

Comfort of Friends

by Linda Simoni-Wastila

She sat with me in the white bathroom, holding my hair while I upchucked in the once-pristine commode. When there was nothing left to hold, she rubbed small circles between my shoulder blades. At the wig shop, she held up a red bob.

“Spunky,” she said. “And sexy.”

She drove me to radiation, to acupuncture and support group. She brewed herbal concoctions that smelled of twigs and dirt. She brought casseroles and cookies, and later, applesauce and other soft sick-foods. She painted yellow happy faces on my toe nails, upside-down so my piggies smiled up at me during infusions.

After I survived the treatment, I weighed the possibility of reconstruction. She came with me for the fitting. I cried at the scars cratering my chest, mourning how my husband once caressed the soft fullness of my breasts, kissed my rosebud nipples. She squeezed my hand the way only a best friend could reassure.

“He loves all of you, not just your body parts.” She held up a C-cup mastectomy bra, a full size bigger than what I’d lost. “So let’s go, Dolly,” she said, and we both laughed.

Turns out she brought more than food for comfort. Now my husband begs me to take him back, but I don’t return his phone calls, or hers. Nights I climb the stairs to the empty bedroom, rubbing the stubble growing newly black on my head, the prosthesis stashed deep in his underwear drawer.

