

# The Story of the Little Dented Car



Just before Marcos and 23 *Comandantes* embarked on the March for Indigenous Dignity, Durito surprised El Sup disguised as a patrol car informing him that he would protect the Zapatista delegation during the march. Helping Marcos prepare a talk for children, Durito dictates “The Story of the Little Dented Car” about a wind-up toy that coped with the crisis caused by privatization.

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March 18, 2001

To the Boys and Girls of the Isidro Favela Neighborhood<sup>1</sup>

Through my voice the voice of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation does not speak.

Yes, you heard right, “the voice of etcetera,” and it so happens that I was contemplating the walls in the room where we stayed yesterday, and I was looking for an idea or something that would wind me up to say a few words to you that would simultaneously be analysis, reflection, gratitude, invitation, etceteration, or something better than one of those games where everybody participates and there’s joy and songs and dances, or at least as good.

But nothing. What came to me was something like that radio program where they say “boys and girls,” or something. It occurred to me that just as Fox’s public relations advisors tell him to imitate what we do, I could go out with a statement that I’m willing to fulfill the three conditions or that I don’t want to supplant peace with commercials, or something along those lines.<sup>2</sup>

That’s what I was up to, when the lights went out. The most incomplete darkness reigned around me. And I say “incomplete” because almost immediately there appeared, under the doorjamb, a kind of miniature Christmas tree that was moving laboriously. I checked the calendar, and it told me “we are in March, and in March there are no little Christmas trees.”

Panic overtook me, but I overcame it because, given all that stuff about us Zapatistas being very brave, well, it wouldn’t look good if I were to panic. So you won’t be able to go around saying that I’m afraid of the dark, since we children really are afraid of the dark; that’s why we Zapatistas fight so that all of us children can have light. But okay, that’s another story.

I tell you, from under my door something appearing like a little Christmas tree was coming towards me. When it got close, I was able to make out that it wasn’t a little Christmas tree, but one of those strings of colored lights being dragged by something that looked like a little dented car or a little flattened ball or . . .

“Little dented car your mama, and little deflated ball your mama!” screamed the thing that looked like a little dented car or a little flattened ball. I happen to like my mama very much so I turned on the lights in order to give . . . just desserts to . . . to whatever it was!

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1 The Isidro Favela neighborhood surrounds the National School of Anthropology and History that hosted the Zapatista delegation during the March for Indigenous Dignity. The neighborhood and university have provided consistent and outspoken support of the Zapatistas.

2 Following the presidential succession of Vicente Fox, the Zapatistas announced their decision to participate in a renewed peace process only if Fox fulfilled three conditions: dismantling seven of the 259 military installations in the conflict zone; release of all Zapatista political prisoners; and acceptance of the San Andrés Accords. Fox, with the aid of the media, attempted to reduce the peace process to an agreement between himself and Marcos, and ultimately, into a media event with a commercial logo.

When I turned on the lights, surprise! I discovered that it was nothing more and nothing less than a grouchy beetle who calls himself “Don Durito de la Lacandona,” although his real name is Nebuchadnezzar. He allows his friends to call him “Durito.”

“Excuse me, Durito,” I said to him. “But I didn’t expect to see you around here. Why are you dragging that string of Christmas lights? Don’t you know we’re just barely into March?”

“Of course I know! If it were true that you are a Zapatista, then you’d know that we Zapatistas fight so that children can have Christmas whenever they want, whether in March or July, or a Christmas every month of the year . . .”

“Okay, okay. Why do you have those Christmas lights?”

“Because I’ve come in disguise.”

“And what are you disguised as?”

“As a patrol car.”

“A patrol car?”

“Yes, I’m in charge of guarding the safety of the Zapatista delegation, and I disguised myself as a patrol car so no one would realize that I am the great, the incomparable, the supreme Don Durito de la Lacandona! Completely digitized, guaranteed, and batteries included!”

“Digitized, guaranteed, and batteries included?” I asked.

“Yes, I’m into managerial excellence now,” Durito answered, and continued:

“And tell me, dented carrot-nose, what are you doing?”

“A message or greeting to the children of this neighborhood, in order to thank them for welcoming us.”

“Fine, step aside, this is a job for the indestructible Durito. I’m going to dictate a story to you. You’ll read it to them, and it will be the delight of the young and old.”

“But Durito . . .” I tried to protest.

“I don’t want to hear any buts! Just write this:”

## **The Story of the Little Dented Car**

Once upon a time there was a little wind-up car that no longer had a key with which to wind itself up. Or, it did have one, but there was no one to wind it up. And no one would wind it up because it was an old little car, and completely dented. It was missing a tire and, when it did work, it just went round and round.

The children didn’t pay it much attention because they were into Transformers and Pokemon and Zodiac Knights and other things.

And so the little dented wind-up car didn’t have anyone to wind it up. And one day the lights went out in the great city because the one person in charge had privatized the electrical industry, and the rich had taken the light to other countries, and the Transformers and Pokemon and Zodiac Knights wouldn’t run anymore.<sup>3</sup> And then the little dented car said: “I have a key but I don’t have anyone to wind it up.” And a little boy heard him and wound him up and the little car began going

round and round, and the little boy said: “And now?” “Not like that,” said the little car. “Turn me upside down.” The child did so, and he asked: “And now?” “Well, put a rubber band on the motor that’s there.” The little boy did, and the little car said, “Now wind me up and you’ll see that light will be generated,” and, yes, the little boy did, and there was light once again. This was repeated in all the homes where they had a little dented wind-up car, and, where they didn’t, they continued without light. In the end the little car said: “That’s just how you have to do it. Turn things upside-down so that the world will have light once again. *Tan-tan.*”

Moral: It’s better not to let the electrical industry be privatized because, what happens if not everyone has a little dented wind-up car?

From the Isidro Favela Neighborhood,  
Don Durito de la Lacandona (batteries included)  
Mexico, March 2001

“Durito,” I protested.

“What!”

“No one’s going to like that story!”

“Why not? It’s a good story, substantial, it doesn’t need batteries and it’s indestructible. And so I’m off, because Fernández de Cevallos is around and I have here a razor blade.”<sup>4</sup>

Well, this is the story, boys and girls of the Isidro Favela neighborhood. I hope you’ve enjoyed it and that you understand now why the voice of the EZLN does not speak through my voice, but, in this case, the voice that speaks is that of a beetle by the name of “Don Durito de la Lacandona,” who, he says, is devoted to helping the poor and challenging the powerful.

*Vale. Salud,* and if you see him around here, tell him to give me back the tobacco he took without telling me.

The Sup, sneezing.

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3 The restructuring of the national electrical industry was justified by claims that Mexico would experience power shortages unless the nation privatized the Federal Electricity Commission (Comisión Federal de Electricidad) that provides over 90 percent of Mexico’s electricity. Initiated by Ernesto Zedillo and vigorously pursued by Vicente Fox, the privatization efforts met strong opposition from the Mexican Electrical Workers Union, one of the nation’s most militant and independent unions.

4 Throughout the march and the Zapatista’s arrival in the nation’s capital, prominent PAN Senator, Diego Fernández de Cevallos, publicly expressed his opposition to the San Andrés accords, the COCOPA proposal, and the Zapatista audience with the Congress, thus sabotaging Fox’s attempts to meet the Zapatistas’ conditions and, ultimately, the path of dialogue.