



BY *Sophie Muller*



His Voice Shakes the Wilderness

by

Sophie Muller

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HIS VOICE SHAKES THE WILDERNESS
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Dedication and Acknowledgments

I dedicated this book to my Indian brothers-those who have carried the burden of the tribes with me. I give thanks to God for them. They caused His Word to spread from tribe to tribe, as they continue to do this day, as a living testimony to the power of the Gospel. How can I ever express my gratitude for the love, protection, comfort, and trust of the older generation, many of whom have already "gone before." What a time we'll have in Heaven singing the hymns in all those languages as we did on the Guainia, the Isana, the Inirida, the Guaviare, and the Vichada Rivers.

Besides the Indians' part in the rapid spread of the Word, much credit is due the New Tribes missionaries who lived on the Venezuelan border: the Connie Cains, Kathy Earle, and Faye Taylor with whom I had such happy fellowship. They worked tirelessly with the typing, mimeographing, and packaging of all the translations that kept coming to them after every half-round of conferences when I came for my precious letters from home. Their place was an oasis to me as was the home of Pat and Ellen Symes in Bogotá.

Then, too, I give thanks for the many other kind friends I met along the way, my Colombian co-workers and all. What could I have done without their aid in the little things that go with "journeyings oft" or without those whom the Lord touched to pray and give so that the Word might be heard and read throughout the jungle.

Concerning the book itself: Two Christian publishers re-

jected it, asking for a rewrite so it lay in a trunk for years. Then, when I was pushed by optimistic friends to do something about it, I thought of Jean Johnson of New Tribes Mission who accepted rather hesitantly because of her busy schedule . However, she surely gave herself to it once she had a little time here and there to start its resuscitation. At the end of her cutting out, rearranging, and knitting together, I had a shock. The manuscript seemed only about half as long. Needless to say, I felt as dismayed as a girl might feel who gets her first “hair bob” and sees her beautiful tresses lying on the floor. But still I am grateful to Jean for her job on the book and give thanks for her patient explanations in my hour of deflation.

Sophie Muller

Introduction

What a joy to write an introduction to such a thrilling book as you are about to read. Many years ago, our young people's group held open-air meetings in Woodhaven, New York. To preach at those Gospel meetings, I often stood on the very box I had formerly stood on, before my conversion, to lead my four-piece combo in Times Square. I shall never forget preaching under the elevated tracks. We didn't dare stop when a train went by for fear of losing the crowd, but sometimes, we wondered if our efforts in those street meetings were in vain.

Then one night Sophie Muller came along. She listened. She could hardly believe her eyes. What was a nice-looking group of young people doing, spending a Saturday night like that! Then she recognized Marge, my fiancée, who used to attend the same liberal church that Sophie attended occasionally. Sophie stayed until the close of the meeting, and Marge invited her to our Wednesday night Bible Study and Prayer Club. This was where I met Sophie.

At first, Sophie tried to straighten us out with arguments on reincarnation, but finally the arguments faded away in the light of God's Word. She trusted in Christ as her perfection through whom the believer is already bound for Heaven. Later, she attended the National Bible Institute and then headed for the jungles of Colombia.

During these many years, God has used this dear girl to win thousands of Indians to Christ and to establish dozens of churches. One day I asked her what the conditions were for baptism. She answered, "They have to show evidence of a new life-that they've been born again. If they continue with

their witchcraft, dope, and alcohol, we don't feel they have been truly born again." I thought that this may not be a bad prescription for the churches in the so-called "civilized" world.

At the Christmas season, we have often sent Sophie a picture of our family. On one occasion, we received word back from Sophie: "The Indians love to look at that picture because it was through my acquaintance with you and Marge that true knowledge of the Saviour came to them, and they are not on the road to Hell anymore but on their way to Heaven instead. What an amazing undeserved privilege it is to be accepted as a co-laborer of the Almighty Creator!"

As you read these pages, you will say over and over again, "Lord, I would love to be in Sophie Muller's place on that day when the roll is called up yonder." May God grant that each one of us will hear Him say at His appearing, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant."

