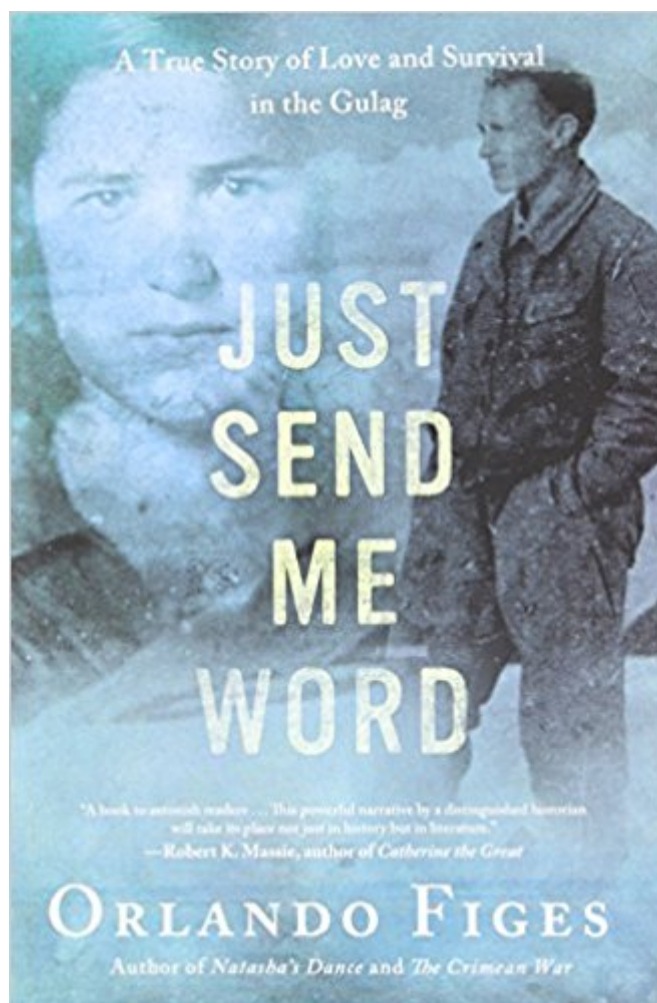


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# Just Send Me Word: A True Story Of Love And Survival In The Gulag



## Synopsis

A heroic love story and an unprecedented inside view of one of Stalin's most notorious labor camps, based on a remarkable cache of letters smuggled in and out of the Gulag "I went to get the letters for our friends, and couldn't help but feel a little envious, I didn't expect anything for myself. And suddenly there was my name, and, as if it was alive, your handwriting." In 1946, after five years as a prisoner first as a Soviet POW in Nazi concentration camps, then as a deportee (falsely accused of treason) in the Arctic Gulag twenty-nine-year-old Lev Mishchenko unexpectedly received a letter from Sveta, the sweetheart he had hardly dared hope was still alive. Amazingly, over the next eight years the lovers managed to exchange more than 1,500 messages, and even to smuggle Sveta herself into the camp for secret meetings. Their recently discovered correspondence is the only known real-time record of life in Stalin's Gulag, unmediated and uncensored. Orlando Figes, "the great storyteller of modern Russian history" (Financial Times), draws on Lev and Sveta's letters as well as KGB archives and recent interviews to brilliantly reconstruct the broader world in which their story unfolded. With the powerful narrative drive of a novel, *Just Send Me Word* reveals a passion and endurance that triumphed over the tragic forces of history.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"An enchanting marvel that reacquaints our technologically sophisticated but verbally deficient world with the power of the epistle to sustain love in the most trying of circumstances...A gem of a book." The Boston Globe "Timely and important...What gives *Just*

