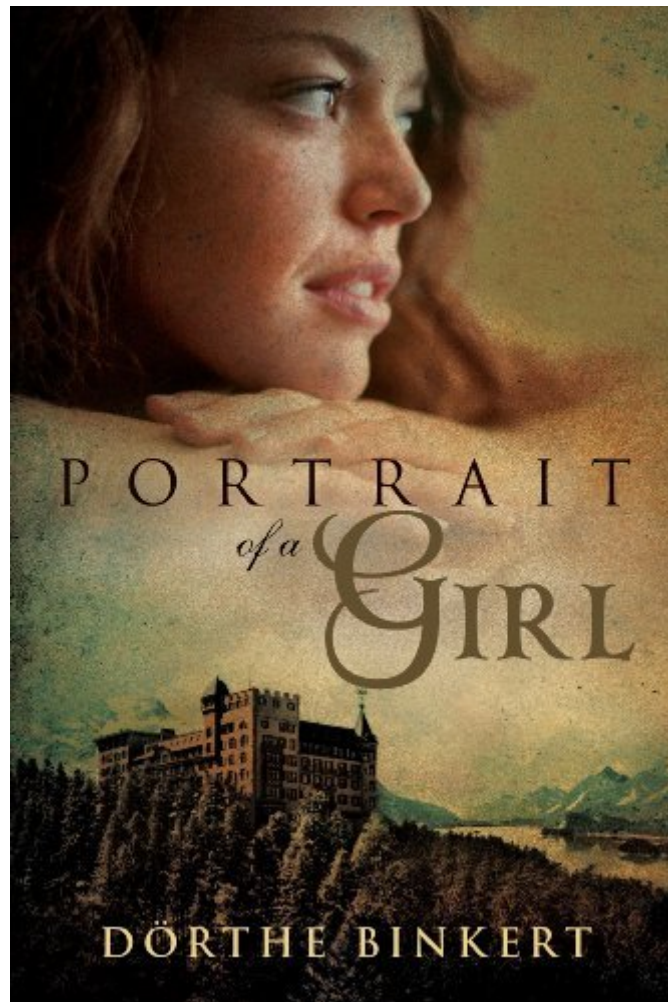


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Portrait Of A Girl



Synopsis

In the summer of 1896, a grand Swiss spa hotel becomes a refuge for Nika, a penniless beauty whose tortured past has left her unable to speak. While working in the manicured gardens, she becomes a muse to the celebrated painter Giovanni Segantini, who takes her under his wing. Although he's married, the two bond closely, and beneath his gaze Nika blossoms. She opens her heart to Segantini, serving as the muse for his luminous masterwork *La Vanit *, and through his patience recovers her voice. The secret between them is her sole material possession: a golden locket with clues to her mysterious heritage. How will Nika learn the hidden secrets of the locket and uncover her origins? And what path awaits her once the facts are revealed? As her ties to Segantini grow ever more complex, her search for love and truth becomes as perilous as the quest for an alpine summit and her destiny is rewritten on the journey.

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Customer Reviews

This is a book that grows on you. At least that was how it affected me. At first I read through it very quickly -- rushing through the second half in a few hours because I wanted to see how the plot would unfold. The story is certainly interesting enough to hold one's attention, but at the same time I

found myself thinking that the writing was not as skillful as it might have been. And yet, after I finished the book I found that I was continuing to think about it, especially I was continuing to think about the principal persons of the novel and how their characters had developed. And after a few days I went back and re-read the second half of the book, enjoying it even more the second time. Although you might get the idea that this is a work of historical fiction about the late-19th century painter Giovanni Segantini, I hope the author will not be offended if I say that her novel is not really about Segantini. It's really a "bildungs roman" in which Segantini plays an important role in the fictitious person who really is the central character -- a foundling who was abandoned as an infant in Switzerland with a mysterious locket and some money, is raised in servitude by a farm family from which she runs away when she is nearly an adult and, after spraining her ankle, is found again by the sons of another poor family in another part of Switzerland, near St. Moritz. It develops that, some time prior to her running away, the foundling, whose name is Nika, had stopped speaking, not because of any physical defect, but apparently because she felt that nobody was listening to her or had any interest in what she had to say. Segantini's main role in the novel is that he is the first person who sees something in Nika, ultimately recognizes that she has talent.

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