

# Durito Names Marcos His Squire



Reflecting on the government's broken promises, Durito shows off his bullfighting moves as "Durito el Camborio," claiming that "bullfighting is like politics, although in politics the bulls can be really crafty and treacherous." The Zapatistas and the government continued to negotiate the logistics and agenda in preparation for the dialogue of San Andrés against the backdrop of an ongoing low-intensity war. The Mexican Congress later stated that if peace talks did not resume by April 10, the government could renew the February offensive. Assuming his role as knight-errant amidst these tensions, Don Durito names Marcos his squire, laments his misfortunes in love, recites poetry, and pokes fun at the ignorance of the government.

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First published in *La Jornada*, April 8, 1995. Originally translated by Bonnie Schrack.

To the national weekly *Proceso*  
To the national newspaper *El Financiero*  
To the national newspaper *La Jornada*  
To the local newspaper of San Cristóbal de Las Casas, Chiapas, *Tiempo*  
April 4, 1995

Sirs:

Here goes a letter and a communiqué that confirm the anticipated meetings (I imagine that by the time you get this, they will be about to take place). Finally, the powers-that-be rejected our proposal of a more attractive site.<sup>1</sup> We are clear that, as befits good thinking, the ee-ze-el-en should show signs of flexibility and reason before the obstinacy of the government. That's why we presented a new proposal that, we were sure, would be to more than one person's liking:

- A) Date: April 10, 1995, in the afternoon hours.
- B) Place: Chinameca Hacienda, Morelos.
- C) Sole point on the agenda: Mexican History.<sup>2</sup>

We would have only placed three conditions on the meeting:

1. That the government forces not shoot us in the face. This is because later it is a problem to identify the cadavers, and so that the obligatory photos do not present our country's image as one of barbarity and irrationality.<sup>3</sup> This last point is very important, especially now when one must read *Newsweek*, *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, and other well-known publications of wide national distribution (in the USA), to know what's happening with the Mexican government.

2. That the order to fire be given by the legislators of the so-called "COMCOPA" (which, as everyone knows, means "Commission for Connivance and Paraphernalia"), so that their "peace-keeping" role is made clear.<sup>4</sup>

3. That, when all is realized, the choreographer of the Chamber of Deputies, Roque Villanueva, delights the honorable members with that refined bodily expression that serves to convey the jubilation over popular and nationalist measures.<sup>5</sup>

I don't know for what reason the powers-that-be rejected the proposal. Wasn't it good?

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1 Due to the increased military presence in Chiapas, the Zapatistas proposed that the peace talks be moved to Mexico City.

2 In addition to marking the date of the Mexican Congress' deadline to the Zapatistas, April 10 is the anniversary of General Emiliano Zapata's assassination in 1919.

3 Since Zapata was shot many times at close range, it was hard to identify his body and there are many popular rumors that the body exhibited in Cuautla, Morelos was in fact the cadaver of his close friend Jesús Delgado. Popular folklore later suggested that Zapata had survived.

4 COMCOPA: another acronym for COCOPA. See Introduction, page 6.

5 Roque Villanueva was the president of the PRI's Executive National Committee at the time this communiqué was written.

*Vale. Salud*, and a life preserver (for the holidays and for the crisis).<sup>6</sup>

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast  
Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos

P.S. that, determined, enters the bullring.

I still can't get down out of the ceiba. The moon is a bull in silver ornament and, with a pair of sharpened horns, it charges to the east. I think that if I were not a guerrilla, I would be a matador. I try then to take the night as a black cape, but it has so many holes resembling stars that I desist in my attempt. I take from my neck the faded bandanna, now more brown than red, and unfurl it with an elegance that Sánchez Mejías would envy.<sup>7</sup> Crickets and fireflies fill the shaded front rows, the sun seats are empty for obvious reasons. I head to the center of the bullring, which, as it's the center of the crown of the ceiba, is safer and a few steps away. I summon the moon, trying some half veronicas with the cape. The moon-bull stays far away. It's inexplicable that it doesn't notice such a gallant matador. I summon again. The public is impatient and a little weasel yawns with boredom. Nothing; only a firefly charges, zigzagging. A wave of the red cape, spread out at the waist, draws from the honorable members of the audience nothing more than the continuous sawing of the crickets. The lunatic bull continues forward without even turning. I sit down in a corner and sigh with sadness. My problem is that neither women nor moons pay any attention to me . . .

Durito too has climbed up to the top of the ceiba, wondering what's taking me so long. As soon as he gets comfortable, I quickly inform him of the situation. Durito thinks that it's easier to bullfight with comets; they come from where you least expect, and they're spirited like a Miura bull.<sup>8</sup> The moon always stays on course, and while this facilitates the final thrust, it doesn't allow the matador's suit to shine and the respectable aficionados tend to get terribly bored . . .

