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# Witness to a scandal

JAMES FOX's account of aristocrats and playboys in colonial Kenya, *White Mischief*, investigated the notorious murder of Lord Erroll. Now he reads the memoirs of Juanita Carberry, the last witness to the crime, who has written her own memoir of the excesses of Happy Valley

One of the most unpleasant men in the history of colonial Kenya was undoubtedly John Carberry, formerly Baron Carbery of Castle Freke, Ireland and the father of Juanita Carberry, the author of this honest, entertaining and, in parts, shocking book, *Child of the Happy Valley: A Memoir* (Heinemann £17.99), written with Nicola Tyrer. Other bad characters, such as Joss Hay, Lord Erroll, the handsome philanderer whose murder became a *cause célèbre* of the 1940s, or his legendary neighbour in Happy Valley, Raymond de Trafford, at least had some charm. Meeting the latter in 1931, Evelyn Waugh described him as "v. Nice, but so BAD and he fights and f\*\*\*s and gambles and gets D.D. [disgustingly drunk] all the time".

But JC, as Juanita called her father, was far from "v. Nice", and wore his badges apparently with pride. He was a sadist, a voyeur, a declared Nazi who tortured animals; he was foul to the Kikuyu servants who nicknamed him *mcharicha*, or oxen whip. He tried to scupper the pregnancies of his successive wives, and Juanita was born miraculously after her mother was forced to go on a mule ride to get her to abort.

This was 1925 when Happy Valley, a loose gathering of dissolute aristocrats and playboys, was in full swing under the leadership of Lord Erroll. He had recently and scandalously eloped with the twice-married Lady Idina Gordon. Despite the scandal this set created then (and again in 1941, when, before he could run off with another beautiful married woman, Diana Delves Broughton, Erroll was murdered), it never constituted more than a dozen people. The men lived on their wives' divorce settlements — and their own debts. Carberry, who dropped his title out of a violent dislike of England and adopted his family name with its two 'r's, thinking it sounded more American, was never a core member; he was too successful a businessman, although he was later jailed for his efforts. Erroll went to work only after allowing his last heiress wife, Molly, to die from drink and drugs under his roof.

Carberry's second wife, Maia Anderson, was a beauty, a second-generation Kenyan and an aviatrix who was setting local records before

Beryl Markham (Carberry financed her famous Atlantic flight). Maia died in an air stunt, made to go up by Carberry against her will, when Juanita was three; murdered, her Carberry-loathing family maintained. (Markham told me she believed Carberry's sponsorship of her own flight was a fundamentally murderous impulse.) Juanita heard of her mother's death much later, from a teasing schoolfriend. She had not been aware, she writes, that she had parents at all. The only emotion Carberry inspired in her was fear. Referred to at home as "the brat" or "sod ears", Juanita was beaten incessantly while her father looked on.

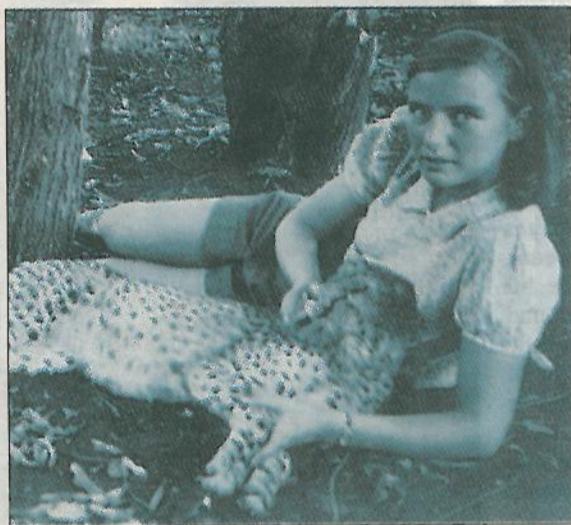
And yet, partly because of a sepa-

late 1920s, the excesses of Happy Valley "became synonymous with Kenya settlers in general". The drinking, the cocaine and the morphine were not exaggerated. Nor was the fact that everybody in the group ended up, eventually, in each other's beds. Juanita reveals that she got DNA samples from her former neighbours while writing this book, to discover if her father really was JC or his hard-working partner on the coffee estate, Maxwell Trench. The results were inconclusive.

Happy Valley was in decline, but still alive through Juanita's childhood. One of its most enthusiastic players was her stepmother, June Carberry, a crucial witness in the Erroll murder trial. A "terrifyingly unnatural blonde with a deep bass voice", as she was described to me, she was, we learn, a drinker and fornicator in a championship class. At least she had a heart somewhere, and Juanita actually liked her; she even thought that she loved her. The Joan Crawford-style beatings with shoe trees and the weird punishments such as forcing Juanita to eat the crow she had shot with her .22 rifle were balanced with treats at the Hotel du Cap at Eden Roc in the South of France, an annual pilgrimage. June, heavily lipsticked and stalking around in the latest pyjamas in the brightest of shades, passed Juanita

off as her younger sister, "picking up men on boats, in bars, by swimming pools, in hotels". (Cyril Connolly remembered her "husky yet metallic voice" floating over the escarpment there in 1938 exclaiming, "My God, I hate men.")

