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John Heminway [00:00:38] Africa. For many travelers, it's an object of desire. They talk of love at first sight, seduction, awakening, rebirth. Why Africa? Why do Westerners like myself, keep returning to a continent to which we have no claim? I'm John Heminway. My story isn't about headline Africa, battle politics and drought induced famine. Mine is a love story about a land that many outsiders yearn to call home. This is the Africa that has stolen their hearts and mine.

John Heminway [00:02:04] I wasn't born in Africa and therefore I can't call it home. Still, flying there is like a return to roots. Ever since my first safari at age 16, I've been suffering from what the French called la mal d'Afrique. The obsession with Africa. I once met an old British colonial who was possessed by Africa. He was living proof of the passion. Today I'm fulfilling a lifetime dream. Returning to his remote island, which I visited only once, nearly three decades ago. During the intervening years, this old man and his attachment to Africa have haunted me. I keep wondering why we became such friends, why his life especially was so important to me. When he died in 1980, he left me a trunk buried in the friend's attic. Latham Leslie-Moore. Nanyuki, Kenya. His last toehold in Africa. Latham was born during the reign of Queen Victoria. Wounded in World War One and given half a year to live. He came to Africa on a dying man's whim and lived for 60 more years, working first as an agricultural officer and later settling on a remote island where he purchased land. He was a renegade colonial, alienated not only from black but from white society. In 1966, my friend Mary Anne Fitzgerald and I traveled to meet him. She was determined to learn about Africa. And I, just out of college, was bent on becoming a writer in search of material for a book. We defied the warnings of others and made our way to his island.

Mary Anne Fitzgerald [00:03:46] Well, first of all, I was a bit frightened because of his reputation. We were told that, uh, he would probably shoot us if we tried to go near the island. And at the very least, he make us show our passports before he'd let us step foot on the sand. So I remember I was a bit cowardly, and I lingered behind you. And I thought, well, if he's going to shoot somebody, we'd better have John be shot first.

John Heminway [00:04:11] But the old man was unarmed. He had authored his own legend and he delighted in being thought dangerous. He glared ominously and then said, oh, do come in and have a pink gin.

Mary Anne Fitzgerald [00:04:22] Well, of course, one saw that this reputation was a lot of hot air and meant nothing at all. And that here was an eccentric, witty and very charming man who welcomed us with open arms. And we stayed there for three days. You know, in my memory, it's like a week or longer. It was just so perfect and wonderful. And he looked after us so well.

John Heminway [00:04:50] On his death, Latham left me his proudest possession. The tattered flag that once flew over his island. I can hear him describing it. Emerald green. Sea blue. Blood red. The colors were his symbols. Let the green island of Msimbati forever be separated by the blue sea from the blood drenched shores of Africa. For 18 months, Latham declared independence from the continent. He flew this flag, called himself Sultan, and wrote the United Nations requesting membership for his pint sized island. On one level, it was comedy. He called the stunt his lifetime's finest leg pull. At another level, this was the act of an old man railing against change, and for a while Africa tolerated Latham's antics. Latham in Africa, a romance that began in 1922, after a month long voyage at sea. He disembarked at Mombasa and took this rail line into the interior. For over half a

century, this was every newcomer's path to the heart of Africa. Winston Churchill rode these rails in 1907, calling this line one of the most romantic and most wonderful railways in the world. He was followed in 1909 by Teddy Roosevelt, who dubbed it a railroad through the Pleistocene. From here on, this line was used by all manner of settlers who, with colonial presumption, declared this Africa, white man's country. But it never was. Kenya gained independence in 1963, changing its pronunciation to Kenya. Tanganyika. Latham's adopted home to the south, had led the way in 1961, modifying its name to Tanzania. There's still a small minority of whites who, like Latham, have abandoned the West to live in East Africa. The passion endures generation after generation. Even after many trips, I come alive in Africa. So too with Letham. In England, he was penniless, estranged from family, stifled by convention. Here he was unfettered at last. No doubt as a colonial, he loved the privilege. But most of all, he loved Africa. That's what touched me those many years ago. And that's what brought me back to Africa today. 300 miles from Mombasa, one mile above sea level. Nairobi. From here, I'll follow Latham's African Trail, and I'll try to make sense of the obsession with Africa with which he and so many outsiders have been afflicted. The Africa passion.