I admit he is right and give him the cape. Durito wants to show me some passes that, he says, Federico García Lorca taught him. To my question as to whether beetles also bullfight, Durito responds that one should know about everything and that bullfighting is like politics, although in politics the bulls can be really crafty and treacherous. "In fact, they called me 'Durito el Camborio' and what they didn't envy in others, they envied in me," he says.<sup>9</sup> We're going on

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6 "Holidays" refers to the celebration of Holy Week, the week ending on Easter Sunday.

7 In the poem "Lament for Ignacio Sánchez Mejías," Federico García Lorca eulogized a matador who was killed in the bullring. Lorca, well known for his antifascist views and defense of the *gitanos*, or Spanish gypsies, was executed by General Francisco Franco's fascist troops in 1936 during the Spanish Civil War.

8 The Miura bull, named for Eduardo Miura (its original breeder), is renowned for its courage and spirit.

9 "Durito el Camborio" is a reference to Antonio Torres Heredia, who appears in two poems by Lorca. See Christopher Maurer, ed., *Federico Garcia Lorca: Selected Verse: A Bilingual Edition*, Vol. 3 (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1996). The verse "What they didn't envy in others, they envied in me" appears in the poem "Muerte de Antoñito el Camborio."

like this when we hear voices at the foot of the ceiba.

“It’s a *woyo*,” says Camilo.

“No, it’s a badger, ‘the loner,’” says My Other Self.

“See if you can get it in your sights to shoot it,” instructs Camilo to My Other Self while he loads the gun.

I stay still, smoking. My bullfighting moves will have to wait for better occasions and less belligerent audiences for their skill to be demonstrated. Durito sighs in a flamenco tone, as there are no offerings from the spectators in the arena. Below, they get bored and leave . . .

The moon finishes by charging the horizon, right into the dark cape of a mountain.

Out of the corner of its eye the moon watches El Sup. He is wiping his face with the cape. It couldn’t tell if he had been crying . . .

P.S. that, although you don’t realize it, contains a mystery (enchanting, like all mysteries):

This is the spot, oh heavens, I choose and hereby take in order to bewail the misfortune in which you yourselves have placed me! Here is where the flooding of my eyes will join the waters flowing in this tiny stream, and where, night and day, my deep and unbroken sighs will shake the leaves of these wild trees, in witness to and as symbol of the suffering experienced by my afflicted heart. Oh you, whoever you may be, you rustic gods that dwell in this uninhabitable place, hear the moans of this wretched lover, who by reason of a long absence and fancied jealousies has been brought to this harsh wilderness, here to lament and complain of that ungrateful beauty’s cruel disposition, she who is the very end and finality of all human loveliness! Oh you, nymphs and dryads, who love to live in the thick shrubbery of these mountains, may the graceful, lecherous satyrs, who long for you, but always in vain, never ever disturb your sweet rest, so you can help me lament my misfortune, or at least not yourselves grow tired of hearing it! Oh Dulcinea de Toboso, day of my night, glory of my suffering, true north and compass of every path I take, guiding star of my fate, so too may Heaven grant you whatever boons you seek of it, and bring you to reflect upon the place and the condition to which your absence has brought me, and grant me as much delight as my faithfulness deserves! Oh lonely trees, from now on the only companions of my solitude, give me some sign, by the gentle movement of your branches, that my presence here is not disagreeable to you! And oh you, my squire, cheerful companion in both prosperity and adversity, never forget what you shall see me do, here, so you may tell and recite it to she who is the sole cause of it all!<sup>10</sup>

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10 Footnote by Marcos: “Chapter XXV. Dealing with the strange things that happened to the brave knight of la Mancha in the Sierra Morena, including his imitation of Beltebros’ penance.” See Miguel Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, trans. Burton Raffel, ed. Diana de Armas Wilson (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1999), 153.

Durito recited it all by heart and with impressive intonation. Standing on a little stone, and raising in his right hand a twig that I later learned was a sword, Durito turned to look at me when he said that part about, “Oh you, my squire, cheerful companion, etc.” I turn and look behind me to see if he’s referring to someone else, but there isn’t anyone there.

“Yes, you,” says Durito pointing toward me with his twig. “You will be my squire.”

“I?” I say, visibly surprised.

Durito pays no attention to my question and continues, “Furthermore, it isn’t a twig . . . it’s a sword . . . the only, the best . . . Excalibur!” he says, brandishing the twig.

“I think you are confusing the times and the novels,” I tell him. “The beginning of your speech seems an awful lot like a part of *Don Quijote de la Mancha*, and Excalibur was King Arthur’s sword,” I ended up hesitating over this last part, trying to remember the video that Eva had called the *Sword in the Stone*.<sup>11</sup> Durito took advantage of my silence to attack:

“Silence, rogue! Knowest thou not nature imitates art? What difference does it make if it’s Alonso Quijano or the page Arthur?<sup>12</sup> Now, it is . . . *Don Durito de la Lacandona*.”

I laughed.

“At what do you laugh, oh vulgar and ignorant person?” reproaches and threatens Durito.

