



Mrs. Engels

By Gavin McCrea

Catapult. Paperback. Condition: New. 368 pages. Very little is known about Lizzie Burns, the illiterate Irishwoman who was the longtime lover of Frederick Engels, co-author of The Communist Manifesto. In Gavin McCrea's first novel, she is finally given a voice, one that won't easily be forgotten. Lizzie is a worker in the Manchester, England, cotton mill that Frederick owns. When they move to a posh townhouse in London to be closer to Karl Marx and his family, she must learn to navigate Victorian society. We are privy to Lizzie's intimate, wry, and astute views of Marx and Engels's mission to spur revolution among the working classes, and to her ambivalence toward her newly luxurious circumstances. Haunted by her first love (a revolutionary Irishman), burdened by a sense of duty to right past mistakes, and torn between a desire for independence and the pragmatic need to be taken care of, Lizzie knows, as she says, that the world doesn't happen how you think it will. The secret is to soften to it, and to take its blows. Despite or because of their differences in nationality, class, education, and religion, Lizzie and Frederick remain drawn to each other, making Mrs. Engels, among other things,...



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