



One Stupid Thing

Stewart Lewis

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In the young adult mystery novel *One Stupid Thing*, three teenagers believe they caused a fatal car accident on a Nantucket summer evening.

Sophia, Trevor, and Jamie all have their lives change in dramatic ways after the accident. Their friendships fracture, and their plans spiral out of control. Each deals with the consequences of their one bad decision on their own.

Back on the island ten months later, the three reconnect as new information about the accident surfaces that might exonerate them. Joining them in their investigation is Violet, a girl with her own doubts about the accident. Their suspicion focuses on Violet's stepfather, Lester, an unscrupulous businessman. As the teenagers' case against Lester builds, each of them makes important discoveries about friendship, love, sexuality, class, and responsibility.

Told from the four main characters' alternating perspectives, the novel leans on some tropes, making it feel like *The Breakfast Club* set during a New England summer. Just as such movies crystallized 1980s teen culture, *One Stupid Thing* captures the nuances of power and self-doubt that shape the lives of today's text-obsessed youth.

The novel is gentle and compassionate when it comes to the characters' sexual comings-of-age, though Jamie's first night with his boyfriend is undernarrated, as is Violet's consummation of her relationship with Trevor, about which the book states that the couple "taught each other things between the sheets," foregoing the complexities of teen angst, passion, and sexual awakening. Where the mystery itself is concerned, the novel is short on surprises and sudden discoveries, working toward a climactic confrontation that's undercut by a *deus ex machina*.

In the young adult thriller *One Stupid Thing*, an island community's idiosyncrasies are represented in a skillful manner, as are the socioeconomic assumptions that linger just below the surface.

KLAY DYER (March / April 2021)

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