



Follies: New Stories

Ann Beattie

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Ann Beattie's *Follies* is a superb novella and collection of stories about adult children, aging parents, and the chance encounters that irrevocably alter lives. Beattie, winner of four O. Henry prizes, has been called "one of our era's most vital masters of the short form" (*The Washington Post Book World*). She is a masterful observer of domestic relations and the idiosyncratic logic that governs human lives.

In *Follies*, her most resonant collection, she looks at baby boomers in their maturity, sorting out their own lives and struggling with parents who are eccentric, unpredictable, and increasingly dependent. In "Fléchette Follies," a man rear-ends a woman at a stoplight, and the ripple effect of that encounter is vast and catastrophic. In "Apology for a Journey Not Taken," a woman's road trip is perpetually postponed by the UPS deliveryman who wants to watch TV in her house, by the girl next door who has lost her dog, and by the death of her friend in a freak accident. Impatient in his old age, the protagonist of "That Last Odd Day in L.A." can hardly manage a pleasant word to his own daughter, but he finds a chance for redemption on the last day of a vacation he spends with his niece and nephew.

Ann Beattie is at the top of her form in this superb collection, writing with the vividness, compassion, and sometimes morbid wit that have made her one of the most influential writers of her generation.

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