



annick press

toronto + new york + vancouver

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Interior designed by Monica Charny
Cover designed by Sheryl Shapiro

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We acknowledge the support of the Canada Council for the Arts, the Ontario Arts Council, and the Government of Canada through the Canada Book Fund (CBF) for our publishing activities.



Cataloging in Publication

Oron, Judie

Cry of the giraffe : ba0[SuT]0b]gbhJb]0[SnT]0b]gedJb]0[Sd]Tgcd]0[ec]bieJ[c]0[cy]h]0[0]n]0[0]e]0[0]B

Printed in Canada.

Published in the U.S.A. by
Annick Press (U.S.) Ltd.

Distributed in Canada by
Firefly Books Ltd.
66 Leek Crescent
Richmond Hill, ON
L4B 1H1

Distributed in the U.S.A. by
Firefly Books (U.S.) Inc.
P.O. Box 1338
Ellicott Station
Buffalo, NY 14205

Visit our website at www.annickpress.com



PROLOGUE

Every year on February 21, I phone her. And every time, I ask her the same question: “Why are we still alive?”

No matter how many times I ask, her answer is always the same: “Because there was a wind.”



My name is Wuditu. When I was 13, my father took our family from our Ethiopian village to another country, Sudan. From there, we hoped to get to a place we called Yerusalem. While we were in Sudan, my little sister Lewteh and I were taken from our family. Not too long after that, I had to leave my sister. At the time, I thought it was the only way to save her. I was wrong, and my life was changed forever.

But I don't want to start my story there. I'll begin instead before that, when I was still a child in my village. I was

nine years old, and it was Fasika, the Passover holiday for my people. We call ourselves the Beta Israel, which means the House of Israel in our language, Amharic. Hundreds of years ago, a foreign army came to Yerusalem. They defeated our people and destroyed our Holy Temple. After that, our ancestors fled our ancient homeland and followed the Nile River into Ethiopia. They settled in the highlands, where we have lived ever since. But even though our bodies are here in EthcfdTOb]ekgghJbJh\$iT[cbTOb"Ob]fkggbSpTOb]gcOb"Ob]

Part One

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“Aiee! Lewteh, what are you doing?” I called, my voice cracking with nervous excitement.

In only a few hours it would be dark, the first night of Fasi

Since then, every year at Fasika we celebrate the fact that our forefathers were delivered from slavery. They were in such a hurry to leave that they couldn't wait for their bread to rise. They had only flat, unleavened bread to eat and so, on Passover, we do the same.

This morning, we'd swept our houses clean and burnt all the leftover leaven, and for the whole eight days of Fasika we would be eating only flat bread, called *atta*. It doesn't taste very good. But that's all right. It's important to remember these things.

"Lewteh!" I called again. There was still so much to do before nightfall. "Where is that girl? It's just like her to disappear right about now!"

Of all my sisters, it was Lewteh whom I loved the most. When she was little, I pretended that she was my baby. I carried her around on my back in a special pouch called an *an al a*. From the moment she began to walk, she followed me everywhere on fat little legs. Now that she was older, though, she had become such a troublemaker! Where I was responsible, and a bit timid, she was always getting into trouble, and I was usually the one getting her out of it. Who knows what she'd gotten into now?

After searching everywngg tē

“Stop that right now!” I shouted. “You’re going to get us both in real trouble!”

Melkeh, and their children, all of them girls. Unlike our quiet home, their house was always busy and noisy and full of activity. My mother and I spent most of our time there.

Melkeh and Ranel got along so well that if you didn't see us going to sleep at night in our separate houses, you'd think we were all one family. We ate our meals together and shared most of our chores with hardly an argument.

Like the other houses in the village, our two were round and made of mud, with a thatched roof leading upward to a spiky peak.

high up you could see rivers of golden *tef*, our local grain,
growing beside patches of bright red peppers. D

In a solemn tone—but one that could still be heard, even by those who'd come late and been forced to stand outside the *mes* walls—he began. We all waited to hear the story of how Moses had led our people out of Egypt. But this year, his words were new.

"I have a surprise for you," he said. "Last week I received a special book from Israel." He laid the Orit down and lifted a much smaller book for all of us to see. There were pictures on the cover and I wished that I were sitting closer so I could see it better. But then Kes Sahalu surprised us again by handing the book to my brother, D

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