

Soil and Smoke

***Freetheme application.**

In the Bolivian West, the mountains are alive. They have been respected and feared by the inhabitants of these lands for centuries. The miners of the city of Oruro know them well; they obtain the minerals as a result of the hard work they do every day. That allows them to feed their families. A person's work in the mines of Oruro is not just any job, when they enter the bowels of the Earth, they know not when they will leave, if they will be able to bring money home or how much will their bodies resent it.

Oruro is one of the first Bolivian cities that allowed women to enter to work inside the mines. Currently, women can become members of cooperatives and work just like men, although those who do, are there because their husbands worked in the mine. Thus, they can take advantage of their cooperative file to enter work, either after their husband's death or abandonment. The work done by women miners is the same as that done by men, except when they arrive at the mine women have been awake for hours working at home, caring for their sons and daughters and, when their shift ends, the hard work continues at home.

Bolivian miners believe that a demon lives inside the mine, he's the mine's owner, and takes care of them. It is known as *El Tío de la Mina* and must be worshipped there where gods do not arrive, nor the State and where people are isolated, with no time, no light, no air...

El Tío de la Mina protects them, and it is to him that they direct their offerings. Asking, every time they descend, to see the sunlight again, to return home alive one more day.