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The Silver Lining and the Black Clouds part one

Sun, 2012-07-29 13:44 — Robin Olson

I'm not even certain where to start all this...the past week has been a nightmare and there are no signs of it being over any time soon. Even with all the doom and gloom there were a few bright spots; maybe just enough to keep me from jumping off a cliff.

Boogie

My Vet took on three, eight-week old kittens who were found by a friend. They were all sick with an upper respiratory infection and needed a lot of care. Two of the kittens were basically friendly, but one was not. Clearly this kitten had no socialization and was in dire need of one on one time to turn him around. I was asked to take all the kittens, but I could not at the time so my Vet provided care for them.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Milo.

During that time the two kittens got better and more friendly. They may be getting adopted together soon, but sadly, the lone gray kitten was still fractious and faced the sad reality of being released outdoors once he was vetted and healthy.

I just couldn't let that happen. **After King was adopted I picked up the cat who my friend, Jill named Boogie.** I liked the name because the kitten wanted to "boogie" away from me (and he had "eye boogies").

The goal was to get him socialized and ready for adoption. I'd done it before with much older cats. I could do it again.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Otis.

What was different this time was that I made many mistakes and Boogie had to pay the price.

One of the Vet Techs was able to handle Boogie, but he was very fearful. With that in mind, I chose to allow him to have free reign over the small bathroom that would be his home. This is a mistake. **I should have crated him so I could control the space and his interaction with me.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Boogie, not loving being handled by his friend, Kristen.

Boogie was clearly SICK, not just a runny eye. He cried and he cried, missing his brothers and being scared in the new space; his meow was clearly rough. He was hoarse, sneezing, shooting goo out of his nose. He obviously was not going to be able to smell any food I offered him. It would make it impossible for me to get him socialized if I couldn't get him to connect me with something good (food).

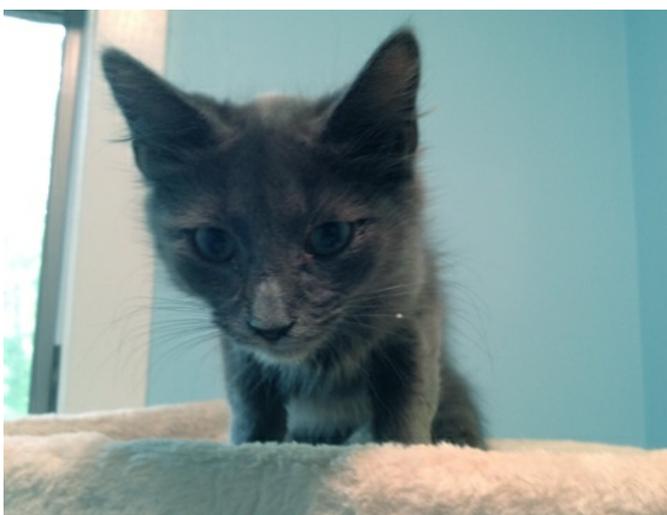


©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Boogie, terrified, in the cat tree in the foster room.

For a few days I struggled with him and made some progress, but after about four days he got worse and more skittish. **He also stopped eating more than a bite of food.** The kitten only weighed a few pounds. Not eating is potentially fatal. As I grew more stressed out about him not eating, I'm sure it didn't help him want to eat. I even gave up and offered him some dry food. He ate a few bites, but not enough.

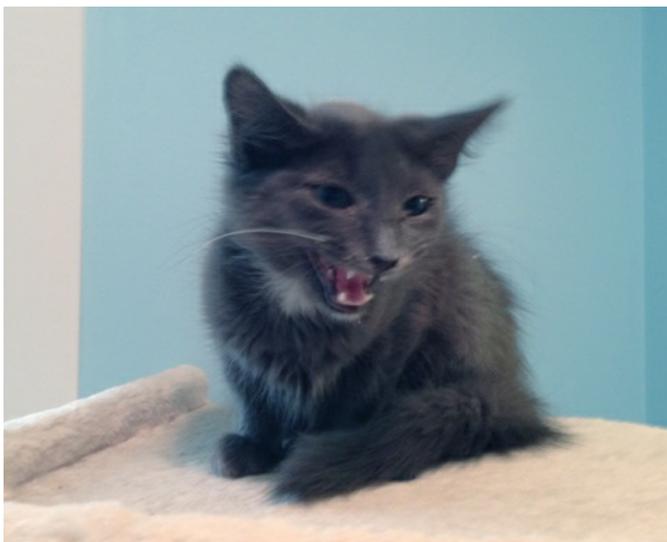
©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Boogie arrives and sings a song of sadness.