She even groped the young Juanita when, afraid of prowling leopards, she sought refuge in her stepmother's bed. Juanita's first sexual encounters took place on a boat where June picked up the barman and Juanita was allotted his colleague, Gustav. She was only 13. Juanita didn't really know what she was doing — certainly there had been scant moral instruction at home. At the age of 11, having barely seen a classroom, she was sent barefoot to finishing schools in Europe and South Africa. Serial expulsions brought her back to Seremai, and her worst and last childhood nightmare — her governess Isabel Rutt. The young Juanita spent many days locked in her room



Juanita Carberry with her pet cheetahs

rate nursery life ("colonials found children a bore") the stoic and heroic Juanita describes her early African childhood as "filled with affection, sunshine and freedom of a kind that modern children can only dream of." The servants at Seremai were loving, patient and amazingly tolerant, as elsewhere in the colony, of their masters "screaming abuse" at them in kitchen Swahili. Juanita's favourite companions were horses and, above all, her pet cheetahs.

Carberry built Seremai — the name in Masai means Place of Death — five miles from Nyeri at the edge of the Aberdares in the White Highlands. His daughter describes well the area's incomparable beauty, with the peaks of Mount Kenya on one side and Nyeri Hill, the aviators' landmark, on the other. But, she admits, "had the fates decided I was going to grow up a slut or a monster they could not have found a more fertile nursery than Seremai".

The author regrets that, from the



Up to no good: Greta Scacchi as Diana Delves Broughton, with John Hurt in the 1987 film *White Mischief*

without food. Finally, "The Rutt", on JC's instruction, gave her a terrible naked beating with a rhino whip, while, of course, he watched. Juanita took the evidence to Nyeri police station, and left home to live with her uncle. (Rutt was later awarded an MBE for services to education. She emerged, when *White Mischief* was published, to say that she admitted the beatings, but denied the sadism and collected £1,500 in damages.)

Juanita's triumph over her tormentors was to have survived to make an independent life. She writes of them with ironic detachment, as if they had never penetrated to her real, protected self. I first met her in Mombasa in 1980, where she gave me the key to the Erroll murder — telling me of the panicky confession that Sir Jock Delves Broughton made to her, 48 hours after the event. It was a secret she had kept for 40 years.

Juanita was 15 in late 1940 when the world-weary Delves Broughton came out to Kenya with his new young wife, Diana Caldwell. Diana began an affair with Erroll soon after they arrived; Delves Broughton made a show of accepting it. Desperate to limit the damage to his wounded vanity and avert further ridicule, he gave a dinner to celebrate the couple's future plans. At dawn the following morning, Erroll was found shot through the head in his Buick near Delves Broughton's house. Delves Broughton was tried and acquitted, mostly on baffling technical evidence. Happy Valley

was on trial, too, its antics, as ever, shaming and outraging the debt-ridden Kenya farmers, and diverting the readers at home who were struggling through the blitz. The courtroom furnished its last parade.

The jacket notes do a disservice to the author — who is now too blind to read, and may not have seen them — by claiming that this was Delves Broughton's only confession. He made four in all, as I reported in *White Mischief*. But Juanita's, recounted here in full, is the crucial one — the only one he made before his arrest and before his acquittal (after which he could say what he liked).

If Juanita had not kept her secret, he might easily have hanged. They saw each other as outsiders, she says, in this hostile adult world; and she felt protective. Bundled around with the grown-ups, she saw all the events of those crucial 48 hours, of which she is the last living witness. Desperate to get out of the house on the day after the murder, with Diana "sobbing quietly and waving away food", Delves Broughton had taken Juanita to see his horses. (She noticed a pair of burning gym shoes on the bonfire that Delves Broughton had made — crucial evidence that also never reached court). The next day he turned up at Seremai after a 100-mile drive to find Diana and June gone and Juanita alone. She showed him her pony, made him fill her book of questions — under "What is your greatest fear?" he answered, "Loneliness". He told her

the police were trailing him, and not to be frightened.

In the dialogue that followed ("They think I killed him"; "How ridiculous"), Delves Broughton admitted it. He had hidden in the back of Erroll's car, he said, while Erroll was saying goodnight to Diana, and shot him as the car slowed at a road junction. He had just dropped the gun in the Thika falls, but thought the police had been too far off to see it. Delves Broughton obviously thought he was about to be arrested and possibly charged within the hour.

I knew when I heard Juanita's story, which she gives here in full, that the quest was over. It fitted all the evidence, and particularly the psychological profile of Delves Broughton. A vain man on his last fling, Delves Broughton had been ostracised and humiliated; he was insane with jealousy and rage against both Diana and Erroll. Having committed a murder, he had to unburden himself, trusting Juanita instinctively or as she puts it, "When he arrived at Nyeri, physically and emotionally at a low ebb, there was no one there but a young girl, and his secret just blew out of him."

When Diana turned up at Seremai, after his confession, she "flew at him like a wildcat, punching and clawing at him, screaming that he had killed Erroll" — a moment Diana confirmed to me.

Any alternative theory of the killer will always fatally snag on the

Juanita Carberry confession. The settlers who looked at the evidence, and especially those who knew Delves Broughton, never had any doubt that he was the killer. Diana and June thought so, too. Closing ranks and even mocking the police, like Lord Lucan's friends a generation later, June provided the alibi and Diana found the lawyer who acquitted Delves Broughton.

There was one other crucial piece of evidence dug up by Cyril Connolly that never reached court. Among the many good photographs here is one of Valerie Ward, later Lady Barwick, blonde, pretty, supremely sexy, her leggy figure poured into a safari suit with shorts. She was at the nightclub that Erroll and Diana repaired to after the celebration dinner, and described Delves Broughton, turning up there unexpectedly when they thought he had gone home, "causing consternation, starting a terrific row", flying into a temper and shouting at Erroll. He had had a few drinks by then. The murder followed a few hours later.

The letters he wrote to Diana after she had abandoned him have only recently come to light. Blackmailing, enraged and jealous, they display not an iota of curiosity as to who else might be the killer who had ruined all their lives, confirming Delves Broughton's murderous mood while he played the acquiescent husband.

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