

WATCHING THE ACCIDENT HAPPEN

Richard Freeborn



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A3

RICHARD
FREEBORN

Richard's formal qualifications are principally academic. After service in the RAF and post-war work in Germany, where he also attended Goettingen university, he graduated from Oxford, did doctoral research and was posted by the FO to the British embassy in Moscow, joining what was called the Secretariat. Invited back to Oxford, he became a don and spent ten years there as tutor and lecturer before being offered a professorship at UCLA. This was followed by a professorship at Manchester University and finally appointment to the chair of Russian literature at London (SSEES).

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Why did Dave Redmond spend so much time watching cars? He had lived for years in a semi-detached house overlooking the A3 not through any accident of birth, but because he felt safe and happy in it. Retired, a widower, he had the time to watch cars. He had turned a soundproofed front bedroom into a kind of observation post for watching cars. But why?

Was he mad? He was reluctant to talk about it, just as he was reluctant to talk about his past, let alone about his absorbing hobby. He wanted to stay where he was and had not been really bothered about the possibility of change until new neighbours moved into the house next door. The new arrivals, especially a teenage boy and his mother, quickly became his friends for different reasons, but along with their arrival came the mother's partner bringing a threatening reminder of the Cold War into Dave Redmond's life.

The novel transforms itself from a study in suburban domesticity into an accidental love story that entirely changes his future. Simultaneously he faces an ironic awareness of the way what happened in Moscow one night can change identity and dominate his life. Meanwhile the cars go on racing everlastingly along the A3, until he suddenly finds himself watching the accident happen.