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This Precious Life: We'll Never Really Know.

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There are rarely situations where what occurs can be clearly labeled as black or white. Somewhere in between the shades of grey lies the truth. Many of you have asked for an update about a neonatal kitten nicknamed Chapstick, who's called Miracle these days. I'll do the best I can to not point fingers or make declarations in this update. You can decide for yourself what you think is going on because in all honesty, I don't know that we'll ever really know the truth.

Miracle and a sibling were found inside a cardboard box, hidden under trash in a dumpster at a gas station in Waterbury, CT. The folks who found the kittens thought they could care for them, but I warned them that perhaps we should help. Neonates are very fragile and I was very worried about them. They said they were okay for the time being.

After a day they called again asking for help. The kittens were dying. I had our Jeannie jump in to take charge. She's my trusted "go-to" person for the littlest kittens. Before she could do much of anything, one of the kittens died. The other was in critical condition. The rest of these first hours are documented in my posts [HERE](#) ⁽¹⁾ and [HERE](#). ⁽²⁾

If the story had ended as this tiny kitten was becoming stabilized in my previous post, it would have been a joyful conclusion. Miracle had many setbacks but she did not die. In fact after a rough week she began to improve. She was very small for her age, but she did begin to grow. She was put with the combined litters of 2 sister/mama-cats who had just had kittens of their own around the same time Mira arrived. We know that her new moms were one big reason why Miracle survived. The other reason was her foster dad, Jon.



©2014 Jeannie G. How Chapstick got her original name. Later she was called Midnight, then finally, Miracle.

Sal, the guy who originally discovered the fragile kittens at the gas station, had put an ad on craigslist looking for a lactating cat to put the kittens with and had found that Jon had mama cats. We didn't know this while Jeannie was trying to save Mira, but after she told me the kitten was dying and it was just a matter of time, I would have told her to try anything to save its life. As the clock was running out on Miracle, Sal called Jeannie and said he'd found someone with a mama-cat. She agreed it was the kitten's best chance to survive so that's how Mira ended up with Jon's cats. I didn't have much say in all this, it happened too fast. There were no other options. I also didn't want Jeannie to suffer further heartache with the possible loss of another kitten. **In all the confusion, I never got any foster paperwork signed over. It was touch and go with the kitten and I was solely focused on her well being, not the fine details of whose cat this was. We'd sort it out later.**

A few days after Mira arrived at Jon's I went there to see her and to bring a huge donation of food, toys for the cats and toys for the family's 5 little children. What I didn't feel comfortable about writing about until now was that their apartment was in a very bad part of a not-very-safe town. I was nervous walking less than a block from where I parked to their home. Once inside

it was clear they didn't have two sticks to rub together. It made me feel scared for them and also made me want to help them even more. I figured the least I could do is keep their cats fed after they told me they never meant to be in this place, but chose it from photos on the internet. Once they arrived in this central Connecticut town from their home in Pennsylvania, they realized they needed to move, but the problem was their finances couldn't cover a change any time soon. **Now they had five cats and two had just given birth. I offered to get them all fixed when the time was right. Two of the cats were already spayed and a third, a young male, needed to be neutered. We agreed that once the moms were ready, we would cover the cost of getting them spayed, too.**



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. A donation of food, toys and treats filled my trunk.

But there were aspects of this situation that didn't sit right with me from early on and this is where the finger-pointing might begin. Is it at me for how I handled things? Is it towards Mira's caretakers? Is it both?

You have to understand something about me. I want to help everyone I can with whatever is troubling them. I take people at face value. I assume people are honest with me, as I am with them. Does that make me gullible? Probably, but I believe that lying is a big waste of time, plus there is no way I can remember my lies so I don't bother. Doing rescue I've seen that it usually requires the effort of a team of people, people you have to trust. It's life or death in many cases and many of us understand that and respect it. We put our nose to the grindstone and get the job done, save the life if we can, then go on to the next situation.

I will do what it takes to help cats and perhaps that is also my Achilles heal. Sadly, I think there are people in this world that will take advantage of that truth about me.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Unable to right herself, Miracle fell over but we were right there to help her sit up.

