



The Accident

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Carried by David Plante's keen psychological interest in the details of his characters' inner lives, *THE ACCIDENT* demonstrates his ability to tell a tightly crafted story in which every element counts toward the eventual revelation. Building on his own experience of studying abroad at the Catholic University of Louvain in Belgium in the fall of 1959, Plante presents an unnamed narrator who, thrust in to the same situation, desperately tries to come to terms with the intellectual challenge his life represents to him.

THE ACCIDENT develops its theme of spiritual quest primarily through its narrator's interactions with a small group of fellow American students, each of whom represents a different alternative to the questions consuming the narrator: the self-conscious poser Vincent Vosac; the compassionate believer Tom Donlon; and the blunt, rebellious Karen Larvens. Their fates are inextricably meshed with the narrator's when their rented car crashes en route to Spain, a place of magical attraction for the protagonist.

With Tom the only casualty, and Vincent symbolically punished for his reckless driving with a prolonged hospital stay, the narrator is shocked into a sudden awareness of both the beauty and the transitory nature of life, a new awareness he shares with the similarly jolted Karen. It is now that the reader discovers that Plante has cleverly hidden his highly symbolic and profoundly moral message behind the narrator's pretentious flippancy, and that the stark realism of his prose camouflages the great artistic deliberation with which the novel is put together. A reader who can forgive the characters their never-ceasing, at times deadening earnestness, and who is fascinated by the struggles of the protagonist, will enjoy *THE ACCIDENT* tremendously.

Sources for Further Study

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