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[Home](#) > The Unexpected Turn. For Freya. Part 6.

The Unexpected Turn. For Freya. Part 6.

Wed, 2014-11-12 20:14 — Robin Olson

Freya's asleep in the little pink cage that sits on the printer stand next to my desk. The sun has long since set and after a few hours of racing around the living room, followed by a snack, Freya's too tired to do more than soak up the warmth from the heated bed and purr herself to sleep.

It's been barely 48 hours since Freya and I returned from our 350 mile round trip to Boston to meet Dr. Pavletic at MSPCA Angell Animal Medical Center. Nothing happened the way I expected or feared. After all the tears and anxiety in the days leading up to the trip, I assumed this was "IT"—possibly the last days of her life before very risky surgery to correct her recto-vaginal fistula. I'd played out every scenario I could think of including that Dr. Pavletic would put it off, but since he'd reviewed Freya's 5 sets of radiographs (1 for every other week I've had her), blood work and exam notes from our local surgeon, Dr. Potanas, I thought if we were going all the way to Boston the decision being made was IF she was a good candidate at all, not that she was still too small to have it done in the first place.



©2014 Robin AF Olson. Silly girl after returning home from Boston.

I woke up at 5 AM the day of the trip because I wanted to feed Freya a few hours before we had to leave. That way she'd not get sick while in the car—at least that was the idea. I didn't sleep well that night, if at all. I know I dreamt so that means I slept but I also felt like an athlete, ready to jump out of bed at any second and start a race. I was on the alert, positive there was NO WAY I was going to miss the 11 AM appointment even though it meant blasting through rush hour in both Waterbury, CT and Hartford, CT on the way to Boston. With so many variables with traffic I opted to give the normally 3 hour or so drive 4 hours. It would allow me to pit stop if needed, too. **With a kitten leaking stool I had no idea how messy it was going to get for Freya, my car or even myself as I struggled to keep her clean.**

Freya's pink cage was on the passenger seat of my car. I had it rigged up so it wouldn't tip over. A 30 lb container of ice melt was just the right size to place on the floor so the cage could rest on it where it left the edge of the seat. The cage was familiar to Freya so I hoped it would help keep her comfortable for the long drive.

©2014 Robin AF Olson. *My wish for Freya.*

As much as my heart was in my throat and as much as I was terrified to leave, I put my car into first gear and headed out the driveway a few minutes after 7 AM.

After the first hour and first traffic jam was passed, I stopped the car at a rest area to clean Freya up. She wasn't too bad, but needed her towel refreshed. She'd waxed and waned between being completely miserable and silent to meowing at me and playing with a toy I had dangling into her cage. I was able to slip a few fingers between the bars as I drove along, to stroke her face while she looked up at me with such sadness. I talked to her about why we were driving so far away and how important this was to her future. **She grunted back in reply, another uncomfortable contraction raced through her. She was trying to move stool, but I knew it wouldn't result in much. I thought about how this surgery couldn't happen soon enough. I'd see her x-rays over the months and they continued to show a continual build-up of stool inside her. I wished I could give her that relief. In some way this trip was my only way to do that—IF Dr. Pavletic would do the surgery.**

About 30 minutes before we arrived at MSPCA-Angell, Freya began to grunt and whine in earnest. Stool was coming out in tiny drips but she was laying in an ever more disturbing position. The traffic in Boston was terrible. There was nothing I could do until we got to Angell. **Poor Freya just laid there and groaned.**



©2014 Robin AF Olson. *At last.*

We reached Angell by 10:30 AM, but it took me a long while to get Freya out of the car, then load up all her towels, paper towels, medical records and the like before I could get her into the bathroom to wash her off. She was in one of her "wet phases" where she pushes and pushes until she's moved enough liquidy stool to feel comfortable again. I kept having to return to the bathroom to rinse her off, careful not to get stool all over myself in the process. **She continued to move stool but this was very watery so it bled through the towels.**

My friend Laurie, who adopted two kitties from us, met me at Angell since she lives a few miles away. She helped me attempt to keep Freya calm and clean but it wasn't possible to do much since Freya kept pushing. **She was so tired she eventually fell asleep for a short time in my arms as I tried not to show how panicked I felt that it was almost time to get the answers we'd all been waiting so long for.**



©2014 Robin AF Olson. Wiped out from the trip and from feeling dreadful, Freya rests while we wait for Dr. Pavletic to arrive.

It was almost 11:30 AM before Dr. Pavletic finally entered the cats only waiting area to escort Freya and me into his exam room.

This should have been the big, heart-pounding zenith of our story, but the air came out of it fairly quickly. Dr. Pavletic did a quick exam of Freya as his Vet Tech, Michelle tapped notes into a laptop. He excused himself to go look at Freya's radiographs while I was left to look at poor Freya who was completely filthy from a giant, wet "blow out."



©2014 Robin AF Olson. A very good girl considering how "probing" the exam was.

Michelle helped me get Freya cleaned up and returned to her cat carrier. Here I thought she was going to have a long exam, we'd go over her history, he'd ask lots of questions, but he came back into the room and asked me if I had questions (*I did*). He already seemed to have a game plan in mind—of course. He's been a surgeon for 30 years. This may be rote for him, but I could barely ask my first question: "Is Freya a candidate for surgery?"

