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[Home](#) > Of Cancer, Carbs and Cats: Emergencies all Around. Part 2 of 3

Of Cancer, Carbs and Cats: Emergencies all Around. Part 2 of 3

Fri, 2016-12-02 17:19 — Robin Olson

Continued from part [one](#) ^[1].

Here's where I sound like a b_tch.

Thing is, O.F. NEVER took his cats to the vet in their entire LIFE (*other than the waste-of-time visit Buddy had a few days before we picked up the cats where the Vet wanted to run some tests and where they said not to bother*). They'd been fed cheap dry food for SIX YEARS. They never were given "people food," nor did they get canned food of any kind. I didn't see a scratching post or a toy in the apartment they shared with O.F.. I asked O.F. if I could bring a cat bed or blanket with me that they slept on so they'd have something familiar smelling when they came to my home. There was NOTHING there for me to take. What kind of life did they have?

I asked for a very generous financial donation towards their care. I figured it would probably cost me about \$2000 (*this is without even knowing what might really be going on with them*). I got half that amount. It's not that I wasn't grateful. I was, but I also assumed they both needed dental cleanings, at least, and that I couldn't cover those costs with what we had. **It wasn't fair to ask me to take these cats on, with all the issues we knew about, plus the fear of what was to come and to do it for FREE or to magically pay for it when we didn't have the funds to do so. Yes, O.F. is very sick but he also didn't tell me that with chemo he could live another year to THREE years. Somehow he skipped telling me that fact. I learned it through a friend of his. Was this such a dire situation or an easy way out to play the "C" card when he probably could have found a family member or friend to take the cats? It would have required effort and time, and I'm betting he didn't want to deal with it. I began to feel my hackles go up, wondering if I'd been duped.**



©2016 Robin AF Olson. Buddy the day before surgery.

Once we got the cats home and I got a chance to really look at them, it was clear they were in terrible shape. I have six-year old cats, too, but these guys acted twice that age. **Buddy kept going in and out of the litter pan. He could pass some urine, but I could tell it wasn't enough. The fact that he kept going to the pan meant he was in pain and something was wrong.** His eyes were running badly. His coat was dry. He was terrified and withdrawn. He and Belle were

growling at each other. The two of them were quite overweight, with Belle overshadowing her brother by a lot.

I made an appointment for Buddy to see Dr Larry. I wanted to give it a few days so Buddy could calm down, but I was concerned that Buddy had crystals in his bladder. All it would take would be for one to slip into his urethra and cause a blockage, which would be an expensive emergency surgery. I prayed it was only a bladder infection, which would only mean giving him antibiotics for a few weeks. I knew we'd have to run blood work and urinalysis, update Buddy's vaccinations and test him for Feline Leukemia and FIV so he could be adopted one day. I added up what I thought would be the costs in my head having had these things done so many times before. We could get by with what I had, but just barely.



©2016 Robin AF Olson. Belle at 17.2 lbs.

But Buddy was too sick to delay getting him to the vet. Dr. Larry had to keep him for the day in the hopes he could get some urine to test. I got a call a few hours later. Buddy had a lot of blood in his urine. They did an x-ray and his bladder was full of LARGE stones. While we could change his diet, get him off dry and give it time over doing surgery, we'd be at high risk of him blocking up. We couldn't wait. I begged a favor to pay off the costs over time, so we could do the surgery the next day. Buddy stayed at the Vet overnight while I began to do an emergency fundraiser. There was no way we could afford to drop \$2000.00.

I **hate** asking for donations. I shouldn't run a non-profit cat rescue. While I am deeply humbled and so very grateful we get the help we need when we need it, we NEVER have much in the bank to fall back on when there's an emergency and that stresses me out to no end.

Funds began to come in for Buddy and we barely reached our goal after two days. Buddy had his surgery and came through with flying colors.

Dr. Larry said his bladder was loaded and the stones were very large. Buddy had to have been in pain for a very long time. Knowing that made my blood boil because O.F. lives about a block, tops, from a Vet. How hard would it have been to get the cat checked out years ago? Instead of saying no to diagnostics, say yes. Find out what is going on and face it. No. That was on me to deal with.



The stones removed from Buddy's bladder. They were quite large indicating they had been present for some time.

While Buddy recovered from surgery, I knew I needed to find out what was going on with his sister Belle. She wasn't eating; not a bite for days. Nothing. I had to syringe feed her and that was very difficult. I've syringe-fed cats MANY times but Belle fought, spit, hissed, growled. Some how she spit cat food all over the ceiling. **She also upset Buddy so much he ran behind me and attacked me, clawing my behind. Yes! It's called re-directed aggression. Belle got upset and it upset Buddy so he attacked whoever was close to him---ME! I was not loving having these cats in my house.**

Meanwhile, our 16-year old cat, Nicky, was depressed. I could tell he was in pain, too. He was losing weight even though we were offering him food many times a day. I was very worried about him.

Nicky had a seizure a few weeks ago right under my office desk, while I was working on a design project. I rushed him to the Vet where they put him on valium to stop the episode. Later that night, Sam took him to a neurologist where we learned he'd lost some vision in his left eye. It might come back. It might not. He might have underlying lymphoma causing the seizures, but it was too soon to do more tests.

We started Nicky on Phenobarbital but it left him doped up and miserable. We changed his medication but he still wasn't right. He would "forget" the litter pan was in front of him and would urinate on the floor. Having chronic kidney disease, also meant when Nicky peed, it was a tremendous amount of output, often covering half of our kitchen floor. If he did it overnight while we were asleep, the urine would warp the wood floor near the kitchen. It infuriated me and kept me on edge. Every time Nicky got up, Sam or I would have to keep an eye on him because many times we'd have to grab him before he peed on the floor. **I had to remind myself that it wasn't Nicky's fault at all. We loved him and would do what we had to do.** The urine was very dilute anyway. It was mostly like cleaning up water, but it was exhausting trying to keep up.



©2016 Robin AF Olson. *Our sweet Nicky, not feeling well at all. By the way, when you see your cat is depressed, something is wrong. They should be taken to a Vet to be checked out.*

The night Buddy has his surgery, Nicky really seemed to be feeling lousy. Sam hadn't given him his fluids because he got home late and was tired. I pushed Sam to do the fluids, while we made sure Nicky had a nice meal. Sam sat on the sofa and held Nicky as he often did, like a baby with his belly up and his hind legs stretched out. Sam was cold so I wrapped a blanket around his shoulders so he wouldn't have to disturb Nicky. He sat there for a long time in the dark, just holding and comforting his dear cat. I asked Sam about getting Nicky's blood work checked in the morning. I had an appointment set for Belle. He could have my appointment if there weren't any others that day. Belle could wait if needed. He agreed Nicky should be seen.

I felt good going to bed that night. Nicky seemed much happier and comfortable. He didn't come upstairs to snuggle with us as he used to do because he was somewhat weakened by his illness. We didn't want to push him to do something he couldn't do and Sam was worried he would fall and hurt himself getting on or off the bed.

If I only knew that was our last night together...

Part 3, the final chapter: ***Where we have to make a heartbreaking choice and I show my true colors about how I feel about O.F. and his cats.***

CICH Content Categories:

[Heartbreak](#) ^[2]

[Nicky](#) ^[3]

[Pee](#) ^[4]

[Who Approved That?](#) ^[5]

[WTF?!](#) ^[6]

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Links

[1] <https://coveredincathair.com/content/cancer-carbs-and-cats-return-ex-part-1-3>

[2] <https://coveredincathair.com/category/cich-content-categories/heartbreak>

[3] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/71>

[4] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/109>

[5] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/95>

[6] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/89>