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## Staying Strong for Gracie: Part 9. The Test.

Thu, 2015-10-22 19:50 — Robin Olson

*(Continued from Parts [1](#) <sup>[1]</sup>, [2](#) <sup>[2]</sup> and [3](#) <sup>[3]</sup>, [4](#) <sup>[4]</sup>, [5](#) <sup>[5]</sup>, [6](#) <sup>[6]</sup>, [7](#) <sup>[7]</sup> and [8](#) <sup>[8]</sup>)*

The morning of Gracie's liver biopsy arrived like a brick dropped onto my gut. Once again, I didn't want to get out of bed. It was only 6:30 AM and I'm not a morning person. Late the night before Sam and I decided we must do the biopsy and that due to the amount of work it takes to get the cats fed and cleaned up in the morning that I would stay behind while Sam drove Gracie to Pieper Memorial where the biopsy would take place.

In all honesty, though I feel I'm generally a brave person, I was so sick with worry that this was Gracie's last day on earth that I couldn't get in the car. I thought my heart would explode from the anguish of having to make choices over the past few months, not knowing what might be next because what ailed Gracie remained a mystery. I'd spent the past few days running scenarios in my head of what was killing my cat, how we could fix it, how she would do, how we would pay for it. I felt stupid wasting all this energy because I knew, in the end, it would never go how I imagined, but I figured if I thought of every scenario I would be ready for what was about to happen. I only knew what the game plan was: blood test, transfusion, biopsy, possible second transfusion if needed.

**I also knew that thanks to a lot of people, the night before we raised just enough money to cover the estimate for Gracie's procedure.** Even with that anxiety off my back I still had to take the last of my old Xanax. I had one and a half pills left. I decided to take a quarter of one so I could still drive, but when I tried to cut the pill down it didn't break properly and some of it disappeared onto the white tile floor. I took the tiny piece that was left and hoped it was enough to keep me from vomiting while leaving me clear-headed enough to be ready to take whatever action was needed for Gracie.

**We got Gracie into her carrier. I made sure she had clean towels lining it to keep her comfortable. I'd told her every night before I went to bed that I loved her, to fight this horror off, to make red blood cells, to feel better. I knelt down and kissed her head. I dropped my head lower and gently pressed it against hers for a precious moment. I said goodbye and good luck and that I would see her in a few hours. I really hoped that would be the case as Sam lifted her carrier and walked out to the car.**

I wondered if that was going to be the last time I saw Gracie alive. I choked back tears and tried to focus on the morning ritual of scooping litter pans and preparing breakfast for the cats. The familiarity of the routine comforted me, but my mind kept flashing forward to the what ifs of what was yet to come.

The medication made me feel sleepy and being tired already only intensified the effect. Once I was done with the chores I went back to bed. I sat on the bed with some of the cats deciding to join me. They seemed confused to see me in bed at this point in the day but were glad to snuggle close by and I was glad for their company.

Sam called from the road. The traffic was a horror and would I call the Vet and let them know he'd be a few minutes late. I made the call and sat back down on the bed, closing my eyes. I didn't want to fall asleep, per se, just rest quietly, try to calm my heart, try to think good thoughts. It was almost time. If things went according to plan I'd be leaving in a few hours to be there before the biopsy started. That was the most dangerous procedure Gracie would be having and I needed to be there before it began.

As I sat there, I let the medication calm me down and for a few moments everything was all right. But the phone rang a few minutes later and I jumped into alert. Sam said he was told to drop Gracie off and return home. The transfusion and blood test would take a few hours. There was no need to stay there. He added that to make matters worse most of the waiting area was under construction and there were plastic sheets hanging from the rafters and a lot of noise coming out from behind them.



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Since there was no way I was going to do any work that morning, I sat back against my pillows and tried to rest up. Here we go up the roller coaster track. Tic, tic, tic the cart goes up, up, up along the wooden planks as it aims for the zenith of the first rise before it hurtles downward into oblivion.