Jack Wyrzten
Director, Word of Life,

Inc.

Chapter 1

Trial by Poison

A group of Indians sat around the dying embers of a fire in the middle of a big clay cabin in the interior of Colombia. They were having a pow-wow about the origin of a white woman who traveled their rivers and taught in their villages.

“She’s a witch doctor,” said one.

“No, she isn’t,” came from several. “She wants only to help us.”

“But all witch doctors talk about the unseen world. How could she know so much about it?”

“From her black book! She says it’s the book of *Dios*.”

“Oh, that’s Yapericoli, the Great Spirit! Remember what our old witch doctor used to tell us? He said once he had died and entered the presence of Yapericoli in a city of dazzling lights.”

Most of them did not remember, but one older man joined in.

“Yes. And our witch doctor could never forget what Yapericoli told him with all those lights shining around him.”

Every ear was attuned to the speaker.

“Yapericoli promised him that some day he would send his sister down to our river with a message for all our people.”

Gasps of surprise around the campfire. “You don’t suppose...?”

The Indians were quickly putting two and two together. This white woman who was teaching them seemed to fit right into that picture.

“Yapericoli’s sister?”

“Why else does she think of us and want to help us?”

“Who else would know so much about the Great Chief and tell us things we didn’t know about him?”

“Isn’t the white sister telling us of Heaven and how to get there?”

“Didn’t she come from a distant land?”

“Didn’t she show us the little black book, the message from our Great Chief?”

Then, silence for two whole minutes.

“But how can we really know she’s Yapericoli’s sister?”

No immediate answer to that one. Then an idea struck one of the men.

If she’s really Yapericoli’s sister, she cannot die! So even if she would take poison, she cannot die. There’s only one way to find out. Some day we must give her poison with her food, and if she doesn’t die, then she *is* Yapericoli’s sister!

Grunts of approval and of disapproval. Most were not so sure. Yet the reasoning could hardly be disputed.

The “white sister” continued her travels from village to village, but began to notice that, in this village, a few persons who had seemed interested and friendly before were now withdrawing from her and staying aloof. One of the more friendly women quietly and matter-of-factly tried one day to tell her something.

“Someone is going to poison you!”

The white sister only smiled. What a thing to say of such harmless-looking people! She must be trying to frighten her. How could anyone in that village be capable of murder? Did the woman have some ulterior motive? Did she want her to leave? Her high cheek bones, black, mischievous eyes and furtive glances gave her the appearance of a sorceress. But this was no cause for alarm. The white teacher often walked in

and out of villages where there were witch doctors. So she promptly dismissed the whole incident from her mind.

Weeks passed. Then one day, when the white sister was back in the village of the discussion, one man decided it was time to make the test. It had been postponed long enough. They just had to know.

After an evening meeting, when everyone was off for a belated evening meal, the hungry white sister was given a bowl of soup. The broth itself looked strange. More than that, a few turtle feet, nails and all, were bobbing around on top of it. Just the looks of it made her nauseous, but she was accustomed to eating whatever they brought her, so she ate it for lack of other food.

Shortly after consuming it, while still sitting in her hammock, the white sister was seized with the most excruciating abdominal pains she had ever experienced. They continued for several minutes.

Off in the corner of the palm-leaf hut they had assigned to her was a large old gourd intended for heavy drinking during fiestas. She reached it just in time to deposit the contents of her stomach in the empty gourd shell. She staggered back to her hammock and lay panting, too weak to change to her pajamas. The pains gradually subsided, and she fell asleep.

At daylight, the white sister awoke and got up to empty the gourd before the Indians would come in. But the gourd was completely empty. Beside it lay a large rooster, stone dead. She quickly picked it up by the legs and shoved it out through a space in the palm-leaf wall so the Indians would not blame her for its death.

