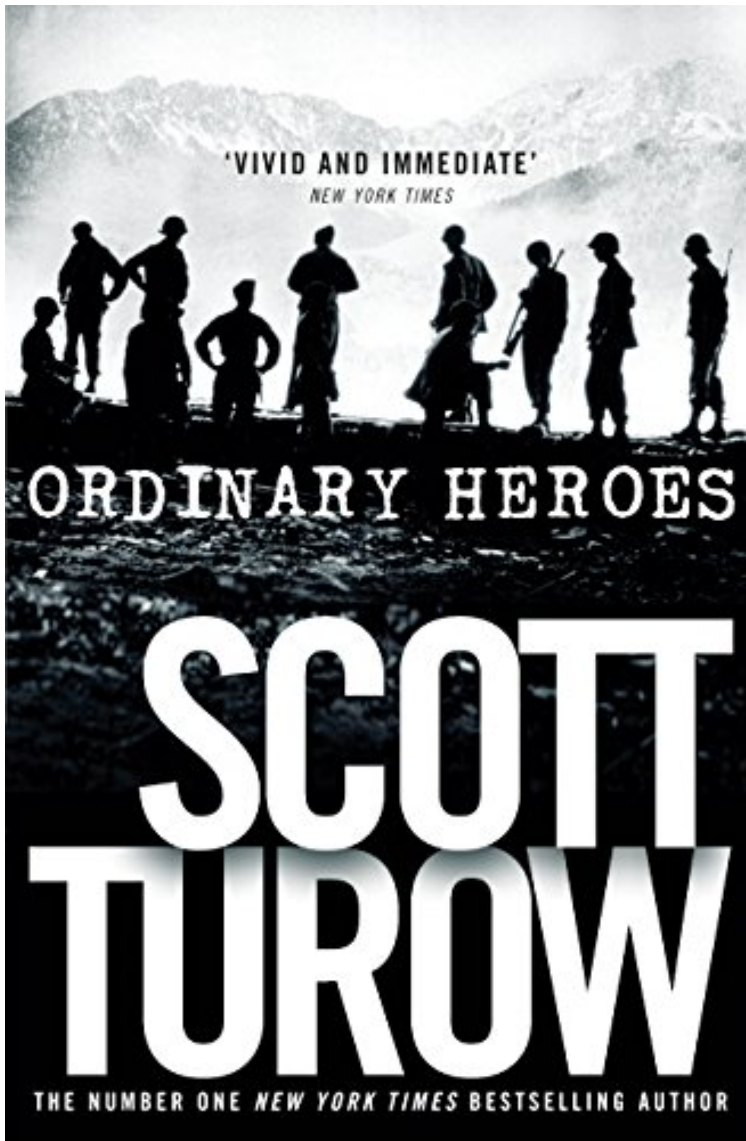


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Ordinary Heroes (English Edition)



Par Scott Turow
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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurAll parents keep secrets from their children. My father, it seemed, kept more than most . . . Whilst mourning the death of his father, journalist Stewart Dubin decides to research the life of a man he had always respected, always admired, but possibly never quite knew . . . As a young, idealistic lawyer during the last terrible months of the Second World War, David Dubin was sent to the European Front ostensibly to bring charges against a brave American hero, Robert Martin, who had suddenly, inexplicably, gone local and stopped following orders. Martin has become a liability and the authorities want him neutralized. But as Dubin learns more about Martin and the demons possessing him, he finds himself falling in love with Martin's enigmatic ex-mistress a dangerous woman of incredible courage. And someone who will do anything to protect her comrade-in-arms . . . Stewart discovers a journal written by his father and

learns of his incredible courage in the face of battle, reads first-hand of the shattering moral consequences for those caught in the chaos of war and, finally, the secret he had died protecting . . . From Publishers Weekly Starred . When retired newspaperman Stewart Dubinsky (last seen in 1987's *Presumed Innocent*) discovers letters his deceased father wrote during his tour of duty in WWII, a host of family secrets come to light. In Turow's ambitious, fascinating page-turner, a "ferocious curiosity" compels the divorced Dubinsky to study his "remote, circumspect" father's papers, which include love letters written to a fiancée the family had never heard of, and a lengthy manuscript, which his father wrote in prison and which includes the shocking disclosure of his father's court-martial for assisting in the escape of OSS officer Robert Martin, a suspected spy. The manuscript, hidden from everyone but the attorney defending him, tells of Capt. David Dubin's investigation into Martin's activities and of both men's entanglements with fierce, secretive comrade Gita Lodz. From optimistic soldier to disenchanting veteran, Dubin, via the manuscript, becomes the book's de facto narrator and describes the years of violence he endured and of a love triangle that exacted a heavy emotional toll. Dubinsky's investigations prove revelatory at first, and life-altering at last. Turow makes the leap from courtroom to battlefield effortlessly. (Nov. 1) Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From The Washington Post's Book World/washingtonpost.com

