

# About the Cora of the Nayarit Sierra

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## The Wounded Fox

(Jesús María, a Cora village)

Holy week rites are being celebrated as usual. The Cora men have "erased" themselves by wearing a mask each man has made according to his self-image, his identity and totems.

They appear masked in strange, unreal shapes, animal, vegetable or looking like rocks; mixtures of horns, hair, teeth and ears, painted in bright colors. Each man is possessed by his subconscious self, his underworld being, that arises from the corrupt core that all possess.

They are the "Judea," the evil ones, the Christ killers, the ones who, possessed by the devil, take over the town.

There are many, wandering the streets in groups, wielding wooden swords; naked, but for colored stripes painted all over their bodies.

They wear only a waist band with a turtle shell, the symbol of sexual power.

No one leaves the house, families peep through a crack in the window, then quickly close it again. The "Judea" are crazed by peyote that gives them the mental power to enter another dimension.

Suddenly they form a ring, dancing and shouting raucously, they make sexual displays among themselves. They separate, howling, running, jumping and dancing with incredible strength and agility.

It is an overcast Good Friday, evil has triumphed. At three in the afternoon, with a knife attached to the end of a long reed, they stab their church's huge, cane-paste Christ in the chest. The final aggression, "Good" has died.

Then comes the dizzying paroxysm that celebrates the triumph of evil.

Horrified, we watch the spectacle from inside the small clinic. The "Judea" seem more terrifying in the shadows, as night falls.

A pack of them flashes past our window. One falls, bleeding, and lies face up on the stones. He is a fox, his head moves from side to side, he writhes and howls. A wounded fox.

We can't leave him there, bleeding. So we go out with the first-aid kit to help him.

We calm him with words he can't understand, clean his wound and, like an animal, he accepts, feeling consoled.

Horrors! A deafening racket from the end of the street; they're back. They threaten us and we run inside slamming the door.

They surround him, the fox is in a convulsion, he arches his neck, raising his muzzle, white foam dribbles out. One of them lifts the mask and stuffs peyote in his mouth. The effect is immediate. He gets up, stretches his arms, roars victoriously and, waving his sword, takes off with the rest.

The whole night, seems an eternity of impotence and terror.

At sunrise on Saturday, church bells begin to ring. The "erased" Coras drag themselves in agony and defeat around the atrium. The paint runs from their bodies, they seem to melt in their sweat and, at ten, the gates of Glory open! Good has triumphed again.

Swaying and staggering, the devils go down the street to the sacred river.

They seem to revive as they submerge in the cool blue water. Their cleansed brown bodies shine in the sun; they remove their masks and sink them in the river.

The water becomes tinted with bright colors. The ritual objects of their demoniacal possession disappear; and turning their smiling faces, they become the same native *campesinos* they were before.

The women come down the hill, gracefully, wearing their wide, colorful skirts, their arms full of white cotton shirts and pants for their menfolk.

The "erasure" is over. The magic has dissipated.

One of them turns and finds me. He didn't sink his mask. He brings it to me, saying something in his language that I don't understand.

I still have it, hanging by an image of Christ, because it is "bewitched." I keep it lovingly, in memory of the "wounded fox" 