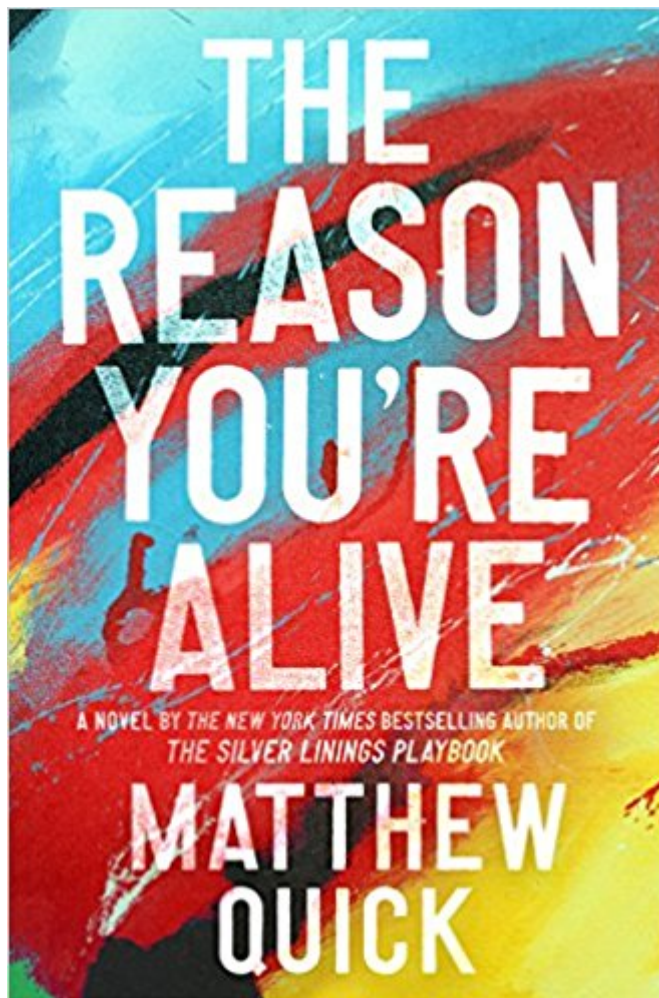


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The Reason You're Alive: A Novel



Synopsis

The New York Times bestselling author of *The Silver Linings Playbook* offers a timely novel featuring his most fascinating character yet, a Vietnam vet embarking on a quixotic crusade to track down his nemesis from the war. After sixty-eight-year-old David Granger crashes his BMW, medical tests reveal a brain tumor that he readily attributes to his wartime Agent Orange exposure. He wakes up from surgery repeating a name no one in his civilian life has ever heard—that of a Native American soldier whom he was once ordered to discipline. David decides to return something precious he long ago stole from the man he now calls Clayton Fire Bear. It may be the only way to find closure in a world increasingly at odds with the one he served to protect. It may also help him to finally recover from his wife's untimely demise. As David confronts his past to salvage his present, a poignant portrait emerges: that of an opinionated and good-hearted American patriot fighting like hell to stay true to his red, white, and blue heart, even as the country he loves rapidly changes in ways he doesn't always like or understand. Hanging in the balance are Granger's distant art-dealing son, Hank; his adoring seven-year-old granddaughter, Ella; and his best friend, Sue, a Vietnamese American who respects David's fearless sincerity. Through the controversial, wrenching, and wildly honest David Granger, Matthew Quick offers a no-nonsense but ultimately hopeful view of America's polarized psyche. By turns irascible and hilarious, insightful and inconvenient, David is a complex, wounded, honorable, and loving man. *The Reason You're Alive* examines how the secrets and debts we carry from our past define us; it also challenges us to look beyond our own prejudices and search for the good in us all.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

“The author of *The Silver Linings Playbook* delivers another engaging and screen-ready dramedy about an irascible misfit on a mission for closure. (Atlanta Journal-Constitution)

“The role of David Granger may someday be played by an Oscar-hungry actor. But that shouldn’t distract from the vivid, high-definition protagonist that already glows from the page.... That candor and honesty gives this first-person narrative its potency. It also supplies the humor. (St. Louis Post-Dispatch)

“The Reason You’re Alive” is fundamentally about the power to forgive both yourself and others.... Quick forces both readers and characters to reexamine their first impressions through his narrator.... In classic Quick fashion, the novel is full of intriguing supporting characters.

