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

By Sara Wheeler



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A champion of Africa, legendary for his good looks, his charm, and his prowess as a soldier, lover, and hunter, Denys Finch Hatton inspired Karen Blixen to write the unforgettable *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. In 1910, searching for something new, he 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. In Nairobi, Finch Hatton met Karen Blixen and embarked on one of the great love affairs of the twentieth century. Intellectual equals, 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. Mesmerized all his life by the allure of freedom and danger, Finch Hatton was, writes Wheeler, “the open road made flesh.”



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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*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

James Marcus:

The book *Too Close to the Sun: The Audacious Life and Times of Denys Finch Hatton* has a lot associated with on it. So when you check out this book you can get a lot of help. The book was written by the very famous author. McDougal makes some research prior to write this book. This particular book very easy to read you can get the point easily after reading this article book.

Barbara Goodman:

Reading can called thoughts hangout, why? Because when you are reading a book specifically book entitled *Too Close to the Sun: The Audacious Life and Times of Denys Finch Hatton* your brain will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in each and every aspect that maybe unknown for but surely can be your mind friends. Imaging each and every word written in a e-book then become one application form conclusion and explanation this maybe you never get ahead of. The *Too Close to the Sun: The Audacious Life and Times of Denys Finch Hatton* giving you another experience more than blown away your brain but also giving you useful facts for your better life in this era. So now let us explain to you the relaxing pattern this is your body and mind are going to be pleased when you are finished studying it, like winning a game. Do you want to try this extraordinary investing spare time activity?

Sean Bass:

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Janice Martin:

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