She spoke to no one about the incident. Nor did it ever occur to her to connect it with what the old woman had told her about the poisoning. She blamed the nausea on her revulsion at the appearance of the soup. Only five years later did the man confess that he had given the white sister enough poison in that turtle soup to kill five men.

But as far as the Indians were concerned, they concluded that the white sister had passed the test. How they hung on

her every word after that! She must truly be the white goddess!

Chapter 2

Into the Unknown

Many moons before the event of the poisoning, I, the “white sister,” had come to Colombia in the quest of a new or Bible-less tribe and had settled in to live and work with the Curipaco Indians. But a mutual confidence between me and the Curipacos had not been easy to come by.

My first encounter with the tribe had been en route to Sejal, a little settlement I chose as my base of operations. Sejal was only an hour’s canoe trip away from the Colombian frontier, near the place where the borders of Brazil and Venezuela meet as they brush past Colombia. How I arrived there and what led me to come was another story.

It was while I was studying advanced art at the National Academy of Design in New York that I “chanced” upon a street meeting. The group of young people interested me—blowing trumpets and preaching. Could it be some new fad?

Next thing I knew they were giving an invitation to accept Christ as Saviour. I felt I loved God, so I raised my hand. A girl named Margie drew close to me.

“Come and study the Bible with us at my house,” she invited.

Why not? I wanted to know if these young people were for real. I had drifted from occasional attendance at a modernistic church to a study of theosophy and reincarnation. So when I got to Margie’s house I began arguing with the leader.

“Yes, Christ is the Son of God. But He came to show us what perfection is so we can strive toward it, life after life, until we’re perfect as He is.”

My target was Jack Wyrzten, leader of the original Word of Life group. Margie, who was Jack’s fiancée, spoke up. “Keep studying the Bible with us, and you’ll see.”

That was the best advice I ever got. It was in those Bible studies that the prophecies, types, and symbols of the Old Testament fulfilled in Christ hundreds of years later really shook me and led me to see the whole Bible as the Word of God. Before that time, I had never considered the Old Testament to be authoritative.

My belief in reincarnation soon dissolved. I Corinthians 1:30 came alive for me, that Christ “...*is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.*” I became hungry to know the Bible better.

Shortly thereafter, I enrolled in the three-year course at National Bible Institute, New York. I had a desire to be active for God like Jack and his young group. All ambition to be a renowned artist was set aside. In prayer, I asked God to show me what He would have me do with my life.

God answered very clearly with a burden to go to a tribe that had never heard the Gospel. There was no getting away from it. That constituted my “call.” So when one of the students at NBI told me about New Tribes Mission, specializing in unreached tribes, I knew that was it. Soon I heard the founder of this Mission, Paul Fleming, speak in one of Jack Wyrzten’s youth rallies. I lost no time in applying to the Mission then, in 1944.

During my orientation to the Mission—a very brief training course in those days (before boot camp, jungle camp, or language school were thought of)—I asked God which country I should enter to work with that unreached tribe. I had not been praying long when I just knew it was Colombia.

Colombia was closed to missionaries at that time, but not to those of other professions. Since, by profession, I was a commercial artist, thanks to my father’s encouragement, I decided to go through the open door as an artist, hoping to combine



The Andes - en route to the jungle

it with missionary work later on. The Mission was glad they would have an artist in Colombia sending back illustrations for their magazine *Brown Gold* and for their posters. One of the couples in training with me also planned to go to Colombia. They would teach agriculture to the Indians.

I had been in touch with a medical missionary in Colombia named Catherine Morgan. She was under a different mission but had close connections with Jack Wyrzten's work. Arrangements were made, then, for me to spend the time with her until that couple came down. So after disembarking at Buenaventura, I made my way up and down the mountains of the Andes in a rickety old train to Pasto, where Catherine lived. My trip had been just tough enough, and my lack of Spanish so frustrating, that when I got in the door at Catherine's place, I put my head against the wall and wept. It seemed like everyone I loved had died: father, mother, my sisters and brothers—everybody. But Catherine seemed to understand. Her own world had *really* come crashing down a couple of years earlier when her husband had died (apparently by being poisoned), and she was left a widow with four children.

