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The Silver Lining and the Black Clouds part four

Thu, 2012-08-02 12:25 — Robin Olson

Day six has drawn to a close. I can't sleep. My heart is broken. It's not that I even feel the need for it ever to be "repaired-" if such a thing is possible. While I was working on the story of my cats falling ill, another story began to form. **Stories that follow along with a real person's life don't transpire in tidy little packages, so here I stop to inject something else before I get back to the mystery ailment.**

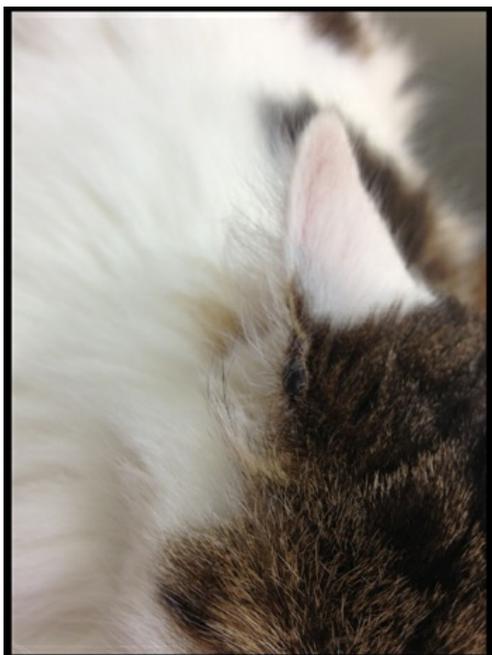
Two nights ago I found a small, odd looking black growth on the edge of Spencer's right ear. In my foggy memory, I believe I saw it long ago, thought about running Spencer to the Vet, got sidetracked and forgot. There it was, this rubbery, creepy mass, well hidden by the dark fur along the cap of Spencer's head.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Back at the Vet for a second time.

At first I thought it was a tick, **then realized there were two masses, one "tick sized" and the other much smaller.** I knew this was something that Dr. Larry needed to take a look at so yesterday morning I took Spencer back to the Vet for the second time in less than a week.

Super Deb entered the exam room first. **After working with Spencer the other day, she realized that he was calmer if we didn't cover him during procedures.** She got to work taking his temperature and he was basically calm. **He had no fever.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. The growth was easily overlooked. Follow the left edge of Spencer's ear. Where the fur gets dark you'll see a tiny black area where there is no fur. That's the growth. It's just right of center of the photo.

She weighed him and he'd lost 4 ounces in five days. Not surprising, but a reminder to keep him eating as much as he wanted while he recovers from his illness. **His fluffy rear end, which had become soiled yellow from having diarrhea, was looking cleaner.** Perhaps he was feeling better?

Dr. Larry entered the room and I was relieved to see him now that he's back from his vacation. He's been my Vet for more years than I can remember. **Though we may not always agree on things, he's open minded and in return I'm very respectful of him.** We've had some difficult discussions about my choice to feed a raw diet to my cats. It's unfortunate that even now I have to be on the "down low" about it, but there is so much fear mongering going on about it that it's just easier not to talk about it.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. She didn't even buy him dinner first! Spencer gets his temperature taken.

On this day we HAD to talk about it. He approached the topic carefully. **I felt myself taking a step back, crossing my arms over my chest as he spoke.** What is sickening my cats could have been caused by the raw food. **Though rare, salmonella could be a culprit, yet we did NOT see any indications in the blood work to show us it was a possibility.** It could be e.coli or other bacterial culprits. To really know for certain, Dr. Larry asked if we could get a stool sample on Spencer and run a PCR test on it. **Though expensive, running over \$200.00, the test would show us what was causing the diarrhea.** If we could manage, he wanted a sample from Nicky, as well. Using that information we could get a better picture of what happened and how to NOT let it happen again-IF it's something we can control.

I said yes to the test and I told Dr. Larry that we stopped feeding raw the day the cats got sick. We've discussed

how we prep the food and saw some minor things we can and will correct. We're going to throw out the litter pans and start anew. We've been feeding raw for many years and the cats have NEVER gotten sick, but in case we did something to cause this, we will find a way to do right by them.

