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[Home](#) > Angels Walk Among Us.

Angels Walk Among Us.

Wed, 2014-12-24 09:55 — Robin Olson

I'm not even sure what words to write to form the perfect telling of recent events, but I must try with shaky fingers as they clumsily tap out another few words. I just finished crying and suppose I will do it again soon. My tears aren't inspired by loss, rather by gain; but this kind of gain can't be seen, only felt in one's heart.

Last week I wrote about my nail-biter road trip to Boston with little foster kitten, Freya. Though the arc of the story revolved around her surgery and whether or not she'd survive, there was a minor player who would later play a larger role. It was my car. My 14-year old BMW 328ci coupe; the one I bought used from a dear friend when it already had 99,000 miles on it. I love cars and although I've only had four in my life, I truly appreciated how sturdy and solid this car handled and hoped I would have it for many years to come.

I've done my best to take excellent care of the car, but over the past two years, with finances in an ever deepening hole, I haven't been able to repair every little thing when I'd like. As I drove Freya to Boston, I knew that my tires were not very good, that there was a burning smell coming from the engine (*my friend Erich looked at the engine and thought it was leaking transmission fluid*) and that something was rattling in the right rear of the car. I thought that perhaps there must be a cap to the top of the shock absorber and maybe it was loose. I'd get everything looked at next year, as soon as I could. I had to hope it wasn't a big mistake to wait. I usually don't drive very far so maybe I'd luck out.

We'd barely returned from our trip when I got a message via Facebook. It was from Tammie and her husband, Stephen. They said they didn't like the idea of me driving kitties around in a car with bad tires and that their cats had discussed it and each one of them wanted to buy me a tire. They have four cats, so that meant a new set.

Beyond stunned I sat at my computer re-reading their message to make sure I didn't misunderstand it. I couldn't imagine anyone giving a total stranger such a huge gift. I wrote back and thanked them, giving them every out I could. I knew it would be around \$500.00 to get new tires and I didn't want to put them into financial difficulty. I told them I'd get them a proper estimate from my car repair guys and if they still felt it was all right that they could call the repair shop and pay them directly. **I didn't want to think something like this could really happen to me so I didn't tell anyone about it until it really happened.**



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Help arrives!

Within 30 minutes of emailing them the estimate, Steve called and paid for the tires. Holy moley! Now I just had to wait a few days until they arrived. Since I didn't have to cover that cost, I could have the shop check out the other issues with

my car sooner. It really felt like Christmas came early and I was deeply touched that these people, who don't know me, literally took care of me and are making my car safe for every kitty I take to the vet.

Two days later, I was running some errands and one of the roads has "speed humps" along it. They really annoy me and I foolishly didn't slow down exactly as much as I should have. I think this was the death knell to my car because a less than a mile later, while I was driving, my car bucked and stopped hard even though the engine was still running.

I quickly shut the car off and on again but the "check engine light" and the traction control lights came on. I tried to move forward but it was as if someone threw a spike between the wheels and they would not budge. I was able to pull over a few feet onto the shoulder, but it was a very busy road and cars were flying past me. I put the hazard lights on and started to shake. I called Sam, but what could he do? Of course the battery was dying on my phone so I had to make it quick. I called AAA (*with an old car I will never be without it*) and tried to calmly tell them where I was, but they were having trouble sorting it out and kept talking, while I started to fear the phone going to die on me.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. Officer John & Dave.

Never wanting to make a fuss, but realizing I was in danger, I called the Police and asked for help. I called the non-emergency number and explained what was going on, not even sure if they would come. Within 5 long minutes Officer McDermott appeared. It was the first time seeing flashing blue and red lights didn't make my stomach flip. The second he arrived, the passing cars slowed way down. They even pulled away from my car so I didn't feel my car shiver every time one zipped by.

I told Officer John how grateful I was for his help. He had someone at the P.D. call AAA and give them not only my location but told them to put my call up higher on their list due to the dangerous location of the car. He said they should arrive in about 15-20 minutes but he had gotten another call and had to leave. He'd only been with me a few minutes and I was sad to see him go. He directed me to stay in the car and since the engine still worked, to keep it running and stay warm and be safe.

As I waited it dawned on me that this could have happened last week, on the Mass Pike, in the nor'easter, on the way to Boston or in the snow on the way home to Connecticut. As bad as this might be, I was grateful I was okay and Freya was home. We could have died on that trip, between almost hitting the semi-truck fender that was in the middle of my lane and the slick roads that my crappy tires couldn't get adequate traction on. I was really lucky.

Officer John returned after barely a few minutes. The other call ended up not being an emergency so he parked his car behind mine, leaving the flashing twin-sonics running. He was going to sit right behind me, keeping me safe. He didn't know me, I just lived in the same town he worked in as a Police Officer. I thought about how he put himself in danger to help others and I wished I could do something nice for him in return, but I'd have to think about how to thank him later.



©2014 Robin A.F. Olson. See you after Christmas!

Dave, the tow truck operator came up the hill going the opposite direction then passed my car. **I held my breath and said a few dirty words.** Did he not see me or did he assume the car with the Police car behind it had gotten pulled over and was going to get a ticket, instead of needing a tow?

