different flush strengths. ‘Regular’ for normal water, ‘Super’ for hot swirling water and ‘Atomic’ for boiling, volcanic water.’

‘Is that for when you’ve had a curry, Clive?’ Mum chuckled, grinning like a circus clown.

‘Is anybody taking this seriously?’ Dad snapped, puffing out a long blow. ‘Anyway, press seat lift up and the seat lifts up. Press seat heater and the seat heats up.’

Gemma folded her arms tight, pouting her thick lips out. ‘We can all read you know, Dad,’ she barked. ‘Come on, Gemma,’ Mum said, turning on her toes. ‘Hartington’s started. I can hear it.’

Dad looked at me, raising his eyebrows.

‘I don’t know why I bother sometimes, son,’ he said. ‘Anyway, come on, you know how it works, don’t you?’

‘Well it does seem pretty straightforward,’ I said. ‘In fact, I’m going to give it a whirl right now!’

‘I won’t look,’ Dad chuckled, walking through the door.

I pulled my jeans down. Hauling my bottom onto the seat, I pressed ‘Seat heater’ on the remote control. A sudden golden warmth shot through my skin. I looked over my shoulder. The green light was burning with a strong brightness.

Quickly, I did my business and pressed ‘Super flush’. A powerful jet of hot water burst into the bowl at an incredible speed, almost blowing my body up into the air. The water swirled around my bottom, followed by jets of warm, breezy air. Then the blue light emitted a long, satisfying flash.

‘Unreal,’ I whispered, climbing off and pulling my underpants up.

As I washed my hands, a slow, computerized drawl spoke to me. ‘Super flush complete,’ the loudspeakers announced. ‘Thank you for using the LAV 620. Tomorrow’s technology today.’

Dashing downstairs, I could hardly contain my excitement.

‘It’s brilliant Dad!’ I exclaimed. But nobody was listening. Curled up on the sofa, Mum and Gemma were both sat like limp, lifeless puppets, their eyes glued to the T.V. screen. ‘Put the kettle on, Jimmy,’ Mum said, hardly peeling her eyes away from the tense operating theatre scene.

‘I’m off to the Labrador to see Kenny,’ Dad shouted over his shoulder. ‘I’ll show him the ring and see what he thinks.’

Nobody bothered to reply, being too engrossed in the television as usual.

Later, Dad returned armed with £200 in crisp ten-pound notes. ‘I told you Kenny would buy it, didn’t I, eh?’ he announced as a proud smile stretched across his wide, chubby face. ‘And here’s our holiday money, Hilary!’

‘Oh well done,’ Mum said, blowing Dad a kiss. ‘You’re a star!’

‘I still think you should have had it valued, though,’ I said.

‘By that geek from the antique shop?’ Dad chuckled as he counted his money. ‘He couldn’t value a toilet roll and he’d only rip me off anyway!’

That evening, I crawled into bed as usual. Drifting off to sleep, our sleek new toilet filled my dreams as the day’s events whirred around inside my head. I was on top of the LAV 620, flying through deep space, hanging onto the three silver eye bulb pipes. Red, green and blue lights flashed furiously, lighting up the night sky as I steered my craft through a swarm of silvery stars.

Sweating, I tossed and turned in the middle of a hot, August night. Awakened by my strange adventure, I jumped out of bed. I wanted to splash cold water onto my cheeks to cool me down a little.

Pacing along the landing, I was just about to turn into the bathroom when a bright, crimson reflection caught my gaze. It was creeping along the wall, like some sort of long, alien searchlight. I stood in the doorway, cracking my fingers. I couldn’t peel my lazy, squinting eyes away from the strange, magnetic light.

Then I realized that the thick beam of light was coming from the bathroom. I arched my neck around the door. The LAV 620’s red ‘eye bulb’ was burning brightly at the top of its long, silver pipe. It seemed to be slowly rotating, rather like a lighthouse lamp, scanning the area like a secret, spying eye.