(AV Club)

“Dark, funny, and surprisingly tender. (Publishers Weekly)

“Surprising.... At the core of the novel is the voice of David Granger, a combination of Archie Bunker and Marlow of Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*.... A valuable addition to fiction about the tangled aftereffects of Vietnam on soldiers in the field. (Kirkus)

“A scorching family drama. *The Reason You’re Alive* is narrated with ire and eloquence by David Granger... It’s as if Holden Caulfield grew up to be a reflective, even soulful, Archie Bunker.... A touching, old-fashioned drama about the ties that sometimes choke, but always bind. (BookPage)

“A book of unexpected turns, a fun and funny narrative intermixed with many dark plot lines, *The Reason You’re Alive* is a poignant work and a must-read this summer. (New York Journal of Books)

“This new novel from the author of *Silver Linings Playbook* spotlights an unlikely hero, and a father-son relationship, with wry warmth and humor. (National Book Review)

“Poignant and uproarious. A novel that thrums with energy. A vibrant and compassionate tale of a complex man finding his way in a divided America. (Minneapolis StarTribune)

“Touching and often laugh-out-loud funny. (Asheville Citizen-Times)

“Quick has an amazing ability to build characters who are big-hearted and hopeful even in the face of great tragedy, heartbreak, and trauma. In this case, once you get beneath the camo and insults, you begin to really see Granger. (Writer’s Bone)

“David’s voice is completely distinctive and compelling – one that captures your attention from the first paragraph. David’s story will leave readers laughing one minute and crying the next. Another hit from Quick! (RT Book Reviews)

“Inspiring... Matthew Quick has a way with wounded characters. (

(Boston Globe, on Love May Fail) "A gratifying romp. Fans of The Silver Linings Playbook know Quick's penchant for emotionally troubled, big-hearted characters, and Good Luck will satisfy those readers and new ones alike. (People, Three Stars, on Good Luck of Right Now) "It's impossible not to love each of these deeply flawed characters. As funny as it is touching, Quick's latest effort is on par with Silver Linings. (USA Today, Four Stars, on Good Luck of Right Now)

After sixty-eight-year-old David Granger crashes his BMW, medical tests reveal a brain tumor that he readily attributes to his wartime Agent Orange exposure. He wakes up from surgery repeating a name no one in his civilian life has ever heard—that of a Native American soldier whom he was once ordered to discipline. David decides to return something precious he long ago stole from the man he now calls Clayton Fire Bear. It may be the only way to find closure in a world increasingly at odds with the one he served to protect. It may also help him to finally recover from his wife's untimely demise. As David confronts his past to salvage his present, a poignant portrait emerges: that of an opinionated and good-hearted American patriot fighting like hell to stay true to his red, white, and blue heart, even as the country he loves rapidly changes in ways he doesn't always like or understand. Hanging in the balance are Granger's distant art-dealing son, Hank; his adoring seven-year-old granddaughter, Ella; and his best friend, Sue, a Vietnamese American who respects David's fearless sincerity. Through the controversial, wrenching, and wildly honest David Granger, Matthew Quick offers a no-nonsense but ultimately hopeful view of America's polarized psyche. By turns irascible and hilarious, insightful and inconvenient, David is a complex, wounded, honorable, and loving man. The Reason You're Alive examines how the secrets and debts we carry from our past define us; it also challenges us to look beyond our own prejudices and search for the good in us all.

Surprisingly well-written novel. The surprise ending is touching and skillfully done. A very worthwhile read.

