

# Shaking Off the Yoke of Spiritism

**C**ALAMITY struck my family when I was a girl of 14. At that time, a vicious murderer began to eliminate my relatives. His first victims were my sister's children—all nine of them. Then he turned against her husband. Shortly thereafter, he killed one of my sisters too. Four more of my brothers and sisters followed, until only my mother and I were left. Oh, was I frightened!

During the years that followed, I ate, worked, and slept in daily dread. I wondered: 'When will he strike? And who will be next—Mother or I?'

## My Background

To help you understand what happened afterward, let me tell you about my background. In 1917, I was born as a member of the Paramaccaner Bush-Negro tribe on an island in the Maroni River in Suriname. My forefathers were *den lowenengre*, or runaway slaves, who had fled into the jungle to eke out a hard but free life. Well, actually it was a life free from slavery to men but not free from the demons.

Everyday life in our village was ruled by demon and ancestor worship. To bind others with a spell and bring sickness and death upon their fellowman, some people

used *wisi*, black magic, or they enlisted the help of a *koenoe* (pronounced koo noo), a teaser. These teasers are believed to be persons who were mistreated by a family member. After their death, they supposedly return to the family to wreak vengeance. Actually, however, these teasers are debased demons that force people to worship them.

As a member of the Evangelical Brother Community, a Protestant church, I also learned something about God. Although I was left in the dark about how to worship him, the rain forest around me gave abundant proof that he is a good Provider. 'I want to worship a good God but not an evil spirit that causes suffering,' I reasoned. I knew that teasers enjoy torturing their unwilling victims until death.

Imagine how shocked I was to find out



*In breaking free from spiritism, Lintina van Geenen learned that "the name of Jehovah is a strong tower"*



that enemies of our family had sent a *koenoe* to us. I was 14 years old when he set out on his deadly mission. Twenty-six years later, only Mother and I were left.

### The First Encounter

Mother was a hard worker. One day, while walking to her farm, she was knocked down and could not get up. The *koenoe* had chosen my mother. Her health weakened and she became paralyzed. She needed help—my help. But I was torn between love for her and fear of the demon that possessed her. During the attacks of the *koenoe*, however, poor Mother cried out in so much pain that I could not bear it any longer and laid her head in my lap for comfort. She then calmed down, but I felt “hands” squeezing my body.

When I wanted to flee, Mother cried again. So for her sake I stayed and endured my first shivering encounter with this killer. I was 40 years old.

### Intensified Attacks

Mother died. Only three days later, I heard a friendly voice saying: “Lintina, Lintina, don’t you hear me? I’m calling you.” That was the beginning of a misery so great that I wished for a quick death.

First the demon troubled me only when I was going to sleep. As I was about to doze off, the voice would awaken me, talking about burial places and death. Losing sleep made me feel weak, although I continued caring for my children.

Later the demon stepped up his attacks. Several times I felt as if he were strangling me. Though I tried to run away, I could not because a heavy weight seemed to press on my body. I wanted to scream but could not produce a sound. Still, I refused to worship my attacker.

Upon recuperating after each attack, I resumed farming, growing cassava and sugarcane and selling them at the market

in a small coastal town. It became easier to make a living, but my worst sufferings were ahead.

### Searching for a Cure

One day I heard the foreboding voice of the demon say, “I will make your belly swell like a ball.” Some time later, there was a hard lump in my belly that grew bigger until I looked pregnant. Really frightened, I wondered: ‘Can God, the Creator, help me to get rid of the *koenoe*? Can He send a good and stronger spirit to chase him away?’ To find out, I went to a *bonoeman*, a witch doctor.

The first witch doctor gave me *tapoes*, or amulets, but the swelling remained. Determined to find a cure, I traveled from one *bonoeman* to another—all to no avail. Between those visits, I continued farming to get funds to buy the beer, wine, champagne, and loincloths to pay the witch doctors. Many times they advised: “Kneel down for the *koenoe*. Beg him as your master. Worship him, and he will leave you.” But how could I kneel for a spirit that tortured me and wanted to kill me? I could not.

However, in desperation I did everything else that the witch doctors told me to do. One of them treated me for five months. He bathed me with herbs and pressed the juice of 11 different plants into my eyes—“to purify them,” he said as I screamed from pain. But at the end of the treatment, I went home penniless, abused, and sicker than ever.

