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## Good Enough Friends to Make It Work

**S**usan Filstead is my only white friend. The last time I saw her was probably more than a year ago. Susan would know exactly because she keeps up with these things better than I do.

But it was during the Christmas holidays, and she was weighted down with shopping bags. We met downtown for lunch at my favorite restaurant.

Susan brought along a plastic bag full of bacon buns that her mother-in-law makes. I can eat a dozen by myself. Susan always remembers to save me my dozen.

I met Susan while working at a downtown law firm. We were both secretaries. She got the job I wanted and thought I deserved. I ended up working for her.

It was easy to see that as a manager of departments where most of the employees were black, Susan wasn't going to last long.

She was too fair-minded.

By that I mean Susan is one of the rare white people I have run into who are really color-blind, even when it comes to the paycheck. There's something about green that makes most whites for whom I have worked see black and white.

Not Susan. She sees right and wrong. We got to be friends.

Good enough friends for me to talk about the impending breakup of my marriage and her to talk about finally getting her man to the altar.

Good enough friends for her to shut me up when I joked that fat women should cover up or stay off the beach.

Good enough to forget our differences.

Our birthdays are a day apart, and we both love hats.

One afternoon I went over to her apartment and we spent the whole day parading in front of a mirror in wild hats. When I left, she gave me three great hats and boxes for the ones I had scattered on a shelf in my closet.

When I told her that my father shares her love of the racetrack, she made me promise to bring him next time. I never did.

When Susan got married, I got an invitation to the shower and reception, but I didn't go because I had to work. She understood but made me promise not to let the friendship slip away.

When she moved into her new house, I came over for lunch. We sat around the kitchen and talked about her new life as a wife and mine as a reporter. Before I left Susan gave me a present. She had remembered my birthday.

Whenever too much time goes by, the phone rings and it is Susan.

In November, I got a call from her husband, Bill. Susan's baby shower had to be canceled. They were at the hospital. The baby was going to be early.

When I didn't hear anything for a couple of weeks, I called Susan.

On Nov. 6, Susan gave birth to Matthew, a healthy baby boy. The next day she had a stroke and nearly died. Today she is fighting to get her life back.

I hung up the phone and stared at it for a long time.

It is time to learn how to be Susan's friend.