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## Turning 50 & Life Turning Upside Down

Thu, 2011-04-14 00:29 — [Robin Olson](#) <sup>[1]</sup>

**WARNING: THIS POST DISCUSSES A POTENTIALLY UPSETTING TOPIC. PLEASE READ WITH CAUTION. YOU'RE "SAFE" UNTIL THE SECTION AFTER THE UPDATES ON THE FOSTER CATS, NEAR THE END OF THE POST.**

I'm very sorry to not have been tending to my Blog over the last week and a half. Every day that passes that I don't write, bothers me a bit more.

Initially, my plans were to talk about the lovely birthday party-a SURPRISE party, that Sam held for me, now over a week ago. He really pulled the wool over my eyes. I had no idea until the very last second-when I hoped, against hope, that maybe even though he had a bad cold, even though he said there could be no birthday this year, even though most of my friends said they were busy that weekend, it would happen.

It was Connie's doing, too. She called me around noon on my birthday, to say her cat, Big O was very sick and could I come over and help her give him a bath? Oh yes and "Happy Birthday." Big O was covered with poo! She sounded so sad, I realized it didn't matter if it was my birthday, so I got changed, grabbed some things to help with the bath and told Sam I was off. He knew I was hungry so he said he'd come with me and we could go eat afterwards.

Connie lives a mile away. As I started to pull up her driveway, I realized that Sam had asked me to "kill" a half hour before we went to lunch, then Connie called me, it was too much of a coincidence. Maybe something was going on at her house? Surely not. No. I was going to break up with Sam. I was really mad at him. He'd hardly talked to me for weeks. He didn't even notice when I got my hair done (*like a porn star-that's what my stylist called it*) -and it wasn't just because he didn't give me a birthday party. The near-silent treatment was killing me!

Then I noticed two cars in the driveway, but certainly it couldn't be cars I knew. It must be a...then I saw it...a "Happy 50th Birthday" banner over Connie's front door. There stood Marcia, Super-Deb and Connie, all waving and shouting Happy Birthday and here I am in a t-shirt with a glow-in-the-dark Cheshire Cat on it and crappy pants. Thank God I had a change of clothes with me! I looked over at Sam and was torn between slapping him and kissing him. I never had anyone throw me a surprise party in my life. It was really nice.



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No sooner than we walked in the door, I realized there was no sick cat, so I got changed, then we all left for lunch. As I pulled

into the parking lot of the restaurant, I saw my dear nephew, Ryan and my sister, Anne! Another surprise, yay! This was going to be a nice day after all.

But then I walked into the dining room at the restaurant. There sat Mary. My other sister. I didn't see anyone else for a moment. My mouth fell open. Mary had LIED to me, first saying she was coming to take me to lunch and there was no way I'd be alone on my birthday, then she begged off saying her cat was sick not 6 hours later. She had been in Baltimore for a book show (*Mary is a [Writer](#) and [Graphic Designer](#)*)! Then I realized she must have driven up from there. What a shock!..and there sat her partner, Shelly...and my friends Irene and Jennifer I.! I love those babes! I was literally speechless and it took all my reserve not to burst into happy tears.



*©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. Nephew Ryan shoots the flames while his mom, Anne watches.*

We ate at a Hibachi style restaurant and had TWO chefs taking turns either trying to set fire to the place or tossing food bits at our faces (since most of us couldn't hope to catch the food in our mouth). Everyone was happy and getting along well. I never wanted it to end. I had a nice lunch and lots of lovely gifts. I missed my Mother and Father so much, but they were there, too, in spirit (*and later that day, I discovered my Mother had sent me a message, too. More on that, in another post*) .



*©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. The cake on the left is what I ordered for myself, thinking there would be no celebration of any sort. I cut out the frown and turned it upside down later that day.*

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I have a lot to tell you about the cats-especially Bob. The short version is, to me, he seems to have turned a corner and is doing better. He seems to have gained weight. Tomorrow he gets Chemo #9. I'll find out if he gained any weight then. A surprise blessing is that some of his fur is growing back ever so slowly. It's just peach fuzz on his head, but I can see the subtle stripe of his tabby pattern in the fur.



