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The Last Storytellers,

Richard Hamilton



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Marrakech is the heart and lifeblood of Morocco's ancient storytelling tradition. For nearly a thousand years, storytellers have gathered in the Jemaa el Fna, the legendary square of the city, to recount ancient folktales and fables to rapt audiences. But this unique chain of oral tradition that has passed seamlessly from generation to generation is teetering on the brink of extinction. The competing distractions of television, movies and the internet have drawn the crowds away from the storytellers and few have the desire to learn the stories and continue their legacy. Richard Hamilton has witnessed at first hand the death throes of this rich and captivating tradition and, in the labyrinth of the Marrakech medina, has tracked down the last few remaining storytellers, recording stories that are replete with the mysteries and beauty of the Maghreb.

Moroccan tales have a huge educational, religious and moral impact on their audience, offering timeless values and guidance to all who listen. With their passing we risk losing something of Morocco's national psyche and also part of the world's intangible heritage. Those who have seen the storytellers of Marrakech at first hand have witnessed something that is no longer part of this world, a treasure as precious as the planet's most endangered species and of immeasurable importance to humanity.

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