



# The Lure of the Honey Bird: The Storytellers of Ethiopia

*Elizabeth Laird*

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In 1967, at the age of 23, Elizabeth Laird set off for Addis Ababa to take up her first teaching post. She was introduced to Haile Selassie, made a pilgrimage across the mountains on foot to the ancient city of Lalibela, hitched a ride on an oil tanker across the Danakil Desert, and was arrested for a murder she had not committed. Back in Britain, Laird established herself as a major author of fiction for children and young adults, but she always wanted to return to Ethiopia. Her chance came in the late 1990s, when the British Council in Addis Ababa invited her to collect folk stories from every region of the country. Encountering ex-guerrilla fighters, camel traders, Coptic nuns and tribespeople en route, Laird has written a remarkable account of her journey interwoven with a treasure trove of stories featuring princes and maidens, snakes and lions, zombies and hyena-women.



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