“At nothing,” I say, in a conciliatory manner. “I was remembering that in the files of the PGR, where they charged those alleged to be Zapatistas, they put ‘*La Candona*.’”<sup>13</sup>

“Those ignoramuses of the PGR can’t even find the jungle of Chiapas, much less the murderers of LDC, JFRM and Cardinal Posadas,” says Durito with scorn.<sup>14</sup>

“All right, but how did you become a knight-errant?” I ask, sitting down and taking care not to get too close to “Excalibur.” Durito sits down, too, lets out a quixotic sigh, and laments, “Oh, my ignorant squire, a woman is to blame for my raving, the wound in my side, the reason for my sleeplessness, the cause of my sorrow, and responsible for my misfortune.”

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11 *Sword in the Stone* (1963, directed by Wolfgang Reitherman, Walt Disney Home Studios)

12 Alonso Quijano is the country gentleman of La Mancha who takes on the noble identity of *Don Quijote*.

13 In their February 1995 arrest warrants for suspected Zapatista leaders, the Mexican Justice Department (PGR) incorrectly referred to the Lacandon region as “La Candona.”

14 On March 23, 1994, while campaigning for the presidency, PRI candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio was assassinated in Tijuana, Mexico. In August 1994, President Salinas’ brother, Raúl, was jailed for ordering the assassination of his brother-in-law José Francisco Ruiz Massieu. Cardinal Juan Jesús Posadas Ocampo was assassinated May 24, 1993, in Guadalajara.

Durito doesn't let me protest over the "ignorant" nor the "squire," and continues sadly to pour out his woes, "It is good that I tell you my tragedy so that your heart may learn to go with care and caution on the rugged road of love. See, it is not for pleasure that my steps have carried me to such distant places, where solitude cuts like a sharpened knife and silence oppresses men and the heavens. Know well, my wretched squire, that it is divine law that a gallant knight-errant must roam sadly through the world and through life, and die sighing for some absent Lady, who, adorable criminal, has robbed him, with only a glance, of all judgment. Oh, but what a glance! A lightning bolt in the April sun! A starburst at midday! A diamond that floats and kills! A sea all waves and coral! A desire that looking speaks! A mute plea of longing!"

I implore him to finish the story at once. "You had better hurry because we've gone on for several pages and there won't be a newspaper that will publish this. As it is, they say I only use the communiqués as a pretext to send whatever occurs to me . . ."

"By my faith, you are right and there is truth in your words. I am certain that there is neither newspaper nor book nor encyclopedia that could contain all the fortunes and misfortunes that, lovesick, I have suffered. Not even the library of 'Aguascalientes' would suffice for a love so great and aggrieved as pains my breast!" says Durito, his voice breaking.<sup>15</sup>

"Don't even worry about the library of 'Aguascalientes,' they have it at the PGR now," I say to console him.

"That sounds very good to me. That way those rogues and scoundrels will learn something of geography and spelling," says Durito, putting away his sword and walking toward his little leaf. Night has clouded over all corners and one of those rains that March splashes on April can be felt in the dampness of the wind.

Disconcerted, I ask, "Aren't you going to continue the story?"

"It's useless, there aren't enough words to contain so much pain and sorrow," says Durito as he covers himself with his little leaf. Before he covers himself completely he tells me, "Don't forget to have the mounts ready. Tomorrow we will leave at daybreak, as is the law for when knights-errant ride. At dawn, so the shine of our weapons puts the sun to shame when he dares to confront us and he may be, thus, less savage."

Durito heaves a last sigh and is silent. I stay seated, ready to watch over the sleep of my master, the valorous knight, "Don Durito de la Lacandona." I am determined to defend his noble sleep against any adversity. Monsters and giants will not dare disturb such noble repose. I have even found a branch that, with a little imagination, resembles a fearful lance. It begins to rain, and like any self-respecting squire, I abandon guard and master. I run and take refuge under my shelter. Now dawn begins to arrive with its cold embrace and the rain isn't stopping . . .

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15 The library of Aguascalientes built for the 1994 CND was destroyed by the Mexican Army during their February 1995 military offensive.

I can't sleep. I haven't been able to figure out where the devil I'm going to find the mounts on which we're to ride out tomorrow . . .

P.S. that, hanging from a reddish fringe, murmurs apologies in the ear (since Baudelaire was taken prisoner by the PGR and hasn't been presented<sup>16</sup>) and offers, instead, that . . .

Poetry works with the sweetest  
ideas, and becomes the sweetest,  
the noblest, most sober and wise  
Oh lady, delighting all eyes,  
Accept my soul in these lines,  
And by letting my earnest praise  
enfold you, you earn yourself  
Envy for the rest of your days,  
And find your fortune raised  
Higher than the moon in the skies.

—Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra<sup>17</sup>

El Sup, in the middle of the bullring, waiting patiently for the clock to strike five in the afternoon . . .<sup>18</sup>

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16 Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867) was a French poet whose work critiqued bourgeois society while searching for transcendence.

17 Cervantes, *Don Quijote*, 466.

18 Lorca's poem "Llanto por Ignacio Sánchez Mejías" contains the refrain "At five in the afternoon, at five in the afternoon"—the hour at which the gored Mejías died.