Announcer [00:07:52] Travels with John Heminway. We'll be back in a moment. Now back to travels with John Heminway.

John Heminway [00:08:00] At the turn of the century, Nairobi was no more than a railway terminus built on a swamp. Today, it rises from the Athi Plains with all the architectural pretensions of an African Houston. Here's a city with multiple personalities, a raucous, energetic head of steam town that, on the surface seems to work. The unofficial business capital for much of English speaking Black Africa. Nairobi is the place where many East African journeys begin. The throngs the traveler encounters at rush hour are a minority. The fortunate ones, those with jobs. On the other side of town where tourists rarely linger. There's another Nairobi, where a discontented, mostly unemployed East Africa gathers. Victims perhaps of past colonialism, present overpopulation, failing bureaucracy and ubiquitous corruption. I asked writer Isabelle Mbugwa what sort of expatriate settler is welcome in the complex environment of East Africa today?

Isabelle Mbugwa [00:09:11] It depends on why they are here, and there are various categories of whites who live in Kenya. There are those whites who have lived here. They are actually third generation and I think they are Kenyan and they should live here. Then there are those whites who come to work here because they think they need to come and help with the development of, of the country. And I think I have no quarrel with that. But then there are those whites who just want to come and live here because it's it's cheaper, there's cheap labor. It's a good lifestyle and they like it. And I think that is not a very good reason to want to come and live in this country.

John Heminway [00:09:51] Isabelle believes there's another guideline to calling Africa home. If whites are to leave racial baggage behind, then they mustn't dodge real African issues.

Isabelle Mbugwa [00:10:02] I think you've chosen if you've chosen to live in a country, you should be concerned about what's going on generally all around you. If there's going to be a demonstration against something and all the whites stay away because they think it's none of their business. And yet they say they love staying in this country. I think they are not being very honest.

John Heminway [00:10:25] Most travelers, on the other hand, don't have time to get beneath the surface to learn about conflict. They want storybook Africa.

Unidentified [00:10:33] To your busses.

John Heminway [00:10:37] An example of the African tourist fantasy is just minutes from downtown Nairobi. An unconventional bed and breakfast run by Rick and Brianey Anderson. Here comes your friend.

Rick Anderson [00:10:48] Here comes Jacques.

Brianey Anderson [00:10:49] Good morning Jacques.

Rick Anderson [00:10:53] Morning. Let me say.

Brianey Anderson [00:10:55] Hello. Jacques.

John Heminway [00:10:58] Now, now, this is the oldest, is it?

Rick Anderson [00:11:00] No, this is this is Jacques.

John Heminway [00:11:01] Has something that.

Brianey Anderson [00:11:02] The young male.

Rick Anderson [00:11:03] The young male named after my late stepfather. Jacques, who started the wildlife organization.

John Heminway [00:11:08] Well. How do most, um, tourists find this? This is their probably their first day in Africa. They just gotten off a plane and they've walked in here for breakfast. How do they take it? Giraffe coming in. And it's extraordinary. Mansion in the middle of Africa.

Rick Anderson [00:11:26] Well, I think they're, uh, quite shocked, but very, very over overwhelmed shock. I mean, there's so. They can't describe it. It makes them feel like children, and they just really couldn't care less if they're eating their breakfast or not. Like if they have a giraffe here for breakfast.

John Heminway [00:11:45] Overwhelmed by the 18 inch tongue,.

Rick Anderson [00:11:47] Overwhelmed by it all.

John Heminway [00:11:49] And jet lag forgotten.

Rick Anderson [00:11:51] That's Right.

John Heminway [00:11:52] Here I'm reminded of Latham and his life in Africa. Is this land no more than a drug? Medicine for Western egos. Is the Africa passion merely an attraction to this kind of comfort and scale? A great writer said of this land "up in this high air you breathe easily, drawing in of vital assurance and lightness of heart. In the Highlands, you woke up in the morning and thought, here I am, where I ought to be." The writer was the Baroness Karen Blixen, known as Isak Dinesen. She lived in this

farmhouse. Even though she failed as a farmer, she eked from this experience great joys and awful pains that are the stuff of her story. Today, thanks to the film Out of Africa, this home has become a kind of shrine. The most popular of all museums in East Africa. Karen Blixen lover was Denys Finch Hatton. Cast, Hollywood fashion, as all American Robert Redford, in reality a very British balding classic scholar. Here in this house. Screen legend and truth have become one.