By the fifth day I decided he needed to be crated and I'd just work on getting him well, then worry about socializing later. The problem was that I couldn't medicate him. First, I had to get him in the crate if I had any hope of doing anything with him.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. A moment of calm. I wish I could have cleaned the crust off his eyes, but he was too fractious for me to try.

I set up the crate. There wasn't much space around it. I got a broom and figured I would gently sweep him into the crate. It didn't work. He flipped out. I had to move everything out of the room other than the crate. He hid behind the toilet, crying. I kept trying to get him to move. He wouldn't. I started to get mad and frustrated. **He flipped out more, then jumped into the sink, accidentally turning the faucet onto himself! He sat there crying, looking at me terrified with the water drizzling over his fur.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Crying. Missing his brothers, but "tough love"-separating Boogie from other kittens was the only way to get him socialized.*

I used the broom handle to shut off the water. I couldn't risk being bitten. I don't have health insurance. I just wanted to pick him up and hold him, soothe his fears, but all I was doing was scaring him into a frenzy. I wanted to die. I felt so bad. I hated myself for scaring him. He looked so small and pitiful. Scaring him went against EVERYTHING I believe in, sacrifice for, strive for. I'm here to HELP cats, not ever cause them grief! How could I do this?!



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Baby steps with baby food and canned grain free food.*

I finally got Boogie into the crate after about 30 painful minutes. **He sat on his pink bed and cried. I had to leave the room and cry. I didn't go back for a day because I felt so guilty.** I asked Sam to try to get him to eat off a spoon taped to a long stick. Boogie ate only a tiny amount of food.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *The first day or two went all right.*

The next day I tried again, very calmly to get him to eat. I know all the tricks and I tried most of them. He just wouldn't eat, but I did happen to catch him near the front of the crate. I reached out to pet him. **I needed to feel his body to asses how thin he had become. As I touched him he turned, violently hissing at me, but he didn't bite me. I tried not to be scared, tried to soothe. I stroked him again and felt a skeleton under my fingers. Boogie was in critical condition. He had to go back to the Vet—NOW.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *It was clear that Boogie was in no hurry to make friends, but at least he wouldn't hide.*

He had to go back and get fed and get WELL. **I would work with him all over again once I knew for creation his URI was resolved.** I couldn't take him to the Vet. Sam had to do it, so I asked him to underscore that I wanted Boogie back as soon as he was well. **I couldn't let him go back outside and live the life of a feral cat. I got him to play, jump over my leg, eat just inches away from my hands. I could turn him around, but first he had to be well enough to smell his food and get some weight back on his frail frame.**



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. *Afraid of me taking his photo...*

The Vet was supposed to contact me with an update, but I haven't heard a word in 48 hours. I fear the worse for Boogie. The Vet is closed tomorrow. I'll have to wait until Monday to find out what became of him. I pray I was not too late and

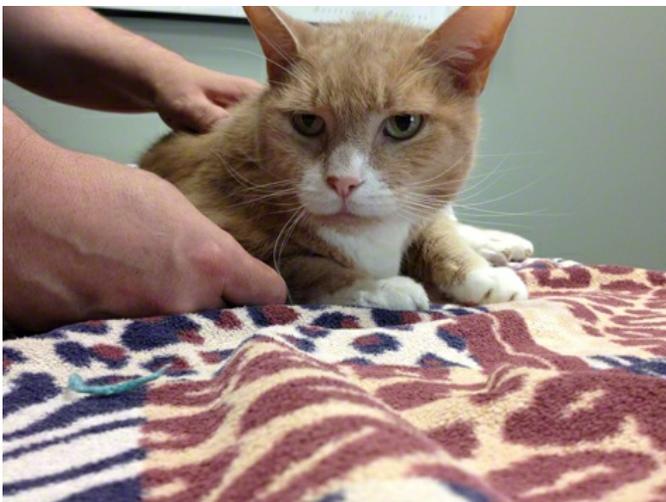
that they could help him.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Boogie felt safe in the tub and would even play with a Cat Dancer until he started to feel worse and refused to play.

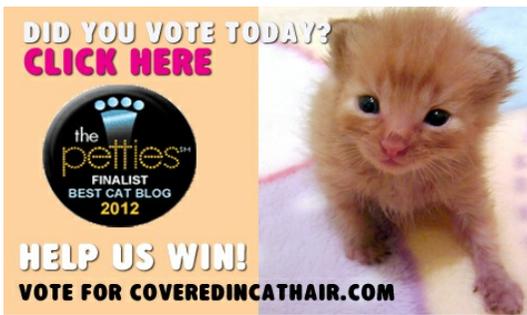
I will have nightmares for a long time about him crying in the sink with that pleading look in his eyes, the water running over him while he was too scared to move.

