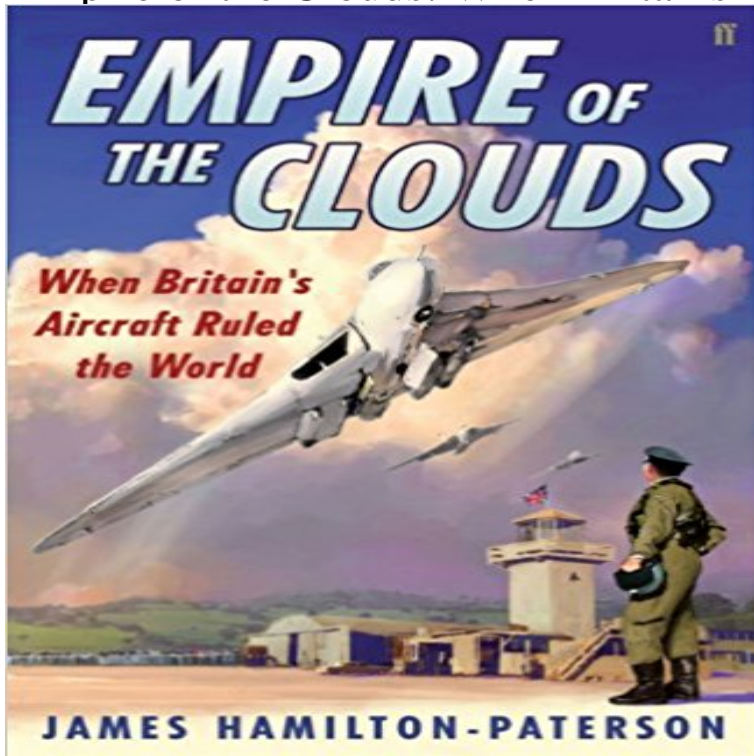


Empire of the Clouds: When Britains Aircraft Ruled the World



In 1945 Britain was the worlds leading designer and builder of aircraft - a world-class achievement that was not mere rhetoric. And what aircraft they were. The sleek Comet, the first jet airliner. The awesome delta-winged Vulcan, an intercontinental bomber that could be thrown about the sky like a fighter. The Hawker Hunter, the most beautiful fighter-jet ever built and the Lightning, which could zoom ten miles above the clouds in a couple of minutes and whose pilots rated flying it as better than sex. How did Britain so lose the plot that today there is not a single aircraft manufacturer of any significance in the country? What became of the great industry of de Havilland or Handley Page? And what was it like to be alive in that marvellous post-war moment when innovative new British aircraft made their debut, and pilots were the rock stars of the age? James Hamilton-Paterson captures that season of glory in a compelling book that fuses his own memories of being a schoolboy plane spotter with a ruefully realistic history of British decline - its loss of self confidence and power. It is the story of great and charismatic machines and the men who flew them: heroes such as Bill Waterton, Neville Duke, John Derry and Bill Beaumont who took inconceivable risks, so that we could fly without a second thought.

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