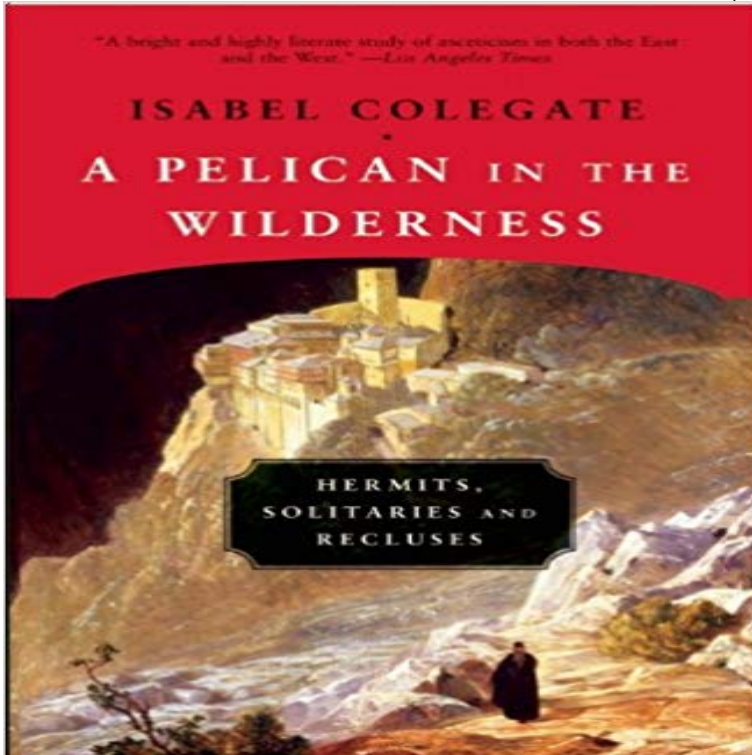


A Pelican in the Wilderness: Hermits, Solitaries, and Recluses



From Lao-tse and the Buddha, St. Anthony and the early Celtic hermits, through Rousseau, Thoreau, Ruskin, and up to the present day, certain gifted persons have shown a vocation for living alone and apart, finding in simplicity and attention to nature a spiritual space to be explored and rejoiced in. Others, retreating from the world in scorn or cut off from it by scandal, have found that solitude is Hell, a pit of melancholy and morbid fancy. In this, her first work of nonfiction, novelist Isabel Colegate gives us the lives of the solitaries male and female, medieval and modern, divinely inspired and patently fraudulent. But this is no mere gallery of saints and sinners, poets and misanthropes. It is also a reevaluation of solitude for our times, and a reminder that it is in solitude that the soul meets itself, refreshes itself, and from there goes out to join the communal dance.

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