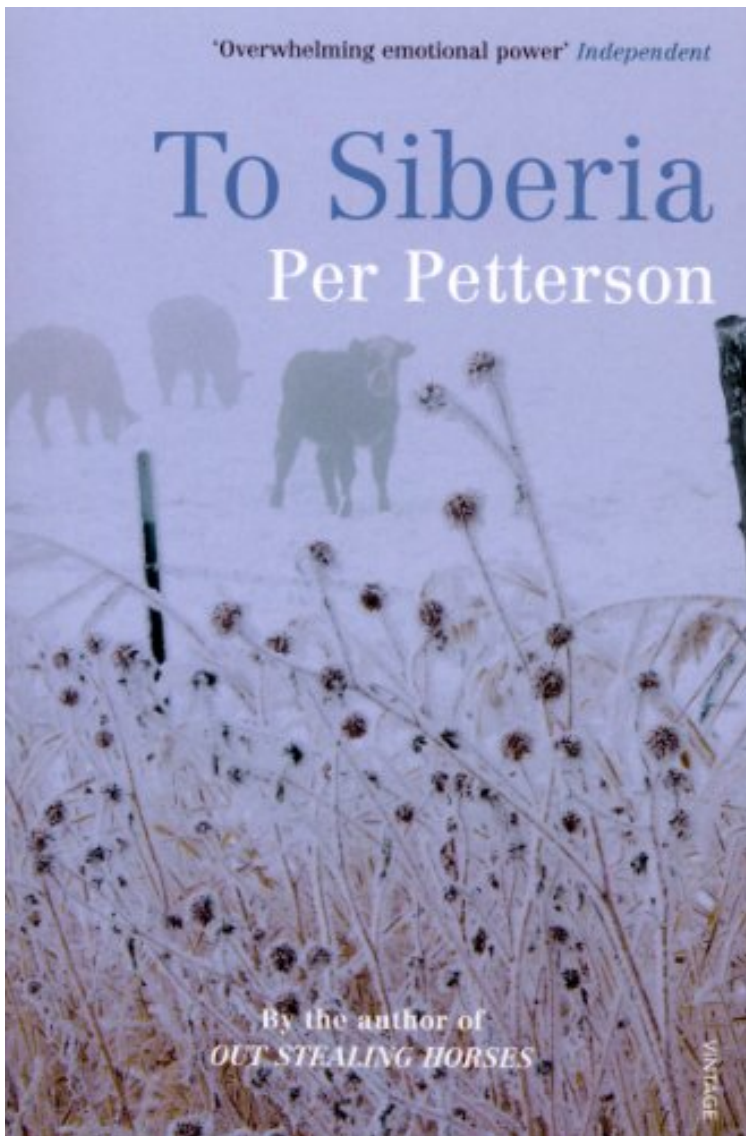


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# To Siberia



*Par Per Petterson*  
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**Par Per Petterson : To Siberia** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised To Siberia:

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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurIn the bitter cold of Danish Jutland, where the sea freezes over and the Nazis have yet to invade, a young girl dreams of one day going on a great journey to Siberia, while her beloved brother Jesper yearns for the warmer climes of Morocco. Their home, with a pious mother who sings hymns all day and a silent father, is as cold as their surroundings. But the unshakeable bond between brother and sister creates a vital warmth which glows in spite of the chill and the dark clouds that threaten to overtake their dreams.From Publishers WeeklyEvoking the severe beauty of the tundra his heroine dreams of, Petterson's second novel fashions a subtle stoicism reminiscent of Katherine Anne Porter's work. A unnamed narrator recalls her girlhood in Denmark, on a farm in Vrangbaek near Skagen, where she and her beloved brother, Jesper, live with their hymn-writing mother, carpenter father and stern grandfather. The family falls

on hard times when their grandfather hangs himself, leaving behind the explanation, "I can't go on any longer." But the young girl endures the changes in her life, including the new rancor of the Nazi occupation of Denmark, by finding security and hope in her deepening relationship with Jesper. She and Jesper sense there is no future in Denmark and long to go elsewhere: she yearns for the cold stillness of Siberia, he for the desert tumult of Morocco. Jesper, a vivacious and sharp idealist ("I'm no peasant, I'm a proletarian," he shouts at the local baron), opens his innocent sister's eyes to the diminishing possibilities and hypocrisies of life in North Jutland. When the Nazis invade, Jesper joins the resistance and, under suspicion, flees to Morocco, leaving his worshipful sister behind. Instead of fulfilling her own goal of a Siberian idyll, she swallows her disappointment and her dreams of travel. Although Petterson addresses the impact of WWII, alluding to the resistance movement and the coexistence of gentile and Jewish Danes, the novel focuses on the profusion of little moments shaping the beauty and pathos of a stagnant life. In an infinitely sad but translucent ending in the vein of Porter's "Pale Horse, Pale Rider," the narrator says, "I was so young then, and I remember thinking: I'm twenty-three-years-old, there is nothing left in life. Only the rest." Copyright 1999 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal

The realization of life's unfulfilled dreams is the theme of this beautifully written novel, which recounts the unnamed narrator's childhood and adolescence in a small Danish town. She dearly loves her brother, Jesper, the only person in her family she cares about. Her rigid, intolerant parents are unresponsive to her need for affection, scarred by the suicide of her grandfather and her mother's Christianity. Then the Germans bring World War II to their quiet world, and life changes. Jesper joins the underground and is forced to flee the Gestapo. Our narrator continues to dream of escape to Siberia, which in her imagination is an idyllic place where her wishes come true and she is happy. In the final pages, she comes to the realization that her parents are more intolerant than ever, her beloved brother is dead, and she will never be able to fulfill her dream. The author of a story collection and an earlier novel, Norwegian writer Petterson is an outstanding talent. Highly recommended. ALisa Rohrbaugh, East Palestine Memorial P.L., OH Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.