In combat, the rule of law is often a luxury warriors cannot afford. Is it theft to raid a well-stocked civilian larder while trapped behind enemy lines? Is it cruel and unusual to torture a captured messenger on the eve of battle? Is it murder to execute burdensome prisoners while retreating from an overwhelming force? To paraphrase Capt. Willard in *"Apocalypse Now,"* looking for justice in the midst of war is a bit like handing out speeding tickets at the Indy 500. This hard truth stands at the center of *Ordinary Heroes*, Scott Turow's seventh novel. The story opens in 2003, when Stewart Dubinsky, a 55-year-old crime reporter, happens upon a bundle of letters that allude to his recently deceased father's court-martial during the last days of World War II. Stewart is knocked flat by the thought that his "tirelessly proper" father should have such a scandalous past. An insurance company lawyer and devoted family man, David had always claimed that his wartime service as an assistant judge advocate in Europe was unexceptional. Stewart decides to investigate whether he is "the son of a convict who'd betrayed his country and slipped away on some technicality, or, perhaps, the child of a man who'd endured a primitive injustice which he'd left entombed in the past." After running into several bureaucratic roadblocks and the intransigence of his mother, a concentration camp survivor who would rather leave the past alone, Stewart strikes pay dirt when he unearths the defendant's personal account of his court martial. The document reveals that David was charged with allowing the escape of a renegade American intelligence officer named Robert Martin during the last days of the war. What's more, David made no bones about his guilt: "I intend to plead guilty because I am guilty. The reasons I freed Martin are irrelevant in the eyes of the law and, candidly, my own business." David's troubles began when he was assigned to investigate whether Martin was going off the reservation to mount unauthorized missions with a cadre of loyal partisans. After tracking Martin down at a French chateau, David was quickly seduced by his rebellious courage, as well as by the agent's right-hand woman, an alluring Polish partisan named Gita Lodz. The formerly desk-bound lawyer was dragged along on a bold raid against an ammunition dump, then literally dropped into the middle of the Battle of the Bulge, where he lost track of Martin but found himself commanding an infantry brigade. This early section of the novel proves its weakest. In works such as *Presumed Innocent* and *The Burden of Proof*, Turow used his expertise as a former Assistant United States Attorney to create narratives that were as much about the gritty day-to-day working of our legal system as the grand ideas their titles evoked. *Ordinary Heroes* lacks this grounding, and in those early chapters that focus on army life, it fails to achieve the raw power of his earlier work. Minor characters and action sequences seem to have come right out of countless war films, from the retreating U.S. soldiers, "grimy, embittered hangdog men, on whom the wages of war were posted like a sign," to the attacking tanks that "emerged like ghosts from the morning blizzard." True, many characters have their secrets, but these qualities seem tacked on merely to distinguish them. *Ordinary Heroes* finds its voice during a long, harrowing night in which David and his men had to play dead in the snow to avoid being picked off by German sharpshooters. Watching his soldiers being butchered proved a destabilizing ordeal for David, though worse was to come when his pursuit of Martin led him to the newly-liberated Balingen concentration camp, a vision of hell that threatened to shake him loose completely from his moral foundations. There, he was forced to make a self-sacrificing decision that cast him into the labyrinth of post-war politics and generated the mystery that his son must solve some 50 years later. What ultimately elevates the novel is its astute depiction of its central players. Stewart's self-lacerating share of the narrative provides some real

emotional punch when he discovers that unraveling a parent's mystery can often be a mixed blessing. Robert Martin and Gita Lodz may arrive like characters out of central casting, but as the novel progresses, both reveal qualities that will surprise the reader. Gita turns out to be considerably less hard-bitten than she lets on, while Martin's urbane cynicism masks an idealism that struggles to survive between the era's colliding ideologies. "I thought fascism was the plague," he explains to his captor in his bid to escape. "But war is. War is." In the end, *Ordinary Heroes*, like all of Turow's fiction, derives its considerable power from its depiction of a lawyer's disillusionment, his understanding of the dark ironies that await anyone with an absolute belief in the rule of justice. After that long night spent playing possum, David was celebrated for a command strategy that he knows was simply cowardice in action. "I had given my men saving advice mostly because it was what I had wanted to do, to lie down like a child and hope that the assault -- the war -- would be over soon. True, it was the wiser course. But I had taken it because at the center of my soul, I was a coward. And for this I was now being saluted." A more bitter wisdom was born at Balingen, where his faith in the law was shattered by the sight of Nazi atrocities. "There was no glory in the savagery I saw. No reason. And surely no law. . . . If human beings could do this, it seemed unfathomable how we could ever save ourselves. In Balingen, it was incontestable that cruelty was the law of the universe." This inner drama, rather than the battle scenes and action sequences, makes the novel worth reading, leaving the reader with a lasting sense of the corrosive effects of war on even the most civilized souls. It is little wonder David spent the remainder of his days toiling through "the infinite complications of insurance law." Winding up in a courtroom, with its messy human dramas, would have been too painful, forcing him to peer again and again into an abyss where the law holds no sway. ed by Stephen Amidon Copyright 2005, The Washington Post. All Rights Reserved.