Catherine's outlook and her selfless medical service to the tattered crowd in her patio day-by-day were a very steadying

factor in my life at that time. Six months of Spanish at that place gave me a good start in the trade language of Colombia and would serve me in good stead for eliciting a tribal language soon afterwards.

All was not rosy in Catherine's home. I wasn't fond of the gruel of plantains that Catherine served. She made enough to include some hungry mouths from the city who looked to her for both medical and material needs. More than once, I gave in to homesickness and self-pity and cried when I was alone in bed at night.

Once I was trying to help in the serving when suddenly one of the women (whom I termed "free loaders") pushed forward impulsively and put her arms around me. She was dirty and unkempt. I recoiled and pulled back, taking on my most reserved stance.

None of this was lost on Catherine. She summed it up in one simple rebuke, "*You'll* never make a missionary!"

Meantime I sent art work home regularly for Mission use, waiting for the family who was to come and join me. Then one day a letter came from the Mission. That family had been refused a visa to Colombia. Now they would not be coming at all!

At first, I was stunned. Then I saw that my obedience to God did not depend on that family, but on how I personally would serve Him. I decided to go on alone to the Indians of the Colombian jungle.

When the time came for me to go interior, it was not easy to say goodbye to Catherine. She was apprehensive about my traveling in a strange country alone. Her concern was reminiscent of my parents' fears for me before I had left New York.

"You're not the strong rugged type," my father had said. "You can do much more good right here with your art work."

My father had cherished great hopes for me as an artist, but seeing I would not be turned back, he threw up his hands in resignation.

“Well, go ahead! See where your stubborn head will get you!”

But I knew that deep inside he was proud of me for doing what I felt was right. He himself would never go back on what he felt to be his duty, whatever the cost.

In spite of her apprehension, Catherine respected what I felt to be God’s will for me. She showed me her map of Colombia.

“There’s a missionary couple down here in Puerto Leguísimo on the Putumayo River who can tell you about tribes. But it’s a man’s territory and too dangerous for a young woman.”

Dangers often went with the missionary task, I knew, but duty called. I felt God would have me move on toward an unreached tribe. I gathered the information on how to travel toward Puerto Leguísimo. I would seek out that missionary couple who knew of tribes without a missionary. Catherine cooperated with whatever help I needed.

I set out on a truck with my two duffle bags, and it didn’t take long to see that Catherine Morgan had real reason to be concerned for my safety. There were men too friendly for comfort. At least, I knew more Spanish now than I did on my trip from the coast. So I gave out Gospels of John and spoke of God and the Saviour. This kept things in check.

The road held its dangers, too—scary drops over the cliff. The truck I had boarded climbed steadily toward the first mountain range east of Pasto, then on toward the Colombian jungles. Soon I felt very alone. I missed the protecting wing of Catherine who had been like a sister to me.

Toward evening on the second day, we reached the edge of the vast jungles. We were in the lowland interior, the home of insects, fevers, parasites, and pallid people. I was able to stay with a señora who took in travelers until arrangements were made to travel by horseback down to the Putumayo River. This meant three days of bouncing along over a muddy trail on horseback to a point on the river where I, along with other travelers, took a motor launch.

Each night, the launch docked at a cabin where everyone slept on the floor, rolled up in a blanket or poncho—men, women, and children. My body already ached from the horseback ride, and now I shifted from one bone to another through the long night hours. Once I dreamed I lay on a soft, velvety sofa, listening to my mother playing the piano and singing the old hymns. When I awoke, the aches from the bamboo flooring were augmented by the heartache of homesickness. How I longed to see my father and mother! Just to have my arms around them for a few minutes! But I pushed the yearning out of my mind and centered it on my goal of reaching at least one tribe who knew nothing of the Saviour.

