

CURTAINS *for an* INVADER

by PATERNO F. TACLOB, JR.

- OR -

What Happens To An Alien Who Tries To Fool Around With N a t i v e s



The Time: D-Day-minus-two.
The Place: Cebu.

The Occasion: (No background Latin phrases, please) A banquet tendered by Rajah Charles (the former Humabon) in honor of Magellan and his officers. Rajah Charles, Magellan, Simiot, Sibuya, Sisakai and other local chieftains were seated around the head table, on which were placed roast pigs, broiled birds, fried chickens, salted fish and other delicacies.

Magellan was plowing diligently through the dishes. He had not yet fully recovered from his three-month diet of rats and canvas with sawdust for dessert. The native chieftains didn't just pick at their food, either.

At length the meal was finished, punctuated by burps, belches, groans and other sounds of gustatory satisfaction. The Cebu monarch, who had been watching Magellan, looked at the latter admiringly and murmured to himself, "Half a pig, three chickens, five eggs and six bananas. That beats Lapulapu's record by one chicken and two bananas." Then he summoned the interpreter and once more they took up the current topic, viz: What to do with Lapulapu? The day before, Magellan had sent some of his men to burn the Maetan village of Bulaia and abduct their women. (It was his customary way of saying hello.) Now

they were awaiting the answer to an ultimatum sent to Lapulapu after the Bulaia incident, an ultimatum ordering Lapulapu to cry uncle and pay tribute, or else.

Presently a messenger arrived, bearing Lapulapu's answer. It was written on a meter-long Bamboo stick. Rajah Charles grabbed the letter and began reading. The letter ran:

Maetan,
Two days after full moon

Misguided One,

I received your letter this morning, and had a hard time deciphering it, as usual. Your secretary should be arrested for such a terrible handwriting, you know.

As regards your ultimatum, tell your white friend that I have been used to being on the receiving end of a tribute, and I'm not inclined to change ends right now. Some other time, perhaps. But thank him for the barbecue and kidnaping session his men held at Bulaia yesterday. It solved our squatter problems there.

I read your ultimatum to my men. They say it's the funniest thing they've

ever heard since Rajah Colamba's funeral oration last year.

As always,
Lapulapu

P.S. If you think you can beautify your face by having your name changed into Charles, you're sadly mistaken.

Same

Rajah Charles broke the letter over the messenger's head. Then he ripped out a fearful oath, filled with allusions to Lapulapu's doubtful ancestry, and related subjects.

When the angry Rajah had calmed down, he told Magellan of Lapulapu's refusal, but forgot to mention the other contents of the letter.

Magellan sat thoughtfully for a few seconds (to get the desired dramatic effect), then stood up and addressed the nobles around him. "Gentlemen of these islands. Once more it is my distasteful duty to go forth and make a dirty rat see the light. I have had considerable experience in these matters, and this one ought to be a cinch. Have I ever told you that I did to the mutineers at Port

Saint Julian? No? Well, remind me to tell one of these days. At any rate, what I did to those mutineers will be a caress compared to what I'm going to do to Lapulapu."

"Will you roast him alive, perhaps?" asked a chieftain.

"That is my usual procedure," replied Magellan. "But we must not limit our style. You will soon find out, however, because tomorrow I'm going with my men to Mactan for a visit, the purpose of which will be to fertilize the island with Lapulapu's corpse."

"Good! You can use my men," said Rajah Charles.

"I'll supply the bancas," said Simist.

He then side with the winner. The other chieftains have taken sides with the whites on the assumption that the imported is better than the local. You know — colonial mentality and all that jazz.

"I do not know what course you may take. But as for me, give me liberty, and down with western imperialism!"

"So here are the odds: Their god against seven of ours; and our one hundred ten warriors against I don't know how many whites, plus possible reinforcements from Humabon. Now then, those in favor of battle say 'aye'. Those who oppose may signify by handing in their resignation."

The decision to fight was unanimous.

in the big ships. Whether the other chieftains will help them or not, we must be ready. I have just received a report from Secret Agent double-O-plok. He says that the whites use small sticks that make small noise and big sticks that make big noise. But don't worry. Noise never killed anybody. Double-O-plok further reports that the whites wear iron on their heads and bodies. That means we'll have to hit their exposed parts. Sharpen your weapons. The spears and arrows must be hardened over fire. Fall in as soon as you're ready.

"And remember: Carry on the finest traditions of the Mactan Marines! That's all."

In the island of Cebu, the invasion force was ready. Magellan's officers had tried to dissuade him from attacking, reminding him that their mission was to find a route to the Moluccas, not to make conquests. But Magellan's mind was made up. He was the big Boss, wasn't he? And he was going to let anybody defy him and get away with it! No, by the Treaty of Tordesillas! No! And that, was that.

At midnight the Spaniards set sail for Mactan. Rajah Charles and the other chieftains came along for the ride. They never missed a free show, those natives.

Upon reaching the island, Magellan sent a converted Moslem trader to Lapulapu with another ultimatum. (Magellan just loved ultimatums.)

"This is your last chance, Datu!" said the trader. "For Pete's sake, surrender!"

"Oh yeah?" said Lapulapu. "So I am going to take orders from a bunch of tourists, am I? Hah! You're nuts!"

"Think again, Datu. When you defy Magellan you are inviting trouble, courting disaster, and flirting with catastrophe."

"Drop dead," said Lapulapu.

"It's war, then."

"You're dam right it's war," said the Datu.

"Magellan will attack at daybreak," the trader said.

"Well then, tell him to come on time. I'm a busy man," said Lapulapu.

When morning came, it was the Mactan warriors who attacked. The Datu had decided that if any attacking was to be done on his island, he, Lapulapu, will be the one to do it.

And so the forces clashed. The Spaniards shouted, "Viva España!"

The natives screamed, "Wa-a-a-a-h! Our king can lick your king!"

The rest is history.

END OF STORY

(Author's note: The idea for this story was suggested by: Antonio M. Molina: "The Philippines through the Centuries")



"And I'll take care of the prayers," said Sibuyaya.

Magellan held up a restraining hand. "Your offers are very generous, my friends. But this is strictly a One-man show, see? In fighting me, Lapulapu is already at a disadvantage. To accept your assistance would be most unporting."

Meanwhile, back at the panting Lapulapu was delivering a speech to the council. ".....and so the situation boils down to this: the whites will surely come, but we will have another chance to surrender when they do. If we kneel, it will be for the first time, and the experience should be very educational. But if we fight, we can't expect outside help. Datu Zula, in spite of the seven slaves he owes me, says he remains neutral. That means he'll wait until after the bat-

"That's fine. Now hear this: Women and children will hide in the hills. Old men will form the reserved group. The rest will stand and fight. High Priest! What do we usually offer the gods before a battle?"

"Two chickens and half a pig for each of the seven gods" replied the High Priest.

"Make it three chickens and one pig each. And throw in a deer for good measure. This battle is going to be a hot one," said the Datu. "One thing I can say for those whites. They sure don't spend much on sacrifices." Then he dismissed the council and ordered the herald to summon his warriors.

When the warriors had assembled, the Datu briefed them. "Noble warriors of Mactan, here's the lowdown. We are going to fight the white men who came