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# Guide's Greatest BRAVE BELIEVER STORIES

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# The Hand Behind the Window

*by Mrs. C. R. Beeler*

**T**u vas?" ("Are you going?") Hernando asked Juancho as they sat together on a crude bench one Sabbath morning.

They attended a small church in a country that didn't want Protestant churches to do missionary work. Nevertheless, the church elder appealed for both young and old to cooperate in giving out faith-building literature that afternoon.

When Hernando asked his buddy if he was going, Juancho had a personal battle with himself. In the first place, he told himself, he had never given out Christian literature before. Someone might laugh at him or throw rocks at him or slam the door in his face. No, he didn't believe he would go.

"Come on," Hernando urged. "I don't want to go alone. Guess I'll stay home too."

"Scared, huh!" chided Juancho.

"Who, me?" Hernando countered.

The two boys joined in the closing hymn. Then, as they

parted at the church door, Juancho grinned and called over his shoulder, "See you at three o'clock."

When the boys arrived back at the church, they received literature and instructions.

"I'll take one side of the street, and you take the other," said Hernando as they stepped outside. "That way we'll be through soon. But we're going to give the tracts personally, you know."

"Yes." Juancho nodded half-heartedly. "Let's go back inside the church a minute and pray that the Lord will go with us. Then we will begin."

On their knees inside the church door, they prayed fervently that they would be protected and that the people would read the papers. They walked in silence to the territory they had chosen, wondering what the afternoon had in store for them. Then they parted, each to his side of the street.

Juancho finished in a hurry. He didn't have enough courage to knock on the doors and hand the literature to the people inside. Not this time anyway. The words just wouldn't come out. So he pushed the literature under the door or through an open window. Sometimes he gave it to the children playing outside.

It took only ten minutes to finish the street, but it seemed like ten hours. Then he sat on a curb to wait for Hernando.

Hernando smiled from ear to ear as he crossed the street to his friend. He had enjoyed talking to the people as he gave them the papers. "Most of them were very nice," he told Juancho.

Juancho resolved to do a better job of literature distribution the next week.

But the next Sabbath afternoon, he found all his resolve

melting away. Again he ran down the street, finished in a hurry, and waited an hour on the curb for Hernando.

Each week he listened with intense interest to the progress his friend was making with a few of the people on this street, and each week he knew that next time would be different. But it wasn't!

Juancho particularly dreaded one house on his side of the street. The doors and windows were always closed. At the top of one of the windows was an opening, but it took some work to reach it. Juancho had to climb to the lower part of the windowsill in order to drop the tract inside.

One Sabbath he jumped up to the windowsill as usual. But as he reached his hand through the opening to drop the tract, a hand caught his! It held on to his fingers with a great deal of strength. The grip was so tight that his hand hurt and he couldn't get away.

His heart beat fast. Tears welled up in his eyes. What would happen now? He wished he hadn't started giving out these papers!

Looking up at the window opening, he saw a face looking down at him, the face of a man wearing a priest's collar. Now Juancho was really frightened. But the man smiled kindly and told Juancho that he wanted to talk with him. He said he had tried for several weeks to catch him.

As the priest let go of Juancho's hand, he said, "You're sure a good runner, but don't run this time until I have talked to you."

Juancho waited outside, and when the priest joined him, he had a request: "Son, I want you to take me to someone who can tell me more about the things I've been reading in those papers. They are interesting, and I believe they are all true. I want to be sure, though."

Juancho thought of all the members of the church. Who would be the best one to take the priest to? Then he remembered Hermano Cardoza. *That's the one*, he decided. Together they walked more than a mile outside of town to the dirt floor cabin of Brother Cardoza.

There the priest went week after week to study the Bible with this Adventist man. Months later the church members gathered beside the crystal waters of a mountain stream. An Adventist minister and the priest stepped down into the water. The priest was going to be baptized.

But first he called Juancho to the water's edge. "Thank you," he said, "for being brave enough to share your faith."

Juancho just smiled as the minister dipped his new friend under the water.

