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[Home](#) > Staying Strong for Gracie. Part 3. And Back.

Staying Strong for Gracie. Part 3. And Back.

Wed, 2015-09-09 18:54 — Robin Olson

(Continued from Parts [1](#) ^[1] and [2](#) ^[2])

Later that day, I reached out to my friend Warren, who put me in touch with the folks on the Feline SmallCell Lymphoma Yahoo Message Group. They told me to try a combo of two different anti-emetic drugs that many cancer cats respond well to and that help them regain their appetite. The problem is that they both effect the liver. I called Dr. Larry's office yet again, asking for more medications. I went back and had a long talk with Dr. Mary, explaining to her why I wanted these drugs, but that I also respected her advice about how dangerous they might be. I knew the folks on the Board focused on cats with cancer and what they were saying made sense. One of the meds, [Zofran](#) ^[3], had questionable results, but of the two, the other being [Cerenia](#) ^[4], we decided it would be safer. I can't tell you how many medications we almost gave Gracie or did give Gracie. I kept a log so I could keep it straight. I was sleeping very little and had completely lost my appetite I was so stressed out. I tried not to second-guess what I was being told, but I had to make sure it made sense. I don't like to give my cats any drugs and here I was loading Gracie up with them.

Gracie did not like to be pilled, but we had to make it happen. I tried all my tricks but we had to hold her down and struggle to get the medications into her. I felt like I was betraying her by treating her roughly. Immediately after we pilled her I insisted that we spend time brushing her, which she loved, and simply being gentle and loving with her make up for what we'd just done. Gracie seemed to relax and appreciate our efforts.

That night I got a text from a friend. I was feeling so down and lost. I'd given up. She gave me a kick in the behind, reminding me that maybe it wasn't such a bad idea to try getting a transfusion done. We'd promised to keep Gracie going for a few more days and it would certainly help her feel so much better. I feared the costs, but knew she was right. If Gracie didn't make it to Monday and we got the test results and it **WAS** something treatable I'd never forgive myself.

Tough I couldn't imagine this not being cancer, I also didn't want to give up. That's not me, but I was so beat down I needed that push to keep going. I'd even made an appointment for Gracie to see the oncologist, Dr. Gerald Post, on the following Wednesday, just in case things didn't go as I feared. We had to keep trying.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. *Waiting for the results while Sam comforts her.*

Poor Sam. He was scrambling to get some work done and I'd already taken up some much of his time, but I was so buoyed by my friend's advice that I had to talk to him about getting the transfusion done. I called over to our ER Vet and asked about costs. If I took a few dollars from here and used a credit card or two I could make it happen. We decided to give it one last try.

I called my dear friend Connie who's had transfusions done on a few of her cats. She told me what to expect and that it could make a big difference. **She also said that it might take the full night, into the next morning to have it done and did**

I want to give up that precious time to Gracie being at the vet or did I want her to be home? She explained that it WOULD help her feel better and that the reason it took so long was that some of the time was spent in cross-matching and typing Gracie's blood and that sometimes they used a blood donor who is on site at the hospital and it takes time to get the blood from the other cat. I realized that meant another cat was going to help my cat survive. Even though we have Gracie's daughter here, Petunia is too skittish to sit still for a multi-hour procedure. As I gathered Gracie's vet records I grabbed a new catnip banana toy. I decided that the donor cat should have a token of my appreciation. *You can't have enough good Karma.*