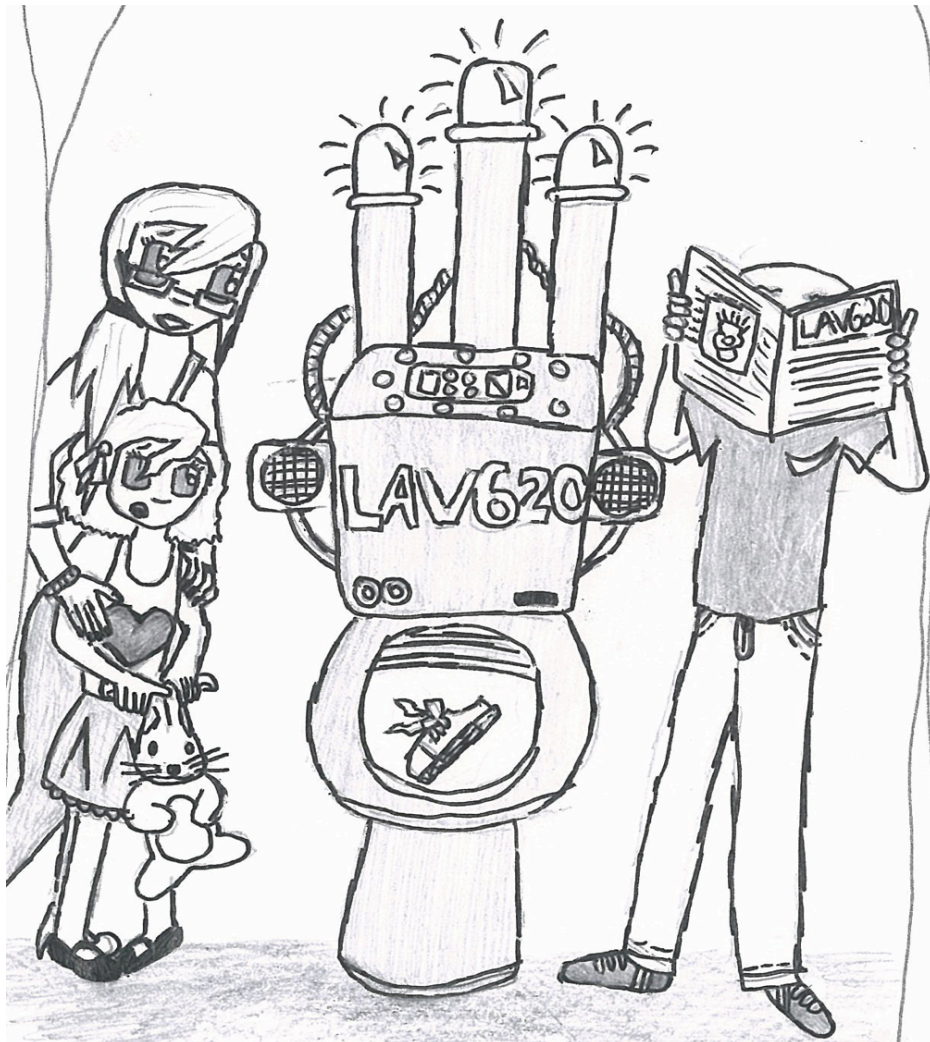
It suddenly switched off. A thick black cloak descended, plunging my eyes into caverns of darkness. I couldn’t see a thing in front of me. Pulling in a sharp

gulp of warm, stale air, I waited. My heartbeat clicked into overdrive. My breathing thinned out.

I flicked on the light-switch and walked over to the sink. Sprinkling cool water onto my face, I turned my head, staring at the LAV 620 once more. For several seconds I waited, but nothing happened, just the rumbling of a gentle shudder deep in the water pipes.

Darkness surrounded me but I turned around, briskly tiptoeing down the landing. Climbing back into my bed, I wondered about the strange red light as I tried to recapture my exciting dream.

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**Hilary, Clive and Gemma and the infamous LAV620 toilet**

**(Illustration by Lucy Cuerden, Y6 – now a lawyer!)**