I asked Jon how he knows so much about kittens. **In a rapid-fire staccato, he replied he'd lived on a farm and the cats**

were always having kittens and he would jump in to save them. It made sense, but alarmed me since why not get them spayed since he knew about getting that done. I didn't want to be disrespectful so I kept my mouth shut, plus it was water under the bridge. Then we got to talking about their intact male cat who had fathered both litters of kittens. **Jon made a comment about wanting the cat's genes passed on.** It startled me but I didn't push the fact. I offered to get the cat neutered and they agreed to have it done (*which WAS done a few weeks later*). I asked what happened with the sisters getting pregnant and they said they didn't realize they had 2 girl cats since one was an orange tabby they assumed it was a boy.

What didn't add up was that the cat wasn't orange it was buff. How could they know everything there is about kitten care, but they can't sex an adult cat or not notice the cat was going into "heat"?

Maybe they were just being quirky? I didn't know. Knowing that Mira was okay, but fragile, I left my donations with them and said to let me know if they needed anything else.

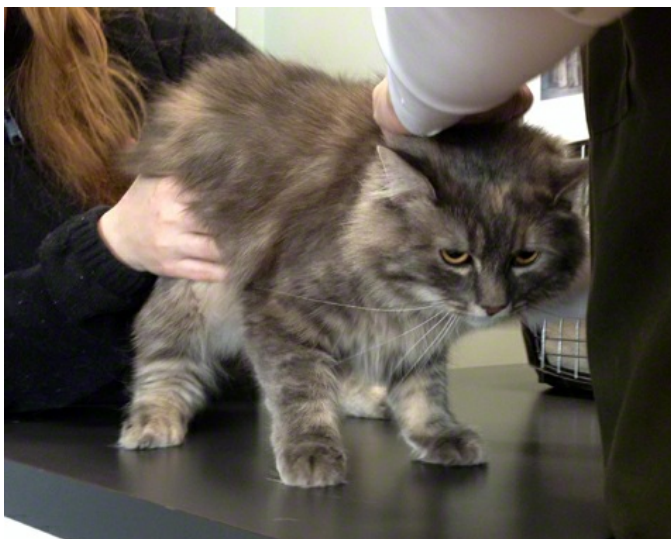


©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Fussy feeding time while Cupcake looks on.

I got a call the following Saturday. Due to Jon having to stay up around the clock with Mira, he lost out on a carpentry job and could I help them get more cat food? I felt terrible about that so I dropped what I was doing, ran to the store, then drove another hour in a different direction to their apartment to get them the food. **When I arrived Jon said they were okay and didn't really need it that second, but thanked me. I had just spent most of my Saturday getting this done for them and now they don't really need it?** His wife, Christal tried to sweep it under the rug. At least I got another look at Miracle, though my camera failed, I could see she was doing much better.

Christal then told me she was worried about one of the other adult cats named Cookie. She worried there was a mass on her side but they couldn't afford vet care. Normally we don't pay the vet bill for owned cats, but I felt I owed this family for their care of Mira so I said I would get their cat vetted if they used our low-cost vet.

Well...the two vets who are reasonably priced were a few miles too far to bring their cat to so I had to set the appointment up with my own vet who is very expensive. I worried that if the cat had cancer we could be on the hook for who knows what sort of tests. I decided to set a budget and just okay an x-ray and blood work and the exam and figure out what to do next. **It took many text messages back and forth over days to find a time and day that would work...then appointments would be canceled last minute over and over.** I understand. She's got little kids. They don't have money for gas. I was tempted to give them money, but I was really starting to wonder what was going on so I just waited for them to let me know when to try to set the appointment again. Frankly, I barely had money for gas myself so I did what I could.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Cookie getting examined.

We finally get Cookie to the Vet. Cookie is a gorgeous silver tabby. She looked great but I knew that there could be underlying problems. Dr. Mary carefully examined Cookie as she spoke with Christal. Dr. Mary tried to find the growth on Cookie's abdomen. **There was no mass of any kind. She politely said it could just be some belly fat, while Christal tried to act as though there was something there when there wasn't.** I didn't want to do any more tests, but we did them and they were all negative or normal. Cookie had flea dirt so I told Christal I had flea treatments at my home, which is a 15 minute drive from my Vet. I asked her to come to my house so I could save the money on buying flea meds from the Vet but she said *no, she really couldn't take the time.* **She also added that Cookie wasn't getting along with the other cats and I said I would take the cat and re-home her but she said no. It was, however, okay for me to spend another \$50.00 on a feliway diffuser for the cat and they'd see if that helped her stop peeing on the clothes the kids were leaving on the floor. (even though leaving clothes on the floor was the problem).**

In the end I spend over \$200.00 vetting a cat who didn't need anything other than a flea treatment that I had FOR FREE at my house. I was glad Cookie was okay but I was sorry to let her go back to that situation. I know I could have re-homed her easily.

