

Iron String

Rudy Revak

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Though filled with grisly war images, this novelization is an inspiring story of the power of love.

Rudy Revak's *Iron String*, based on the story of his family's experiences during World War II, is a testament to the power of love, even when it is confronted by unimaginable evil.

With Europe in turmoil, residents of the small village of Scheindorf are feeling the awful effects of war. Battles rage, threatening to destroy their simple, peaceful life. Young Stefan Revak Jr., the son of Scheindorf's mayor, has been forced to serve in the German army and is training new conscripts in the effort to hold the Russians at bay.

Now in retreat and pushed back to defending German borders, Stefan and his comrades, angered to learn of the lies they have been fed by Hitler and his minions, are no longer fighting for Germany, but for their lives. Scheindorf now lies directly in the path of the Red Army, notorious for looting, murder, and rape, and Stefan fears for his family's safety. The Revak family, forced to quickly evacuate, is torn apart and must struggle to survive amidst the ravages of war, and the family's dream of a new life in America appears to be lost forever.

While called a work of fiction, Revak's book is based on approximately thirty years of audiotapes and transcripts made by his parents, together with his own memories and those of his sisters. Alternating between scenes and events that are in turn intimate, poignant, powerful, and chilling, *Iron String* is a fast-paced, gripping tale that pits two forces—that of evil and that of love—against each other. The work highlights the dignity and resilience of the human spirit, movingly portrayed through the story of Revak's family's suffering and eventual triumph.

Dialogue flows naturally, and the descriptions of people and their emotions are vivid. The book's layout and design give a feeling of spaciousness that makes reading a pleasure. A timeline of events and an ample reference section facilitate understanding and independent research, as does the section in which the author gives the history behind the story and makes clear what is fact and what is fiction in his narrative.

While history covers the geopolitical and societal consequences of war, Rudy Revak has made a great contribution to our understanding of its consequences for individual soldiers, civilian populations, and families. *Iron String*, though filled with grisly images of war, wounding, and starvation; of beautiful cities turned to rubble and ruin; and of dreams trampled into the barren soil, is also an inspiring story of the power of love to sustain life and hope. Perhaps this is our greatest hope for the future—that such love, fully lived and expressed outward into the wider world, will one day make the atrocity that is war obsolete.

KRISTINE MORRIS (November 29, 2016)

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