Send Me Word its power is the intimate, granular detail of Gulag life, of how men and women attempted to create a semblance of normality in the most abnormal of circumstances. [The Daily Beast](#) "A heroic, absolutely astounding love story." [Minneapolis Star-Tribune](#) "Wonderful...Just Send Me Word blends Gulag and sentiment in its loftiest application into a "you- can't- put- it- down" book and Orlando Figes, a modern master of Russian cultural history, brings off a worthy successor to Natasha's Dance." [Washington Independent Review of Books](#) "A remarkable love story intertwined with a rare glimpse into a harsh chapter of Soviet history." [Christian Science Monitor](#) "Drawing on more than 1,200 letters between Lev and Svetlana "Sveta" Mishchenko, and interviews with the couple, veteran historian Figes tells a remarkable tale of love and devotion during the worst years of the USSR...His fine narrative pacing enhances this moving, memorable story." [Publishers Weekly \(Starred Review\)](#) "A heart-rending record of extraordinary human endurance." [Kirkus Reviews](#) "A book to astonish readers: never before has Stalin's Gulag been the setting for a love affair. This powerful narrative by a distinguished historian will take its place not just in history but in literature." [Robert K. Massie, author of Catherine the Great](#) "Orlando Figes, a serious scholar who can reach wide general audiences, has done it again...An engaging portrait of a revealing and intimate relationship within almost unimaginable conditions." [History Book Club](#)

Orlando Figes is the author of *The Crimean War*, *The Whisperers*, *Natasha's Dance*, and *A People's Tragedy*, which have been translated into more than twenty languages. The recipient of the Wolfson History Prize and the Los Angeles Times Book Prize, among others, Figes is a professor of history at Birkbeck College, University of London.

I read every Gulag memoir and history I can, and I loved this one. I also have read most of Figes' writings and love them all. In this book, he sifts through hundreds of letters to tell a story of the endurance of love. I found it impossible to put this book down and developed such love for Sveta and Lev. One reason I read Gulag memoirs is to keep these people alive, to help preserve their memories by experiencing their lives anew. We owe it to our ancestors to not let their experiences disappear from memory, whatever they may be. Their stories deserve never to be forgotten. We also need to read about and know the negatives of the past to try to prevent repeating those negatives.

It's a long time frame compressed into a story but not really that well done. There's going to be gaps but this story leaves quite a few questions. I can see where what Figes had in front of him felt remarkable but I just think the end result is lacking detail, granted likely detail impossible to get.

This is an amazing and enduring love story spanning some of the most terrible times in the Soviet Union ...a time of war, separation and the horrors of the Gulag. I have enjoyed Orlando Figes masterful writing through several of his works. The story of Svetlana and Levi was disclosed through the contents of boxes and packages of letters saved by both throughout Levi's time served in The Gulag. A wonderful treasure trove which the author was fortunate to read and narrate the events of this beautiful story.

An amazing story; touching, encouraging, interesting. While going through the pages you feel as if you become a witness of the history itself and you realize that a place like the Gulag needs to be recorded over and over so that nobody will ever be tempted again to build something like this.

One of the better re-creations from precious letters between two lovers (later husband and wife) of one of the darkest periods of Soviet history. It is a moving testimony to strong yet also fragile love. Figes is a master in telling stories of this period, and he has put together the hundreds of saved letter meticulously, together with background explanations given decades later by the two principles of the story, bringing their lives, their sufferings, their heroic virtues and above all their selfless love to life again.

I heard about this book on a History Extra podcast when they interviewed the author. This is a beautiful story that intermixes the love story with the reality of living in Russia. This book is also a keeper. When you wonder about the strength of the human spirit, it would be a great book to pick up and remind yourself that there are good people out there and everyone is fighting different battles.

It is a true story, written in epistolary form about the nobility of a woman that sacrifices herself to be with her beloved and risking all dangers in within an unfeeling burocracy, travelling through brutish circumstances in the Russian Gulag. It is a story that could have been maudlin, but shows the victory of the ordinary against the kafkaeske Russian state regulatory system. A good description of the feelings in the Soviet Union era.

It is a very good read; a vivid portrait of life in the Gulag through the many letters of a loving couple. Many lessons can be learned from the way these thoughtful and intelligent people chose to face their reality. This is a story of real love, injustice, despair and separation in Russia under Stalin's rule. A quote from Sveta on love: "Give and don't reach out for its return this is the key to opening all hearts."

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