



The Curious
Accounts of the
Imaginary Friend

P.S. Gifford

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IMAGINARY
FRIEND

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A VIRTUAL TALES BOOK

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The Curious Accounts of the Imaginary Friend

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THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY FATHER,
ERNEST GIFFORD,
WHO INSPIRED ME MORE THAN HE COULD EVER REALIZE.
ALSO TO MY WIFE, SARAH, AND MY SON, JONATHAN,
FOR THEIR INFINITE PATIENCE, SUPPORT AND
ENCOURAGEMENT, WITHOUT WHICH THIS BOOK
WOULD HAVE NEVER BEEN COMPLETED.





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DR. OFFIG'S LESSONS FROM THE DARK SIDE, VOLUME 2

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Who am I? Well, I am the Imaginary Friend. You know—the one you conjure up to talk with when you're consumed with loneliness, greed or visions of eminent doom. And that's how this manuscript came into being. I have listened to thousands of stories and it would be a shame if they just stayed with me, never to be heard again. Their subjects vary greatly, but I have chosen to share only the ones I found to be particularly curious. Take the story told to me by a man within days of his execution, for instance. I will relay it to you verbatim, just as he told me his tale...



1

CONFESSIONS OF A MAD MAN

It is a curious—and one might say, tragically comical—set of circumstances that has brought me to my impending doom, sitting here on death row counting the hours to my execution. I am having a hard time eating my last meal: New York Steak, three eggs, hash browns, orange juice and coffee.

My story began three years ago on a sunny spring Monday morning. I shall never forget it; how could I? I am, or rather I was, a knife salesman by trade. This forced me to travel constantly, but the lonely existence of the road was far more enjoyable than the unmitigated level of wretchedness I suffered when I was at home with Mildred.

Mildred, please understand, was my wife of twenty-six years and I suppose I had loved her once. Yet as I strive to recollect the emotion, my search is in vain. All that I can bring to mind is her incessant and constant nagging that gradually etched away my confidence. Each derogative utterance chipped recklessly away at my increasingly fragile sense of self, but as I awoke upon that spring morning, I knew that things were about to change. For on this

beautiful spring morning the events that were about to unfurl had been meticulously considered for months...

We awoke that morning as we always did, and her mouth began moving the moment her eyes opened. The insults quickly began streaming out as I made her breakfast. I always made her breakfast, and served it to her in bed. As she examined the tray in front of her the usual bombardment of condemnation flowed.

“Eggs too runny... Coffee too strong... Idiot... and Useless.”

This was the typical routine, yet this morning my mood was so highly elevated that I cheerfully withstood the verbal pummeling. At precisely 8:30 a.m. I was meticulously packing my fine German knives in a large stainless steel case for a presentation later that day. I had in my possession a second case, and this one I placed on the bed, empty.

Moments later I heard my wife singing some wretched show tune in the shower, something from *The Sound of Music*, I think, but with her it was difficult to tell. I calmly picked up the shiny butcher boning knife from my collection, which is a strong, long narrow knife, and as its name implies, is used to sever through bones.

Perfect.

As I approached the bathroom door, I heard her shrieking out her pathetic rendition of Julie Andrews over the sound of the gushing water. Holding my breath, I opened the door and entered. As I watched her flabby silhouette wobbling behind the floral shower curtain, I could not help but shudder. A moment later, and with a speed that surprised even me, I had thrown back the curtain and plunged the knife with exacting precision into the base of her neck. The shower continued to gush relentlessly, but the water was transformed into the most beautiful hue of red. Her death was almost instantaneous and relatively painless, I believe, and within a few moments she collapsed onto the floor of the bathtub. I watched fascinated as the blood continued to flow. This is why I had decided upon the shower, so that the blood would be drained away, and after about twenty minutes not a trace of red was left to be seen.

It was then time for the next phase of my plan, and once more I turned to my trusted knife collection and returned the boning knife lovingly back into its place, spotlessly clean and shining. I removed a stainless steel meat cleaver and a butcher's saw. My spirits were

rather high at this time; I was enjoying this far more than I imagined I would. I turned my stereo on and the joyous sounds of Beethoven filled the diminutive bathroom.

Perfect.

As I set about my gruesome task, I imagined the conductor gallantly guiding the orchestra as they pounded out the *Fifth Symphony*. I took up the rhythm of the music and orchestrated my movements to it; I was starting to have fun, as her arms and legs came off with relative ease. However the head, which I had saved for last, was a little more trouble; in fact, it took me nearly ten minutes to finally disconnect each stubborn sinew. Finally, with one almighty whack from the cleaver the last ligament surrendered to my blade. I laughed to myself as I considered that Mildred was always making trouble; naturally her murder was not going to be an exception.

The body had been cut and sliced tidily into small pieces. I took the suitcase, lined it with plastic bin liners and methodically positioned all of her body pieces in it. I placed Mildred's head on top, and with much satisfaction at a job well done, jubilantly closed it.

Perfect.

I meticulously cleaned my knives and scrubbed the shower using copious amounts of heavy duty cleanser. After all of my efforts I surveyed the bathroom; it was spotless.

Perfect.

