

## THE LAST KAPAMPANGANS ON EARTH

**by Ernie Turla**

The year is 2112. Far up in the future! I've just woke up from a deep slumber as part of a secret experimental project. The brains among scientists who initiated it have been dead for sometime now and their followers took over to continue with the experiment. As I recollect the past, the last thing I remember was being given an elixir injection that would make me sleep for a hundred years inside a time capsule.

I, along with hundreds of other "guinea pigs", have participated in this experiment which scientists thought could become a breakthrough in their efforts to find ways by which life could be preserved. During the time gap which was a full century, I was fed intravenously and placed in a sealed container similar to that of Ripley in the movie, Alien. It was like being in an H.G. Wells time machine, except that I was not awake but rather asleep with no awareness at all for all the passing time.

Well, the experiment seems to be a success, me and the others having survived the lapse of time. It is a wonder of wonders! For what is even more amazing is its wonderful side effect. It seems that a reverse trend has occurred for I've even grown younger-looking, and my vitality as a teen-ager is revived. My muscles are once again intact, the deep lines of my brow faded, and my white hair, black

again and with no more sign of balding. Now, after being given a physical exam, and under observation for a week, we are being released from their custody and are free to go anywhere and do whatever pleases us, and with the hefty sum of money we received as part of the benefit package bestowed upon us for volunteering in the experiment, we want to catch up with what we have missed during the last hundred years.

As I get out of the giant laboratory building in New York City, the capital of the United World, I am amazed to see skyscrapers one thousand stories tall and with lots of flying conveyances buzzing all over the metropolis! I can't believe my eyes when I see the place so different from how it was a hundred years ago then when the restored twin towers towered over most of the buildings, compared to now when they are the ones dwarfed by these many skyscrapers erected all around Manhattan. With anxiety I hail a taxi and head for the airport. Then I hurriedly board a huge jet bound for the Philippines, and to my amazement, the trip just takes 45 minutes! What a vast improvement in technology, and in transportation! I alight from the jet at the old Diosdado Macapagal International Airport (formerly, Clark) and take a taxi to nearby Angeles. I decide to visit my good friend Josie Henson who I know had also gone to New York to participate in the same experiment I have been in, though belonging to the batch a month ahead of ours.

At Villa Gloria, I am surprised to see modern houses four times bigger than how they were when Josie invited us over to their place during our medical mission a century ago. I ring their doorbell and I am met and greeted in Tagalog by her great grandson. Josie, looking like a mere 30-year old Linda Carter, comes out of her quarters and we hug each other like long lost friends. She quickly whisks me to her art

gallery where her now antiquated paintings still emblazon the marble walls. I notice conspicuously displayed in a showcase some masterpieces that have gathered the dust of time: the CDs and videos of the ArtiStaRita choral group under Andy Alviz, the Singing magazines quarterly published by the Center for Capampangan Studies under Robby Tangingco, the books by Evangelina H. Lacson, Rosalina Icban Castro, Edna Zapanta Manlapaz and John Larkins, the compiled poetry of Crisostomo Soto, Amado Yuson, Jose Gallardo and Vedasto Ocampo, and my own Classic Kapampangan Dictionary. I also get to take a passing glance of a grand portrait she painted of her loving husband, Dr. Ruben Henson, nearby, along with Maniago's paintings of Ninoy Aquino, Jose Abad Santos, Diosdado Macapagal and Gloria Arroyo!

Once seated comfortably in the sala, we start talking about the experiment and its success, how we find it quite a thrill to still be alive and young after a hundred years. We are delighted to know about all the changes that have taken place in the world. Yes, very happy until the topic turns to be about the Academia Ning Amanung Sisuan Int'l. and the Akademyang Kapampangan Int'l. which we respectively head. She says, "Do you know that the two of us are the only remaining Kapampangan speakers here on earth?"

"Well, just what do you mean by that?" I say.

"You heard it, we are the only Kapampangans left, everybody here in Pampanga now speaks Tagalog! Kapampangan is now just mere history!"

"You gotta be kidding! What happened to our cabalens, did they leave the province on exodus?"

"No. They just all became Tagalog-speaking. Just like my 75 year old

great grandson here, he can't utter a word in Kapampangan."

"So, we're survivors? Incredible! How could such a proud race like ours disappear? How could our descendants who are now our 'ancestors' let this happen?"