The missionaries in Puerto Leguísimo were hospitality personified. They seemed so one in heart with me and had me stay three or four weeks. But there were no tribes in their area who were beyond the reach of their mission. I made it very clear that I did not want to infringe on anyone else's work. So they suggested I go on to Leticia, in the southernmost corner of Colombia, and learn what I could from missionaries there.

More river travel. This time, I was on a steamboat. Whenever it stopped along the river to get wood, the soldiers at the army posts seemed eager to see me and to receive the Gospels of John I was passing out. At first, this interest in God's Word surprised me. They were so anxious to see *me* ("Will she come out of her cabin?" "I saw a glimpse of her once."), that I felt like a celebrity.

But the interest was not in God's Word. I had declared my profession as an artist, and the word had passed from mouth to mouth. "Artist" to them could mean nothing but an actress! This misunderstanding was taken care of later on when I had my documents changed to "missionary artist" instead of simply "artist."

Leticia did not turn out to be the end of my quest. The missionaries in that town did not know of the tribes beyond their own area; besides, they were expecting reinforcements in

their own mission to take over the Indian work there. I was disappointed not to get more information after my tedious trip. However, God had not let me down.

A Harvard botany professor whom I met in town gave very helpful information. He had been combing Colombian riverbanks for new specimens of plants and knew of other tribal areas. He felt I should head for Mitú on the Vaupés River. Over in that area, he told me, there were tribes with neither priests nor missionaries. This I reported to my host and hostess in Leticia.

“Go see Pat Symes, the director of World Evangelism Crusade,” they suggested. “He has workers in one tribe there. He’ll help you.” This was the man to whom Catherine Morgan had sent my papers for a permanent visa into Colombia. He would have heard that I was already in the country.

Pat Symes lived in Bogotá, the capital of Colombia. I had no other recourse than to head in his direction. So I took to the riverboat, truck, and train transportation once again. In a week, I arrived at the home of Pat and Ellen Symes and introduced myself.

Without a smile, Pat Symes looked down at me, like a teacher studying a naughty child. “Why are you running around Colombia by yourself?” he finally asked quietly.

By this time, I was tired beyond description, even wishing I could be back home with my mother and father—feeling the need of comfort, not reprehension. I felt obliged to defend myself.

“I’m looking for a tribe,” I began. “Aren’t the heathen lost? Didn’t Christ tell us to go and preach the Gospel to every creature? And didn’t Paul say, *‘I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me?’*” (Philippians 4:13).

I stopped. My voice was beginning to quiver. I had come so far and was still no nearer my goal. Self-pity wanted to take over.

Pat Symes’ face softened. He looked off into space. Perhaps he was recalling his youth and his own obedience to Christ which began in the jungles of Brazil. He spoke softly, more to himself than to me.

“Courage—the lost chord of Christianity!” And the Symes welcomed me into their home with open arms.

Chapter 3

A Tribe at Last!

Two weeks with Pat and Ellen Symes in Bogotá made me more knowledgeable about the area for which I was headed. I took a little plane bound for Mitú, the government Indian post of the Vaupés River. Pat had sent a radiogram to the Wesley Drivers, missionaries to the Cubeo tribe, to meet me there. Wesley and two Cubeo paddlers took me by dugout canoe to the Drivers' jungle station.

The total "station" meant two huts and a million blood-thirsty gnats. The setting seemed most incongruous for a gracious English couple and their two little children. The essence of pioneer mission living, I took mental note.

The Drivers would do their best to find out information for me on other tribes they knew to be some distance away from their station. Meantime, they were not anxious to hurry me on my way alone.

From time to time, they entertained rubber gatherers who stopped in for a cup of black coffee between trips. These men spoke of the Curipaco tribe where no missionary had been. When I became interested in the Curipacos as an unreached tribe, the visitors were quick to "educate" me.

"You can't go there! They'd kill you and take your possessions."

"Oh, the Curipacos are good Indians," another countered. Yet another wanted me to know the dangers of the jaguars and boa constrictors—all very alarming. No less so when I found

out that Mr. Driver had killed a very deadly snake curled up under a box right in his kitchen.

