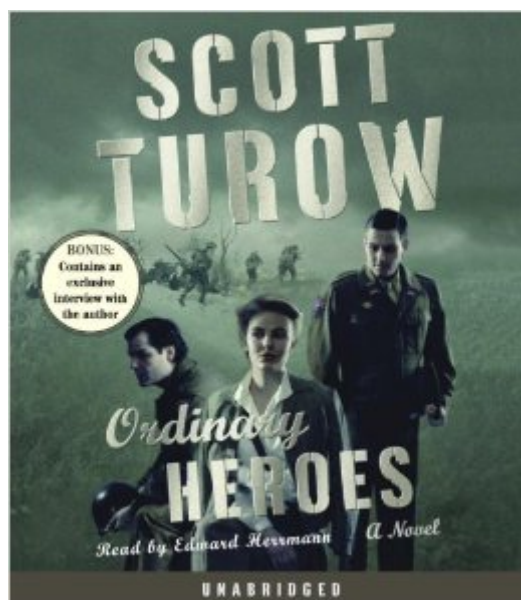


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Ordinary Heroes



Synopsis

Stewart Dubinsky knew his father had served in World War II. And he'd been told how David Dubin (as his father had Americanized the name that Stewart later reclaimed) had rescued Stewart's mother from the horror of the Balingen concentration camp. But when he discovers, after his father's death, a packet of wartime letters to a former fiancée, and learns of his father's court-martial and imprisonment, he is plunged into the mystery of his family's secret history and driven to uncover the truth about this enigmatic, distant man who'd always refused to talk about his war. As he pieces together his father's past through military archives, letters, and, finally, notes from a memoir his father wrote while in prison, secretly preserved by the officer who defended him, Stewart starts to assemble a dramatic and baffling chain of events. He learns how Dubin, a JAG lawyer attached to Patton's Third Army and desperate for combat experience, got more than he bargained for when he was ordered to arrest Robert Martin, a wayward OSS officer who, despite his spectacular bravery with the French Resistance, appeared to be acting on orders other than his commanders'. In pursuit of Martin, Dubin and his sergeant are parachuted into Bastogne just as the Battle of the Bulge reaches its apex. Pressed into the leadership of a desperately depleted rifle company, the men are forced to abandon their quest for Martin and his fiery, maddeningly elusive comrade, Gita, as they fight for their lives through carnage and chaos, the likes of which Dubin could never have imagined. In reconstructing the terrible events and agonizing choices his father faced on the battlefield, in the courtroom, and in love, Stewart gains a closer understanding of his past, of his father's character, and of the brutal nature of war itself. From the Hardcover edition.

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Random House Audio; Unabridged edition (November 1, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0739322591

ISBN-13: 978-0739322598

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 1.2 x 5.9 inches

Shipping Weight: 4 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (159 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #2,658,880 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in [Books > Books on CD >](#)

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Customer Reviews

This is not the classic page-turner of nonstop action, cliffhangers, and suspense. But it is classic Scott Turow: intelligent, intricately plotted, and superbly crafted, adding up to an extraordinary mystery that also can't be put down. Turow, a practicing lawyer best known for his legal drama, wraps the plot only loosely around the law as he treads new ground with this original novel of World War II. Stewart Dubinsky, a middle-aged reporter, knew his father served in Europe during WWII, but the War was a subject off-limits in the Dubinski household. Upon his father's death, Dubinski discovers that his father had been court-martialed and imprisoned, and sets out to find the decades-old answers. What follows is a tale that is anything but ordinary; a deeply emotional and painfully realistic drama of the horrors of war in the European theater. It is early 1944, and Dubinsky's father, David Dubin, is a young lawyer assigned to the US Army's JAG Corps headquartered in Nancy, France, recently re-occupied by the Allies. He is assigned to investigate the alleged insubordination of Robert Martin, a Major in the CIA-forerunner OSS. Martin is a shadowy figure; a living legend of unparalleled heroism and bravery behind Nazi lines, but perhaps also a spy the loosely allied Soviets. Turow, ever the perfectionist, can be counted on for a richly developed cast of characters. And rarely has there been a character more interesting than the enigmatic Gita Lodz, a Polish immigrant turned French resistance commando, a gritty and war-hardened warrior with as much similarity to Laura Croft as LeCarre's George Smiley has to James Bond. She is also the inseparable companion of Martin, setting up the first two legs of the triangle that Dubin not surprisingly completes.

I'm always a little amazed when people lump together Turow and Grisham as writers of "legal thrillers." Grisham turns out superficial, heavily cinematic potboilers. Turow constructs careful, literate, precisely plotted novels of substance. But having said that, I wasn't sure what to expect with this one. It is, indeed, a "thriller," and the plotline deals with the law, but the setting is the European Theater in World War II, not the present in Kindle County (which always has felt, to me, a lot like Cook County). Captain David Dubin is a young Jewish lawyer who goes through infantry officer training in early 1944 but is then assigned to JAG in France a few months after D-Day. He and a handful of others like him spend alternating days either prosecuting or defending GIs accused of ordinary crimes, from theft to rape and murder. It's hard, rather boring work and David yearns to take a more direct part in the war. Then his commander sends him out to locate and arrest Maj. Robert Martin, a swashbuckling OSS officer who has been ignoring orders he didn't agree with. And with Martin is Gita Lodz, a strong-willed Polish gamine who takes over David's heart and soul.

Martin, of course, has no intention of giving himself up to the military authorities and David's quest to carry out his orders takes him on a harrowing, appalling journey into the depths of war. He's forced by circumstances to take command of a rifle company, to send men to their deaths. His principles are challenged again and again, until he is no longer the earnest young officer who left a girl behind to fight for the American Way. And throughout the book, Turow dares you not to care about Dubin, the tormented Sgt. Bidwell, Gen. Teedle, and especially Gita, who does what she has to do. And you'll certainly care about Robert Martin.

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