

OCTOBER 24, 1974

Dogs howling down by the river gave the situation away. I knew that Child Who Sits in the Sun was going to take our 25th anniversary in bad spirit, yet I didn't realize that she was going to upset the whole neighborhood.

As early as three days before the date, she started muttering to herself. She'd be back in the garage stringing pepper to dry for the winter and I'd hear her mumbling about her bad luck. I can stand everything she does better than that muttering. It's nerve wrecking day after day. Even a war song isn't so difficult to bear. Chants at least reach a crescendo. Muttering is a slow steady drill on the nerve tips.

The neighbors caught on fast that she was mad. One old boy who whistles every afternoon in his yard took a quiet spell. Kids stopped playing in the streets. All of the pets moved closer to their houses.

I tried to keep my courage by ignoring her conduct. The evening she threw a pot of scalding water at my face, I held ground. Instead of running I ducked into the bathroom and pulled a dresser against the door.

On the morning that I found hat nailed to the drain board with a butcher knife, I threw her off guard by cutting a bouquet of flowers for the front room.

Squawmen become fascinated by danger and violence. Knife play is so much a part of their life that they seem to be drawn to the flurry of flashing steel.

Twenty years ago I was horrified at the thought of losing an eye or a hand. I can remember, back in the first moons of our marriage, becoming nauseated after a close fought battle. But living so close to the blade tends to reduce the fear of making that one bad step of losing footage at a moment that means the end.

Child Who Sits in the Sun changed in those times, also. Once she was so intent to do battle. Fighting was the heritage of her people, scalps and war parties the tradition of her race. As our marriage matured, however, we both began to treat it as a big game.

For instance, the other night after she'd thrown the scalding water so far off target, we had a good laugh. She knows that her arm isn't as true as it was 10 years ago. I know that I can't sidestep a blow like I could in my 30s.

Time has to take a toll on man. I can't work on a waxed floor like I once could. The old legs just won't function so swift of so sure.

So many married women are poor losers. Every day they meet in the stores and over coffee to denounce their bad luck. Men of the cloth constantly point out the evil of material gain, nevertheless women live in a world of comparisons.

Time and time again, I have said that a happy wife is a homebound wife. As long as she does not see her city sisters wallowing in such luxuries of easy zipper clothes, they are happy. Keep them home and they are content with the simple things. Allow them to read women's magazines or roam in the cities and trouble is bound to come.

The 25 years have passed so fast. It seems like less than a fortnight since her father took a stick and drew an Indian marriage circle in the dirt that sealed the contract.

Why she takes it all so hard is a mysterious barrier between the sexes. I gave her eight children to raise during her vigorous years. Wherever we lived, there was always enough land for her garden.

She had the freedom to look after the house without my interference. Though she refused to spin yarn, There was never a time that she couldn't have had all the wool she

wanted to make clothes and blankets. The ranch abounded in game; pecans and fish were hers for the asking.

What else they want, I don't understand. Ranch life spoils a woman. Too much idleness, I suppose, ruins them all.