*©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. Bob and the gang on the electric blanket*

I took him to a Dermatologist and she confirmed he as a terrible case of ringworm and that only he can really fend it off and with cancer and a bad immune system, the odds aren't great. We give him baths and add a special lotion afterwards. He's lost half of his coat, but I think, just maybe it's slowed down. He seems comfortable and he seems a lot more like his old self.



*©2011 Robin A.F. Olson.*

The kittens are still struggling with URI's and this and that. Cara has grown some, but one of the kittens has been vomiting. I don't know if it's Cara. We're closer to the day we can call her healed, but we're not there yet. The kittens are as big as their Mom, now. I think Chester will be even bigger. He is the most darling cat in the world. He really is sweet.



*©2011 Robin A.F. Olson. Cara and Chester, bigger and better every day.*

MacGruber is still here, too. Got a tiny dot of ringworm on his paw, so he seems to stay here another month and another month...he's a bit like gum stuck on the shoe...but very cute gum.



*@2011 Robin A.F. Olson. Okay. I'm suppose to adopt this cat out! Really?*

I'm bringing Noelle to Connecticut next week, along with Amelia, another Henry Co. Cat we rescued last year. It's time for them to get their forever homes. I need to write more about that soon.

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The main reason I need to write is I need to tell you what happened and why I haven't been able to write more than this post- we had a family tragedy and I'm struggling to cope with it.

A few days ago, Sam and I were to visit his Mother in Manhattan. We were going to have a belated birthday party for me and Sam's adult daughter, Kate, whose birthday is two days before mine. The day before we left, Sam told me his mother was having trouble walking. The pain from her hip, which she broke six years ago and has long since healed, was back. We worried that if she couldn't stand for a long period of time, that we needed to come up with ways for her to fix meals that didn't require much effort. The plan was to finally buy her a microwave whether she liked it or not. Get her some wholesome meals she could just pop into the microwave and eat without standing over a stove or getting up and down to check on a pot on a burner. We put a lot of time into planning how we'd manage to get all this stuff into her apartment, since we'd have to double park to get the car unloaded. Parking is a bear on the upper West side on a weekend.

We thought we had it all worked out. We got a bit of a late start, but we got everything done. Sam called his Mom to tell her we would be there soon. She didn't sound right. She said she might need to go to the ER. Sam pressed her as to why. All she said was, "You'll find out when you get here."

This was not something his Mother would say. She has always been the most polite and kind person I have ever known. She was raised in the south and that sweetness never faded away even though she's lived in Manhattan most of her life. What was going on?

Sam drove as fast as he could to NYC. We had an hour to go. I texted his daughter. She called her Grandmother and found out that she was asked to get there soon. Clearly something was terribly wrong. Had Sam's 82 year old mother re-broken her hip? Why didn't she call 9-1-1? Why was she waiting?

When we got to the apartment building, I got a txt. Kate was there. I said we would be right up. I stayed with the car, as Sam ran up to her apartment. A neighbor came out and signaled to me to follow him up the block to take his parking spot. As I was about to try to park the car, I saw Sam in my rearview mirror. I got out of the car. Something was wrong-really wrong.

"It's bad up there. It's a mess...you need to be calm about this, but get up there now. I'll park the car."

"What happened?"

"She slit her wrists. Prepare yourself. She's alive, but it's a mess. Just get up there."

No one had called 9-1-1. I think everyone was in shock. As much as I wanted to help, I had a bad flashback and my heart started racing. Years ago, my Father took his own life. I didn't want to go through this again, but I went upstairs and walked into the apartment filled with dread and absolute fear.

Poor Kate was kneeling on the floor, next to the sofa. She wasn't saying a word. I could see Sam's Mother's white hair on the arm of the sofa. She must be laying down. I walked over to her and tried to be calm. It was very gorey, but she was conscious. I asked her what she did and she told me that the pain was so bad in her hip that she just couldn't take it any more. That she felt so bad she couldn't do anything any more and didn't want to get in the way. I asked to see her wrists. I saw that the blood was congealing. This was good, but she injured both wrists and up her arms. I talked to her for a few minutes. Everyone was calm, almost matter-of-fact. As if nothing terrible had happened at all. It was surreal.