Announcer [00:13:27] Travels with John Heminway will be right back. Now back to travels with John Heminway.

John Heminway [00:13:36] I'm bound now for the home of a friend who, along with her husband Paulo, has dedicated resources and much more to Africa.

Kuki Gallman [00:13:46] Paulo drove me up a hill and said, what do you think? And my feelings were extraordinary. My breath was taken away. It was on the top of a hill here, overlooking the Rift Valley. And the distance and the wind and the breeze and the noises of the bush. It was all I dreamed about, but somehow much more. Well, friends told us you're mad you come to this country. I give you ten years. Paulo and I looked at each other and you said ten years of our life at this stage in our life is forever. We gamble it. Of course we can. And we never look back.

John Heminway [00:14:27] Kuki Gallman and her 11 year old daughter Sveva, live here on the Laikipia Plateau, caring for one of Kenya's last private wildlife sanctuaries. A Kuki, in owning a ranch in Africa. Do you actually own a little piece of Africa?

Kuki Gallman [00:14:43] Well, I can't own anything. You can't own Africa. How can you own something which has been here since time immemorial? Which is going to be here far after I've gone? I can only look after what has fantastically been my privilege to be the trustee of. I feel, a trustee to this land. I can't be anything else.

John Heminway [00:15:10] About 3000 elephants live on Kuki's ranch. There are lots of other animals. Giraffe, zebra, gazelle. But she's proudest of these elephants. It looks like it's only cows and calves here. Do you ever get any bulls here on the place?

Kuki Gallman [00:15:37] Oh, yes. We get all sorts of things like that. Look that baby elephant

John Heminway [00:15:43] I have to tell you that I've seen lots of elephants and very few of them drinking at a cattle waterhole.

Kuki Gallman [00:15:49] This is the combination of wild and tame that I like to project. I want to prove that you can actually live. We humans can live in a wonderful, still untouched piece of land in harmony with what is around us, protecting the wildlife and utilizing, on the other hand, the potential of the land. You see in Africa, animals wild animals are going to be mostly national parks in the not too distant future, because there won't be room for them. People are growing too fast. Land is shrinking too fast. But if we can prove that man and nature can survive together for the benefit of one another. In fact. Then it's the answer for Africa and for the wildlife of Africa. And this is what I want to do.

John Heminway [00:16:44] Extraordinary how they can just ghost away. Like huge apparitions. Makes you wonder if you ever saw them to begin with.

Kuki Gallman [00:16:53] I know, It's extraordinary they can disappear through the bush as if they were dolfins, diving through the ocean waves.

John Heminway [00:17:07] Do you ever get tired of watching elephants.

Kuki Gallman [00:17:08] It's impossible.

John Heminway [00:17:16] I knew Paulo. He lived a romantic life. Hunting, fishing, ranching and driving cars at great speed. When Paulo died. Did you ever think about going back?

Kuki Gallman [00:17:27] Not for a second. I was pregnant when he died. And naturally, a number of our friends came over. And to a certain extent, my remaining family in Italy and said, you must come back. What are you doing there in the heart of Africa, with an unborn baby on your own and a son of 14? But I never thought about going back to Venice. I love Venice, I go back all the time, but not to live. I got really nothing to do anymore in Europe, John. This is my life. And I can do things here that I believe in. Like if I went, what would happen to the land? And I've never forgive myself for that. And Paulo's death made me more sure that finally this was my place and I had to be here. He and I were here in a wonderful adventure together, and in a way, he knew he was not going to survive me. He knew he was going to die young, and you always thought I could make it. He always thought I was going to carry on here. He never for a moment thought I was going to let him down and go back and be tame.

John Heminway [00:18:32] And then Emanuele when he died, didn't you at that point think you've lost everything to Africa?

