

THE STORY OF HARU HARIVA

CANOEES, CROCODILES AND CHRIST



DAVID McCLINTOCK

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Preface

I was the principal of Mount Diamond Adventist High School near Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, in the mid 1980s. It was there I had the privilege of teaching Haru Hariva's granddaughters and finding out more about their grandfather. Daniel, the oldest son, was the Associate Education Director for the Papua New Guinea Union Mission at the time. But my acquaintance with the family didn't begin there, I remember Haru's son Naphtali, who worked in the office at Kabiufa Adventist High School, when my dad was a teacher there.

I spent many pleasant hours talking with Kaura, Haru's widow, and Zita Hibo, Haru's daughter in Port Moresby, as I gathered many pages of notes in anticipation of preserving this story. When I travelled down to the Gulf Province, I walked into Hepere Village to capture the atmosphere of Haru's early years.

Stories of the early Adventist pioneers in the Pacific are inspiring. Sadly, many of these stories are being forgotten as the pioneers pass on and their memory is lost. The story of Haru Hariva is one that must not be lost. His was a life that was dedicated to God. A life that impacted numerous communities with their first awareness of God. It is the family's hope that as you read this, you too will capture a sense of what God can do through you.

David McClintock



Chapter 1

Taken by a Crocodile

Hariva!” she screamed.

There was a loud splash, then silence.

Hariva leapt from the small fire where he had been squatting contentedly. He raced the short distance to the edge of the dark, muddy creek.

“Where are you?” he yelled into the darkness. “Where are you?”

Frantically, he scanned the dark waters. Ripples, but nothing else moved. Silence. Desperately, he raced back to the fire, grabbed his spear and lit some dried coconut leaves as a torch. The leaves blazed brightly, although only briefly. Leaving his two-year-old son Haru and his three-month-old daughter Rouru near the small fire, he ran back to the creek, holding his spear.

He again scanned the foreboding waters. The creek was narrow with branches overhanging the water. Nothing moved. *What can I do?*” he thought. He had clearly heard his wife’s startled scream. Hariva dreaded what it meant. There was only one thing it could be. *Itahe*—crocodile.¹

Hariva jumped into the creek. He had to rescue his wife!

He knew what he would do if he found the crocodile. He would feel for its eyes and then push his thumbs into them. That would make the crocodile open its mouth.

Even as he dived and felt around the muddy creek bed, he dreaded to think what he might find. Hour after hour, he searched through the night but found no trace of his wife. Exhausted, he collapsed beside the sleeping children as dawn etched its fingers of light through the steamy tropical jungle.

Hariva thought back to the previous evening. He had returned after dark from hunting all day. He had speared a possum. “Look what I have caught,” he had boasted. His wife had smiled proudly back at him.

“I will get some water so we can cook and enjoy our meal,” she had said and then walked off in the darkness to the small creek. That was when it had all gone wrong.

The crocodile was waiting. They had stayed too long at the one camp

site on this hunting trip and it had picked up on their routines. As she had bent over, it had flicked her with its powerful tail and knocked her into the water. The crocodile had grabbed her in his mouth and dragged her under. Gone. Gone forever.

“Papa,” came the plaintive cry. “Papa, I am hungry.” Haru clambered over the still body of his dad. “Where is mummy?” Hariva did not stir. “Where is mummy?”

Then little Rouru began to cry again. She was hungry and needed attention too. Her shrill crying filled the dank, humid jungle air.

Gradually, Hariva woke up from his exhausted sleep. Had he dreamt last night?

He looked around, half expecting to see his wife with some cooked possum and fish for him. Then the nightmare hit again in all its reality—*the crocodile!*

He knew he needed help. Quickly, he took some of the sago² that his wife had prepared earlier and gave it to Haru. But he had nothing to give Rouru. She was still breastfeeding and was too young to eat solid food. She cried constantly. What could he do?

The flies buzzed around the dead possum near the fire. It lay there just as he had thrown it down the previous night. He knew he would never cook it now. It was too much of a reminder of what had happened.

Throwing back his head and raising his arms in anger, he called out his frustration at full voice. It echoed through the bush. He knew that several families from his own village of Hepere had also gone hunting. They heard from their camps and, within a short time, they had paddled to his makeshift shelter.

“What has happened?” they cried out as they paddled closer to the camp.

One look at the distressed husband and they knew the news would be terrible. Hariva was their chief. He was a good hunter. No, he was the best hunter in the whole village.

“A crocodile took her. She went down to get some water from the creek. That was the last time I saw her. I have dived all night. Nothing! Nothing at all.”

For three days they searched, knowing they would never find her alive. It was hopeless. Rouru had been crying for much of those three days. None of the families had mothers who could feed her. She was getting

weaker. Haru was occasionally given some cooked fish or sago when he was able to get anyone's attention.

On the third day, the evidence of the crocodile's work was found. All that remained of Hariva's wife was a little of her body fat. Superstitiously, the others commented, "Hariva, it must have been a *puri puri puk puk* (magic crocodile)."³

Finally, it was time to return to the village they had left more than two weeks earlier. Hariva was devastated. He had left home as the young village chief, proud of his family. He had left with the promise of good hunting and fishing. He enjoyed the forays up the creek and wanted his son to develop a love for hunting and fishing like him. It was good training for Haru.

He returned without his wife—she was gone forever. All he had now was a two-year-old who did not understand where mummy had gone and a crying baby who was hungry and weak.

How could he go on?

Who had caused this?

Was it really a *puri puri puk puk*—a magic crocodile?

Had he upset the spirits? What if they were now against him in his village as well? Could he continue living there if that was the case?

