

## Nothing to Do by Nancy Martz

Just as Emilio's gaze fix-drifted from the trace snow atop Truchas Peak, the distance splintered, sun-caught, into the lower ridges of Sangre de Cristo, rising and falling under a million autumn-flaming aspens. The frail boy turned slightly to watch a cloud that seemed inches away from the sun, the only cloud in the sky and meaningless to everything below. Meaning nothing to the snakeweed hardily scrubbing the lower mesas or the waxen yucca stalks lit golden by the sun. He watched the cloud. He saw the thin trembling whiteness of it frazzle and sneak off to the southeast and then blister out of sight.

Emelio sucked in the smoke from the tobacco and let it curl up from his mouth into his nose. He watched the lit end of the cigarette burn the thin white paper and blacken the brown strands. Then Emelio frowned grandly under the heavy sun, as he had seen his father do when working the field behind the house. Emelio ceremoniously pinched the lit end and fixed the cigarette butt under a loose brown tile. He had stored others there and now had enough to sell to other kids lost for something to do, for some mischief to try to break the boredom of small town life between Santa Fe and Taos. Emelio could get pennies and sometimes nickels for inch long Lucky Strike butts. Some day, he imagined himself leaving Truchas and this land of other people's enchantment, but those were just little boy dreams. He would never leave; he would learn to plow the ground and take a small living from it some day, but he didn't know that now.

Crouching suddenly he hugged the steep-pitched roof, his brown eyes studying a supply of pinion heaped under the window below. He hooked the projecting viga letting his thin legs drop over the ledge; his small shoulders, taut, falling with him, hunched in an instant with the raw shock of scattering firewood scraping his bare feet. His head jerked, brown eyes searching instinctively above a row of coffee cans settled on the thick adobe sill, some sprouting cilantro and some dripping with serano peppers. He knew she would appear there any moment, but she would never climb up to check the roof tiles.

Suddenly running free, he glanced back, his chest fluttering with short breath, his eyes glinting wild and delighted. He tried to hold his breath, listening, but a flurry of giggles burst from him. Then he hid behind chamesa bushes next to the shed, listening. He heard movement in the shed and knew it to be the mule his father used to pull the plow against the dry and rocky acre. A mother's voice lifted in a strange mystery of lamentation and fury; then he could hear the dry volley of restacking the wood pile interrupting her words, and he knew she was repairing the wrong mischief.