Kuki Gallman [00:18:41] Well, you see good things come at a price. And I paid a lot for what I had. I came into myself, into my identity. I lost a lot along the way. I lost the man I love. I lost my family. But I still had a daughter. A chunk of Africa to look after. And certainly it was not Africa's fault. You see, tragedy happened everywhere. They are perhaps different tragedies. But car crashes can happen elsewhere. Certainly the snake which killed Emanuele, it was extraordinary. But this is an extraordinary place. With extraordinary people doing extraordinary things. It does happen that people meet extraordinary deaths. And that didn't really mean that that was Africa's fault. In fact, it was African privilege to claim the prize. You know, we don't choose what we are born. To an extent we can choose where we die because we choose a way of life or a place to live. We had chosen Africa. Paulo and Emanuele had chosen Africa. I could choose how I buried them, and I interpreted their wishes. I wanted to prove this is my ancestral land. Why not my garden? They're part of my life. Alive or dead? And that is the reason why I planted two trees on their graves. They loved Africa. The acacia is an African tree. The African tree par excellence, Paulo loved it more than any other tree. And I thought if the body can be transformed into something else, the body now becomes a shape. An African shape. And it survives. And I love it. And I know he would have loved it. And so would Emanuele have.

Announcer [00:20:37] Travels with John Heminway will be right back. Now back to travels with John Heminway.

John Heminway [00:20:47] Back on the Latham trail, I think again of the old man. No doubt he suffered crushing loneliness on his island. Sometimes he'd write total strangers inviting them to stay. Such was the case with the Griffiths. So what was your first impression when you saw him?

Wendy Griffith [00:21:03] It was wonderful. He was on the beach.

Tony Griffith [00:21:05] The big man with the big hat.

Wendy Griffith [00:21:07] With the big tall hat and the big stick and a little shuka.

Tony Griffith [00:21:12] Hey, look, we just come out of the sea, isn't it?

Wendy Griffith [00:21:14] Yeah. He looked wonderful. Yeah.

John Heminway [00:21:17] Were you a bit intimidated by him when you first met him?

Tony Griffith [00:21:20] I was a little bit worried. Well, when you think about it they were Wendy and I, young married couple with two young children going to an island. To someone that Wendy had corresponded with only. Obviously an eccentric. But, uh, I settled in very quickly. Second day realized. Delightful, delightful character. Great fun. Different. But we had a superb three weeks there.

Wendy Griffith [00:21:49] Wonderful. You know.

John Heminway [00:21:52] Just wonderful.

Wendy Griffith [00:21:53] The best holiday we've ever had.

John Heminway [00:21:58] I just want to see that island once again for the last time. What's happened, do you know, I mean, it was just a total. In home movies of the 60s, Latham's world is restored. He created this kingdom because he had lost interest in the 20th century. In truth, he had discovered feudalism. Himself, the Sultan and everyone else, serfs, including me, a lowly American. Here he was beyond law and financial cares beyond perhaps the awkward truth of his own parentage. He survived on laughter, routine, and dreams of how the world once was. In me, I think Latham saw a youthful version of himself. I viewed him as a storybook figure, free from all restraints, at least for a time. I'd never met anyone like him, nor had I encountered such freedom. After leaving the island, I kept recalling the sound of his antique voice rising and falling on the offshore wind.

Latham Leslie-Moore [00:22:56] Eventually he got the the house built. The place is lovely. Every room looked into the courtyard and to the outside. So There was a current of air blowing through the house all day and night. The weaver birds, rambunctious little beasts they are, used to get into the into the shells and splash about splash water all over the place. Like a little monkey. The three mile long beach Ruvuma to Msimbati must surely be one of the most beautiful on the East African coast. Slipping gently from the coconut grove to the sea. The sand is shrimp color when wet and clean, white in the bright sunlight at low tide, with a background of waving coconut palms, with the wind whispering in the fronds. It is one of the few peaceful spots left unspoiled by men.

Mary Anne Fitzgerald [00:24:05] I think Latham understood Africa. Africa has that special appeal. It's a land that's so wide and so open and so empty, that you're free to do anything you want to in Africa. You're free to be the sultan of an island, to declare independence from the country that you're living in. You're free to do all these things. But there's no nothing to protect you if things go wrong. There's no safety net. And Latham knew it. And that's what happened to him.

