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Staying Strong for Gracie. Part 6. Too Close.

Tue, 2015-10-06 18:31 — Robin Olson

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Words fail me. I can't eat. I lost 5 lbs in 4 days. I don't have the brain-function to work. I can't sleep. I'm terrified that I'm going to find my cat, Gracie dead.

Every morning I wonder if I'll see Gracie lying strangely still on her heated bed in the living room, where she spends most of her day. Every morning I hope I'm wrong and that she'll be okay, sitting up, hungry. Even better, will she be in the kitchen meowing at me to be fed? Or worse, will she be quietly sitting in a "meatloaf" position that tells me she's in pain and doesn't want to eat even though her last meal was so many hours ago.

The ups and downs of Gracie's health crisis are taking a toll, while Sam and I are working so hard to get a definitive diagnosis of what has been causing Gracie's hemorrhaging and serious anemia. We've seen an oncologist, three general practitioners, and two Board Certified specialists. We thought we had a diagnosis of [biliarycystadenoma](#) ^[6] and while that may be partially true, it wouldn't cause Gracie's other issues.

A week ago Gracie wasn't doing as well as I'd hoped, so I brought her in to see Dr. Larry. Her blood work showed the anemia was back and Dr. Larry could feel that Gracie's liver still felt enlarged. I was shocked and scared. He asked if we could do yet another ultrasound to find out what was going on. I was reluctant because I didn't think we'd find anything out, but he reminded me that we'd see if the bleeding was worse and if the liver looked bigger or smaller. We had to act fast, but I was already exhausted and couldn't face the idea of making the hour-long drive. Sam had worked all night to make up for all the time he's been on Vet runs with me and unable to work. How could we make this happen?

Super-Deb and I made calls, trying to find a place to do the ultrasound. In the end I realized we had to go see Dr. Sean, who did Gracie's previous procedure. I was able to get an appointment two days later, but what I wasn't ready for was that we ended up being at the hospital all day.

Gracie's appointment went quickly, but Dr. Sean strongly felt we needed to meet with an Internist to discuss his findings. It was 11:30 AM, but she couldn't see us until 3:00 PM. Did we want to wait? Neither of us wanted to drive over an hour back home, turn around and come back so we opted to wait. Sitting in a waiting room with nothing but a blaring TV and patients with their pets in different states of decline was not my idea of a good time. Sam and I both just wanted to sleep. Gracie was in her carrier between us. We had the top unzipped and we were both gently petting her. I knew she wasn't strong enough to run off, so we each took turns closing our eyes for a few minutes at a time.

Dr. Carolyn finally came to get us a little after 3 PM. She seemed very clever and was eager to give us her take on what she thought was Gracie's issue. We were all looking at Gracie's liver, but no one bothered with the fact that Gracie's spleen also had a strange shape that was seen on ultrasound. Something was wrong with it, too and no one had even considered it as part of the equation. Dr. G carefully described how Mast Cell cancer could be in the spleen and be the culprit. Gracie could also have hemolytic anemia or a portal shunt that basically meant something was blocking blood flow from Gracie's digestive tract into her liver.

She further explained that she'd like to do another blood test on Gracie to make sure she could clot, that she'd do another type of blood test (*I forget what it's called*) that measures her blood differently and would tell us if she had the hemolytic anemia. Lastly she wanted to do a needle aspirate of Gracie's spleen to rule cancer in or out. I was having a bad flashback to a few weeks prior when we'd done the needle aspirate of Gracie's liver and Gracie was in terrible shape afterwards.

Dr. Carolyn added that Gracie should get a transfusion and stay overnight with the theory that the new blood would help her feel better and give us more time to find out what was going on. Once again we'd have to wait until the following Monday for the results. We just had to keep her going until we had more information.

We decided it all made sense and agreed to let her take Gracie. The bill for that day was \$1600.00.

The traffic was terrible going home and we didn't arrive until nearly 7 PM, to a house full of anxious cats who needed to be fed right away. We finally got everyone settled when my phone rang. It was Dr. Carolyn-

She asked me if something went wrong did I want them to do CPR on Gracie? I said YES if it was appropriate and if she could be revived, but why was I being asked this? Then Dr. Carolyn dropped the bomb: *Gracie was not doing well at all. The needle aspirate was done quickly but*

now Gracie was flat. She was rushing the transfusion and hoped it would be enough to help Gracie recover, but that she wasn't sure and that it didn't look too promising.

My gut hit the floor and I tried to choke back the tears. I told her to go; to take care of Gracie and not bother with me on the phone. I hung up and told Sam the bad news. **What made it unbearable is that we just did what we promised we would NOT do to Gracie—let her die alone, without us, surrounded by strangers.** I asked Sam if we should drive back to Middletown, to Gracie, to be there for her. I knew that even if we left right away, odds are we'd be too late. If she survived, they'd want to keep her there overnight so we decided to stay home.



©2015 Robin AF Olson. My sweet girl.

Less than an hour later, Dr. Carolyn called. Gracie had bounced back and was eating and up on her feet! Sam looked at me while I got the news. I gave him the thumbs up sign while I tried to choke back the tears, telling Dr. Carolyn to please give Gracie a kiss from us and that we'd see her in the morning.

I hung up the phone and sobbed. I cried so hard I started to hyperventilate. My heart felt really wonky and I knew I was in trouble. Sam sat near me and put his arm around me and helped me calm down. I couldn't stop saying; *We almost lost Gracie, but we didn't. She's still with us.* I was so grateful and relieved.

Gracie didn't come home the next morning. Dr. Carolyn wanted to keep her longer so we picked her up that night. Gracie seemed perkier and even ate for me when we got her home. I hoped the effects of the transfusion would last, but I also knew that Gracie's updated blood work showed she didn't bounce back as well as Dr. Carolyn would have hoped. I have the paperwork but I don't have the heart to even look at it. Knowing what that number is didn't change that Gracie survived the procedure. Frankly, I didn't know if I could take much more. I just wanted to sleep and feel certain that when I woke up Gracie would still be with us.

Part 7 is next...where we have to make a life or death decision for Gracie and I sure could use some advice on what to do.

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Comments

Wed, 2015-10-07 13:28 — jmuhj (not verified)

RE: GRACIE ^[12]

What a roller-coaster ride, that brings back a flood of memories involving several of our beloved ones. *PRAYERS* for Gracie and for you all; and in advance of Part 7, I would say that, unless she is in what you know to be untreatable and unrelievable pain/distress, to always keep hope and leave it in the best Hands (whatever your beliefs may be), knowing that we are not and should not presume to be in control over these matters.

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