



Too Close to the Sun: The Audacious Life and Times of Denys Finch Hatton

By Sara Wheeler

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Denys Finch Hatton was adored by women and idolized by men. A champion of Africa, legendary for his good looks, his charm, and his prowess as a soldier, lover, and hunter, Finch Hatton inspired Karen Blixen to write the unforgettable stories in *Out of Africa*. Now esteemed British biographer Sara Wheeler tells the truth about this extraordinarily charismatic adventurer.

Born to an old aristocratic family that had gambled away most of its fortune, Finch Hatton grew up in a world of effortless elegance and boundless power. Tall and graceful, with the soul of a poet and an athlete's relaxed masculinity, he became a hero without trying at Eton and Oxford. In 1910, searching for novelty and danger, Finch Hatton arrived in British East Africa and fell in love—with a continent, with a landscape, with a way of life that was about to change forever.

Wheeler brilliantly conjures the mystical beauty of Kenya at a time when teeming herds of wild animals roamed unmolested across pristine savannah. No one was more deeply attuned to this beauty than Finch Hatton—and no one more bitterly mourned its passing when the outbreak of World War I engulfed the region in a protracted, bloody guerrilla conflict. Finch Hatton was serving as a captain in the Allied forces when he met Karen Blixen in Nairobi and embarked on one of the great love affairs of the twentieth century.

With delicacy and grace, Wheeler teases out truth from fiction in the liaison that Blixen herself immortalized in *Out of Africa*. Intellectual equals, bound by their love for the continent and their inimitable sense of style, Finch Hatton and Blixen were genuine pioneers in a land that was quickly being transformed by violence, greed, and bigotry.

Ever restless, Finch Hatton wandered into a career as a big-game hunter and became an expert bush pilot; his passion that led to his affair with the notoriously unconventional aviatrix Beryl Markham. But Markham was no more able to hold him than Blixen had been. Mesmerized all his life by the allure of freedom and danger, Finch Hatton was, writes Wheeler, “the open road made flesh.”

In painting a portrait of an irresistible man, Sara Wheeler has beautifully

captured the heady glamour of the vanished paradise of colonial East Africa. In *Too Close to the Sun* she has crafted a book that is as ravishing as its subject.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

A superlative athlete with an enormous capacity for friendship and a chronically underachieving, charismatic loner with eternal wanderlust, Denys Finch Hatton (1887–1931) emerged as an iconic figure in the memoirs of two lovers, Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa* and Beryl Markham's *West with the Night*. In childhood, this earl's son—who would later reject the trappings of worldly success, saw his family fortune depleted, developed a passion for hunting from a nonconformist uncle as well as an appreciation for strong, artistic women like his mother—found Eton a "youthful paradise," says Wheeler, that made it possible for him "to believe in the African dream." The nonconformist in him was drawn to the freedom the Dark Continent promised; after settling in East Africa, he fought on the WWI battlefield there and later became a hunter shepherding rich clients. Hatton, who died when the plane he was piloting crashed, left no diaries and his inner life remains unknowable, as Wheeler (*Cherry*) acknowledges, yet in this thoughtful, satisfying work, she masterfully captures his allure through the memories of others and through her deft interpretation of both his East African and British milieus in the tumultuous years surrounding WWI. Photos. (Apr. 24)
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From [Booklist](#)

Denys Finch Hatton has achieved a measure of fame as the lover of Karen Blixen (Isak Dinesen) as portrayed in her memoir *Out of Africa*. Much has been written about their relationship, and the film version, with Robert Redford portraying Finch Hatton, has added to public interest. Wheeler, in a well-written and engrossing biography, focuses on the full span of Finch Hatton's life. He was born into a family of "fallen" British gentry who were, typically, land rich but cash poor. As a youth, he seemed a "golden boy" with a bright future; he was strikingly handsome, a superb athlete, and blessed with immense personal charm. Yet part of that charm was an intriguing but frustrating aloofness. Even in Kenya he found it difficult to sustain commitment, as his prolonged but erratic affair with Blixen illustrated. This thoroughly enjoyable work casts a light on an attractive but enigmatic figure, but a true understanding of him remains tantalizingly out of reach. *Jay Freeman*
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Review

"What is it about these untamable men that makes them so alluring? . . . In Finch Hatton, [Sara] Wheeler has found the archetypal wanderer forced to straddle multiple worlds. He embodies the contradictions of the early modern age and, in some ways still, of ours."—*New York Times Book Review*

"A fascinating portrait of . . . a singularly romantic life."—*Vogue*

"Highly recommended . . . Wheeler's striking descriptions of East Africa, including Kenya and the Rift Valley, create a rich sense of place and time."—*Library Journal*

"Wheeler's fascinating, witty bio reveals her wonderful eye for telling details."—*Entertainment Weekly*

From the Trade Paperback edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Corrine Switzer:

Nowadays reading books become more and more than want or need but also turn into a life style. This reading addiction give you lot of advantages. The huge benefits you got of course the knowledge the actual information inside the book that will improve your knowledge and information. The information you get based on what kind of e-book you read, if you want get more knowledge just go with knowledge books but if you want truly feel happy read one using theme for entertaining including comic or novel. The actual Too Close to the Sun: The Audacious Life and Times of Denys Finch Hatton is kind of book which is giving the reader capricious experience.

Chester Walters:

Spent a free a chance to be fun activity to try and do! A lot of people spent their leisure time with their family, or their own friends. Usually they undertaking activity like watching television, going to beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Will you something different to fill your own personal free time/ holiday? Could possibly be reading a book may be option to fill your free time/ holiday. The first thing you will ask may be what kinds of e-book that you should read. If you want to test look for book, may be the reserve untitled Too Close to the Sun: The Audacious Life and Times of Denys Finch Hatton can be great book to read. May be it is usually best activity to you.

James Murray:

The book untitled Too Close to the Sun: The Audacious Life and Times of Denys Finch Hatton contain a lot of information on that. The writer explains the woman idea with easy approach. The language is very clear and understandable all the people, so do not really worry, you can easy to read that. The book was written by famous author. The author will bring you in the new time of literary works. You can actually read this book because you can continue reading your smart phone, or model, so you can read the book throughout anywhere and anytime. If you want to buy the e-book, you can wide open their official web-site and order it. Have a nice study.

Christopher Melendez:

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