# The Baby That Was Buried Alive

by Keith Moxon

**T**he hot African sun beat down on a collection of mud-and-grass huts. In the dust that swirled among them strode fierce-faced tribesmen holding great spears. Women moved about bearing loads on their heads, and the smell of roasting flesh mingled with the smoke from a dozen little fires that the women tended. In and out of the throng darted children screaming and shouting at one another or at the dogs and chickens that fled in noisy panic before them.

Every now and then one of the tribespeople paused by the door of Kuruman's hut and listened to the piercing wails that rose above the din of the village.

"What is the matter? Who is it that cries as if her heart were breaking?" a passerby asked a woman at the neighboring hut.

"Oh, it's a sad story!" the woman explained. "A little baby came yesterday to Kuruman's wife, and the witch doctor has just told her that it was born on an unlucky day. It must



be buried alive tomorrow before the devils bring misfortune on us all.”

The neighbor shook her head sadly and hurried away to offer up an extra chicken to the devils and to pray that her own baby would be born on a lucky day and not on an unlucky one.

But Kuruman’s wife, Nania, cried on. The little black face of her new baby girl was so beautiful, her little body so strong and perfect. She couldn’t bear to be parted from the baby, and her whole soul revolted at the idea of having to bury her alive.

Kuruman put his arm around his wife and tried in his rough way to comfort her. “Never mind, Nania,” he said. “We can have another little baby, and maybe the next one will be born on a lucky day.”

But Nania still cried on. She wanted this little baby, for mothers love all their children and don’t want to lose any of them.

“We’ll have to take the baby and bury it tomorrow,” said Kuruman. “We can’t get around it. If we don’t bury it, the rest of the tribe will come and do it.”

Nania raised her tear-stained face to look pleadingly at her husband. “Oh, Kuruman, couldn’t you take the baby away and hide her?”

He shook his head. “Do you know what happened the last time someone tried to do that? They found the mother taking food to her baby, so they got the baby and buried it, and then they took the mother and buried her!”

There was one last gleam of hope in Nania’s eyes. “Oh, my husband, the tribes to the north buy little babies to use as slaves when they are grown.” She grasped his arm. “Let us take our little baby, sell her, and say that we have buried

her. No one need ever know. Then someday we can buy her back.”

“Indeed not!” said Kuruman fiercely. “What can you hide from the devils, you silly woman? They see all things and will tell the witch doctor; then we will all be buried. No, I must take the baby tomorrow! You go to your sister’s hut in the morning, and when you are gone, I will take it.”

Hope fled from the poor woman’s face. She bowed her body to the earthen floor, and great sobs racked her frame. On into the night she cried, pausing now and then to care for the little one through a mist of tears.

The next morning Kuruman loped along at a fast trot toward the burial ground. For a half hour he had been passing over the dry grassy plain on which his village was situated, but now in the distance he saw the belt of forested land toward which he was bound. In his arms he carried what looked to be a bundle of rags and grass. Nestled within, sleeping soundly, was their little baby, unaware of the awful fate that drew nearer and nearer.

Now Kuruman slowed his pace. He was approaching the outskirts of the forest, and for a few minutes he moved back and forth through the trees and undergrowth before he found a faint path that led into the depths beyond. Quickening his pace again, he followed the path into the forest, every now and then pushing a great vine aside or clambering over a fallen tree.

Suddenly he stopped dead and stood listening, his head turning this way and that to catch the slightest sound. Strange. He thought he heard a movement in the forest behind. Was something following him? A lion? He stood motionless several minutes longer until the silence of the forest dismissed his fears.

He moved off again, holding his bundle carefully to avoid waking the babe within. He was nearly at his destination now, and his heart began to tremble at the awful task before him.

*Hisst!* Movements behind him again! He stopped and stood motionless once more. There was no sound, only the low whisper of the leaves as the hot desert breeze stirred them now and then. *Fears before me, fears behind*, thought Kuruman. *I'm only nervous. It is nothing.* And once more he began to make his way along the path.

The trees began to thin out now, and soon Kuruman emerged into a comparatively open space of rocks and sandy ground. He moved over to the far side of the space to a group of little mounds, all with a spire of hollow desert grass poking out of the top.

