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The Curious Accounts Of The Imaginary Friend
P.S. Gifford
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Virtual Tales
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Official Apex Reviews Rating: ★★★★★

A serial killer is tormented by the ghosts of his victims – years after his crimes were committed and concealed; a conniving golddigger murders her husband and hides his body within the walls of their home – only to have him mysteriously exact his revenge on her years later; rapt in her undying love for him, a disturbed woman keeps her dead husband’s rotting corpse around for years – and even feeds it breakfast every morning.

Dozens of tales such as these – and ones even more bizarre – fill the pages of **The Curious Accounts Of The Imaginary Friend**. In it, debut author P.S. Gifford introduces the reader to various vignettes featuring a vast assortment of different characters who commit the most gruesome acts imaginable. The uniting factor? An omnipresent “Imaginary Friend” representing the personal conscience of each malefactor, providing the reader with a first-hand look into their conflicted, tormented souls.

Both disturbing and intriguing, **Curious Accounts** is nothing if not imaginative. Gifford’s collection delves deeply into the darkest dimensions of human nature, taking the reader along for an eye-opening ride through the realm of twisted logic that sinister minds often apply in justification of their malfeasance. What’s most striking about Gifford’s stories, though, is the revealing manner in which he frames his protagonists, successfully placing the earnest – if not flawed – nature of their humanity on full display.

Consider, for example, the account of the man who, as a teen, kills an unsuspecting hobo in a remote wooded area...why? Because the transient is about to feast upon a defenseless rabbit for dinner, and the teen has always considered

himself a protector of the innocent wildlife in the area. After killing the hobo, though, the teen becomes stricken with considerable grief that consumes him for thirty years until he finally kills himself as an adult, unable to bear the weight of it anymore...little does he know, though, he did the world a huge favor by killing the hobo – who actually turned out to be an escaped mental patient and one of the country's most notorious serial killers.

Another compelling story features a miserable knife salesman who for years suffers through a loveless marriage to a woman who criticizes him mercilessly at every turn. He finally kills her one day, then proceeds to dismember her body, stuff her various parts in a suitcase, and make his way to a major sales conference out of town – with plans to dump her remains along the way. After arriving at the conference, he prepares his presentation – only to realize, once he opens his suitcase, that he disposed of the wrong one, exposing his heinous deed in full view of all the conference attendees.

Definitely not for the squeamish, **The Curious Accounts Of The Imaginary Friend** is, nonetheless, a skillfully crafted volume of stories sure to remind the reader of that quite, yet powerful voice within us all – and the equally powerful influence that it can wield over us if we're not careful...