Before we went too much further down this path we agreed it might still be something else and NOT the food.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. At least he's starting to eat again.

Then Dr. Larry examined Spencer's ear. He measured it and said it measured out larger than he expected. **He didn't "like the look of it" and said we should remove it.** He looked at Spencer's teeth and mentioned Spencer really needed a dental cleaning. **I asked him to look into Spencer's ears because I noticed they appeared a bit dirty.**

Spencer fussed and hissed angrily as Dr. Larry looked into his ears. The right was dirty and irritated. **Dr. Larry told me that some times cats can have an over production of a greasy residue in their ears. The ear gets dirty and very itchy.** Certainly Spencer would need drops to get him feeling more comfortable.

Next, Dr. Larry looked at Spencer's left ear. As Spencer fussed, Dr. Larry adjusted the angle of the scope. He stopped for a second and removed the scope.

"There's another mass in Spencer's ear. It's very small, but I think we need to get in there and remove it."



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Measuring the growth.

I felt a lump form in my throat. I took a deep breath, trying to steady myself. I brought my cat to the Vet to look at this weird thing on his ear. Hopefully it was just a funky benign mole or something, but with the discovery of a second growth I knew what that could mean and I didn't know if I could get the words out to ask the question.

"Is this cancer? Does Spencer have CANCER?"

Dr. Larry has this serious expression I've seen too many times before. He had it when he examined Bob's belly and said it didn't feel right. **It turned out Bob had a cancerous tumor engulfing half his liver.** Dr. Larry never makes light of a diagnosis like this. **Being conservative and I'm sure not wanting to upset me, he would only answer; "I don't like the look of this. It could be benign, but..."**

He said if it was cancer that the rule of thumb would be to excise enough tissue to get a clean margin. It would mean removing Spencer's ear or ears. It was too much to imagine. I had to keep it together. I said if it was malignant, what was the point of cutting his ears off? His lovely little elfin ears...how could I do that to him? We didn't talk much beyond that. It was too soon to go down that road.

First Spencer had to get well and recover from whatever was causing his gastric issues. We'd schedule a dental and surgery for sometime near the end of the month. He wished me well and left to attend to the next patient. I put Spencer back into his cat carrier and went to the lobby to pay the bill, not sure I could get out of the clinic without bursting into tears.

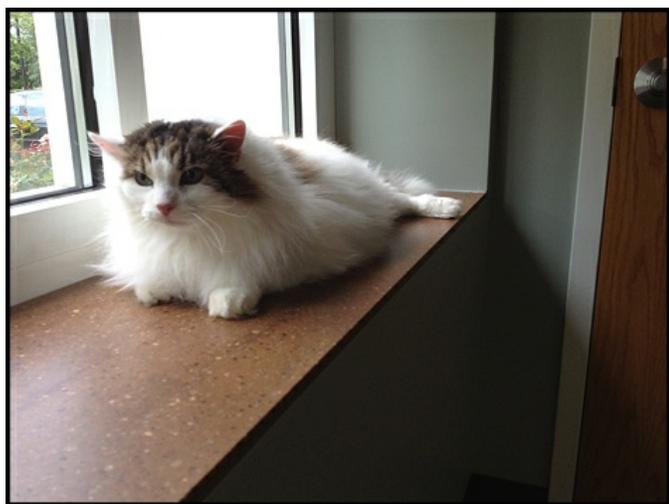


©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *My little pouff-waiting, wondering and scared.*

Although I have no idea how I'm going to pay for this surgery, I will find a way. **The overriding thought in my mind as I waited to hand over my credit card was; this can't be cancer. I just lost a cat to cancer 11 months ago.** I just watched my dear Bob slowly die over the course of a horrible year. I can't go through that again.

I can't go through that with SPENCER. He's only 11 years old. He's the mascot of Covered in Cat Hair. He's my love, my dear friend.