"But it happened! I'm afraid we'll have to face reality. In fact, we were already seeing such a trend even before we boarded that time capsule a hundred years ago, didn't we?"

"Oh yes, I remember. The thing is that so many of our cabalens ignored the portent, even dismissing it as paranoia unnecessarily causing worry to 'region-nationalists' like us."

"But at least we did our best during our time, didn't we?"

"Yes, I'd say, we did. One would only have to look into our archives and see the supposedly immortal writings of Mar Franco, Rafael Maniago, Renato Alzadon, Ed Sale, Elpidio Rivera, Ronnie Juanta, Rolly de Jesus, Arnold Batul, Mike Pangilinan, Tony Pena.... "

"Well, you could go on and on, yes... but it seems all the effort we put into our cause was just not enough! We have to retrace our track to see where we failed."

"Yes, and I am really at a loss on where we failed. It breaks my heart to see this happen! I'm sure you feel the same way, being the chairman of our DILA chapter in our province. You and Edwin Camaya really worked hard to try saving the language from the jaws of extinction. I really wonder why we failed despite doing the best we could!"

"I think I know why we failed, Cong Ernie. It was in our failure to disseminate fervor-burning information to arouse pride and awaken

the spirits of our cabalens. Maybe they did not at any moment realize that our race was at the limelight during all the 327 years of Spanish rule and during which we, as 'wicked accomplices', practically co-governed the island-colony. We were the Castilians of the so-called Indios! Our forefathers were even congratulated at one time by the King of Spain for their bravery and for helping defend the colony against Dutch and Chinese attacks. Our own capital, Bacolor, became the colony's capital during the British occupation of Manila. And we failed to make them proud also of our province being represented by the 8 rays of the sun, having been among the first provinces to join the revolution. We really had to plant such pride before more love to our language could grow and bear fruit."

"You're right, Josie. I was, I guess, too short-sighted! And to add to that, we also failed to stop our cabalens from using the national language at home with their own children! My gosh, so if we had it to do over again, we must adopt a much better strategy than before. Such as going house-to-house maybe (?) and having a heart-to-heart talk with the people. But now, it's just too late to change what has happened during the last 100 years! So, there really are no more Kapampangans, and you're dead sure?"

"Let's go out and you can take a look for yourself. Hope it does not scare the daylight out of you! I, for one, am nervous to see what I don't ever want to witness."

So we take a stroll. There are many tall buildings, a lot of businesses, and the place is teeming with people. As we inch our way into the crowd, I try to listen to the people around us. But true to what she says, I can't hear any Kapampangan. I can't hear the language that's been music to my heart and soul. Everything I hear is Tagalog! Even inside the restaurant where we eat, everybody speaks Tagalog,

including the waitresses! I am as bewildered as Charlton Heston was in that movie I saw 130 years ago, "The Planet of the Apes", when he realized he did not actually land on another planet but was just back on earth and that the place was now dominated by those war-like apes!

"Let's find out if the same thing has happened all over the country," I say to Josie. "Let's go to the north."

"Very well," Josie agrees. "Let's find out if the Ilocanos are still around."

So, we rent a space-bug and fly to Laoag. Once there, we head for the marketplace, and to our disbelief, the language we hear is also Tagalog! We ask the people we meet if there are still Ilocanos there, and we are told that they had been so greatly reduced in number in recent years that they doubt if there are still any left!

Fortunately there is a history professor nearby who overhears our conversation and he kindly introduces himself. He says that if there ever are Ilocanos still around, they are now just members of the cultural minorities. To that, I say, what about the Ibanags, the Igorots, the Ilongots? Being much fewer before, they must 'ave all vanished by this time.

And he says, "Oh no, as a matter of fact, those are still around. They are left untouched by society as they had been during the Spanish times. They kept to themselves so much, and so they survived. The ones that were gravely affected by ethnic weeding were the most civilized groups as they were the ones most susceptible to changes and who acquired education the most. If you go to to the Visayas, you will see the same situation. Cebuanos who used to even outnumber Tagalogs have been wiped out completely. Same way

with the Hiligaynons, Warays and Bicolanos. You see, 99.9 per cent of people here in the Philippines now speak Tagalog. Everybody here in the Ilocos is proud of the Tagalog language and has forgotten Ilocano completely.

