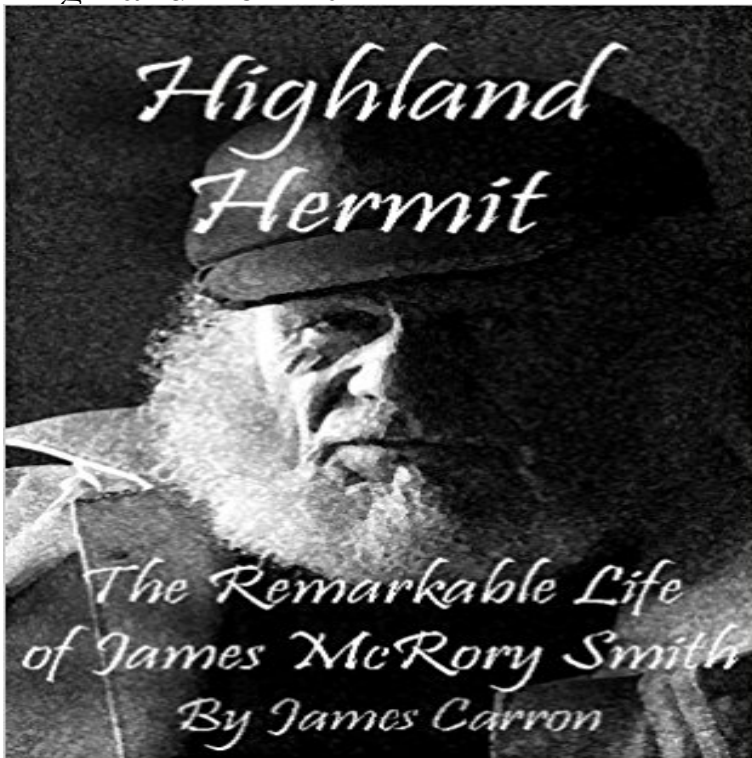


Highland Hermit



James McRory Smith lived for over 30 years at Strathchailleach, one of the most remote cottages in the Britain Isles. Standing in the shadow of the squat stone structure, it is hard to imagine a more isolated spot. The building sits alone in a vast tract of empty, featureless terrain to the south of Cape Wrath, in Sutherland. There is no access road, no running water, no electricity and no telephone. Yet James McRory Smith survived here, battered by the elements and devoid of human company. His story is a fascinating account of a man pitting his wits against the wilderness, enduring endless isolation and existing, for a large part, off the land. James's™ lifestyle belonged to a bygone age, yet he lived it in the 20th century, turning his back on the luxuries and conveniences of the modern world. His way of life was frugal. He constructed furniture from fish boxes and driftwood washed upon on the coast. He kept warm by burning peat dug from the moor, and he ate trout caught from local lochs. James survived everything Sutherland could throw at him. He arrived at Strathchailleach in the early 1960s, after leaving the army and embarking upon an itinerant lifestyle, moving from one abandoned, isolated property to another, and remained there until 1994 when ill health finally forced him back into society. Behind this tale of survival there were two significant events that brought major change to James's™ life and both involved women very close to him. James was a

complex character. He was intelligent and resourceful, artistic and creative, but he also drank heavily, resulting in regular confrontation with hillwalkers and anglers who visited his bothy home, and the law. This biography traces James's life, from his early years in Dumbarton, through his time on the army to the moment he decided to leave behind everything he knew for the isolation of Strathchailleach. It seeks to answer why any man would take such a momentous decision and describes how James was able to exist for over 30 years in such a barren and unforgiving environment. It looks at the tools and life skills he developed to survive and examines how he was able to cope, both physically and mentally, with the challenges he faced on a daily basis. This biography provides readers with an inspiring account of a modern day hermit. It offers a rare insight into an alternative way of life, one that is far removed from the norm. At a time when people are becoming increasingly concerned about consumption and consumerism, and their impact on the environment, James McRory Smith's story demonstrates the practicalities and challenges of the frugal, self-sufficient lifestyle many people dream of. However, this is not intended simply as a social history, is also a true-life story of adventure and survival.

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