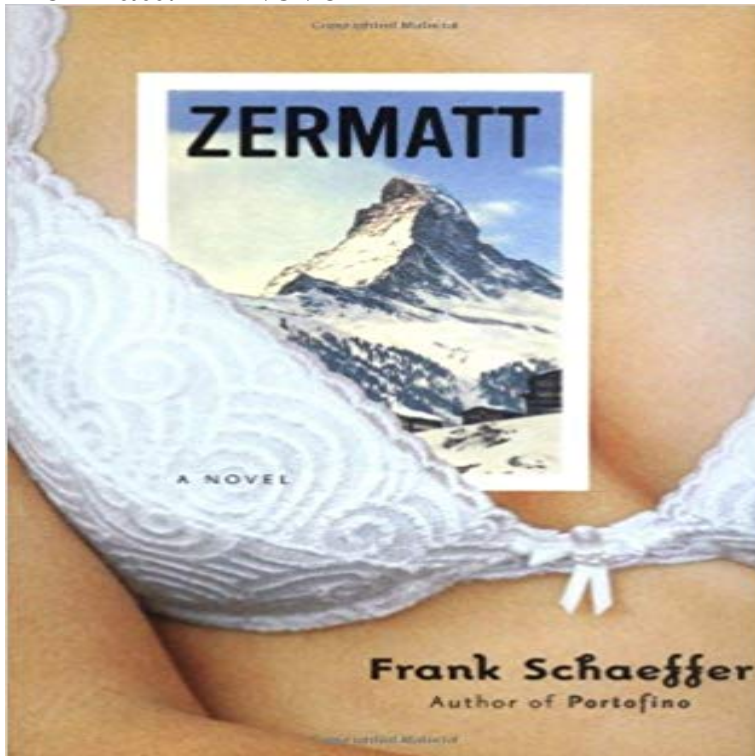


Zermatt: A Novel



Calvin Becker is back in a timely, timeless story about the volcanic sexual curiosity of a fourteen-year-old boy born into a fundamentalist family so strict that he has never seen a movie, watched television, or danced (and has to hide his five copies of Mad magazine in the attic). It is 1966, and Ralph and Elsa Becker, Reformed Presbyterian missionaries from Kansas, are stationed in Switzerland, and on a modest ski vacation with their children: tyrannical eighteen-year-old Janet, angelic Rachael, and our narrator, the irrepressible Calvin, a fourteen year-old who puzzles over his sisters bras, as they hang on a line hidden away so that I could not get a good look unless I ducked under the sheets ... to the feminine heart of the laundry maze. But at the Hotel Riffelberg, high above Zermatt, Calvin falls into the hands of a waitress who, while bringing him his breakfast each morning, serially initiates him into ecstasies he can barely comprehend. The resulting family crisis triggers a larger crisis of faith in his fundamentalist father, leading to a climax which rips Calvin out of his childhood. With echoes of Irving and Roth and its own uniquely human voice, Zermatt is a gem.

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