

Northern Lights

Category: Alone

written by Jill Muhrer | June 5, 2023

Lights from the city shade the stars as he awaits the dark. When the maze of stars appears, the distraction and solace eases his pain. Life outside with all of its hazards suits him, feels safer, closer to who he is than any homeless shelter.

After all, he is a survivor, and solitude is a comfort and a path. Flashbacks of Vietnam he can't shake. It's easier alone, less shame. The struggle a way of life now.

He is worried.

"What do you mean there is something in my brain? A tumor invading where? I told you, it's just my headaches, nothing more. I know my body!"

His neurosurgeon pressures him to go to the hospital NOW! Absolutely not. He says he can't miss his daughter's softball game. He promised her.

The neurosurgeon calls me, "Have you found him?"

And, finally, I do. "I'll be in soon," he says. "The ache is on the move."

Between the city's row homes and boarded houses, there are deserted lots seeded with trash, wild flowers, crack vials, discarded needles and trees. Somewhere in this mix of decay and beauty, he subsists. I know he is on his way back inside to treat the tumor. To let go of that pain.

He promised.

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