

To the Boys and Girls of the Isidro Favela Neighborhood

March 18, 2001.

To the Boys and Girls of the Isidro Favela Neighborhood:

Through my voice the voice of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation is **not** speaking.

Yes, you heard the "is not speaking the voice of etcetera" right, and it so happens that I was gazing at the walls in the room where we were staying yesterday, and I was looking for an idea or something that would wind me up to say a few words which 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 out was like that radio program where they say "youngsters" or something would just occur to me, like the way Fox's image advisors tell him, to imitate what we do, I could go out with a statement that I'm willing to fulfill the three signals or that I don't want to replace peace with commercials, or something along those lines.

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 miniaturized Christmas tree, laboriously moving. I checked the calendar, and it told me "We are in March, there are no little Christmas trees in March."

Panic took over me, but I pulled myself together, since, given that stuff about us zapatistas being very brave, it wouldn't look good if I were to panic. And so you guys won't be able to go around saying that I'm afraid of the dark, given that we children are in fact afraid of the dark. Which is why we zapatistas are fighting so that all us children can have light, but okay, that's another story.

I'm telling you that, from under my door, something appeared that looked like a little Christmas tree, advancing towards me. When it got close, I was able to realize that it wasn't a little Christmas tree, but one of those strings of colored lights that was being dragged by something that looked like a little dented car or a little deflated ball or...

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

When I turned on the lights, surprise! - I discovered that it was nothing more and nothing less than a cantankerous beetle who calls himself "Don Durito of the 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 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 you really were a zapatista, then you'd know that we zapatistas are fighting so that children can have Christmas whenever they want, whether in March or July, or a Christmas for every month of the year..."

"Okay, okay. Why are you bringing those Christmas lights?"

"Because I've come in disguise."

"And what are you disguised as?"

"As a patrol car."

"As a patrol car?"

"Yes, I'm in charge of looking after security for 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 of the Lacandona! Completely digitized, guaranteed, and with batteries included!"

"Digitized, guaranteed and with batteries included?" I asked. Durito answered:

"Yes, I'm into business excellence now." And he continued:

"And tell me, dented carrot nose, what are you doing?"

"A message or greeting to the children of the neighborhood where we are, in order to thank them for having us."

"Fine, to one side. This is a job for the unbreakable Durito. I'm going to dictate a story to you. You'll read it to them, and it's going to be the delight of the small and the large."

"But DuritoÖ" I tried to protest.

"It's not negotiable! 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 cord. Or, it did have one, but no one wound it up. And no one wound it up because it was an old little car, 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 then the lights went out in the great city, because the one who governed had privatized the electricity industry, and the rich had taken away the light to other countries, and the transformers and pokemon and zodiac knights wouldn't run anymore. And then the little dented car said: I have a cord 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 turning 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? Put a rubber band on the motor there. And the little boy did, and the little car said now pull my cord and you will see that light is going to be generated, and, yes, the little boy did, and there was light once again. And 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. And in the end the little car said: That's exactly how you have to do things. Turn things upside down so that the world will have light once again. Tan-tan."

Moral: Better that the electricity industry not be allowed to be privatized, because what if everyone doesn't have a little dented wind-up car?

>From the Isidro Favela Neighborhood.
Don Durito of the Lacandona (batteries included).
Mexico, March of 2001.

"Durito," I protested.

"What?"

"No one's going to like that story!"

"Why not? It's lovely, substantial, it doesn't need batteries and it's unbreakable. And I'm leaving now, because there goes Ferna'ndez de Cevallos and I brought a razor along with me."

And so this is the story, boys and girls of the Isidro Favela neighborhood. I hope you have enjoyed it and that you understand now that the voice of the EZLN is not speaking through my voice, but, in this case, the voice is speaking of a beetle by the name of "Don Durito of the 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 letting me know.

The Sup, sneezing.