Kuruman laid down his bundle gently and went to get a long piece of hollow grass. The grass was to be placed into the nostrils of the buried babe so that death would not come quickly. The longer the baby took to die, the more the devils would be pleased.

Now he began to dig the hole, using a long, flat stone to scoop away the sand. Quickly he placed the bundle in the bottom of the hole and set the grass into the nostrils of the baby, who awoke at this irritation. Then he pulled the earth and sand back into the hole. There were a few weak cries, then silence.

Working frantically, with eyes staring and great drops of perspiration on his face, Kuruman heaped up the sand over the spot. Leaping to his feet, and without one backward glance, he fled across the clearing and back along the path he had come.

For a few minutes there was no sound or movement

save the low whisper of the leaves or the sharp melody of a bird. Then there was a rustling in the trees again, and across the clearing, at breakneck speed, came another figure. He reached the new mound, fell to his knees, and swiftly began pulling away the sand. His kindly face was anxious as he reached the little bundle and snatched it up out of the grave.

A sigh of relief escaped him, and he laid his hand over the mouth of the infant to smother the screams that burst from her lips. With one hand and his feet, he filled the hole, heaped up the sand once more, poked the spire of grass back into the mound, and made off rapidly the same way he had come.

Every now and then glancing behind him to make sure he wasn't being followed, the man with the bundle half ran, half walked over the hard ground. He was hurrying toward a cluster of huts built at the edge of a belt of forest that swept down from the low hills behind. There was something unusual about this village. The huts were made differently from those in the other villages, and there was an orderliness that was absent elsewhere.

His body gleaming from sweat, the panting man slowed to a walk as he approached the high grass fence that surrounded the village. He had evidently been seen long before, for the sound of excited voices came to his ears. Through the bars of the gate and over the fence in several places, faces peeped and peered.

As soon as he reached the gate, he was admitted. At once he was surrounded by a milling throng of children ranging in age from two and three to older boys and girls of fourteen and fifteen. Some of the girls had chubby black babies in their arms or on their backs.

“Did you get it, Uncle Samuel?” shrilled a chorus of

voices, as several little children assaulted his legs and tried to climb them.

A white woman, middle-aged, with her hair pulled into a bun, pushed her way toward Uncle Samuel. With a questioning look on her face, she tried to see through the bundle of rags that the tired man held. "Samuel, is it . . . ? Is it . . . ?"

With a smile Samuel lifted his hand from the infant's mouth for an instant, and the woman's face relaxed. The noise of the squalling baby was drowned by the gale of happy laughter that swept over the crowd.

"Oh, praise the Lord!" said Mrs. Christie. "Another soul saved from death. Uncle Samuel, God bless you for your courage." Smiling gratefully at Samuel, she took the baby from his arms.

"Yes, yes, God bless you, Uncle Samuel!" chorused the children. Several of them took his hands and kissed them tenderly, then nestled close to his side.

"Come in and get cleaned up, Samuel, while I fix the baby," said Mrs. Christie.

Together they made their way to one of the large buildings, over which hung a sign with the words "Bethel Hospital."

The youngsters didn't disperse but followed them. They milled in a large group around the steps of the hospital, as if awaiting some event to follow. On the faces of the older girls especially there was written anticipation.

"It will be Loanda or Jimana, for their babies are old enough," said one of the girls.

Some time went by, and then all playing ceased as Mrs. Christie appeared. She held the baby, who was wrapped in a small white sheet and was sucking contentedly on a bottle of milk.

Samuel was also transformed. Instead of his loincloth, he was dressed in a white shirt and trousers. His dusty face was clean and glowed with a happy smile.

“Well, children,” began Mrs. Christie, “who shall we ask to be the new mother to this dear little baby girl?”

“Yes, yes, who shall it be?” shouted several children.

The missionary’s wife turned to a tall girl of about fifteen years who was holding the hands of two little tots. “Loanda dear, I think it’s your turn again. Little David is big enough now, isn’t he?”

Loanda dropped her eyes shyly and nodded her head—but not unwillingly.

“The Lord Jesus will bless you for your kindness and your patience, Loanda. Remember His words: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive’ ” (Acts 20:35).