I told her that we all loved her and it would be so terrible if she left us without letting us even say goodbye...that we didn't know she was hurting so much and that we wished she could have told us so we could help her.

Then I did something weird. I'd bought her a hyacinth. It was in bloom and so fragrant. I held it up to her nose and asked her to smell it. She smiled as she smelled the sweet flowers, even though her skin was as pale as a sheet and her robe was crimson. I reminded her that it was finally spring. That even on our worst day, another day will follow and maybe that day we will smell the sweetness of a flower or see the sunny sky and it will remind us to try to get to the next moment, and the next after that. To not give up.

I calmly told her she needed some help and that I was going to get that for her. She said it was ok, if I really thought she needed help I could do that (*as if anyone could to STOP me from calling for help!!!*) I left the room and called 9-1-1. In less than 5 minutes, 5 NYPD officers were at the door. A few minutes later, the EMS arrived. I had to stay away from them so I could completely fall apart and cry. I felt so bad for Sam and Kate and his Mom. I worried about Kate, who found her Grandmother just moments before we arrived. I was in a bad place, myself. I couldn't believe it. It was not about me, it was about his Mother and getting her help. I pulled myself together and did whatever I could to help until she was ready to be taken to the hospital.

It was about 10 hours before we could get his Mother admitted. We waited in one room after another. She barely was tended to at all. We had to fight and make a fuss for every little thing. No one was "supposed" to make a decision or do what was needed. I never so much "passing the buck" in my life.

She's stable now. She had to be admitted into the Psych ward, though she is the last person on this Earth I would ever think belongs there. I don't know for sure, but I think she just wanted the pain to stop so badly that maybe this was the only way anyone would really hear her? If that's the case there's a big disconnect that needs to be fixed. Between her Doctor putting her off for almost a week, to even our relationship with her. We all need to learn to stop being polite and start getting "real" with each other.

Since Sunday, my life, Sam's life and Kate's have been turned upside down. There is so much to do, so much to try to figure out. Will Sam's mom ever be able to live alone again? How can we get her help? Who can pay for these things? And who is going to clean up the apartment?

The last question, I answered. I cleaned it up. I didn't want Sam or Kate to have to do that. Even though I've known her for almost 20 years, I was still the person most removed from this situation, so I got to work. I just did what I needed to do. I started to clean away more than just the accident scene. I started to clean everything. I wanted to put life back into that apartment. I wanted the space to feel happy again. In a way, it was like cleaning my Mother's house after she died. It was so nice, freshly painted, re-carpeted, sparkling, even. It made me sad she never go to see it. I hope that Sam's Mother gets to see this. Her home, which was dark and sad, will be clean, fresh and even have lots of color and comfortable places to sit. Perhaps the gloom, washed away, will give his Mother something she's needed in addition to being free of pain, maybe it will give her some joy, some delight in her day to day life?

Perhaps this is the start of her new life? Perhaps it's a new start for all of us?

I don't have the answers. I can tell you I had a breakdown the night after I cleaned things up. I couldn't stop crying. Other than my little birthday lunch, it's been one bad thing after another for more than a year. Every time I feel down, I look to the positive. I get myself back up. You guys lift me back up, heck you catapult me back up! But with all of those blessings, that love and generous support, sadly there is a darkness that remains in my heart. The same thing that drove Sam's mother to do what she did, the same thing that drove my Father to do what he did...it's there, waiting. I am terrified one day I will lose this battle to stay in the sunshine, but I am equally determined to not give up and to help Sam's mother do the same.

One of my friends said something to me once in jest; "**Life. It's not for everyone.**" He couldn't have been more right.

