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Staying Strong for Gracie. Part 4. The 10 Percent Chance.

Thu, 2015-09-10 11:12 — Robin Olson

(Continued from Parts [1](#) ^[1], [2](#) ^[2] and [3](#) ^[3])

Monday morning I got up at 5 AM. I didn't bother Sam, deciding to let him sleep. I walked downstairs, my stomach in a tight knot. I looked around the corner and saw Gracie. She was sitting up. She meowed at me. She was HUNGRY.

I raced over to the kitchen and put some food on a plate, warmed it and added some water so she would stay hydrated. I sat next to her holding the plate in my hands. I noticed she seemed too painful bending over so I held the plate up high and she did better eating that way. The problem was she ate very slowly so I began to cramp up hunched over holding the plate. I didn't care. She was eating. **I knew it was likely just the medication making her do that but I couldn't help but think that "every bite is a victory."** I knew that good nutrition would possibly help her recover from the anemia and that would go a long way to helping her be comfortable.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. Gracie laps at her food.

I got Gracie brushed, gave her fresh water, and cleaned her litter pan. I found she was ready to eat a small amount every 5 hours or so and I was determined to keep her fed. Whatever she wanted she was going to get. The more she ate, the better for her anemia.

Meanwhile, I was falling apart.

I couldn't think. It was a joke to try to work and I was working on a design project that may be one of the highlights of my career. The pressure of not tending to my job wasn't enough to get me into gear. If I had to give up this project, so be it. How could I be creative when my cat was in the next room dying?

I couldn't concentrate, so reading was out of the question. I didn't answer emails. I didn't want to go on Facebook and see more sad stories. I had to force myself to eat something—*scrambled eggs was all I could choke down*. I couldn't sit by the TV and eat. Gracie was right there. I couldn't look at my cat and eat breakfast and I didn't want the sound of the TV to bother her. I went upstairs and grabbed my old iPad. I sat on the bed with my eggs and started watching *Fraiser* ^[4], a TV-show from the early 1990s. It didn't require any effort to watch the episodes and there were over 200 of them in the queue. I could zone out and let Kelsey Grammer help me forget about how terrible things were for 22 minutes, though nothing loosened the knot in my gut.

Gracie's Cytology Report Arrives

I forced myself to check my email inbox. There was a message from Pieper Memorial waiting to be read. I knew it was Gracie's ultrasound report. I didn't want to read it, but I had no choice. I opened the file and began to read. Other than words like "and" or "the" all the other words were very long, technical jargon. I believed it said that basically there was a good sample of

a cyst taken. That there was activity indicating a reaction to possibly some sort of thing...infection maybe? That a cyst or more had ruptured and was bleeding.

What grabbed me was the following:

“The hepatocytes [liver tissue] present are minimally pleomorphic [bacteria that alter their shape and size in response to environmental conditions], and well-differentiated, with no evidence of neoplasia ^[5] (benign or malignant cancer).”

Neoplasia=CANCER. NO EVIDENCE OF CANCER.

COMMENT:

The hepatocytes present are minimally pleomorphic, and well-differentiated, with no evidence of neoplasia. The background is medium blue and proteinaceous, consistent with aspiration of a cystic lesion, as described in the clinical abstract, and there is mild mixed inflammation and hemorrhage. No infectious organisms are seen. Histopathology may be required for appreciation of tissue architecture to further characterize the cystic lesions in this patient's liver.

I showed the report to Connie, to Katherine, to Warren, to Sam, to the folks on the SmallCell Lymphoma Board and they all said the same thing. **No cancer is NO CANCER. Could it be true?!**

By Monday evening Gracie continued to show signs of perking up. She sat up a little more, looked a little more comfortable. She wasn't eating a lot but I stopped syringe-feeding her. **We had to decide what to do about Tuesday's appointment. Gracie seemed a bit better but maybe we were kidding ourselves and we still had to do what needed to be done.**

Dr. Larry called to go over the cytology results with me. I was so excited that it wasn't cancer until he said that he HAD to speak with Dr. Sean before he could feel like we were out of the woods and that Gracie had cysts in her liver that weren't cancer. **My joy quickly faded when he said that Dr. Sean might feel his sample wasn't perfect or that even WITH a good sample that there was still a cancer diagnosis hanging over us. He needed more time to reach Dr. Sean and since Gracie seemed stable, though weak, he would NOT put her down, not if she was showing improvement. She wasn't ready to leave us just yet.**

I was torn in two. I was so glad we didn't have to let Gracie go, but I still had no answers. It might be a few more days and maybe we were just dragging out the inevitable. That said, every day I could give Gracie meant something even if I was having a hard time handling it. This was not about me. It was about my cat.

Tuesday

Tuesday at 2pm arrived. **I was sitting with Gracie, watching her take dainty licks at her food instead of watching Dr. Larry put her down. Starting from this moment on was “bonus time” for us both.** I wanted to see her get better. I wanted a WIN! I didn't want my cat to die soon, but I also didn't have a lot of hope.

Dr. Larry called again later that day. He'd reached Dr. Sean. Before he said much, I already knew it was bad news. **I could tell from Dr. Larry's tone of voice. He wasn't his usual jovial self. He was very serious-deadly serious.**

He said that although Dr. Sean had gotten a great sample and there was no sign of cancer, that based on her abdominal fluid, the blood in her belly, the many cysts seen on ultrasound that it was likely that this was something very bad. Paraphrasing his conversation he said that Dr. Sean was feeling it was 90% chance it was cancer and 10% chance it was benign cysts. Dr. Larry, always my friend, gave me as much hope as he dared. He said he was 75% sure and maybe only 25% chance it wasn't malignant.

I asked if we should keep our appointment with the oncologist and he said **YES**. We needed a diagnosis and Dr. Post was the guy to give that to us. We **HAD** to keep trying as long as Gracie was stable.

It wasn't what I was hoping for, but I wasn't surprised, either. Though I hold Dr. Post in VERY high regard, I knew we also had to be prepared for the costs to put us in a place where we couldn't afford to care for Gracie. I checked all my accounts and decided I could stitch something together. If I had to, I'd take the last bits out of my retirement account, but I hoped I wouldn't have to go there. I couldn't be reckless, but I could provide more for a little while longer.

Wednesday

The Veterinary Cancer Center ^[6] is an hour west, near where my rescue-friend Katherine lives. She and my other dear rescue-friend, Connie had been in contact with me every day, checking on Gracie, offering advice. I told Katherine about our appointment, in case she wanted to meet us at the cancer center. **I needed all my friends more than ever as we were about to get the news I'd been dreading for a week.**

Part 5 is next. Yes, this is a long story, but imagine having to live through it! And this final chapter is the one where as a writer you dream of being able to write an ending like this.

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Comments

Thu, 2015-09-10 13:30 — jmuuhj (not verified)

RE: GRACIE ^[12]

PRAYERS and looking forward to Part 5.

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[3] <http://coveredincathair.com/content/staying-strong-gracie-part-3-and-back>

[4] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Frasier>

[5] <http://www.pethealthnetwork.com/cat-health/cat-diseases-conditions-a-z/neoplasia-cats>

[6] <http://www.vcchope.com/>

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