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In a Perfectly Perfect World

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I entered the foster room and was met by Laney, Winnie and Piglet. Their tails held high, their eyes bright with excitement. They crowded in close, rubbing up against my legs as I struggled to enter the room without dropping their food. It was time to have breakfast and they were eager to eat.



©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. Winnie, Piglet and photobomb by Laney.

As I lowered the tray, covered with small mounds of chicken, they gathered in a circle, joined by shy-Lolli, and began to eat. It was just another breakfast, about their 485th, with me, but this one was different. It was their last breakfast together.



©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. Last breakfast.

I watched them eat, oblivious to what I knew was going to happen in a few hours. They lapped up every morsel as they quickly glanced over to their neighbor to see if they had any food left that could be snatched away. **In moments the tray was clean, as if nothing had ever been on it in the first place. It was a metaphor whose meaning wasn't lost on me.**

I sat on the bed, in my usual spot near the right side. Winnie jumped up right away, as she often did, climbed into my lap and began washing her face. Laney took her place just in front of me and Piglet was off to my left. They were getting clean before settling down for a nap. The only sound was them purring away. All was right in the world, but wrong in my heart.



©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. *Love-filled lap.*

Winnie looked up at me, her sweet expression filled me with sorrow. I ran my hand along her back and she pressed against me. Her fur was soft and thick, no longer shabby and dirty from living a lousy life outside with no one to care for her. I wanted to hold onto this feeling of love, make it solid somehow, so I could have it with me whenever I needed it. In that moment I saw Winnie vanish, my lap empty, as if she never existed. I felt the pang of loss, the yearning, the familiar heartache that was to come. Our story together was ending, a real end this time, and her story was going to begin anew with someone else.



©2014 Foster Mom Moe. *Used with permission. Winnie, pregnant, just before rescue.*

Time felt more like a layer cake than a linear path. All at once I could see Winnie sitting in the grass in Georgia, fat with kittens inside her, the same sweet expression as she had now. I saw Winnie struggling with an upper respiratory tract infection last year and coming back home from a failed adoption in early February. I saw myself entering the room and the girls would not greet me. They would be gone and I probably would never see them again. All things were happening at once, the beginning, the end, the challenges, the happy moments.

As much as I wanted Winnie, especially, to stay with me forever, it was not fair for her to stay in a small room for the rest of her life. **She and the girls always deserved more, better.** I turned away great adopters who only wanted Laney and Piglet had a failed adoption by a poser-cat-person in NYC over a year ago. **I struggled once I decided the girls HAD to stay together because who would adopt three cats?**



©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. *The ever-silly, Winnie.*

When I found an adopter, she was flakey, changing her mind over and over again. I wanted to give her the benefit of the doubt so I moved forward with the adoption. I wasn't surprised when after barely a week, the girls adoption fell through, leaving me to drive to Boston and back in an afternoon to bring them back home.

After over a year I wondered if I was doing the wrong thing. Maybe I should let the girls go to a home on their own? Maybe I was stupid and greedy. I didn't want them to leave. I liked having them here.



©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. *No vacancy.*

In March I got a two adoption applications for all three girls. I wanted to get excited about it but I couldn't get my hopes up after what had already happened with them. It was a good thing I just went through the motions of processing their applications. Both adopters backed off-one after going back and forth with me for a MONTH, the other had a terrible vet reference.



©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. Lovely Laney.

I began to feel remorse every time I entered the foster room. I felt so bad for the girls and for poor Jelly, who is still in a cage recovering from knee surgery. I felt so badly for his brother Lolli, who I doubt will ever be adopted because he's too skittish. **For the past five weeks, every Monday night, a couple came to visit Jelly and Lolli with the idea that if the boys warmed up to them (*they did*), they would adopt them. I was so excited that they might find a home, but even after hosting this couple when I had the worst Flu of my life, after answering a million questions, putting them in touch with my vet so they could be assured they understood why Jelly had to have surgery, I get a short email. "Bad news." The woman's dad brought over two kittens and they couldn't say no (*really?*) and the adoption was off. I was devastated.**



©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. On or near my lap, this wonderful family will be one I'll never forget.

The cats deserved more than to be in a small room day in and day out. They were bored and I didn't blame them. We were all ready for a change, but I felt like hope was running out unless I did something.

I got another application for the girls-for all three. It wasn't another out-of-state adopter. It wasn't someone who had two dogs and a cat. It wasn't someone who had a terrible vet reference.

It was from a couple who live **IN** Connecticut, in fact, about 30 minutes drive from my home. They live alone with no children. They had no other pets. Their cat passed away in March at the age of 19. They had room in their heart for a new cat and they wanted to help cats who were hard to adopt.



©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. Too much love irks Winnie.

A few days ago Sam and I did a home visit. I loved their home. It wasn't too big or too small. It was on the side of a hill surrounded by plants and trees. The home was immaculately clean and when I mentioned that Winnie would jump on their piano because she liked to be up high, they thought it was charming and said they didn't care about furnishings. They just cared that the cats had each other to play with while they were away at work during the day. There were lots of big sunny windows. This was it. Now all I had to do was have them fall in love with the girls.



©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. *I know. I played favorites, but I do love them all, just maybe not exactly equally.*

I really liked this couple; Amy and her husband, Markel. The more we spoke, the more I liked them. I never had a weird pull at my gut telling me something was off. This time it was easy. They came to visit the girls for maybe 30 minutes. **The girls were great with them and vice versa. It was the easiest adoption I've done in ages, though they'd have to come back and finalize the paperwork once they had things set up at their home, it was decided. The girls found their forever home and I had a few days go say my goodbyes.**



©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. *I wish I could have told them it was going to be okay and that they'd understand this was all so they could have a great life.*

I've fostered over 500 cats so far. Most of the time it's not too difficult to say farewell, but the girls have been with me for so long that it was more like I was giving away my own cats, than I was adopting out foster cats. I knew if it went on any longer, Winnie would be staying with me. It wasn't fair to my other cats or to Winnie. I didn't want to break up Laney's family any more than I already had. **I had to continue on with the plan. I had to let go.**

Last night the girls began their new story, their life with their new parents. Markel came to get the girls since Amy was delayed at work. He has a loud, deep voice, but the moment he loaded the girls into the car his voice turned falsetto. They were crying and scared. As he entered the car, he turned to the girls and said it was going to be okay, that they would be home soon.

©2016 Robin A.F. Olson. A few final moments with the girls.

Home. That's what this story has been about from day one; finding a home for sweet cats, neglected by uncaring people. It took a small team of dedicated volunteers, especially their rescuer, Moe, our intrepid foster mom in Georgia, to reach this joyful conclusion. The money spent, the sacrifices, the fearful times were worth it because we got what we dreamed of, placing three adult cats in a home together.

Their story with me has come to an end. It's been a very long journey. All in all we saved 16 cats all because Laney was never spayed. I still have Jelly and Lolli left to find a home for. I know they'll be missing their mom, so I return to the foster room to comfort them, **but in truth, they'll be comforting me.**

A long, happy, loved life to my girls...forever in my heart.



©2014 Foster Mom Moe. Used with Permission. This is how I'll remember the girls and their amazing story.



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©2016 Foster Mom Moe. Her lovely video in honor of Laney & family.

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