## Comments

Thu, 2011-04-21 01:33 — Anne (not verified)

### Thanks For Sharing...

((HUGS)))

Wed, 2011-04-20 21:22 — purpie

### So very sorry

Wow. Never a dull moment for some people. Robin, I'm so sorry you've had to have such an experience. I know it must be painful. And that's what it seems to be all about. I've experienced my own mother dealing with years of pain before she died to

be really angry about how Sam's mother was treated (or, to be more precise, undertreated). It infuriates me that doctors can be so scared of turning someone in such pain into an addict that they often under prescribe, leaving much of our elderly population in constant agony. I hope she can find some comfort soon. Same for you and Sam.

Wed, 2011-04-20 08:11 — Robin (not verified)

## **I'm so so sorry**

Hi Robin. I am just now reading this and I am at a loss for words. You, Sam and your furrkids are in my thoughts and prayers. (((((HUGS))))))

Sat, 2011-04-16 15:21 — AmyShojai (not verified)

## **A Writer Hero**

I met a catwriter, a hero, at a conference a year or so ago. This wise and caring woman introduced me to the world of "blogging" and the "twitter universe" and made it less scary for an old cat set in her ways. Because of this brilliant and savvy woman, a whole world was opened up not just to me but to an organization of like-minded writers with the power to change lives for the better for others, and especially for the fur-kids who depend on us. Because of this purr-son, she made it possible for shy kittens to be brave. Because of this woman, and others like her, I'm starting to reinvent myself and am no longer giving up.

I met a catwriter. Her name is Robin. And she's my hero.

Because you saved me (and many others) I know you will keep yourself safe, too. You are not your parents. You are you. And the tragedies you've seen, while horrific, also empower you.

I stopped by to read my hero's blog just to enjoy the glimpse into your life--and got so much more. Heroes are human. They are still heroes.

Hugs, my friend.

Tue, 2011-04-19 22:49 — Robin Olson

## **Speechless**

Amy...I'm honored you stopped by my blog and moreso by your words. Thank you very much. It means a lot to me that I could help you and whoever else needs it. I think the only way to be really happy is to help someone else, but you know...it's really nice to be helped, too.

xoxoo.

Thu, 2011-04-14 20:54 — isilwath

## **I am so so sorry**

What a horrible thing to have to walk into and have to deal with. But you handled it beautifully. Everyone should be so proud of you for everything you did and how well you kept it together when you were needed most.

\*HUGS\*

Thu, 2011-04-14 18:05 — jansfunnyfarm (not verified)

## **Warm thoughts**

I'm so sorry! I hope she will come through this with life changes for the positive. It is a terrible situation for all of you to go through. No wonder you finally broke down and couldn't stop crying. Saying a prayer for all of you.

Jan

Thu, 2011-04-14 16:51 — Karyn (not verified)

:-(

I thought to myself when I read your warning - oh ill be ok, nothing I cant handle to read... no. no i wasnt ok. Such a horrible thing to happen to people (yourself and Sam) who are such wonderful caring people. I know it isnt about you guys but Sam's mother but you feel the pain and by extension so we.

I'm not an overly religious person (for personal reasons) so I say my prayers for only the speical occasions. My thoughts and prayers are with you, Sam and your family. You have a the biggest heart I have ever known.

xxx

Thu, 2011-04-14 12:41 — Michelle L. (not verified)

## **I'm so sorry! Please keep us**

I'm so sorry! Please keep us all updated. I share in that struggle against "the darkness." Probably the best weapon is facing it and being real, rather than denying it. :)

Thu, 2011-04-14 10:04 — Christina (not verified)

## **My furbabies keep me anchored**

My furbabies keep me anchored in the light, despite the darkness that sometimes overwhelms. Without them, it would be easy to give in.

Peace, light, and furbaby love to you and yours.

Thu, 2011-04-14 08:43 — Sheryl (not verified)

## **I'm so very sorry.**

Robin, I'm so sorry that you and your family are having to deal with this. I, too, understand the darkness of mental illness, and its terrifying control over your thoughts. You are doing amazing things, and are surrounded by love, both human and furry. I'm certain that better times lie ahead; you certainly have earned it! You are all in my thoughts quite often, and will continue to be. Don't forget to take good care of yourself as you care for others. All the best to you!