John Heminway [00:24:38] Less than one year after our visit, police forcibly removed Letham from the island. The reason? An impending civil war crossed the border in Mozambique. Perhaps. Also, Latham had infuriated one bureaucrat too many. I flew to Africa to help, but there was nothing I could do. Latham had lost everything he had, but he vowed never to give up. He was sure he return one day. Now to Lamu a muslim island just off the coast of Kenya. Here, I'll visit a friend of Latham's, Anne Spoerry another victim of the Africa Passion. Some 60 years ago as a young girl in France Anne dreamed of Africa, a dream interrupted by war, her work in the French underground, and her imprisonment by the Nazis. The dream only came true in 1949. Ever since, she's called Africa home. Anne is a legend in Kenya, one of its pioneer flying doctors.

Anne Spoerry [00:25:42] It was more difficult than I thought because flying isn't that easy. And I was 43 I think when I started learning to fly. It's fantastic. The freedom it gives you. I love flying, but. But I fly to do to go somewhere and to do something.

John Heminway [00:26:03] Anne covers much of Kenya, tending the rural poor throughout its remote districts. She's often a Kenyans only link to modern medical care.

Anne Spoerry [00:26:13] Lamu, it's a very difficult district because it's not very large, but it's, uh, islands, uh, little, little villages in the bush, uh, very difficult to get at. And unless you can fly, it's practically impossible to, to to cover the place. We have a lot of rural airstrips that help. And, um, we will see the villagers, treat the ones that need to be treated. And there's about 400 villages, I think, in that place, and do the vaccinations. This is a very, very important part of my work. I started in 1976, in Lamu District. And, uh, the results, uh, are to be felt now. I mean, I've seen a big difference. There's hardly any cases of measles have practically disappeared. I haven't seen a new polio case now for ten years. This is this is an achievement, I think. I really feel that, uh, you know, you feel really like these people, and you like to try and help them to to to be healthier and to, uh, to have a slightly better life than what they've got now. You see, in the old days, they were very free and they had a life that was not affected by modern ideas and modern things. Now, uh, they are affected by it by by the modern life as we've worked the 20th century, we've got to try and make it, uh, at least worthwhile for them. That's what I feel.

Announcer [00:27:45] Stay tuned for more travels with John Heminway. Now back to travels with John Heminway.

John Heminway [00:27:55] Lamu featured in Latham's life too. In 1967, when he was removed from his island. He began searching for a new home. First South Africa, where he discovered he couldn't stomach apartheid. Then to Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe. Following his heart. The romance was brief, and at the end Latham's life savings had dissipated. So after an absence of some 40 years, he returned to England, the land of his birth, only to reaffirm his discomfort with the weather, the politics, the hubbub of the 20th century. In Dorset, I met him for the first time since he left the island. He had a final wish. To return to Africa, this time to die. So Marry Anne and I settled him in Lamu. It's climate we thought would resemble Msimbati's. Happy as he was to be back in Africa, the old man resumed his habit of writing rude letters, mostly to the small expatriate community nearby. Armed with deadly Edwardian rhetoric, he launched a war of words. Only one fellow European was not in his line of fire.

Anne Spoerry [00:29:03] I remember him very, very well. Bwana Bada Kufa, as my friends used to call him here. Um, yes. He was a marvelous person. Uh, I used to see him

every month when I used to come regularly, every four weeks. And, um, I would stay for five days. Uh, go and see him every day at six in the morning, because that was the only time I had free. And he was always ready to see me. He was an a very impressive chap. I liked him very much, but, uh, I can't remember how long he stayed here. About a year or something like that. And, uh, his health deteriorated. Well, he couldn't really walk very well. And, uh, if he had to go somewhere, uh, to the hotel. So they used to carry him with, uh, with a chair in the end. And, uh, with your help and so on. We we found this place at, uh, Chamsenden in Nanyuki, and, uh, I flew him up there and, of course, old Latham felt very, very, very chuffed by that. He was so pleased.

