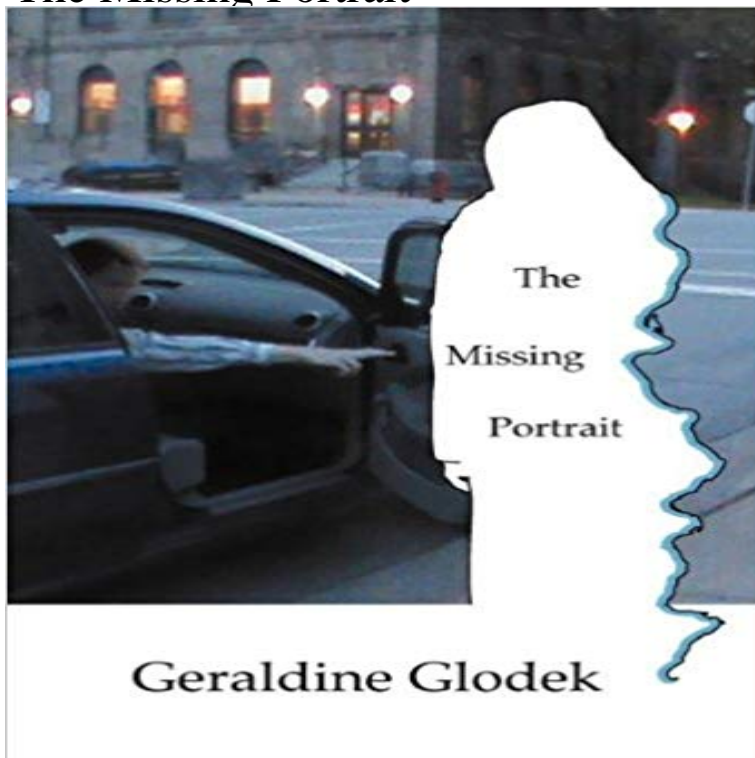


The Missing Portrait



Five wealthy men, buddies since childhood, get together in Maine to drink and have a look at a young woman one of them had spotted on a visit there before. Staring into the lounge of the Maine Hotel for Women in Transition, the men are fascinated with the shabby redhead. If not so colossal, she could pass for Mary Frances McDonald from their home town in Pennsylvania, a miners kid none of these men can forget. In the 1960s, these five were teens whose families had made it into businesses and out of the mines and factories their immigrant ancestors had toiled in. They paraded the streets like prizes. Girls whose parents still earned a living with their hands were urged to better themselves by landing boys like them. Tim Giovannini, son of a wealthy car dealer, confident of the privileges his family's status entitled him to, cruised around for opportunities to get pretty young hopefuls in the back seat of one of his father's cars. Now forty-five, Tim pretends not to be interested in this shabby Mary Frances look-alike in Maine. But learning that Mary Frances has returned home from the Navy to plead at churches, bars, government records offices-everywhere-for any information on the infant she gave up at sixteen, he privately delights to imagine the horror on her face if her long-lost child should turn out to be some lowlife like the one in that hotel lounge. He hears someone shout Good luck, Sharon! as the redhead steps outside, pulling a suitcase. He follows her. Sharon, to ease her loneliness, goes and stands among a group of Quakers holding a peace vigil on a street corner. Tim slips in next to her. Introducing himself as Howard Parker, an attorney, he tells her he's been trying to locate her to unite her with her real mother, a loving person in Pennsylvania. He thinks that sounding religious will make her trust him, so he claims to be a Quaker. If she'll meet him at the Quaker worship on Sunday, hell

have more information about her mother. Discovering that Sharon is now homeless, he hopes one of the Quakers will trust him enough to receive mail for her, and better yet, encourage her to stay in touch with him. Subjects in THE MISSING PORTRAIT by Geraldine Glodek: Birthmothers--Fiction: Mary Frances is searching for the child she gave up in 1963. Children of immigrants--Fiction: This novel deals with the socioeconomic status of descendants of immigrants who started out in America as coal miners and factory workers. Themes include status-seeking and attitudes of entitlement among descendants whose families made it into professions or business ownership. Revenge--Fiction: Tim, a wealthy car dealers son holding a grudge against Mary Frances for nearly thirty years, sees her search for her child as an opportunity to hurt her again. He tells Sharon, a shabby, homeless young woman in Maine, that her birth mother is a loving woman in Pennsylvania named Mary Frances. Homelessness--Fiction: Sharon interacts with other homeless people, sleeping in homeless shelters, and hanging out in libraries and on the docks of the city waterfront. Quakers--Fiction: There is a scene dramatizing how Quakers worship. When two Quakers with very different attitudes toward Tim clash, their conflict brings out themes important to Quakers, particularly what it means to answer that of God in a person. Mississippi River--Fiction: The Mississippi River has been a positive obsession for Tim since childhood. Several scenes take place at the river. The book cover depicts the river as part of an outline of Mary Frances as Tim offers her a ride on a street corner in 1962. Maine--Fiction: Almost half of the novel takes place in Maine. Pennsylvania--Fiction: More than half of the novel takes place in Pennsylvania. Coal miners--Fiction: This novel includes historical background of coal mining in Pennsylvania and related heritage.

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