



## An Accidental Light

*Elizabeth Diamond*

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"Why didn't you have your headlights on?" . . . I couldn't tell him about the light in November. When it's easy not to notice the first signs of dusk. When shapes suddenly lose their edges and a girl moving quickly from behind a stationary bus, moving in the fading light, in the rain, in the November gloom, may be a ghost, a spirit, something from the Underworld, a phantom from out of my own mind."

On a quiet road just outside London, in the blue half-light of dusk, a fatal car accident takes the life of thirteen-year-old Laura Jenkins, and her death changes the lives of two families forever. For Jack Philips, a married police officer with two small daughters, the consequences of that evening behind the wheel will force him to reassess everything he loves and to confront long-buried secrets from his past. For Lisa Jenkins, the loss of her daughter seems unbearable. As she struggles to find the courage to rebuild her life, her husband grows ever more reclusive, and Laura's presence continues to haunt her. Eventually, Lisa's and Jack's paths cross in surprising and shocking ways.

In this heartbreakingly redemptive novel, Elizabeth Diamond explores the ripple effects of a single moment of tragedy--the journey from guilt to peace, from vengeance to forgiveness, from sorrow to hope--and even, ultimately, to joy. *An Accidental Light* is a tender and deeply affecting story that is not easily forgotten.

## An Accidental Light Details

Date : Published February 3rd 2009 by Other Press (NY) (first published April 29th 2008)

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Author : Elizabeth Diamond

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## From Reader Review An Accidental Light for online ebook

### Su says

This novel is probably deserving of more stars, but I couldn't bring myself to give it three. It is a story of a man who accidentally kills a young girl while driving home one night. What follows is the effect this event had on both he and his family and the mother and father of the dead girl. I guess it explained all their feelings in great detail, but still left me wanting more out of the book. At the end of it I was just relieved that it was finished!

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### Eric Klee says

The death of one person can change another person's life. The death of a child can change the lives of that child's parents. In this novel by Elizabeth Diamond, the lives of two families are forever changed when the man from one family accidentally hits and kills the daughter of the other. And while, yes, it is a sad, sad moment, it's also the spark that ignites both couples to finally start living and do what makes them happy instead of remaining stagnant.

The story takes place in England, but the story transcends international borders. It could take place in any "Western" country or U.S. state. In fact, I didn't realize where it actually took place for several chapters when Diamond started using British colloquialisms.

Diamond's writing is very conversational and easy to read. I quickly breezed through the novel during Christmas vacation and was never bored. Her descriptions and character development were wonderful. The only part that felt jarring to me was the novel's first sudden change in point of view. The first few chapters were told from the point of view of Jack, the man who accidentally hit and killed Laura, the little girl, one day while driving home because she ran out from behind a bus and he didn't have time to stop. He tells his story to his psychiatrist and we, the readers, are his psychiatrist. Later, the story's point of view shifts without warning. Suddenly, we're being told the story from the point of view of Lisa, the girl's mother, whom we haven't even met yet. She's telling her story to her deceased daughter, Laura. We, the readers, substitute for Laura. Once you understand whose point of view each particular chapter is, the confusion dissipates.

All in all, I thought this was a very powerful and well-written dramatic novel about people's ability to cope with loss. I enjoyed it as much as the similarly themed "The Lovely Bones" by Alice Sebold and "The Bright Forever" by Lee Martin. I look forward to reading more from Elizabeth Diamond.

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### Solla says

I picked this up at random, thought it might be a mystery. It wasn't, but it was a page turner. It had a strong portrayal of how accidentally killing a child affected the driver, Jack. Although told in first person from the point of view of two characters, the other, Lisa, being the mother of the child, the driver was the strongest for me. The accident kicked off a lot of feelings from the past, and I thought the encounters of both characters with family members was done well. Spouses were drawn less well or less intimately, except at the end for Lisa's husband. I enjoyed the portrayal of the Lisa's best friend, and Jack's therapist. It is set in England, and

it might be interesting for how Jack's trauma was treated in England (assuming the fiction is more or less an accurate portrayal of what might happen) and how it might be treated in the U.S.). I can't say it was a great book, but I enjoyed it. It is a first novel so it promises of better to come.

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### **Maya Panika says**

A single event, the death of a child in an accident, changes the lives of everyone involved as the story unfolds.

It's a very smooth read, compelling yet very easy to digest; written in first person from the point of view of two characters, the dead girl's mother and the policeman who accidentally killed her, both bound by the tragedy and the ghost of the dead girl who appears to them both.

Their lives and the lives of those around them, amble along; nothing huge happens yet everything changes as their comfortable, half-happy existences fall slowly apart. Lives are destroyed, repaired, remade. Life goes on.

It's a story about the remarkable events of everyday lives, of Shakespearian tragedies unfolding behind the double glazing. Most of all, it's a story about how friendship and love can happen despite a history of heartbreaks old and new and how lives can be rebuilt despite shared horror, grief, hate and loathing.

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### **Jo Barton says**

In the normal course of events Jack Philips is a good guy. A serving police officer with a good track record, he is happily married to Sam, and has two little girls.

When driving home one night he is involved in a road traffic accident, the consequences of which will have dramatic repercussions on the lives of two families.

This is a thoughtful and provoking read, ultimately heartbreaking and describing every parent's worst nightmare, but told with compassion and bravery.

It proves that life doesn't always work out the way you plan.

" I've seen her a thousand times. Running through the blue shadows in the rain. Stopped by a screech of brakes and my voice shouting. Stopped by the sudden boom of my heart " ..

