

A Little Peace

by Jack Swenson

At times we got along, at other times we didn't. We fought over the usual things: money, politics, sex, family. She told me I drank too much. I told her I had good reason and implied that I wasn't happy, and it was her fault.

One night we were invited out for dinner, and we got into a knock-down, drag-out that afternoon. My wife got so angry I had to hold her down on the bed. She got a hand free and scratched my face. I looked at myself in the mirror and told her that I looked liked a plowed field. We both started laughing.

Before dinner, my wife's friend's husband asked what happened. I said I cut myself shaving.

We became good friends with Jurgen and Pat. We all taught school. Jurgen taught at a high school on the coast. The students were so bad, he said, that in one class, all he did was have them take turns reading from a novel. "For the whole class period?" I asked. "For the whole year," Jurgen said.

Jurgen's wife Pat was as lively as a bug. I was immediately taken by her. She was smart and pretty and she laughed a lot. We got to be good friends. Very good friends.

One night my wife and I went to a party. Jurgen and Pat were there, too. I got drunk, and Pat and I slipped away and locked ourselves in a bathroom upstairs. Afterwards, Pat went one way, and I went another. I found a bedroom, crawled under the bed, and fell asleep. Later our host hauled me out by the heels.

It was the following week that Bobby Kennedy was shot. My wife and I were getting ready for bed when we got the news. We sat up half the night watching the reports on television.

When finally we went to bed, we lay in each other's arms. My wife started to shiver. She was crying. I turned on my back, looked up at the black ceiling, and wondered when if ever we would get a little peace.

