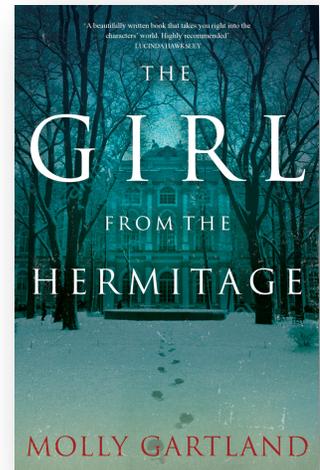


MOLLY GARTLAND
**THE GIRL FROM THE
HERMITAGE**

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From the siege of Leningrad to the glitz and bling of modern-day St Petersburg, a haunting debut about art, ageing and the changing face of a city.

It is December 1941, and eight-year-old Galina and her friend Vera are caught in the siege of Leningrad, eating soup made of wallpaper, with the occasional luxury of a dead rat. Galina's artist father Mikhail has been kept away from the front to help save the treasures of the Hermitage. Its cellars could now provide a safe haven, provided Mikhail can navigate the perils of a portrait commission from one of Stalin's colonels.

Nearly forty years later, Galina herself is a teacher at the Leningrad Art Institute. What ought to be a celebratory weekend at her forest dacha turns sour when she makes an unwelcome discovery. The painting she embarks upon that day will hold a grim significance for the rest of her life, as the old Soviet Union makes way for the new Russia and Galina's familiar world changes out of all recognition.

Warm, wise and utterly enthralling, Molly Gartland's debut novel guides us from the old communist world, with its obvious terrors and its more surprising comforts, into the glitz and bling of 21st-century St Petersburg. Galina's story is at once a compelling page-turner and an insightful meditation on ageing and nostalgia.

Originally from Michigan, **MOLLY GARTLAND** worked in Moscow from 1994 to 2000 and has been fascinated by Russian culture ever since. She has an MA in Creative Writing from St Mary's University, Twickenham and lives in London. *The Girl from the Hermitage* is her first novel.