### “This Is Your End”

One of my sons, who lives in the Netherlands, sent me money to continue the search for help. So I went to a medical doctor in the capital. After an examination, he said: “I cannot help you. Go and see a *bonoeman*.” So I tried a spirit medium of East Indian origin—but again no



**Suriname  
hinterland  
where many  
people are  
captive to  
spiritism**



help. I headed home but got only as far as the capital, where I reached the house of one of my daughters. There I collapsed—broke and sick. In vain, I had spent 17 years and 15,000 guilders (\$8,300, U.S.) searching for a cure. I was 57 years old.

Next, the demon threatened: "I'm finished with you. This is your end."

"But you are not God, you are not Jesus," I cried.

"Even God cannot stop me," the demon answered. "Your days are numbered."

### **The Final Struggle**

Some weeks passed. Meena, a neighbor lady who was a full-time minister of Jehovah's Witnesses, asked my daughter about my condition and said: "Your mother can be helped but only with the Bible." Overhearing the conversation, I walked toward them. Before I reached them, however, I was thrown to the ground. Meena hurriedly came and said: "That demon will not leave you alone. The only one that can help you is Jehovah, no one else." Then she prayed with me to Jehovah God and began to visit me. But the more she visited me,

the fiercer were the demon's attacks. During the night, my body shook so violently that no one in the house could sleep. I stopped eating and had moments when I completely lost my mind.

My condition became so serious that my sons came from the interior to take me back to my village to die. Being too weak to travel, I refused. But feeling death approaching, I called the Witness to say farewell. Meena explained from the Bible that even if I died, there is the resurrection hope.

"Resurrection? What do you mean?"

"God can raise you to life in Paradise," she answered. A ray of hope!

But that very night the demon possessed me. In a trance, I seemed to see the *koenoe* followed by a crowd of people. He ridiculed: "She thinks she is going to get a resurrection." Then the crowd laughed and laughed. But then I did something I had never done before. I called: "Jehovah! Jehovah!" That is all I knew to say. And the demon left!

My sons came again and begged: "Mama, don't die in the city. Let us take



you to your village.” I refused, for I wanted to learn more about Jehovah. “All right, perhaps I will still die,” I told them, “but I will at least have served the Creator.”

### Like a Strong Tower

Meena and other Witnesses continued visiting me. They taught me to pray to Jehovah. Among other things, they told me about the issue between Jehovah and Satan and how the Devil brought suffering upon Job to get him to renounce God. Learning these things strengthened my conviction never to worship the demon. The Witnesses read a scripture that became dear to me: “The name of Jehovah is a strong tower. Into it the righteous runs and is given protection.”—Proverbs 18:10.

Slowly my strength came back. When my son returned, I told him to wait outside. I dressed and tucked a blouse into my skirt to show that the swelling was almost gone. Then I walked outside.

“Is this Mama Lintina?” my son blurted out.

“Yes, it is—thanks to Jehovah, my God!”

### Taking My Stand

From the moment I could walk a bit, I went to the Kingdom Hall of Jehovah’s Witnesses. There I received so much encouragement from the friends that I never stopped attending meetings. A few months later, I accompanied the Witnesses in the public preaching work. Shortly thereafter, I was baptized and became a servant of Jehovah, my loving Rescuer. I was 58 years old.

However, something remained to be done. Years earlier, back in my hut in the village, I had built an altar on which to offer sacrifices to my ancestors. To be spiritually clean, I had to destroy it. I asked Jehovah for help, since my action could cause an uproar among the villagers.

When I reached my hut and opened the door, someone yelled: “*Pingos!*” (Wild hogs!) A herd was crossing the island and jumping into the river to swim across. Immediately, both young and old deserted the village for this easy catch. Thrilled, I knelt and thanked Jehovah for this development. Quickly, I dragged the altar outside, poured kerosene over it and set it on fire. The altar was gone before the crowd returned. Of course, they found out, but nothing could be done about it anymore. Thus, with peace of mind, I returned to the capital.

### From Misery to Happiness

More blessings came my way. My son in the Netherlands did not believe the stories he had heard about me and boarded a plane for Suriname to see for himself. He was so happy to see me healthy that he bought a fine house for me in the capital, where I now live. What a change I have experienced—from a penniless slave of demons to a well-cared-for servant of Jehovah!

Eleven years after my baptism, I have even more reason to be grateful. Moved by the many blessings I received, three of my children and one son-in-law also became interested in Bible truth and eventually dedicated their lives to Jehovah God. And time and again, I have related my experience with demonism when brothers and sisters have taken me along to see their Bible students who lack the courage to break free from the demons. In that way even those dreadful years have been of some use in the Kingdom-preaching activity.

I lack sufficient words to express my gratitude to Jehovah, my God. Surely, I have seen his almighty hand in my behalf. Indeed, Jehovah has been good to me! —Compare Psalm 18:17-19.