



An Unlikely Hero: A Father's Struggle to Raise His Son in the Bronx During the Great Depression and the Golden Age of Radio, Motion Pictures, Comic Books, Stickball, Baseball, and Prize Fights

Steve Zimmerman

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An Unlikely Hero is set in a magical kingdom that no longer exists—the Bronx during the 1930s and 1940s. But the story really begins at the turn of the twentieth century, when the hero arrives in America with his emigrant family and settles on the Lower East Side of New York. After running away from home at thirteen, the hero acquires his education on the streets before joining the ranks of America's new breed of ambitious salesmen, who use the unparalleled growth of American business in the 1920s as a springboard to make their way in the world. For many years he leads a solitary, hardscrabble life—until, in 1928, at age forty-two, he marries and settles down to raise a family. He manages to survive the Great Depression, and, with single-minded determination, cares for his family and his sickly wife before her untimely death from cancer eleven years later. This is a story about tenacity; about survival; about a father who, without a trace of rancor or self-pity, rises to the occasion and forms a bond with his son based on working-class values and a bedrock of unspoken love. It is a clear-eyed, unsentimental portrait of their years together, and the father's remarkable courage and stoicism in the face of unusual adversity. More than just a father, he becomes the boy's mentor and unlikely hero. Alternately heartbreaking and hilarious, An Unlikely Hero is also a coming-of-age story about the hero's teenage son growing up on the streets of the Bronx. The tale is told with an unerring sense of the time period that shaped the boy's life—a life deeply marked by the death of his mother when he was six years old.

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