He answered by telling me what the surgery would entail. It all depended on factors we couldn't know about until the surgery was started. **He felt that it was possible Freya did have a rectum just on the other side of her skin, just above the opening of her vagina, as in all cats. If that was the case he could pull it out and attach it to her, but then it gets tough because he'd have to go INSIDE her colon to FIND the beginning of the fistula (the abnormal connection between her rectum and her vagina). If the opening wasn't too far inside her he could stitch it closed. Then he'd dilate her vagina and find the end of the fistula and stitch that closed.**

The stitches might not hold, they might tear, they might allow stool into her abdomen and she could die from sepsis.

He also told me that odds were that Freya would always be incontinent but she might be able to at least pass stool. He mentioned that many people would not consider her adoptable and that **euthanization** would be an option at that point.

I stopped him from going further and told him that without ANY doubt we wanted Freya to live. Where or how she passed stool-we didn't really care. If she was happy and having fun we'd deal with the rest. He seemed maybe not relieved by my words but willing to drop it and move forward.



©2014 Robin AF Olson. Freya uses her cuteness to intensify her spell over me.

There were more risks listed and a possible second and third surgery to be done depending on how things worked out. It would happen either separately or possibly two procedures during the same session. One surgery after the fistula repair could be to put a "twist" into her colon to help her have the muscle strength to push stool out and another surgery to possibly remove the megacolon she might develop from having her colon stretched so much over all this time.

But then the bomb dropped-he very matter-of-factly said he wanted to wait two months and see if she was big enough then. I couldn't understand why I'd come all this way to have it delayed. Couldn't he have made the call after seeing all her records?

He said he'd done the surgery a few times and one cat was continent and 3 or 4 were not. He never talked about any of them dying and by then I was too blank to think because I had made a hotel reservation and I had to sort out how I was going to get out of paying for it now that it was too late to cancel it. I admit to feeling a bit irked because I had planned on taking a day OFF to just go to a museum and eat a nice meal while Freya was resting before her surgery the next day. I was exhausted and I wanted to rest. **I wanted a day off, but now there was no reason to stay in Boston at all.**



©2014 Robin AF Olson. As it should be-not a care in the world.

Freya needed her Platelet test re-done so they took her from me and I walked out to the waiting room with Dr. Pavletic. I made a few jokes which he appreciated. He said his job was very tough and laughter was one of the few ways to manage the stress. I agreed with him and told him there was plenty more where that came from. I wished I could have connected better with him, but we really didn't have the time. I told him I was very grateful and honored to meet him and that I'd keep him posted on Freya's status until we met again.

He told me he realized this is a careful balance. **We need Freya to get bigger, but we can't let her keep filing up with**

stool to the point where it becomes emergency surgery. **"We don't want her to come here in crisis,"** to which I quickly agreed.

At that moment I re-dedicated myself to finding a better diet for Freya now that I had time. As I waited for Freya's return I called the hotel, scared they'd still charge me the full rate for my room. As soon as I mentioned I'd need to return to Boston in January Ryan, the front desk guy, easily changed my reservation to the new dates. **I was free to go back to Sandy Hook after only being in Boston for two hours.**



©2014 Robin AF Olson. *Not the best snack.*

I also had time to research if we could do a 3-D model of her anatomy. Dr. Pavletic was all for doing that, but the trick is HOW to do it. We'd have to do a very expensive CT Scan first and that would also require Freya to be very lightly and briefly sedated. After that we'd take the data and it would have to be translated into a file format that the 3-D printer could read, but IS there software that does it? I guess I'll find out. **No one has modeled soft tissue like this before, but we're talking about Freya so we must find a way.**



©2014 Robin AF Olson. *Cross-eyed, bowlegged, rectum or not, what's not to love.*

As for myself, on the very long drive home, I thought a lot about how this was going to effect my life. Freya takes up one of my two foster rooms. It will really impair my ability to move cats to CT from Georgia. I need to do a better job getting our foster kittens (*who are HUGE NOW*) adopted. I have to work harder somehow and be more effective. **I can't give up on Freya because I didn't factor her being her for months on end. I love her and she brings me great joy between all the tears and fear about her future.** She doesn't know she has multiple birth defects. She just knows love and joy and sadly a great deal of discomfort from time to time, but with any luck, we'll try again in January and maybe this time will be her time.

Until then I'm going to love her like crazy.

©2014 Robin AF Olson. Sweetness from the Sweetess.

#ForFreya

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Thu, 2014-11-13 10:21 — Chrisa (not verified)

You & Freya ^[2]

I just want to hug you Karin. I feel every single word you wrote and so hope waiting will be the positive, not the negative. The dynamics of this is overwhelming and truthfully, I don't think just anyone could go thru this situation with as much grace, love, and compassion as you have. Albeit words, you have many supportors that are behind you mentally and in their hearts. Of course those are just words in the sense, of how much hands on help you need vs someone 2500 miles away rooting for Freya and you.

God Bless. Kisses and hugs to baby girl and love all around to you both.

Thu, 2014-11-13 15:44 — Jeanne B (not verified)

Beautiful Freya ^[3]

She's such a beautiful kitten, I'm hoping for the best for her. I think she might be "yours", though, after all of this.

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