At this point it was almost 10:30 a.m., which left plenty of time for my drive to West Virginia for my presentation at the hotel association. By 11:00 a.m. I pulled out from the garage of my tidy little house in Ohio in my station wagon. I had the two suitcases crammed into the back, along with my overnight bag. I placed my favorite Mozart CD into the player, and as *Piano Sonata Number Eleven* filled my ears, I started to relax. *Almost done.*

I had driven this same route many times over the years, and as I sped along the highway I knew precisely what needed to be accomplished. I came to the appropriate exit, which is located right in the heart of West Virginia, and took the adjoining mountain trail into the green hills. I needed to travel two miles. You see, I had already dug the hole where I was going to dispose of Mildred. I remember looking at my watch then; it was 1:45 p.m.

Perfect.

I had five hours before I had to do my presentation at the conference, which was plenty of time. I hummed along merrily to Mozart once more as I bounced along the logging road. Very few vehicles ever traveled out here so I considered it the ideal spot for the disposal. It was then that the unexpected happened. I felt the car veer sharply to the left and I realized at once what my problem was—a flat tire. As I hastily removed the contents from the back of my car to reach the spare and tools, I cursed nervously to myself.

It was only a minor hitch and I still had plenty of time. Thirty minutes later, I was racing along the mountain road yet again. It had begun to drizzle at this point, and the road in front of me was quickly turning to mud. These sudden April showers were common enough, but I could not help but wonder deep down that some strange kind of bad karma was beginning to overtake me. I quickly suppressed the growing gnaw of guilt in my gut. This was not going to be as easy as I had imagined after all, and even though I was no longer enjoying the process, there was no turning back now.

I finally made it to my chosen spot with the rain still falling. I hastily got myself out from the car, grabbed the case and dropped it deep into the awaiting cavity. I hurriedly scrambled to fill in the hole and slipped, falling directly on top of the case. As I clambered to my feet, I realized that Mildred would have gotten a good laugh out of this. I could imagine her cackling disparagements at me, “Useless, pathetic, feeble, stupid...”

It took almost an hour to cover her up. I hadn't counted on it taking so long and I was really behind schedule now; I was going to have to hurry. I placed the inspiring music of Elgar into my player and turned the volume up to maximum as I once again bounced along the mountain road, back to the freeway and on to my convention. I managed to distract my unfocused, doubting mind by considering what lay ahead of me. The next couple of days were going to be fun, after all; hotel conventions always are.

Two hours later, I hastily pulled into the Charleston Weekender Inn, where the convention was being held. I hurriedly checked in at the front desk, and as the reservation clerk handed me my room key, it seemed as though she was eyeing my dirty clothes suspiciously.

Did she somehow know what I had been doing? Or was I simply getting paranoid?

In a few moments I was in the hotel room, safely locking the door behind me. I unlocked the mini bar and poured myself a generous quantity of bourbon. As I took a hot shower I kept seeing Mildred's face from the corner of my eye, silently mocking me and causing me to question my own sanity. I remember thinking that I had to pull myself together, that the worse was surely over.


Just at the stroke of 7:00 p.m. I marched punctually into the auditorium, my confidence restored. Several hundred anonymous faces greeted me with polite applause. I studied the carcass of the pig on top of the stage, the expression on the dead animal's face held a spooky resemblance and I shivered. I took a deep breath and lifted my trusted knife set next to the pig; my presentation on butchery was about to commence.

Perfect.

I opened the case and the auditorium instantly became hushed. At first I was unsure as to what had provoked such a surprising reaction. Then I saw Mildred's face, smiling up at me. See, I told you it was kind of funny! You've guessed what mistake I made, haven't you? Of course—I had gone and buried the wrong case.



W*ell? Not bad, I say. But this situation is nothing. Take the tale, for instance, told me by a man who was in no danger to die. But he needed me more than the other one. Yes, he did...*



P.S. GIFFORD was born on April 28, 1965 in Birmingham, England. From a remarkably early age, he discovered his fascination with the written word. By the age of nine he was devouring several books a week and began to write. In the early 1980s P.S. Gifford and his father relocated to the California coast, which he has cheerfully called home ever since.

While in college, Paul wrote a few stories, but as he got older alas writing was relegated onto his hectic life's "back burner" and he barely wrote a word of fiction for over fifteen years. However, in 2004 all this was about to abruptly and delightfully change, as that was the year when he realized that despite a serene contented existence an important aspect in his life was missing: the written word. So, once more he began churning out in abundance short stories. And the rest, as they say, is history.

Since then he has written well over one hundred short stories and has had numerous tales published. P.S. Gifford lives in Lake Forest, California. He is married, has a son, two dogs, a rabbit and an endless dream ...





RIP

Who Am I?

Well, I am the imaginary friend.
You know—the one you conjure up for
conversation when you're consumed with
loneliness, greed or visions of imminent doom. I
have listened to thousands of stories and it would
be a shame if they just stayed with me, never to
be heard again. I have chosen to share only
the ones I found to be particularly... curious.
Have you ever been troubled by nightmares?
Were you relieved when you woke up? No
matter. Are you sure you can tell the difference
between the nightmare and the waking state?
Think it through before giving me your answer.
Sometimes only an imaginary friend can truly
listen to your deepest troubles and most
distressing woes.

Wouldn't you agree?

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"A cross between Edgar Allan Poe
and Stephen King."
Lawrence Dagstine, The Literary Bone

3rd Place, Best Horror eNovel
Preditors & Editors 2006 Reader's Poll

Very cool and impressive!!!
*Nicholas Grabowsky, author,
HALLOWEEN IV*

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