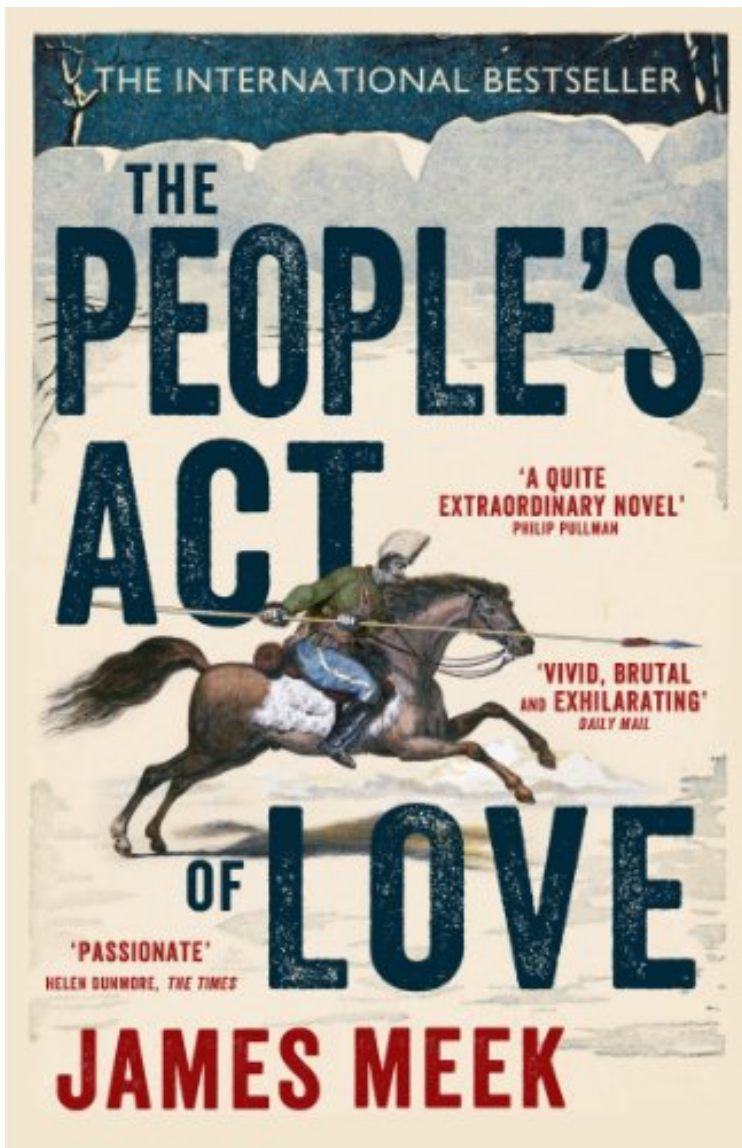


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# The People's Act Of Love



*Par James Meek*  
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**Par James Meek : The People's Act Of Love** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The People's Act Of Love:

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**Description :** Description du produitIn the outer reaches of a country recently torn apart by civil war lives a small Christian sect and its enigmatic leader, Balashov. Anna Petrovna, a beautiful, restless photographer, is raising her young son by herself amid this brutal landscape. Stationed nearby is a company of Czech soldiers, desperate to get home but on the losing side of the recent conflict. Each soldier lives in a fragile co-existence and a troubling uncertainty prevails. Into this isolated community trudges Samarin, an escapee from Russia's northernmost prison camp. Immediately apprehended, he is brought before Captain Matula, the Czech company's megalomaniac commander. But the stranger's appearance has caught the attention of others, including that of Anna Petrovna. And when a local shaman is found murdered, suspicion and terror engulf this village. To be published in twenty countries, The People's Act of Love is quite simply magnificent storytelling and it promises to be an auspicious literary event.

Prsentation de l'diteur1919, Siberia . . .Deep in the unforgiving landscape a town lies under military rule, awaiting the remorseless assault of Bolsheviks along the Trans-Siberian railway. One night a stranger, Samarin, appears from the woods with a tale of escape from an Arctic prison, insisting a cannibal is on his trail. Only Anna, a beautiful young widow, trusts his story. When a local shaman is found dead suspicion and terror engulf the isolated community, which harbours a secret of its own . . .comJames Meek has won several awards for his journalism and his fiction, but *The People's Act Of Love* is a singular departure from all that came before. It is a big Russian novel, written in English. Meek has upped the ante on such books as *Cold Mountain* and *The March* in bringing the reader his version of the unspeakable horror and brutality of war, the colder-than-cold winter, the cruelty and humanity of people in extremis. It is 1919 in Yazyk, Siberia, far from anywhere. The war is waning, but its ravages remain. There is an uneasy detente between a group of Czech soldiers, marooned on the losing side and longing to go home, and a fanatical Christian sect that practices castration as a means of purifying themselves. One of their number is their leader, Balashov, married to a beautiful and restive photographer, Anna Petrovna, who has come to the village of Yazyk to raise her son, after learning of her husband's castration. Her fury knows no bounds. She gives herself to anyone who is interested as a means of shaming Balashov, and satisfying her own appetites. Into this motley collection of people comes a stranger, Samarin, who says he has escaped from The White Garden, Russia's northernmost prison camp, a place of unbelievable barbarism. Shortly after his arrival, the village shaman, possessed of a third eye and an albino sidekick, is found murdered. Suspicion falls immediately on Samarin.

In successive chapters, Meek has each person or faction tell his or her story. Samarin, a revolutionary, charismatic visionary, every bit as zealous as the castrates, tells of his escape. Matula, the crazy, cocaine-snorting leader of the Czechs, doesn't really want to go home, so he prevents his soldiers from leaving. Mutz, a sensible sort, quite taken with Anna, dreams of home and keeps hope alive among his soldiers. Balashov tells of what led him to castrate himself. The hopes, wishes, dreams, and illusions of all these people converge in Meek's novel. He shows man as pure, base, megalomaniacal, rational, intelligent, incredibly stupid--every aspect of humanity is examined, especially compassion. Despite the horrid excesses of war--and peace--Meek, in their telling, weaves a completely believable story of what happens to people who are not just at the margins of the world, but at the edge of their ability to understand themselves and the world around them. (The people's act of love, by the way, has nothing to do with love: it is cannibalism.) Don't miss this extraordinary novel; it is hugely deep and satisfying. --Valerie RyanFrom Publishers

WeeklyStarred . Set during the waning days of the Russian revolution, Meek's utterly absorbing novel (after *The Museum of Doubt*) captivates with its depiction of human nature in all its wartime extremes. In 1919, the remote Siberian town of Yazyk contains a strange brew of humanity: the docile members of a mystical Christian sect, whose longing for purity drives them to self-mutilation; a small outfit of Czech troops, marooned by the civil war and led by the mad cocaine-snorting Captain Matula; and "the widow" Anna Petrovna, whose passion for worldly things (e.g., photography and men) isolates her from the devout townspeople. When the charismatic revolutionary, Samarin, trudges into town with a harrowing tale of escape from a distant labor camp and a dangerous philosophy, Yazyk becomes a theater of bloodshed and betrayal as well as heroism and compassion. Using the town as a microcosm of the larger war, Meek illuminates both perverted ideology and irrepressible humanity. With confident prose, layered storytelling and prodigious imagination, he combines scenes of heart-pounding action and jaw-dropping revelations with moments of quiet tension and sly humor. This original, literary page-turner succeeds both with its credible psychological detail and in its grandeur and sweep. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.