Within a month or two, I was anxious to continue my journey. I felt by that time the Curipacos must be the tribe I was searching for. The Drivers were not too sympathetic with the idea of my going alone to a tribe, but they did cooperate. They arranged for a canoe that would take me to some Cubeo paddlers upriver who hopefully would take me to the Curipacos.

That first canoe was manned by a sturdy twelve-year-old Colombian boy named Carlos. All went well down a narrow winding stream until we neared the rapids where the current became more swift. I thought, and he agreed, that we could drag the canoe over the rapids without unloading hammock rolls and food supplies. So we got out on the rocks to maneuver it. But as I pulled upward on the rope in front, I didn't realize that the water rushed into the boat at the lower end where Carlos was pushing.

"Suéltelo! Suéltelo!" Carlos cried out in distress as he took his stand on a large rock.

Thinking that *"suéltelo"* must mean to pull harder (the word was not in my limited Spanish vocabulary), I grasped the rope more firmly, braced myself on the water-covered rocks, and pulled with all my might. By the time I realized that he must have been saying "Loosen it!" the boat was three-quarters full of water.

I let go, but the heavy boat pulled out of the boy's hands, whirling in the rapids. If it should hit a rock, I knew it would capsize and all my things would be lost. So without thinking, I jumped into the water, shoes and all, swam for the boat, and held on tightly while treading water.

My wet clothes must have added 50 pounds to my usual 110, making my situation more precarious.

"Help, Lord!" I cried. I grabbed my sun helmet from the canoe and began to bail water out furiously. Soon the swirling water carried the canoe out of the main stream into calmer water.

By this time, the astonished and transfixed Carlos came to life, swam out from his rocky perch, climbed into the canoe, and paddled it to shore with me still hanging on.



When we landed, a delayed-action panic took over. I started trembling from head to toe and couldn't stop for five minutes. Perhaps my father was right after all. Perhaps this work was not meant for women! But I rejected the thought quickly and thanked God that everything was safe, needing only to be spread out on the rocks to dry.

Finally we caught up with some co-operative Cubeos who were willing to paddle me on ahead to the edge of Curipaco country. The trip took longer than I would have guessed: several days by canoe, then eight hours on foot, slopping through mud and climbing over tree trunks. The trail led us out to another river which was closer to the Curipacos. There I paid the Cubeo paddlers with some much-treasured pieces of cloth, and they left me to the care of an old Curipaco couple who would take me deeper into Curipaco territory.

Immediately I felt as though this couple “belonged” to me. They were my introduction to the tribe for whom I had been praying. They made me feel comfortable with their own tribespeople whenever we had to stop along this deep, swift-flowing creek.

At long last, I was on the Isana River where there were more Indian villages. I learned later that these people were called the Carom in Colombia, but Baniua in Brazil, where the Isana went on beyond the border to empty itself into the Rio Negro. But the Carom and Curipaco tribes understood each other very well, with only dialectical differences.

At first, women and children ran away when they saw us approach. I must have struck fear into their hearts. Normally they shunned traders, leaving their men to deal with them. How much more they stayed clear of a white woman when they had never seen one before! But after a while, they crowded close to watch my every move. These women, in long, full skirts, had no upper covering except their long black hair, purple-streaked skin, and strange triangular designs tattooed on their arms. I would learn later that this was done to ward off sickness and evil spirits.

Skinny, naked children, blotched in brilliant seed-pod red, wore necklaces made from the teeth of monkeys, jaguars, and *babillas* (small-type crocodiles). Some men wore tattered trousers; others, only a loincloth. Their makeup consisted of red designs on their faces and rows of thick welts across their chests. I discovered later that the welts were scars of lashes from a long, tough vine during initiation ceremonies when they stoically proved themselves worthy to enter manhood.

In my very best Spanish, I tried to talk with the villagers.

“I have a message to give you about the true God, the One who made everything. I will learn your language and come back to tell you what it says in this Book about Him.”

