

Falling Out of Bed

by Jack Swenson

I get that way from time to time. Anxious. Edgy. It's something built in. I can't help it. When I get these spells, I sleep poorly, too. I have nightmares. Or I should say I have a nightmare. It's always the same. Someone is after me, a monster, something you can't kill with a bullet and you can't get away from.

Usually but not always when this happens, I'm in bed in the dream, too, and I get tangled in the covers. I struggle to escape, but I am weak, too weak to free myself. One time I dreamed I was in a bar, and the bartender, a former football player with wild, crazy eyes came after me. I pulled a gun and shot him three or four times, and it didn't faze him; it didn't even slow him down.

When I have these nightmares, I thrash around until I wake up, and sometimes I don't wake up until I am on the floor. The time the bartender tried to kill me, I pitched out of bed and hit my face on the nightstand. I got up and walked into the bathroom on bare feet, turned on the light, and looked at myself in the mirror. I had a bump on my forehead and a cut on the inside of my mouth. I spat out the blood, got a drink of water, and went back to bed. In the morning my face was Technicolor.

I washed out my mouth with water and patched up a cut on my lip as best I could, put on my robe and slippers and went through the house and into the kitchen. My wife was washing her hands in the kitchen sink. "Oh, my God!" she said when she got a look at my face. "What happened to you?"

I didn't answer. I got a cup of coffee and went into the den and sat down. My wife stood in the doorway and talked to the back of my head. "You really should talk to somebody about this," she said. Who? I wondered. A shrink? Her pal at the clinic where she works, the doc she shared a room with at the convention in Las Vegas?

"Yes, dear," I said to the air. I gingerly took a sip of hot coffee.