Mrs. Christie moved down the steps and placed the baby in Loanda’s arms. “Now, let’s see, where is the rest of your little family?”

At Loanda’s call, four other youngsters, from three to six years old, ran to join the two already alongside their foster mother. “There’s your new sister, boys and girls. Her name is—” and Mrs. Christie looked at Samuel.

Samuel spoke the name sadly, remembering the wailing of the poor distraught mother, “Nania.”

“Ah, yes, Nania,” repeated Mrs. Christie. “There now, be kind to little Nania.”

And then, as Samuel stood with bowed head, Mrs. Christie, with admiration glowing in her voice, continued: “And let us thank God for Uncle Samuel. Never forget, children, that each one of you owes him a tremendous debt. If it were not for Uncle Samuel, none of you would be alive today. You were all brought in the same way little baby Nania has

been brought in today. You owe your life to Uncle Samuel, so always give him your life in willing service and love.”

Samuel's face filled with emotion, and he shook his head as he turned away, tears stealing down his cheeks. Some little ones ran to him to “kiss the tears away” and to ask him why he was sad.

Then with a clap of the hands the kind-faced woman dismissed them. “All right, no more school today. You can play. Let us be happy because another life has been saved.”

As the children scattered in every direction, Mrs. Christie walked across to the weeping man and placed her hand softly on his arm. “Another star in your crown, Samuel,” she said tenderly. Then, dodging the rushing children, she made her way across to the residence alongside the hospital. Her husband and their guest from America were seated in the shade of the veranda.

“Was it Loanda that I saw you give the baby to, dear?” asked Pastor Christie.

She nodded and seated herself alongside him. “That's the seventh one I've given her.” As explanation for their visitor she said, “Loanda was the first baby we dug up. We dug her up with our own hands, my husband and I. But as soon as she got old enough, I made her a little mission mother. I couldn't manage all the little ones that kept coming in, especially since Samuel came to us.”

She sighed as she recalled the struggles of the past. “Really, I don't know what we would have done without her and the other girls.”

Mrs. Christie reached across and poured herself a glass of water. “As you've noticed, we haven't had much success getting the adults to accept the gospel. Samuel and four others are all who have become Christian, and they are

so busy supervising at the hospital, the kitchens, and the gardens that the girls have been God's answer to our needs."

"And Samuel? How did he come to you?" asked their visitor.

Looking over the low rail of the veranda, they could see the stocky, crisp-haired black man swinging a small girl on his arm and carrying a boy on his shoulders.

"Samuel is a miracle of grace. And he has memories that only the grace of Christ can blot out. I still have to remind him that Christ came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance. You see," and Mrs. Christie looked solemnly at their guest, "Samuel was the witch doctor of his tribe and caused at least three hundred little babies to be buried alive because they were born on unlucky days."

An anguished breath escaped their visitor. Mrs. Christie continued. "We found him horribly wounded after a tribal battle and left for dead. We nursed him back to health again. He was touched by our kindness after his own tribespeople had deserted him, and while he was here, he accepted the gospel."

Pastor Christie broke in. "As you can imagine, he has a special burden for these little buried babies."

They all turned their eyes to look at Samuel. A boy was sitting on his arm, and as they watched, the little fellow flung his arms around Samuel's neck and planted a large kiss on his cheek.

Years went by. It was a wedding day at the mission. Lovely Nania, grown now, was marrying one of the stalwart young men whom she had once romped with as a child. A rejoicing throng moved through the mission grounds, decorated with green branches and flowers for the occasion. More branches and flowers kept arriving as people from all



the surrounding districts came to see a Christian wedding.

Among the small group of women helping Nania dress for the ceremony was an older woman. Her face was wrinkled, but her eyes brightened again and again as she followed Nania's every movement. Years before, her heart had been broken as her little baby had been carried away to its grave, but a few months later her grief had been changed to joy after a secret visit to the mission station with Samuel.

Now her baby was grown and being married. Why, soon there would be little babies coming to be with Nania and her new husband. The mother's eyes shone as she thanked God that Nania's babies would never be buried alive, for the light of the gospel had come to their family.