I thought about what my lawyer said to me on the phone when we were talking about a car accident I was in two years ago. **The case is either going to be settled or go to trial. He asked me my age, then told me the insurance company figures that based on my current age I have 29 more years to live which is how they will base my settlement offer.** At first it really bothered me that there's a computer program that bets on how long I'll live. After we ended our conversation, I started to think maybe that was too many more years; more years of witnessing the pain and suffering of my dear cats.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *After the exam, Spencer sat in the window, trying to regain his composure after being poked and prodded.*

Last night Spencer came over to me as I laid in bed. He did his little routine of laying on my arm, with his fluffy ruff in my face, purring loudly next to my ear. I tried to hold back, but I began to sob. I wondered how many more nights we would have together like this-where he is himself, not broken or wasting away. He is my beloved cat and together we have a simple joy that is deeply profound.

Spencer got up and walked to the end of the bed. I gave up trying to sleep, got up and went downstairs to my office and began to write. Between writing and tears I heard a sound. I turned to look and Spencer was there in his cat bed next to me. He was purring away like nothing was wrong.

I hope he's right.

The PCR test results are due in a day or two. I won't know about Spencer until we biopsy the mass towards the end of the month. The sliver lining has to do with a surprise adoption. Find out who it was and about their forever family in the next installment (*unless something ELSE happens first*).

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Comments

Thu, 2012-08-02 12:54 — underthepawrescue (not verified)

Spencer ^[17]

Im hoping with everything in my that your beloved Spencer will be ok... we will all be sending our love and crossing our paws for you all. xx

Thu, 2012-08-02 13:02 — Catnymouse (not verified)

My heart is breaking for you ^[18]

My heart is breaking for you Robin!

My blue persian kitty was diagnosed with oral SCC few month ago on his left lip, just 4 months after I lost another beloved kitty due to a tragic event in the Christmas day. Luckily since we discovered it early, the vet was able to give a clean cut after remove most part of his left lip. After his sugery, I put him in herb detox for two weeks, while also giving him the herb supplement to boost his immunity, along with salmon oil which is very important in fighting cancer. Hs has so much energy now than before since I started these supplement.

SCC is the worst cancer for cat, and the skin SCC can occur in the ears. I pray Spencer's tumor is benign...

Big hugs to you Robin!

Jane

Thu, 2012-08-02 13:56 — Jynx macTavish (not verified)

Spencer ^[19]

Oh, Robin, I am so, so sorry to hear about Spencer's situation - I am crying for you and him reading this post, and I will be hoping as hard as possible that Spencer's ear growths are benign. Your beautiful little boy - I want the two of you to have so many more years of companionship together. You've been going through so much and i have felt terrible that I haven't been able to help with even one Chip-in. I promise when I am no longer living on borrowed money that I will help as much as I can whenever I can. In the meantime I'm thinking of you and all your little charges, and as always amazed and grateful for all you do for the cat's lucky enough to fall under your care.

Be good to yourself.

Jynx

Thu, 2012-08-02 14:00 — [thecatguy \(not verified\)](#) [20]

hugs and purrs [21]

Oh dear. My heart hurts for you and Spencer. I can very much relate to that dread feeling of waiting and wondering about a possible horrific outcome. I pray it's not cancer and all will be well, I'll also snuggle my cats up tight and love on them this moment as I don't know what the next moment will bring.

I can't imagine having to make such a choice about Spencer's gorgeous ears. I sure hope it doesn't come down to that for you both. Many purrs and prayers for you all.

Thu, 2012-08-02 16:44 — [Shelli](#) [22]

OY. Holding you and my [23]

OY.

Holding you and my Spence until the results come in...

Fri, 2012-08-03 00:39 — [Kitten Thunder'... \(not verified\)](#) [24]

Oh my... [25]

Waiting and hoping that all turns out okay for your family. Purr therapy to you all!

Fri, 2012-08-03 16:46 — [Sarah \(not verified\)](#) [26]

Thinking of you [27]

This is so incredibly sad... I'm so sorry for all the stress I'm sure you're experiencing right now. I've been down similar roads with my cats and their illnesses, taking me by surprise and then crushing my heart. I truly hope he's okay.

Mon, 2012-08-06 12:17 — [connie & the crew \(not verified\)](#) [28]

More prayers for the best [29]

More prayers for the best possibly outcome.

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