But I have more things on my mind and a real life nightmare come to life. Within 24 hours of Boogie leaving, our cat Nicky fell ill with a raging high fever, vomiting and lethargy. A few hours later, Spencer followed with more of the same...as I write this I'm facing the very real possibility that two more cats have fallen ill and perhaps ALL the nine cats who live here (my 8 and our foster, Jackson) are going to get sick—how seriously and for how long remains to be seen.



©2012 Robin A.F. Olson. Nicky on one of his two trips to the Vet.

The clouds continues to darken and the pressure of trying to cure what ails my cats is crippling. More on that in part two, along with the silver lining no one could have seen coming.



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Comments

Sun, 2012-07-29 14:12 — J. Smith (not verified)

Hope that your kitties are ^[13]

Hope that your kitties are doing better. So sad about Boogie. I have had a feral for 7 or 8 months and Eddie is scared of everything. I have him in a bathroom with his food, water and a bed. He will let me rub him and pick him up (on his terms). He will play biting at me and he scratches. He does eat and uses his litter box. I have other cats and a little doggy but I know this is never going to work with him and my other furbabies. I do not want to let him outside, because I know that he is never going to make it outside alone. Just don't know what to do now. He has been neutered.

Sun, 2012-07-29 15:17 — Caroline (not verified)

Pls. set up a chip-in ^[14]

Pls. set up a chip-in Robin. I donate to help animals in need. Yours are in need.

Mon, 2012-07-30 15:45 — Cheryl H. (not verified)

Seconded. I'll definitely ^[15]

Seconded. I'll definitely pitch in to help with vet costs.

*****HUGS***** I'm sorry things went so horrible with Boogie, but when he's well enough to leave the hospital, you'll have your chance to crate him and do things right. I'd be beating myself up over something like this if I were in your position, because I have a huge heart and burden for cats in need of forever homes as well, so I'm sympathetic to how you're feeling. That said, stop beating yourself up so badly. His URI could have made him eating enough a problem even if you had crated him from the beginning and he still might have had to go back to the vet. Yes, giving him the whole bathroom made socializing him difficult and there were a few situations where Boogie was scared and frightened that could have been avoided. Yes, you made a small error, but everyone does. It's part of being human. It doesn't matter how many years of experience fostering you have, these things happen. You did your best to compensate and correct once you realized your mistake, and you made sure he got to the vet when it was clear he needed help. *****HUGS***** You're an awesome, amazing, wonderful person, Robin. No one who knows/is familiar with you could think anything else.

Sun, 2012-07-29 15:42 — [Robin Olson](#) ^[16]

Don't give up ^[17]

J. Smith..don't give up on your kitten, but DO make sure you NEVER USE YOUR HANDS as a toy. Also, give him small challenges so he can get more confident with you. Just a little something..like have him eat a special treat like plain chicken baby food off a spoon. Make him take a few steps towards you. You don't come to him. Keep doing this so he sees you he thinks good things will happen. Don't "free feed" food by leaving a bowl of dry out. Take it away. He has to associate food with YOU and that will help you with him. Also get a Cat Dancer. It's a small toy, not scary to a feral cat. Playtime helps distract him from being scared so if you see him start "going into the red zone" then play with him quickly. He will forget to be scared and gain confidence...that's what you want but go slowly. I have an 8 yr old cat who was FERAL at 6 months. I can give him belly rubs and he will come and sit on my lap but it took time. Good luck!

Sun, 2012-07-29 17:22 — Catnynouse (not verified)

Hope he pulls through ... [18]

... but IMO he is not a feral. As you say, he vocalises. He has friendly siblings. He doesn't automatically snarl on approach. He sits in the open when you are there, rather than crouching in a hissing heap in the corner. He's a terrified domestic. Which means you are pushing at a slightly open door rather than a closed one :) Good luck to you and the little lad.

Sun, 2012-07-29 22:20 — [Connie & The Crew \(not verified\)](#) [19]

Spirit Essences [20]

Jackson knows what he is doing and I have had some really good success using his Feral Cat and Safe Space essences..

Mon, 2012-07-30 06:32 — mk (not verified)

Boogie [21]

My heart breaks for Boogie. I hope you got him back.

And prayers for your kitties. Sometimes you feel like you just cant catch a break.

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