No response! Some registered hostility and suspicion. Others seemed to gaze at me with awe and admiration. I did

not realize yet how great was the language barrier that stood between us.

Eight long months of searching had passed since I had left the shelter of Catherine Morgan's home in Pasto. But as yet, we were only on the fringe of Curipaco-land, too far beyond civilization to get to a post office. I needed to be in a village close enough to a government post (which would have to be on the Venezuelan border) to be able to send letters home. My parents and the Mission would surely think the jungle had swallowed me up.

The rainy season was upon us in earnest as my two older Curipaco friends hurried me down the Isana River. I spread my rubber poncho over the duffle bags, and my companions cut protective palm branches while the rain beat down brutally on their bare backs. With chattering teeth, I sat for hours in wet clothes until the rain subsided to a drizzle by evening. We tied up at the bank, and my companions built a tiny palm-leaf shelter for the night. They made a fire by shaving off the outer wet wood of dead branches to find dry kindling. The campfire was their only blanket.

At the next village, my paddlers had reached their destination. So a new group of paddlers agreed to take me by creek and trail to the headwaters of the Guainia River. This was the river I had been told about where the bulk of the Curipacos lived and died. Surely my journey would soon be over!

The rain continued to pour down. The deep, rock-lined river-bed was full and overflowing into the jungles. If I changed my clothes, it had to be out in a thicket with a cold, wet raincoat over my head, rain leaking down my neck.

Wistfully, I thought of the Drivers' pioneering situation. Theirs seemed like advanced civilization in comparison to this. At least I didn't have to sleep in my clothes at their place. Then a sinister voice tried to tell me, "You're crazy! You're not a jungle pig! Go back and live like a human being!"

But I could not dwell on such a thought. Instead I found myself crying out to God, "How long, O Lord, how long?" as I

waited, wet and shivering, for the Indians to build a shelter and kindle a fire for another night.

After several miserable days in the rain, these Carom paddlers became silent and sullen. I presumed it was because they didn't like the rain any more than I did, but I was helpless to cheer them up. Only long later did I discover that one had suggested to the others that I was a witch, that I might cast a spell on their families, and that all had become afraid of me!

When we came to an extra long stretch of rapids, the paddlers unloaded as usual and carried my duffle bags along the bank and set them down below the rapids, then went back for the canoe—presumably.

I waited. And I waited.

Time passed too slowly. What could they be doing? Could they have decided to take a quick swim? But it shouldn't take this long! Suddenly I was gripped by fear. I ran up the stone bank to look. There, already at the next bend upriver, my paddlers were speeding away from me with all their might. I called frantically. They never looked back once.

The truth hit home. I had been deserted in the midst of rapids and waterfalls, left to all the hazards of the jungle!

But God had not died. He was watching over this helpless, abandoned child of His, who certainly had more zeal than knowledge at this point. After several long hours of anxiety and prayer, a real peace flooded my soul. God *would* somehow take care of *me*. Had He not already led me to meet the tribespeople I had come to reach?

God's answer was a trader's boat manned by four astonished Curipaco paddlers. How they stared at me! Whoever would expect to encounter a fragile white woman alone in a place like that! I explained the situation as best I could to the trader.

"You can come down with us," he said kindly.

Welcome words!

"Oh Lord, thank you!" my heart said, as I got into the huge dugout. The trader was a Venezuelan who had come to buy

manioc (ground, toasted *yuca*) from the Indians. He seemed to understand my problem and volunteered information.

“In three days, we’ll reach Sejal, a Curipaco village just two days away from the government post of Maroa on the Venezuelan border.”

This sounded like what I had been looking for—a Curipaco village as a base to work out from, yet within two days’ reach of a store and a post office. I could not only write to my parents to ease their fears for me, but I could have the joy of receiving letters, also.

The trader taught me more about the Curipacos, making me think of angles that had not occurred to me before—that perhaps I might not be accepted by them! “You will not change them,” he said. “They love their drink and dancing and their tribal customs too much.”

“No,” I replied, “I won’t change them, but the Word of God will!”

