

place. I'm going to take you to buy some shoes and *panties*." I waited a long time until I saw a man go by and asked him, "Have you seen my father around here?"

The man asked, "Who's your father?"

"Rogelio."

"Oh, you're Rogelio's daughter. Yes, go to such and such a bar. He's there drinking."

And there he was, flat broke, and drunk. I went in and snatched the glass of rum from his hand and broke the bottle he was holding. It made me angry to see him like that. I told him, "Aren't you ashamed to drink like that, an old man like you? And you deceive me as if I were a baby, promising to buy me something and getting drunk instead."

Then I said to the lady at the bar, "Don't sell him any more rum because he never spends a cent on me. He just takes his money and buys rum." Well, all my father did that time was pick me up and carry me home. He loved me a lot, but what's the use of loving if he didn't give anything?

When he was drunk he always went to his house and lay down to sleep. He didn't get up again until he was sober. Drunk or sober, he never swore or hurt anybody's feelings. He didn't like swearing and one couldn't even say a little word like *coño* in his hearing. My father was always solemn, but everyone was very fond of him anyway. He was a man who never knew what it was to go to court. He never fought and always behaved with propriety. That's the way he treated me too; he never once beat or slapped me. But, God forgive me, my father was never a father to me and I loved my mother more than anyone else in the world. Dear God, forgive me!

*Anti-Story: An Anthology of  
Experimental Fiction  
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## motherlogue

Ann Quin

OH HELLO darling how lovely to hear you thank you for calling on this day yes I know I know one shouldn't but still we share this don't we dear his death of course it's really his birthday Well how are things anything happening it's been cold here are you warm enough in that flat I told you how cold it would get the snow's coming through my kitchen window no no it's all right now I've stuffed newspaper in it mmmmmmm is it well I haven't been out today are you using the electric blanket I gave you because if not you could bring it back next time you come down all it needs is a longer lead I'm sure Richard can fix that has he done it yet I see well if you aren't using it I may as well have it back By the way I've got a new lodger Mr. Mole his name yes really Mole funny isn't it and he's just like one too well he hasn't changed a thing in the room left the furniture exactly as I had arranged it not like some people the only trouble is he will use the lavatory late at night wakes me up and you know the plug being pulled sounds like a deluge coming down and then guess what yesterday he came knocking at my door all white faced said a pigeon had fallen down his chimney and would I see to it he was in a terrible state he'd already moved his bed out and put it in that small kitchen where he went off to while I was left to deal with the pigeon well I called the chimney sweep what a todo and he hasn't moved back in there no dear the lodger the pigeon was taken out and there he is sleeps in that windowless room with the electric light burning all the time of course I'll have to speak to him I mean the electricity bill is large enough without yes dear well he's a computer you know works with machines no he doesn't seem to have a girl friend no I don't think he's one of those what what I can't hear

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you oh dear this line's terrible can you hear me oh did you dear well what had your father got to say for himself then yes he seems a little better walks more quickly seems more coherent doesn't he but he's now got this trouble in his ear like a little heart beating away in there he said and you know what he thinks some insect might have got in there yes dear an insect in his ear it was certainly on his mind the whole day he came down here he couldn't talk about anything else and you know something every time he visits me he nestles down in the armchair and says oh it's so good to be home again I have the feeling if given half the chance he'd hang his hat up here and oh dear you know how soft I can be and then he tries to kiss me when he leaves but I always turn my cheek the other way

what was that oh really well I don't know dear I was thinking of flying to Edinburgh for Christmas there's a hotel advertised all in and you and Richard won't want me around you'll want to be together won't you dear and I do have a week off

yes yes well I thought it might be fun go off on my own well your father told me when he asked what you might be doing for Christmas you said you didn't really know by the way he asked me when you might get married do you really think

hello hello are you there who who who's she oh Richard's wife yes of course well I suppose he must miss the children and that is a problem isn't it dear do you really think she'll divorce him I mean

and oh by the way you might tell him to get that magazine readdressed it keeps coming here you know with his wife's name on it I don't know what the postman must think and sometimes it goes upstairs by mistake and there's a huge parcel for him too he owes me some postage on it I don't know sometimes I feel its like a post office here no no dear it doesn't matter it's only a few bob but you know it's unlucky for stamps not to be paid for anyway if he's expecting anything from New York he might not get it the main post office there was burnt down and all the mail for Europe well at least for Britain was completely destroyed How's Ronnie have you seen him lately do give him my love lovely boy so gentle and understanding oh you had him round then what did you cook ah you must tell me

the secret of doing that no no darling I was only kidding of course Richard likes his food doesn't he takes a lot to feed a man like that of course he needs it all that energy does he still like his babyfood milk dear I mean and he's always eating isn't he still they say it's good to eat often and little does he still eat with his knife well dear that time he used the knife with the cheese I mean it was such a sharp knife he'll cut his tongue one of these days Well how are you feeling you sound a bit down oh yes the weather has been awful did you see in the paper that poor old woman found frozen to death and oh my goodness you remember Peggy I forgot to tell you I saw Lilly at the theatre the other night and she told me she was earth bound what dear no no not Lilly you know Peggy who was found dead after a whole week the landlady discovered her only because of the smell coming out onto the landing there she was a whole week rotting away well apparently she's earth bound they've had several new lodgers in and each one hasn't stayed long terrible things happening in the night bedclothes taken off furniture thrown about and one girl even had her nightie torn off yes yes dear they've seen her of course it was all Peggy's furniture I bet she's mad being left there like that for a whole week cheerful soul really wasn't she so full of life terrible thing to happen you never know do you Oh by the way dear I thought perhaps you'd like to come down this weekend there's a good play on and I could book tickets oh I see well enjoy yourselves Oh I forgot to tell you I've ordered a nice leather bag for you to match your coat after all that one you've got looks so tatty