"Just how did all this come about? Did people lose their love for their native languages?" Josie queries.

"In what I've read, the government at first tried to kill all the minority languages softly by tricking the non-Tagalog people into believing that Filipino is not the same as Tagalog as well as allaying their fear of losing their languages. Then in 2070 it passed a law making all people to switch to Tagalog to pave way for a one-language nation. It is said that it was all done in one click, since all Filipinos then could already speak the language quite fluently because of the schools and the media. Getting rid of their own languages was at first painful, and in fact many die-hard language proponents committed suicide. But nowadays, as you see, everything is just fine and normal. There is hardly any regret or mental reservation. People don't miss what they never learned at all in the first place, just like in my case, whose grandfather spoke the Zambal language. I do not miss my grandfather's language. No, no, not at all! I was born a Tagalog, and so naturally it is the language that I'm obliged to love and be proud of. It is one way to feel nationalistic, which I am. By the way, you have quite an accent. I notice you have no "h" and you put it where it should not even be! I hope you won't take offense if I ask what your mother tongue is."

And we say, almost in unison, "Kapampangan".

Appearing quite shocked he exclaims, "Oh, the Pampanguenos I thought, have also completely disappeared, along with the

Pangasinenses. Their nearness to Manila made them the most vulnerable. They were the very first domino to fall down. I'm sure the National Language Commission and the Department of the Interior would take an interest in you. They want to capture and study remnant specimens like you, find out how you have survived the so-called ethnic cleansing, and probably detain you in the national exhibits." Before I can even reply, he presses a button on his belt, sending a bunch of policemen rushing to the scene in no time!

Quickly, Josie and I head back to the space car, get aboard and take off. We fly through the stratosphere in zigzag fashion to elude some ten patrol space cabs behind us in pursuit. We zoom past Pampanga and on to Manila. At one point in our maneuver to escape them, we suddenly twist in a different direction causing two space cabs to collide and come crashing on the slope of Mt. Arayat! With the ray guns we have equipped ourselves for protection against terrorist attack, Josie and I take turns shooting at the space cars behind us, causing two others to catch fire and plummet. Having mastered the trade in our youth as experts in Hatari and Nintendo war games, we easily dodge all the bullets coming our way. Then, upon reaching Manila we look for a place to land and luckily, we find a spot on the roof of a new SM building. We jump off from the conveyance and scurried like Flash Gordon and Dale Arden as I remember them in comic strips. The remaining cops are relentless in their chase, aware of the bounty waiting for them if they capture prize specimen like us! Running as fast we can, we are able to succeed in getting away, up until we accidentally enter a darn dead-end alley where we get cornered. As they come charging, Josie and I apply the skills we learned as karate students at one time, giving them chops and kicks that send them swirling in various directions. But as we make our way for another attempt to escape, a reenforcement group of cops arrive,



blocking our only exit. Then their captain turns on a siren as he signals us to surrender. It is at that same instant that I hear some loud ringing. It is my alarm clock!

Oh what a relief, and how I quickly jump up from bed in a hurry to escape such an ugly future! I am in total shock, gasping for breath and perspiring profusely. I've been rushed back into the present time and not even able to say good bye to my friend, Josie! But thanks God, I sigh, it was just a nightmare! A nightmare that is somehow significant in that it may be portending the shape of things to come.

"Could this be a wake-up call or a warning?" I ask myself in the mirror as I walk past it and slowly stroll into the bathroom for a hot shower.

**The End**

## **The saga continues on Part II, The Last Kapampangans On Earth - A View To A Kill**

(To prevent a language holocaust in the Philippines, Tagalog should be replaced as medium of instruction by the particular language indigenous to the region served by the school. In Cebu for instance, Bisaya should be used in schools to replace Tagalog. Because English was replaced in Hawaii, the dying Hawaiian language has pretty much recovered and there are now twice as many speakers of it as there were in 1985.)

October 2, 2020 at 6:32 AM · Public

[free.facebook.com/groups/164577200267177?view=permalink  
&id=3654928507898678](https://free.facebook.com/groups/164577200267177?view=permalink&id=3654928507898678)

**Christy Vicencio**

Speechless...

At first, I thought I was reading a wild dream.

Then - it became a nightmare.

Just imagine our language disappearing from the face of the earth. Just like the language of the American Indians. There's no more...

and it's a sad reality indeed.