Thu, 2011-04-14 08:41 — Nancy Battaglia (not verified)

## **The fact that you**

wrote the words and have shared your deepest fears with us says that this is a battle that you can win; that you have already won by being so self aware. Just because you've had such tragedy in your family does not mean that you will have the same fate! The way you deal with your wards, your kitties, your positive nature comes through all the time. If you feel that you have depression that you can't deal with, for heavens sake, get a little help! You too good a woman to have to feel so bad!

Robin, you are dealing with and have been dealing with problem after problem. None of us can stand against a wind like that and not feel bad. But you are no pessimist, not from what I've read in your words day in and day out. Don't ever doubt that your readers send you love, blessings, good vibes. Why do you suppose that is? Because it is easy to see the loving, gentle way you live your life. You are a wonderful lady, never doubt that! Please... you're not in this alone! You have Sam, you have all those beautiful kits, and you have us.

K, just remember that there's love where you least expect it. You've had a traumatic experience at the end of a long series of problems and worries. The strongest among us falls now and then. As long as you can get up, dust off, keep your head up and keep hoping for the future, you'll be OK.

Love, and giant hugs to you

Thu, 2011-04-14 08:29 — BaltimoreJaxs

## **Its there in all of us**

First may God bless you for all you have done, for the cats you keep alive, for what you did for Sam's mother, and for what you do for each of us who read your posts.

The darkness of wanting to take your own life is in each of us. In some of us, we hold it at bay, daily, and in some of us, we never really deal with it, its just a passing thought of " God I hate my life, and I wish it would end". When you are in physical pain, to the point you can't function, it takes away your dignity, it takes away all hope, and that is the one thing you can't live without. The pain takes over you life, you see no future, you just want the pain, both pysical and mental to stop.

I'm sore that you had to be the one to clean the mess in the apartment up, but maybe it helped you in a way, too. Sometimes when I can't fix things(clean) things in my life, if I go to another's life, and help change theirs, I can then find a way to start to make the change in mine. I hope this helps you find the way, or at least offers you the hope that you need, that you can make changes.

I'm glad that you had your family with you on your special day,I'm glad that you have those good memories, to hold close to you, when times are tough or difficult.

You, your feline family, and your human family, are in my thoughts and prayers. Take each day as it comes!

Jaxs

Thu, 2011-04-14 07:37 — Amy Sikes (not verified)

## **\*hugs\* That's all. You're**

\*hugs\* That's all. You're an absolutely amazing person.

Thu, 2011-04-14 07:00 — Caroline (not verified)

## Love

Sending Sam's mom and all of you who love her lots of it.

On a lighter note, I love how everyone uses "sick cat" as a foolproof lure to get you to do something. You're a truly wonderful woman. xo.

Thu, 2011-04-14 03:13 — snowy (not verified)

## How awful. :( I don't really

How awful. :( I don't really know what to say, except that I really hope that things get better... Life can be so hard sometimes... I hope that things improve and the happiness of the future will eclipse the pain of the past. Ugh, it must have been so awful to be the one doing the cleaning... ;\_; At least you were there to help everyone, though- I'm sure it made a HUGE difference to them... I think that true love is less about sparkles and flowers and more about the sort of thing you did- being willing to deal with something awful so that people you love don't have to.

Thu, 2011-04-14 01:53 — Wendy (not verified)

## I'm so sorry!

OMG - how much pain one has to be in to want to leave this world, especially when they're someone who loves life!!! I hurt for you and your family having to go through this. I hope she is able to recover in all senses of the word. I thought dealing with my mother's last days with emphysema and congestive heart failure were hard - a strong, vital woman who absolutely loved life and all it had to offer reduced to complete helplessness. Yet, when it was over, there was no real relief for me. All I could think was how much she hated her bodily confinement all the while with a smile on her face. I can only hope I maintain as well as she did. So, the pain I felt on Mom's behalf is being relived after reading your struggles with your MIL. My thoughts are with all of you.

Another blogger stopping by to visit. You can find me at:

[The Frustrated Foodie](#) <sup>[3]</sup>

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