How's the smoking dear I can hear you coughing away you ought to try those small cigars I told you about are you taking those vitamin pills I'm sure Richard is he knows how to take good care of himself did you read all that about the birth pills of course it might be those that spoil your complexion used to be so nice and clear well it does look kind of dry these days and you look so grey when you do come down I don't think cities really agree with you still God knows where you'll be this time next year the other end of the world I suppose What are you doing for New Year's Eve oh I see no no I haven't arranged anything and I'm certainly not going to the Scottish



do so cliquish besides they'd only put me next to a terrible old blind man like last time no one else would and they think ah there's old muggins we'll put her next to him as she hasn't got anyone and he's not half as blind as he's supposed to be there he is eyeing all the girls no I'm not putting up with that rather spend it on my own the only problem is I haven't got a first footer you know dear a dark man to come into the flat after midnight no no the lodger won't do he's blonde at least I think he is he hasn't got that much hair but I know he's not dark ah well How's the money side of things have you worked it out between you I mean you can spend a lot of money on food alone feeding a big man like Richard it's a shame he can't get a job no no not so much the money dear even a voluntary job would get him out of the flat for a while I mean he's really so restless isn't he all that excess energy and besides no woman can stand having a man around all day

I see well it is difficult to make ends meet for me but then something always turns up even when I'm down to my last penny something turns up my guardian angel looks after me just as well I suppose no one else will I thought I might take up typing lessons can't afford a typewriter though well next year as you know dear I retire of course everyone is amazed that I've nearly reached retirement age what what do you mean dear 1/3d for the cinema oh old age pensioners yes I know it's silly really but when I see these old women drawing their pensions out I think oh dear next year I'll be one of those yes I know dear still at my age what man will look at me they go after all these young girls not that I really need a man around you know I couldn't bear the idea of sharing the same bed besides I snore no what I want is a nice cultured man just for a companion go to the theatre with occasionally someone who likes classical music and good books but men of my age they're so dull and the ones who do look at me aren't worth a second look

yes well I did go out once with that one but he had such a terrible speaking voice I couldn't bear it besides I think he thought I was a rich widow oh I soon tell them I have a job and the car's not mine but belongs to the firm you soon know

then what they're after By the way dear I forgot to mention you know that awful man who came up behind you on the beach and exposed himself well the police have caught a man who's assaulted three women along that stretch of the underwalk I bet it's the same man terrible isn't it you can't go anywhere nowadays rape murder robbery only the other day a poor old woman was coshed to death by hooligans in the grocery just round the corner fancy doing that to a poor defenceless woman And oh did I tell you about the car gave me a nasty turn the other day this car in front of me a woman driver too which is unusual turned off to the right suddenly no signals nothing good job I had my wits about me and there was a lorry right behind me he had to go up on the pavement don't know what would have happened if he what dear oh sorry I always do get a bit shouty when I'm hysterical well it did shake me up no no the car's all right Oh I forgot to tell you such an awful dream I had the other night no dear not the lavatory one wasn't that a strange one there you were hanging half way out of the cistern with all those people looking on and you said you wanted to do it alone that you had to prove something and I thought why demonstrate it in such a difficult way no this dream was really awful I even woke up crying I was searching for you in large buildings then in a huge forest and I couldn't find you anywhere I woke up in a terrible state and it still haunts me funny how some dreams have that effect on one isn't it that one you had of me burning myself like a Buddhist nun no no I never really try to interpret my dreams just as well probably those nightmare ones amaze me because they always seem to be some kind of prophesy it might take a few months but as sure as fate something linked to the dream happens very weird isn't it well dear I better ring off this must be costing you something you'll be down on the Sunday I suppose oh but darling you can't possibly come down on Christmas Day there aren't any trains running no no nothing that day had you forgotten this is England not America everything closes down here yes yes I'm absolutely sure anyway I expected you to be down on Christmas Eve I'd like to see something of o.k. dear and



there's only about one train on Boxing Day so you'll have to go back the following day what's Ronnie doing by the way for Christmas

oh I see well it would have been nice to have had him with us liven things up a bit lovely boy do give him my love when you see him next Well dear it's been lovely hearing from you and I'll get a nice turkey I've got a lot of booze in yes I know dear he still drinks beer doesn't he most men drink beer well be seeing you darling lovely to hear yes yes goodbye oh what time train will you be getting I see well I'll wait until I hear from you on the phone yes yes goodbye darling take care of yourself and my love to

in the  
heart of  
the heart  
of the  
country

*William Gass*

A Place

so I HAVE sailed the seas and come . . .

to B . . .

a small town fastened to a field in Indiana. Twice there have been twelve hundred people here to answer to the census. The

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