It took a few minutes, but Dave turned around and slowly steered by our cars and positioned the truck so it could hoist my car onto the rear platform. I wasn't even sure the car would roll but some how it did. As Dave finished locking down my car, I went over to Officer John and shook his hand again, thanking him and telling him I would ask our First Selectwoman, Pat Llodra, to give him a raise. He laughed, but I told him I saw her once a month at our Animal Control Advisory Board meeting. Heck, it doesn't hurt to ask, right?

I got to ride to the auto shop in a tow truck with Dave. I really enjoyed the view from so high up. Dave and I talked about my car. I presented my theory that perhaps the rear shock had fallen out of position and wedge something in the axel, preventing me from driving forward. He thought it was a decent idea. He made me laugh and the further we got from where I'd been stuck, the happier I felt. Now to drop off the car, then get a ride home. I didn't want to think about how much the repair was going to cost. I could only hope I didn't screw something up so badly that it meant my car was unsalvageable.

I also didn't want to think about how I was going to pay for it. This was the fifth year I wasn't having Christmas. Even by skipping gift giving my finances are very tight. Sam is covering my half of the utility bills until I can get back on my feet and my goal is to not buy anything and to try not to make my financial woes worse if I can help it. **I started to wonder about what would happen if I can't pay for my car to be fixed?** Do they tow it back to my house? I only have one credit card and they don't take that one. Maybe they'd let me pay it off over time? I hated feeling like a total loser. It made me more determined to do a better job making a living in 2015, but for now what was I going to do?

With less than a week until Christmas, even though I've been a customer for 20 years, Gary, one of the owners of the shop, apologized, telling me they couldn't even look at my car that day or the next, that maybe after the weekend off on Monday they could figure out what was going on. They'd also put on the new tires which had just arrived. It was fine by me. I knew Sam could let me borrow his car if I needed to get out. We'd be okay without a second car for a few days **and I really didn't want to know what they were going to tell me about my car anyway.**

What I didn't know was that I have a few additional Angels looking out for me. My family is long gone and the Holidays often leave me feeling very sad. I'm okay doing my thing, helping kitties as I can, but I admit to feeling a bit lonely and heartsick during this time of year, too. Christmas is in four days and to me it's just another day.



©2000 Robin A.F. Olson. *One of the last times I had a family-Christmas.*

But I was wrong. I got another present that I could never have expected. My friend Holly who has been an ardent supporter of my rescue, Kitten Associates, took it upon herself to do a fundraiser to buy me new tires, not knowing I'd already gotten them. She corralled some other friends, Angie, Coleen, and Diane, passing around the hat, hoping to collect enough to make it happen. When she found out I had the tires she still wanted to give me the money she raised. She didn't know my car had died.

She raised was \$350.00. It wasn't a donation for the kittens, it was for my car. Another kind lady, Karen, also pitched in \$100.00 saying it was because of what I do for others that she wanted to help me. While I have no idea what the cost to repair my car will be, I know that this will help make it more likely that when the time comes, I'll be able to pay the bill. **It's a feeling I don't often have and one that I will never take for granted.**

I've already thanked the ladies for coming to my rescue, but I wanted to thank them here because you should know that Angels exist right here on Earth, that they are all around us. In fact I'd bet that everyone could be an Angel to someone else. When I help a family with their cat or help a cat out of a dangerous situation I don't think about what I'm going to get out of it. It just makes me happy to be of service. That's exactly the same attitude that inspired Holly and my other friends to help me.

I've been blessed so many times, over and over again, by so many cat-loving people who have run to my side when I needed funds for one of our cats. Now, when I'm in the dumps of despair, they still come, without me asking, this time to help me. I am so grateful, honored, humbled and sadly a bit embarrassed and maybe ashamed that I even need help in the first place. But I'd rather feel like this and be able to get my car fixed, then be proud and struggle even more.

In this season of giving, **I got the best gifts ever. I got to know that I have friends who care and who are looking out for me.** Their warmth reminds me of my long-lost family and how they made me feel protected and safe. They hold me tight when I feel like all is lost. **They are Angels who walk among us and they are real.**



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Comments

Wed, 2014-12-24 11:56 — Catnymouse (not verified)

Everything happens for a [1]

Everything happens for a reason. You touch and help so many lives, human and cat alike. People want to help you b/c you do what some of us cannot but completely support your efforts. You are a ray of hope in this often times drab world. To know there is someone out there taking care of those who cannot care for themselves is inspiring. I have not meet or ever even spoke with but you hold a special place in my heart. Thank you for everything you do Robin. I wish you much peace, happiness, and abundance for the new year. <3

Wed, 2014-12-24 13:44 — jmuhj (not verified)

ANGELS [2]

What a wonderful story, Robin, and I am so happy for you and your family and Kitten Associates! I'm in a similar situation financially and don't do anything for my own holy days; I usually get a few little things for my beloved cats around this time, but for the first time, not this year. So I understand how that goes. How wonderful that the police officer who helped you actually takes seriously their stated purpose of "TO PROTECT AND SERVE"; that seems increasingly rare in these times -- and how amazing about all the people who, in their various ways, have helped you and Kitten Associates. This is so gratifying! All the very best to you, your family, Kitten Associates, the cats and kittens, and all of these great people now and in the 2015 year.

Thu, 2015-01-01 10:03 — Deb Barnes - Ze... (not verified) [3]

So touching... [4]

What wonderful and selfish gestures - you truly are touched by an Angel and it is encouraging to hear of such kindness... Happy New Year and blessings to you and yours from the Zee and Zoey Gang!

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