Sam had barely gotten home an hour later when the phone rang. It was Dr. Carolyn.

### **There would be no biopsy.**

**Gracie's blood work indicated although her anemia wasn't as bad, her platelet count and white blood cell count had dropped. This was a very bad sign.** A transfusion wouldn't help Gracie and it was too dangerous to do the biopsy. Dr. Carolyn wanted to know if we were interested in doing another needle biopsy, this time of Gracie's bone marrow. There was very little risk, only from the anesthesia, not the test itself, and though it wouldn't tell us everything, it might tell us enough to know what is going on.

They would do the test as soon as we could return. I was assured that Gracie was hanging out with the staff getting attention and that we shouldn't rush up there and that there was time to do the test once we arrived. I felt badly for Sam. He'd already been driving for two and a half hours and now he had to drive for another hour.

We made good time, but once in the parking lot I began to feel unsteady. I had to get this done. I couldn't fall apart now. We walked up the few steps and the automatic doors opened. The entry way was filled with long folding tables that were covered with computers, the wires dangling about like crazed serpents. The reception area was closed off with plastic sheets and the sounds of banging and drilling made the walls vibrate. We were told to go to the waiting area. The place we'd spent so many hours before. No one was there. The TV was blaring so we turned the sound off. We sat together and I leaned into Sam. He protectively put his arm around me. We didn't talk. We just sat there with the construction sounds the only thing keeping us company.



©2015 Robin A.F. Olson. With the sedation beginning to kick in Sam and I say our goodbyes to Gracie, hoping her biopsy would go well.

It took quite awhile before Dr. Carolyn came out. She's so young I feel like she could be my daughter. She was very polite and calming, letting us know what was going to happen next and what we could hope to expect. We nodded our heads, understanding there were risks, but that at this point we had to press on. Dr. Carolyn said she was going to give Gracie some sedation she referred to being like a twilight state, not deeply sedated. Since it took some time to work those minutes would be spent in an exam room with us. That way we'd have more time together.

**A few minutes later a Tech came out holding Gracie's cat carrier. She placed it on the floor and unzipped the top. Gracie looked small and ragged. We knelt down and began to pet her. We'd brought her favorite comb so we began to smooth out the rough areas from where they shaved her shoulder in preparation for her biopsy. They'd insert a needle into the bones in her shoulder so they had to clear the fur away. I hated that Gracie was slowly becoming bald from all the areas that had already been shaved. I wondered if her fur would ever grow back again as we did our best to comfort and soothe her.**

The exam room was for pets who had bone cancer. There was a bulletin board covered mostly with photos of dogs and only two cats. They were cheerful signs saying not to give up and how to find a support group. As a graphic designer I tried to make a joke about how bad the signs looked and Sam agreed. They really were quite awful, but I didn't feel like I could be funny right then.

Dr. Carolyn returned with four other staff members behind her. She introduced each one, saying this was Gracie's team and that they would make certain every precaution would be taken and that she would be carefully monitored. I could barely say thank you before I started to cry. I was grateful to see that everyone was ready to do their best for her, but it felt like too much all at once. I apologized for my tears and tried to cover it up by telling them to kick ass and do a great job.

**It was time. Now or never.**

*Coming up next...the test is performed but can Gracie ever come back home?*

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## Comments

Thu, 2015-10-22 20:12 — Jacki (not verified)

**[Sweet Gracie](#)** <sup>[14]</sup>

Oh, Robin. You made me cry while my Evil Plan Bureau stood looking up at me, as if to ask, "What's the matter, Food Lady?" Please know that my prayers are still strong for you, Sam, and especially sweet Gracie. I'm almost afraid to read the next chapter. Take care. Your girl is very loved.

Fri, 2015-10-23 14:20 — jmuhi (not verified)

**RE: GRACIE** <sup>[15]</sup>

Wow, a roller-coaster ride indeed. \*PRAYERS\* for beautiful Gracie. <3

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