Enjoyed it.

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### **Clare says**

The one moment that changes everything...this theme is explored expertly in Diamond's novel. What I particularly enjoyed about this riveting story is its realism. The author could have written a very different book and made everything turn out in ways that are not real. Instead she writes truth about tragedy - it's lasting consequences, its impact on victims and bystanders, its bitter reality. This is a hard book to read in some ways but definitely not to be missed.

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### **Pamela says**

A tragedy, a total accident, triggers a chain of events. Jack, a policeman, a married man with two girls, accidentally kills Laura, a 13 year-old girl. Jack cannot seem to get past his guilt. The accident also effects Laura's, parents, Lisa and Derek. It's a story about the journey from guilt to peace, from vengeance to forgiveness, and eventually to inner happiness. The one person I have to mention that I could not stand was Jack's wife, Sam. She had to be the most selfish person ever. Of course she cannot understand what Jack is going through but she expects him to get over it as quick as possible. For a woman who loves her husband, she certainly does nothing to support him in his time of need. Not only that, she blames him totally for the destruction of their marriage.

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### **Ellen says**

Really enjoyed this book - well-written and good story. Losing a child is a horrible experience and Lisa Jenkins pulls herself together and goes on in spite of that - in fact, her dead daughter inspires great courage and compassion. Jack Philips, the police officer who drove the car which killed Lisa's daughter, goes through hell and becomes a stronger person too. Both of them experience the dead child, Laura, as a sort of guardian angel who helps them move toward healing.

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### **Ev Bishop says**

Riveting story, wonderfully wrought characters, plus an interesting spin on paranormal and ghosts.

Thirteen-year-old Laura Jenkins, tragically killed in a car accident by off duty policeman Jack Philips, visits her mourning mother, her furious, revenge-bent father, and grief-and-guilt stricken Jack--but in such subtle ways that you're never sure whether her visits are literal or the figments of grieving minds trying to cope with their new realities. Makes you wonder (perhaps again!) about what ghosts are exactly--if they are . . .

Will definitely read more books by Elizabeth Diamond!

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### **Barbara Sissel says**

AN ACCIDENTAL LIGHT, Elizabeth Diamond's riveting debut novel begins: A life can change in an instant. That's all it takes. She gives us that much certainty. What is uncertain, what plays tricks is the light--road light--especially at evening. Anyone who drives at that hour can be fooled for an instant, can misjudge the shape, the potential for hazard. Jack Philips is driving home in such vague light when his instant comes; he isn't sure of what he sees when Laura Jenkins, a thirteen-year-old girl, emerges quickly, ghost-like, from the blue-misted shadow of a parked bus into the street, not until he stops after his car strikes her. Kneeling beside her, he keeps his eyes on her face; her fingers are cold in his. The gleam of light in her eyes suggests the soul is yet uncertain of where it should be. Her mother, Lisa, is at work dealing with a customer when the accident happens, when her daughter lies dying in the rain, in the street. In a stranger's grasp. Lisa Jenkins

will think later how unreal it is to be at work and oblivious in the very same instant that your ordinary life and your child are leaving you. These people and this tragedy that leaves them stunned and gasping, that rips up their lives is posed in such real and heartrending terms. And even when Laura reappears to both Jack and Lisa, it seems natural; it shares a sensibility with Alice Sebold's *The Lovely Bones*.

Elizabeth Diamond has drawn the characters in this novel, Lisa and Jack and their spouses, the girl, Laura, with such precision and care, and such honesty, they seem familiar, more like truth than fiction. And while the story's plot spins off this terrible calamity, the story itself is one of forgiveness, of redemption and found courage. The surprise is the suspense and the bit of magical realism. Both elements are so deftly woven through the pages you are scarcely aware of them, yet you're caught up, and it becomes truly riveting when Jack and Lisa's paths cross in the most astonishing twist, but again, the narrative is unfolded with such skill, you don't question the reality. I wasn't in the least surprised to learn Elizabeth Diamond is also a poet. She has a gift with language. In fact, *AN ACCIDENTAL LIGHT* has everything a good book should have: an absorbing storyline and deeply-layered characters, all wrapped up in a flow of beautiful writing. It's just a great read

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### **Kathryn says**

An off-duty policeman, Jack, doesn't see the young girl, Laura, stepping into the street in time to avoid hitting her. Laura dies and both her family and Jack's fall apart in the year following the accident. Diamond tells us the story from two perspectives: Jack's and Lisa's (Laura's mother). No big surprises but an interesting read.

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### **Rachel says**

This book had its moments. Nothing too fantastic, but it had some interesting aspects.

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### **Wyma says**

An accident. One man runs over and kills another man's daughter. Both men take self-destructive courses. Both their wives leave them and move on. The story is told from alternate points of view: Jack, the man who killed the little girl, albeit accidentally, and Lisa, the mother of the dead child. Well written and fascinating with ghostly influences of the child, their story holds us through the upheavals of two families. we watch as lives are examined, best friends betray, and insanity threatens to overtake. Recommended.

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### **Sarah says**

This was a very touching book to read, it was about a girl who accidentally got run over and died. This book looked at both the family whose family member it was who died and then the other family of the person who ran them over. This book felt very real to me and I would recommend it to other people.

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**Shari says**

This is a difficult book about a man who accidentally kills a young girl and how that incident changes him forever and allows him to confront his past that he has chosen instead to bury deep within. The book always looks at the girl's mother and how she too is able to find the positive in a horrible situation.

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