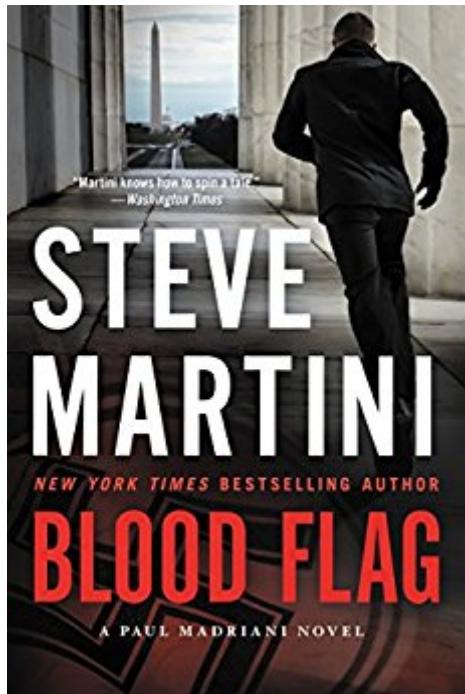


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# Blood Flag: A Paul Madriani Novel



## Synopsis

Defending a client accused of killing her father, attorney Paul Madriani is drawn into a treacherous conspiracy dating to World War II in this enthralling installment in the New York Times bestselling series. Paul Madriani and Harry Hinds have a new client: Emma Brauer, a woman accused in the œmercy killing of her aged father, Robert Brauer. Insisting she's innocent, Emma tells Paul about a package sent to her father shortly before he entered the hospital. Bequeathed to him by a member of his unit from World War II, the box contains a key and a slip of paper. Emma fears that this package is connected to her father's death. When Paul's young assistant Sofia is murdered, Madriani is blindsided by the realization that Emma's fears are well-grounded. Digging into Robert's military history, Madriani discovers that other members of the Army unit Robert served with have recently died "under similarly suspicious circumstances. When he finds that the box sent to Brauer relates to a mysterious talisman that went missing at the end of the war—a feared Nazi relic known as the œBlood Flag." Madriani and Hinds realize they are in for the fight of their lives. With Emma's life on the line and their own safety in jeopardy, Madriani must uncover the truth before the evil of the Blood Flag is allowed to spin a new web.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I have been a fan of Steve Martini in the past, but he -- like many bestselling series writers these days -- has gone assembly line and stopped being a writer. The plot here is not bad, and some of the characters are interesting, but it takes so long to get anywhere it becomes interminable. At halfway through I was fighting putting it down and starting something else. One reason is that Martini changes perspective among a half dozen or so characters, and then takes pages to have each character learn a piece of information or plot point. We get to have a couple thousand words in Madriani's voice telling us how he learned X, then we get to learn another couple thousand words on how the killer learned X, and then another couple thousand words on how Jocelyn thought about X and what it meant for Y. Another is that Martini goes to great length to tell us how people get from point X to point Y in their car or walking or whatever, telling us how they stood up, moved around the desk, opened the door, walked down the hall, went outside, opened the car door, fumbled with the key. For goodness sake, just tell us they're somewhere new and get on with the story! Faulkner and Morrison and Joyce can do this because their language is beautiful to read. Martini just writes sentences. What happened is Martini's books are guaranteed best sellers, and so editing is light. My guess is that he meets a deadline for a certain length of book, and if it's not a disaster they send it to a proofreader to correct typos and really bad grammar then send it out. These assembly line "thrillers" are so lightly touched that we are essentially buying second drafts, and it's getting annoying. I'd have given this one star, but I was able to finish it so couldn't bring myself to. But I'm not likely to pay for another one.

Once upon a time not too many years ago Steve Martini wrote courtroom novels. Himself a courtroom lawyer, he brought to bear both the subtleties of California law and the complex strategies employed by defense attorneys in California courtrooms. The books were fascinating and filled a gap in our crime fiction; there is great interest among readers in legal thrillers but comparatively few writers who work that territory. In recent years Martini has been writing international thrillers. He still draws on his legal experience but legal issues are generally not at the center of his stories. His new novel, *Blood Flag*, continues in that vein. (SPOILER alert [though I will reveal nothing that is not already revealed on the book jacket and the .com description]). In *Blood Flag* Paul and Harry defend a woman named Emma Brauer. Emma's father Robert has recently died and Emma is suspected of having assisted in his death, in short a euthanasia case. Things are far more complicated than that, however. Robert Brauer was a soldier in the 45th Infantry, the unit that controlled Munich at the close of WWII. He and two of his fellow soldiers are

suspected of having appropriated the Ä¢Â Ä^blood flagÄ¢Â Ä™, a flag soaked in the blood of a Hitler protÃ©gÃ© from the days of the Beer Hall Putsch. In celebrating the Ä¢Â Ä^heroesÄ¢Â Ä™ from the early days of his kampf Hitler turned the bloodied flag into an icon or talisman, displaying it at later rallies. It would now be worth a tidy 9-figure fortune. The ancestors of the now-dead soldiers would like to have it. So would Mossad; so would, it appears, some Aryan Nation-types. This naturally draws the attention of the police, FBI and assorted other groups. This is all complicated by the fact that when Emma was arrested, her beloved pup, Dingus, was left alone in her home. Paul sent an office intern to retrieve it. The intern was promptly murdered and we are left to wonder how her case is related to the search for the blood flag, particularly after her autopsy reveals some interesting information. Thus we have an international thriller with an interesting (actually historical) McGuffin and just enough of a legal dimension to enable Paul and Harry to exhibit their legal chops. Since Paul has a new romantic partner and Harry is dating a local judge we get some insight into their personal lives. This aspect of the story complements the mystery plot nicely. Steve Martini is incapable of telling a dull story but this one is just a tad too convoluted and a tad too implausible. It held my attention and I look forward to Paul and HarryÄ¢Â Ä™s next outing, but I would not rank this installment among their very best.

I, too, am an "always" reader of Steve Martini but found this book lacking in almost everything. The plot was plodding and the characters, whom I love, went nowhere. As strange as it might sounds, I spent way more time trying to figure out why he kept changing verb tenses than how the ending would turn out. There seems to be a spate of authors who are producing novels dealing with World War II and tying events to current day happenings. I don't know if this is an effort to recognize history before it slips away as more and more veterans die but I find most of the stories are very contrived. I want plot, I want character and I want a book that holds my attention. Sadly, this one didn't do any of those things.

My view of Blood Flag was that it was a bit of a stretch in the plot side. I enjoy Martini's writing but I felt that this was the weakest of the Madriani books. I have read all of the series, and that's my feeling...

This book is such a well written account of a plausible series of occurrences that it seems more like a nonfiction account of real events. This made it a very desirable read. My only critique is that some descriptions of the use of security technology were dumbed down so much as to no longer

accurately explain the described processes. Adding a few more words to flesh out technical details of the use of encryption, spoofing and the man in the middle attack would have for me added additional enjoyment and plausibility. But as a whole, the book was a winner. Keep it up, counselor.

Compelling. Stand-alone that is fast-paced and difficult to stop reading. No graphic brutality or drag-you-down drama. Interesting storyline with plenty of twists to keep the reader guessing. Believable characters with distinct personalities. Informative, thought-provoking and snarky dialogue. I may re-read this story and always look forward to works by this author.

Seems like a phony story just to write a book. Not his usual interesting writing. certainly not worth the price of this book.

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