Yet again something that was off....okay maybe she made a mistake, but I'd repeatedly asked her over the WEEKS it took to get the appointment if the growth was staying the same size or getting bigger. I worried about an abscess or a tumor, but she would only say she wasn't sure.

I felt like I worried about this for nothing, not to mention all the time I wasted trying to get this appointment worked out.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. So very tiny!

The next issue was Christal complaining to me that Sal, the guy who found the kitten wanted the kitten back and that he and his girlfriend were harassing Christal for her to return the kitten. By this point Christal had told me that she and Jon wanted to keep Mira. I wanted to say no, but after everything they did how would I get the kitten back?

Christal wanted me to help protect her from this harassment about getting Mira. *What could this guy do to them legally, she asked?* Christal said they never promised Sal that he would get the kitten back. I thought this was nuts since last I heard Sal

told me they could not afford another pet so it didn't add up.

I also had NO idea they were even in touch. I called Jeannie and asked her if she knew anything. She reported that indeed Sal wanted the kitten and that his version was that Christal had been sending them updates this entire time, plus photos and was calling them often and making it sound like they COULD get the kitten when she was ready to be weaned. Now she had changed her tune and they were really upset for being led on for so long.

Since there was no paperwork proving that anyone "owns" this once discarded kitten, whoever has her owns her.

Sure. People can change their mind. Maybe that's what happened. Maybe Jon decided after his hard work the kitten needed to stay with them, but why lead these other folks on? Okay, maybe it was just another not-so-smart move. I'm just getting texts asking to fix it. I can't. It's their mess, but I could tell them that cats are only considered "property," like a shoe or car, and that ownership has to be proven, and in this case it was impossible.

Meanwhile, the two litters of kittens were approaching the age of being ready for adoption. I contacted Christal and asked about getting them set up to be spayed/neutered (S/N) and that I wanted to get the moms done, too. **Our verbal agreement was that my rescue, Kitten Associates [3], would cover the costs of vetting all the kittens and the moms. We would post the kittens on our Petfinder.com account. We would direct applicants to use our online application and direct all inquiries to Christal so she and Jon could choose the homes for the kittens.** Made sense. Everyone agreed...

...until the subject of money came up.

Christal wanted to know who would get the adoption fee for the kittens and I replied that we paid for the services so we get the fee. If there was anything left above and beyond our costs (*very unlikely*) that I would be happy to give that money to them. **After all I'd paid for their cat's food and some of their medications, gotten one neutered and one vetted and we'd pay for all this, then what..come up with nothing?**

There was an uncomfortable pause. Then she told me that they really needed the adoption fee to pay for their move to Georgia. I wanted to ask; "So you mean that you're selling kittens for profit? Was that the goal all along?" but I didn't have the nuts.

She pushed that I had raised money to have the cats vetted so the fees were paid, so why couldn't they get the adoption fees? I'm sorry, but we don't work like that. We don't SELL kittens for profit. The fundraiser and the funds are for the cats, but we have to keep getting that money BACK or we have nothing left because vet care always costs far more than we ever can raise. As it was, I'd already spent at least \$600.00 on them. Add the cost of vetting 12 cats to that and it's well beyond what we raised. **It wouldn't cover the 12 cats so we'd have to dip into our account even further, but I would gladly due it to keep those cats from reproducing.**



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Some of the kittens I couldn't get vetted who have since been adopted.

She said that they would deal with it if that was the case. She offered to get the FVRCP vaccine and give it to the kittens to get my costs down so they could get more of the adoption fee, but they legally can't do enough (*like do a snap test or give a rabies vaccination to the moms*) to make a big difference in the cost. I was FLOORED. **I begged her not to let**

those kittens go out not S/N. I offered to TAKE a litter of the kittens just to cut her costs. I offered MANY TIMES to let me take any of them, but no. She always refused. I tried everything I could to get her to let me get those kittens taken care of EXCEPT offer to pay her for them, which, in my desperation I began to consider doing.

This story concludes in the next post...

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