John Heminway [00:30:08] For tourists. Nanyuki is the summit of luxury in the East African highlands, high on the slopes of Mount Kenya. It boasts a refreshing climate and a many stared hotel. But this was far beyond Latham's means. Instead, he lived in a travelers inn with charitable help from the proprietor and friends. A rumor circulated that Latham was an illegitimate member of the royal family. The older he grew, the more he came to resemble Edward the Seventh. But Latham would only smile cryptically. He guarded this secret and many others to protect memories. To preserve a legend. A charming rogue. The arrogant chauvinist. The gallant flirt. Latham was far from perfect. At the end, all that remained was an undying attachment to Africa, even close to death, I think he dreamed of a final journey to Msimbati, to leave his bones there, as he had once planned. In June 1980, Latham's life came to an end. He had come close to realizing his final dream. At least he died in Africa. By the time his friends from all over the world had learned the news and put together a collection for the headstone, no one could recall precisely the location of his grave. It's now taken another friend of Latham, Sam Weller, 12 years to establish where it is. And today we've planned a little ceremony. Well, 12 years late.

Sam Weller [00:31:55] I'm afraid so.

John Heminway [00:31:59] Rest in peace, old man. I've now crossed the border from Kenya into Tanzania, bound for Latham's Island. I wander in and out of the Great Rift, the geologic spine of the continent that bounds the vast Serengeti plain. This is Africa at its most extravagant home to the Maasai, host to the greatest terrestrial animal migration in all the world and not insignificantly, the repository of many human secrets. Here is where I'm most struck by the Africa passion. Whenever I visit the Serengeti plain, I try to do so in the company of safari guide Peter Jones, another friend obsessed with Africa. I have to tell you that. Somehow I feel far more relaxed out on the plains than I do in the woodland. I don't know why it is, but on the Serengeti you want these plains, you feel better?

Peter Jones [00:33:06] Yes you can. You can see what's coming. You can see what's way off there. And when you're walking through the bushland, you've never quite sure what's on the other side of that thicket.

John Heminway [00:33:15] Do you think it goes back to this primordial memory of man that we remember our our place on the savanna?

Peter Jones [00:33:23] Definitely. I think. I think a lot of our what, what a lot of people would like to call intuition, a lot of our gut reactions to things. A lot of those feelings are, in fact, our instincts. And they're they're survival instincts that that have more of a value then, than they do now.

John Heminway [00:33:40] For seven years, Peter camped here as a member of Mary Leakey's team in the search for human origins. While here, he developed more than a passing understanding of the herds of wildebeest and the great cats who live off them. It's fine to drive through the Serengeti, but if either of us have a preference, it's to leave the boundaries of the national park and to proceed in the uncontrolled areas to the outside a foot. Here's the heart of a country. Thorn scratches, biting insects, sore feet, small prices to pay for the smell of dried acacia, encounters with dung beetles, and the exhilaration of feeling minute on a great savanna. Walking is the only way you'll ever be able to visit the most evocative of all early man sites, now concealed beneath the protective covering of stone. In 1976, Peter and his colleagues discovered here at Laetoli not a fossil, but footprints. Here 3.6 million years ago at least two creatures walked, one about five feet tall, the other several inches less. As a two headed off, the smaller, paused look behind and then rejoined the other. They walked together. And what's most alluring of all, according to Peter, they walked arm in on. 3.6 million years ago on this very spot. The Maasai often graze their cattle near the early man site. They're little bothered by this prehistory and only temporarily interested in us. In March, on the edge of the Serengeti, you're likely to find large gatherings of wildebeest and young awaiting the onset of the long rains for their journey north. They accumulate around the occasional waterholes during the heat of the day, and you wonder what will happen if the drought continues. 10,000 here, 20,000 there. And before you know it, there's a million and a half wildebeest marshaling for the migration. Walking on the Serengeti is, for me, equivalent to turning back the clock 3 million years free, wild, unchecked, and totally fulfilled. Here I feel I could be following in the ancestors footsteps. I'm not at all surprised this spectacle seems familiar. As if somehow my genetic material has a memory.

Announcer [00:36:47] Stay tuned for the conclusion of travels. And now the conclusion of travels with John Heminway.

John Heminway [00:37:00] Leaving the Serengeti, Peter and I travel some 650 hard miles on the final leg of the trip to the Old Man's Island. I'm completing his journey in fact. Perhaps I'm doing it for him, but I'm also doing it for me. To close a chapter of my life. To escape the old man's charm at last. Perhaps to understand this obsession with Africa.

