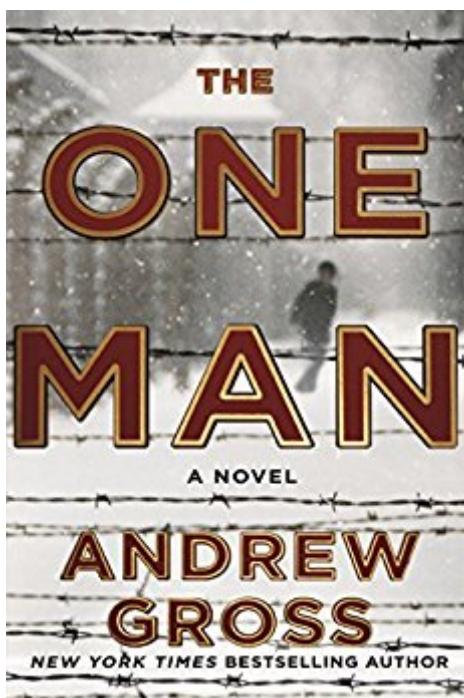


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# The One Man: The Riveting And Intense Bestselling WWII Thriller



## Synopsis

“As moving as it is gripping. A winner on all fronts.” Booklist (starred review)  
“Heart-pounding” Kirkus Reviews (starred review)  
Poland. 1944. Alfred Mendl and his family are brought on a crowded train to a Nazi concentration camp after being caught trying to flee Paris with forged papers. His family is torn away from him on arrival, his life’s work burned before his eyes. To the guards, he is just another prisoner, but in fact Mendl, a renowned physicist, holds knowledge that only two people in the world possess. And the other is already at work for the Nazi war machine. Four thousand miles away, in Washington, DC, Intelligence lieutenant Nathan Blum routinely decodes messages from occupied Poland. Having escaped the Krakow ghetto as a teenager after the Nazis executed his family, Nathan longs to do more for his new country in the war. But never did he expect the proposal he receives from “Wild” Bill Donovan, head of the OSS: to sneak into the most guarded place on earth, a living hell, on a mission to find and escape with one man, the one man the Allies believe can ensure them victory in the war. Bursting with compelling characters and tense story lines, this historical thriller from New York Times bestseller Andrew Gross is a deeply affecting, unputdownable series of twists and turns through a landscape at times horrifyingly familiar but still completely new and compelling.

## Book Information

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## **Customer Reviews**

This review contains spoilers, I am adding this because of the comments to my review. I got this book based on the description of the storyline. I have read different stories on the horrors inflicted by the Nazi regime, so I was mentally prepared for any horrors being described. What kept me more absorbed in the story was the dedication to achieve success despite all odds. Even in the mist of horror there were moments of beauty, like the chess games between Leo and Greta and the reunion of Nathan and his sister Leisa. The story starts at an old age home where a father is being visited by his daughter with a box containing a medal , the Distinguished Service Cross and a picture of a pretty blonde woman, a page of a Mozart concerto and a polished white cheese piece ,a rook.. The daughter asked her father to tell her about these items since he never mentioned them over his lifetime with the family. After some hesitation, he decides to tell the story. It begins with a tale about a physicist named Alfred Mendl who tried to leave Poland with his family along with a group of others but were stopped because of someone telling about the falsification of the travel papers issued to them. The entire group is finally rounded up and sent to Auschwitz where the women are separated from the men and put into two camps. Albert Mendl lost all his papers but he is able to store all his theories into the mind of Leo the chess champion. Nathan Blum is an escapee from Krakow, sent to US with a Talmud that dated back to the twelfth century a valuable item. Once there, he starts school but drops out to join the military where with his language skills, he was placed in intelligence. He wanted to be more active and asked for a transfer to the special unit of Jewish men being formed for the upcoming invasion of Europe by the US. But he gets an offer from the higher ups to do an even greater service. He is asked to infiltrate back into Poland and get into Auschwitz and rescue Alfred Mendl out of the camp. It was never explained to him, Nathan, the importance of Alfred Mendl but Mendl's theories are important to the secret Manhattan Project (i.e. nuclear weapons). Nathan agrees to do this impossible task. He is given details of the surrounding area and the camp, thanks to two escapees one of whom , he gets their number tattooed on his arm. Once he gets into the camp, he finds Alfred Mendl who only agrees to go if they also take Leo.

