

# { Fog }

*by* Francisco Nieto Salazar

Fog was a frequent visitor to the mountain rancherías. The giant red-barked guardians of Santa Cruz mountains fed on it, bathed in it, and relied on its steady supply, especially through the summer months. At times it grew so thick that the greenery of the forest would be absorbed or erased by the mist, and only timid hints of the forest were left to remind one that one had not been carried off into the clouds. Sometimes it waited after dark, when everyone was asleep, and moved in slowly like a thief, working its way into all the ruwas, up everyone's nostrils, seemingly intent on making the people's mountain existence a troublesome one. Soon everything would be dampened, red coal's snuffed to gray, as if a giant slug had moved through the narrow valleys. Grain, stores, blankets and people's spirits would become musty and soggy, but only for a time, until warmer airs dried out everything, and until the next fog's arrival.