This is the first book I have read by Matthew Quick, and I have to say I was not disappointed. I wasn't sure if I was going to enjoy it either, as Vietnam War vets are not my first choice in main characters. However, I was pleasantly surprised by the amazing writing and all of the humor peppered throughout the story. Granger, the veteran, is the type of character we see somewhere in our own family...he is someone who is cantankerous and not always likeable, but, if you know him,

you can't help liking and admiring him. Always, he is true to himself, even when that self is flawed and does impetuous and (sometimes) crazy things. Without getting into too many details (I hate spoilers), I see this novel is listed in the suspense category, but it is not a typical detective story or a police procedural. Instead, the suspense is built through Granger's own and very personal quest to find closure and redemption. And that quest is filled with pitfalls, twists and turns, and surprises, but ultimately leads to a reckoning that brings him closer to his loved ones. It also helps him to understand himself a bit more, too. When I watched the movie, *Silver Linings Playbook*, I was struck by how complex and magically human the characters were. This book offers more of the same. I was sad when it ended because I didn't want to let the characters go. That's my kind of novel.

The irony of war is that its horrors and psychic and physical damage produce amazing writing. I suspect that author Matthew Quick is too young to have had any direct connection with the war in Vietnam, but he has nevertheless tapped into a credible vein of experience in his protagonist, David Granger, who so strongly dominates this novel. Granger was not only a Vietnam War draftee, he was a kind of feral assassin who participated in a host of wartime killings and witnessed humankind at its lowest ebb. When Granger returns from the war, he somehow becomes a successful and model middle-class citizen, but still struggles with a dark personal existence that involves more than the trauma of the war. The novel opens with David Granger recovering from the removal of a brain tumor which he insists is the result of his exposure to Agent Orange in Vietnam. At this stage of life he is, by any definition, a wild character. He habitually dresses in camouflage tunics and pants, is loudly profane and rants continuously about the perfidy of the national government and his contempt for soft-headed liberals. Despite the political spoutings, he is no cliché racist or Tea Partier, and he hilariously describes his pursuit of friendship with and respect for two gay men, his deep paternal love for a "genetically Vietnamese" woman and his fraternal connections with African American buddies. Ultimately, the story turns to Granger's attempts to find peace with his family and put to rest the terrors that have haunted him since his return from Vietnam. Ironically, it is relatively minor incident in the past---his humiliation of a fellow GI on the order of his superiors that has bothered him most; not least because his victim threatened to kill him and apparently made at least one try at it. While the story of David Granger is thoroughly enjoyable throughout, it was the ending that really got to me. I'm a total sucker for any writer's inclusion of credible redemption in their works. It is there in "The Reason You're Alive" in spades. Loved this book! A final note, Matthew Quick has had at least one of his novels, "The Silver Linings Playbook", made into a successful film. "The Reason..." is certainly a candidate for another. Think Al Pacino in the role of David Granger.

Granger is a mess by any standards. He was driven certifiably insane from fighting in the Vietnam jungle. Although he recovered sufficiently to marry and make lots of money, he still has violent nightmares. He views the government and his doctors with deep distrust. And he's just had brain surgery for a tumor, which hasn't helped the clarity of his thoughts any. A right-wing, steak-loving heavy smoker with a home arsenal of guns, Granger is saddled with a bleeding-heart liberal son who eats heart healthy at every meal. The family dynamic hardly looks promising, but Granger is determined to look after Hank and his granddaughter Ella (his one last mission), while they imagine they are taking care of him. Things work out in surprising ways, as does everything in this story. And one last mission leads to another. The plot is really very clever. Granger is the narrator, and his life experiences are fascinating, from surviving on snakes in the jungle, to falling in love as a young man with a depressed pregnant teenager, to making unlikely friends all his life in the everyday world. His language is delightfully profane. His aggressive patriotism is endearing and frankly contagious. He has a genius for friendship that transcends race and every other social stereotype. *The Reason You're Alive* is a feel-good novel that is never sappy, yet it did make me tear up a bit. It is non-stop entertaining and a terrific story with a wildly quirky hero. I'm very happy to have discovered this author.

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