Peter Jones [00:37:40] So how far do you think it is now?

John Heminway [00:37:42] I have no idea. I have no idea. But I think we're very, we're red hot. It's somewhere right in here. But he had a lot of rather lovely shade trees around the house. So it would be a little bit. It's probably in that grove up there. Oh, wait a second. What do I see there? I think we're there. Oh my gosh! Look at this. What? What is that? Here's a forecourt. Here we are. Here we are.

Peter Jones [00:38:25] Yeah.

John Heminway [00:38:26] Right here.

Peter Jones [00:38:27] There it is.

John Heminway [00:38:28] You see? This is absolutely intact. I can't believe it. No. Yeah. We'd sit out here in the evening when the sun had gone down and huge, big. These these shells, as I said, right out there. All out there. Now the windows. And they had a massive Zanzibar door here. That was fabulous. And these were the ties that he used to boast about from the Tanganyika Railway. He'd pinched them himself personally.

Peter Jones [00:38:58] Look at that. The tracks. Tracks in here holding up the ceiling.

John Heminway [00:39:01] Oh, yeah. That's part of the the whole rail system there.

Peter Jones [00:39:04] What was this use, room used for?

John Heminway [00:39:05] This this was a sitting room and, uh, and and he sat he had a big chair that he put here, and he would open these shutters in the evening, the door in the evening, and he would sit here, uh, with his feet on the stool, and he would, uh, you know, he would give the sermon of the day.

Peter Jones [00:39:23] Oh my goodness.

John Heminway [00:39:23] And he had a radio that he'd listened to, and he had complained about the BBC World Service. Why are these ruins so important to me, I wonder? Crumbling coral, the smell of bats everywhere. I can once again imagine the leather bound books, the Waterford decanters, the silver christening cups, the photographs of old friends. This might have been a great English country house, except its Edwardian proprietor had defied the dress code and claimed to have converted to Islam. For me, this house is Latham. His citadel against the world that was passing him by. Here, for a time, he could conjure up a dream kingdom, a Camelot with only one knight, himself. The Sultan of Msimbati already. Now this was the tour de force of the house. The center courtyard. And he had a little fountain there as I recall, right in the middle there.

Peter Jones [00:40:30] Yeah.

John Heminway [00:40:31] Oh, boy. Let's have a look. Most of us dream of absolute freedom. Latham had once lived it, here in this house. And as long as Latham believed he could return here, to wander the still beach outside and swim across the coral reef beyond, he stayed alive. The island of, Msimbati was medicine for his soul. And while in the end he knew it could never be his home, it would always be his principle for living. That's amazing. I really expected nothing here. Absolutely nothing. You know, people probably, if they don't know what it is, they'll they'll come and say, oh, my God, it's an Arab ruin.

Peter Jones [00:41:08] Yeah, yeah.

John Heminway [00:41:09] Little did they know, it was built in 1946 by this very eccentric British colonial who planned to die here.

Peter Jones [00:41:17] No, it looks it looks ancient in particularly the way the trees have all grown up around it. It looks like it's been here since the beginning of time.

John Heminway [00:41:25] It's a grand house. A zillion miles from anywhere. I'm now convinced Africa is haunted by ghosts, some as old as the human spirit. While outsiders like myself can never claim Africa as home. It will always claim us. And in this house I've met the old man one last time. Still outrageous and arrogant. Still laughing. Still guarding secrets. In his heart Latham knew this place was where he ought to be. In the end unmoved, most of all by his daring, he wagered all he had on his passion for place. This Africa passion. Some might say it was no more than a self-indulgent dream. But Latham must have known something. For in Africa, dreams it seems, outlive the dreamers.

Latham Leslie-Moore [00:42:29] As the sun goes down over the mainland, to the west, a hush falls over the island. The sky peddles and turns to a lovely pastel shades of the palest green, blue and rose to berry pink. And only the sighing of the wind in the palms and the ceaseless monologue of the serf sing a whistfull rhythm as another day ends.

John Heminway [00:44:04] I'm John Heminway. Please join us next time on Travels.