While preparing for escape, Nathan finds his sister playing in the orchestra and decides he needs to get her out, too. They almost get out of camp using the original escape plan but a Nazi intelligence agent Major Franke thwarts their plan and ties them all up around a table to torture the information from them. Alfred Mendl is mortally wounded and all looks bleak until Greta, the Commandant's wife walks in. She proceeds to shoot the Major and the aide who was in charge of being them. She tells them they have a chance to escape if Nathan disguises himself as the Major and to use his car to leave camp, with the driver as their captive. They leave Mendl dying behind with Greta and get to the plane pickup spot after disposing themselves of the driver. The Polish resistance army finds them and gives them the coverage to get on plane but Nathan dies trying to board but Leo and Leisa make it out. So the question is who is the person telling this story? I will leave it for you to read.

I've been a fan of Mr. Gross (writing with James Patterson) since reading Lifeguard 10 years ago. Not a piece of great literature but an early indicator of his talent. I've followed his career since going solo and he gets better and better. That said, I was somewhat apprehensive about diving into The One Man due to the subject matter. However, Gross' writing was up to his usual high standard and the story was enthralling. I highly recommend it. And for those who would like more factual information about this period in history, I recommend The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich (by William Shier and Ron Rosenbaum) which was based on actual letters and memoranda left behind when Hitler's staff made a hasty departure at the end of the war.

Mr. Gross is a friend and former K through 12 classmate. For this reason, I have refrained from reviewing any of his previous books. But even allowing for some degree of personal bias in his favor, this latest offering is, by all measures, a work to which attention must be paid. In "The One Man," he creates a level of tension even more gripping, develops characters even more compelling, and devises plot twists even more unpredictable (yet still plausible), than in his earlier, outstanding books. This novel was inspired by the experiences of the author's late father-in-law, who escaped from Poland in 1939; roughly the year in which the book begins. It makes the story especially personal to Mr. Gross, a fact which adds a level of intensity to his writing that few authors can match. "The One Man" is as forceful a work of historical fiction as you will ever read. If you are looking for classic, Holocaust/WW II-era novels to which it compares, think William Styron's "Sophie's Choice" and Irwin Shaw's "The Young Lions." Yes. It really is that good!

I liked this book, but didn't love it. I thought the ending was a bit cliche right down to the "Tell me I was a good man" ending straight out of Saving Private Ryan. It was also pretty predictable regarding who survived and who died. And the Nazi commander's wife's role towards the end? About as cliche as it gets. The sister? Didn't need that, either. That being said, it was action-packed and kept me up well past midnight on a number of nights because I wanted to read one...more...chapter. So it gets high marks for a rollicking pace and keeping my interest. I can't believe the OSS would allow the "new ink/old tattoo number" anomaly. I was also a bit underwhelmed by this author's One Mile Down. So I've probably read my last Andrew Gross book.

This was one of the most intense books I have ever read and I enjoyed every tense moment I experienced while reading it. I had previously read a number of books by Andrew Gross and enjoyed them all. Knowing a little about WW II, I felt like I was there, experiencing much of the intense action, as I read this one. THE ONE MAN is an experience YOU don't want to miss. Lots of surprises, too.

This is Andrew Gross' best book by far, in my opinion, and I hope he'll continue to write WWII fiction. The truths added to the fiction made it unputdownable. WWII was an important event in history and Gross has made it come alive in this book. The fears and deplorable conditions his characters face give the reader a solid clue as to what life in a detention camp might be. His research was obviously extensive and much truth is included which makes the story more fascinating. Don't pass this one up.

Decent overall, despite a slow start (It didn't get interesting for me until about 30% through). Considering the subject matter, it felt PG13 when it should be R. Almost young adult instead of adult historical fiction.

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