Hariva finally decided it was time to talk to somebody he could trust. He spoke with his brother Purahakaia. "I need to get away. I hear the white man is looking for men to work in the mines."

He pointed in the direction of the mines with his chin, lifting it high to show that they were far away. "I shall go to Bootless Bay and seek work there. Besides, if the spirits are upset with me, then it is best if I go far away so they will not find me here."

"Are you sure that is the right decision?" asked Purahakaia. "You are our chief. What about the children?"

"It is the only decision. I cannot stay here. What if the *puri puri puk puk* comes downstream to our village? No, I must go away. Far away."

Roura had already weakened so much, it was only a matter of time. There was nothing Hariva could do to help her. Resigned to the inevitable, he watched as she became too weak to even cry. She eventually stopped struggling and lay there still. Her body grew cold and Hariva grieved the loss of the second member of his family.

"It is time to take her body away from the village, Hariva." Dimly,

Hariva heard the words of his brother. “We need to follow our death rituals.⁴ When the body has dried out, we will have the feast.”

The little family dejectedly walked through the bush to the death platform, a short distance from the village. With loud wailing and chest beating, they laid Roura’s tiny body out of reach of the crocodiles and pigs.

Haru did not seem to understand that he had lost his mother and now his sister. All he knew was that his daddy was withdrawn and angry and sad. He wandered around on his own, often hungry.

Mothers in the village would give him some sago or fish to eat. They knew his father seemed unable to take good care of Haru. Hariva had even stopped caring for himself.

Not long after Roura died, Hariva decided the time had come to put his plan into action.

“Purahakaia, I am going. I will give Haru to your family. I cannot take him with me. I cannot be a good dad now. He is yours.”

It happened all the time.⁵ Family members were often given to extended relatives to bring up and they were considered officially part of the new family. Besides, Haru would have two cousins as family now—Hopa and Uvaro.

The boys will grow up as good friends and brothers. It is better than what I can offer, thought Hariva, as he lay on his thin bamboo mat for the last time in the small village of Hepere.

Rain dripped off the massive kapok trees, which dotted the village area, onto the thatched roof of his hut. He could hear the flying foxes as they plundered the kapok blossoms. He would miss these familiar sounds and smells.

As the village headman, he knew he should not be leaving. This was his village. It was his responsibility to take care of it. It was where he had grown up. It was all he knew.

Getting up on that final morning in the village, he could hear the familiar routines. The roosters had already called. The usual assortment of pigs was rummaging around the village, eating any scraps that had fallen through the bamboo flooring of the raised huts overnight. Children were crying and he thought of how his daughter would no longer contribute to that noise.

He looked over at little Haru as he slept on his own bamboo mat. Haru

stirred restlessly as the ever-present mosquitoes annoyed him, even in his sleep. He was just two years old. What would happen to him?

It was about an hour's walk through the jungle to the big river near the sea. Hariva visualised the trek. He had done it occasionally just to go and look out over the ocean. He knew it would be hot walking to the coast. He would have to be careful of the crocodiles as he crossed over several small streams. But he had to get away. He could not chance bringing bad luck to the village of Heperere. What if the *puri puri puk puk* followed him home?

Once he got to the big river, he would have to walk six hours to Ihu and then catch a boat to Bootless Bay. It would take several days by boat to get to Port Moresby. Once he started working at Tahira, he could stop his mind going over the events of the past few days.⁶

How long would he be away for?

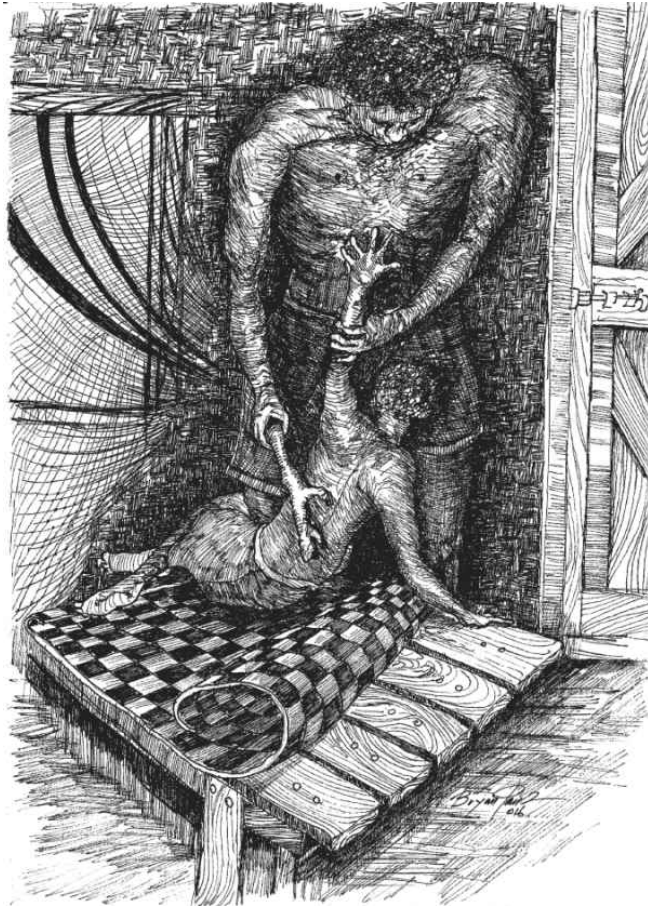
Would he ever come back?

Was his sorcery stronger than the *puri puri puk puk*?

These questions tortured his mind as he began his journey along the creek towards the big river and Ihu.



Port Moresby in 1918



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