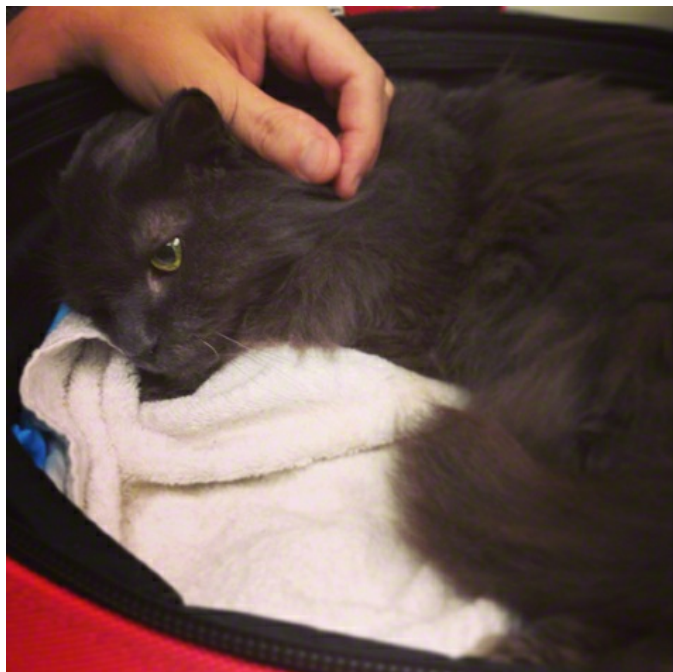
Gracie was very weak and quiet. It only took a few minutes to get to the hospital and within a half hour or so we were seeing the ER Vet on call. We talked to him about our intentions-*we just wanted to give our cat good quality of life so that she'd live a few more days-until the test result came in.* That was it. **We weren't looking for a cure. We were looking for a way to give her ease her suffering.** He agreed that it would help her, but he also was concerned about the fluid in her abdomen. He felt that if it was blood it would not make the transfusion worthwhile. He asked if he could take a sample of the fluid (*since removing the fluid was dangerous because it could drop her blood pressure down too low. We could only take a small amount of fluid for that reason*) and we agreed.

Once again I was hoping for something-that the fluid was clear, not full of blood. It made me sad to think that the longer this went on, the less I could hope for. I just hoped to give my cat comfort in her final few days.

The ER Vet entered the room holding a vile. He held it out to us and showed us it was full of blood. Gracie was bleeding internally either from a ruptured cyst or from the needle biopsy done a few days before. The blood was fresh so that meant she was actively bleeding. **He said a transfusion wouldn't help her; that emergency surgery might stop the bleeding but if her liver was full of cancer, which we suspected, then it didn't make sense to put her through that. He said that it might be best if we considered euthanizing her soon because she could either have a heart attack and die or because of the anemia she might simply become weaker and weaker and die in her sleep. He offered that they could "take care of her" in the back right now.** Sam and I did not hesitate to answer NO. Gracie was coming home. I was going to syringe-feed her and we were going to stay strong-not just for our benefit. Gracie was still "Gracie." No, she wasn't eating, but she had enough quality of life that we knew it wasn't time. We had to risk it and bring her home and not let her go in this sterile place.

We got Gracie home and I cried yet again. That was it. All hope was lost.

I was so emotionally tapped that I took medication to help me calm down. I have a tiny stash of it to use for when I have to fly somewhere. It's probably outdated but it was all I had. I could barely breathe I was so distraught, but I had to find a way to continue to be there for Gracie, and the meds let me do a better job.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. *After we got the news we decided to bring Gracie home, even if it meant risking her passing away.*

As I had on Saturday, on Sunday I syringe-fed Gracie. I liquefied raw chicken liver and added it to her food. I hoped the added iron would help her anemia. We gave her all her pills and she surprised us by grooming herself after she was fed. She was very tired and uncomfortable, but at least her belly was full. **Sam and I set up shop in the living room, which was where she was resting. We did not leave her alone.** I wanted to inflate our air mattress so I could sleep in the living room but I couldn't find the pump or nozzles. I was so frustrated, but I also realized I had to get at least some sleep and our sofa is not comfortable for naps. I decided I would just sleep for a few hours and get up very early to check on her. **I made Sam promise me that I wouldn't have to go downstairs alone. I didn't want to find Gracie dead on the floor.**

Reluctantly, I dragged myself to bed Sunday night. Before I went upstairs I gave Gracie a kiss and told her *I loved her and to*

not give up.

I think she was listening.

Part 4 is next...*Cytology results and the 10% chance it's not what we think it is.*

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[Announcements](#) ^[5]

[Disease](#) ^[6]

[Gracie](#) ^[7]

[Vets](#) ^[8]

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[2] <http://coveredincathair.com/content/staying-strong-gracie-part-2-hell>

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[7] <https://coveredincathair.com/taxonomy/term/59>

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