

The slightest thing upsets her. We were in a hardware store shopping for an ash bucket. A couple of kids were sitting around a stove, working on a mail order rifle kit. You've probably seen them, those do-it-yourself assembly jobs that end up being an authentic reproduction of the .50 caliber muskets that the pioneers used to lay the groundwork for the Indian treaties.

I was busy entertaining the owner with a selection of my drouth stories. Child Who Sits in the Sun , from all appearances, was preoccupied looking at paint samples. Bright colors fascinate her. She uses the mixing powders for house paint just like the white-eyed ladies use cosmetics. The big difference is that squawmen learn to read the paint on their women's faces. Like a white Figure 8 outlined in blood red means that war medicine is brewing. In the paleface, the same design might be hiding a love powder that'd bring romance to a couple of chimney sweeps.

After we left the store, I began to catch on that she was mad. She said, "You stole our land and killed all our cattle." Before I thought I said, "Shush up woman. Injuns never had a patent or a brand."

Cold steel underneath the ribcage chills far into the senses. It was all I could do to hold the steering wheel. I didn't know it then but she'd bought a putty knife such as carpenters hone to razor sharpness.

To say I drove with care is an understatement. I dared not move, yet the mere motion of the car might send the blade plunging to my liver. At the house, her dog distracted her. The instant the pressure lightened on my ribs, I fell from the car in a roll like firemen use to avoid a sudden blaze. Hard limestone gravel tore cloth and skin; the rear wheel rolling to a stop barely missed my arm.

Spread curses upon idle boys that have the time to make rifles and cause uprisings. I didn't steal that red devil's land and cattle. Her naive ancestors traded it off. Lost it! Signed treaties with hombres from Washington. Of course they lost their land. A fellow can do that today. Anybody simple enough to contract with the Potomoc tribe is sure to lose their land, if not every stitch of clothes from their closet.

The time is going to come when she's going to regret being so mean. It takes days now for my old heart to recover from the attacks. Indian women have to wear black, too. I'm going to see that those kids pay for the trouble they caused.