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We Owe it to Chloe

Mon, 2013-03-25 11:38 — Robin Olson

Chloe sits in the center of the living room. I can't see her back legs from where I'm sitting, a few feet away. Her front legs are comically dwarfed, little white mitts, in comparison to the rest of her body.

Chloe weighs 30 pounds. She's so fat her shape is reduced to that of a blob with a cat head stuck on one end and a tail at the other.

It's completely heartbreaking to look at her.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. Look, but don't touch.

I met Chloe last week after getting a number of calls from my Vet, the Animal Control Officer in town and a woman who is friends with Chloe's guardian. **The story I got was that the guardian, who I will call Dave, was calling our ACO and Vet to find out if he could get someone to come over to euthanize his cat.**

Upon further discussion it was disclosed the Chloe had been biting people and that Dave, being basically house-bound and disabled, had to get rid of the cat because his caretaker was making a fuss about her.

First, the caretaker said he was allergic ONLY to Chloe and not Lucy, the other cat in the home. If you find that as bizarre as I do, then join the club.

Obviously there were other reasons why the caretaker wanted to end Chloe's life, but I couldn't know the reason until I learned more.

The ACO said she might have to put the cat down if it was a biter. She couldn't be adopted if she was going to hurt a future adopter. **Chloe was at least 10 years old, if not older, and the odds of finding her any home were slim to none, even if she was a Siamese under all that extra weight.**

I offered to go to the home to assess the cat. We could hear stories about her, but I needed to see her for myself. **I was told the cat was chubby, but I had no idea how grossly obese she was until I met her.**



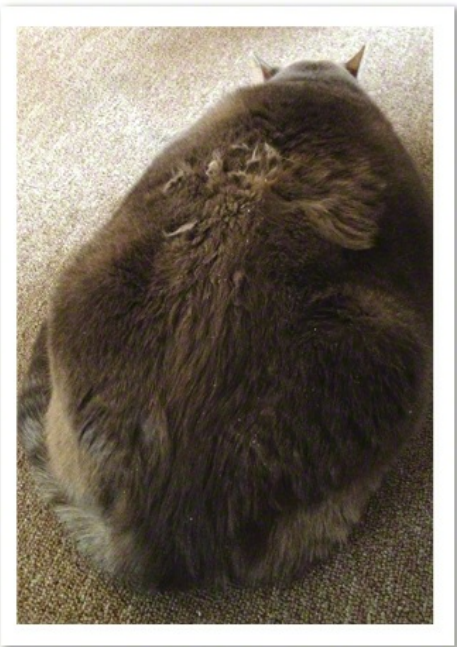
©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. *Chole's back fur is quite matted and I'm sure causing her some discomfort.*

I visited Dave, along with his friend, Frances (*not her real name*). **She'd met Chloe many times, but was hard pressed to describe her behavior to me, which I found very puzzling. Is the cat friendly or not? What's the deal here?**

I entered the small living room of the 1-bedroom apartment. Chloe was sitting on the top of the sofa. As I walked into the room and sat down on a nearby chair, she came over to say hello.

She looked up at me with big round blue eyes. Her head is so out of proportion with her body that I wanted to laugh, but my mirth was short-lived. She approached me in such a friendly way that I put out my hand, back of my hand first, not with fingers in her face, to offer her a sniff of my hand. The second she sniffed me she backed away, growling and hissing. She made motion as if she was going to strike me so I sat back in my chair and made sure I didn't give her any threatening eye contact.

I let her settle down. She sat in the center of the room, commanding the space. She growled softly, which turned into a whine, then back to a growl. **Her ears were not flat. Her tail didn't whip up and down in anger. Her pupils were dilated.** I made no move to touch her.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. *There IS a cat under there, somewhere.*

I spoke with Dave and got some history on the cat. He'd gotten her a few years ago from a woman in Fairfield. **Chloe supposedly slept on his chest and would tap him to get petted. That the day before three Missionaries had come to visit, all men, and she had been fine with them, so why was she so distressed by me?**

We talked about food. **He said he got really good food (*not even close to good-in my opinion*) for the cats, some sort of house brand dry and that was it.** Clearly this cat was being given a huge bowl of food to snack on day and night. She could barely walk. **I imagined that part of her fear was that she was too fat to flee, should I be a threat to her. She might also be in a lot of pain from carrying so much weight on her bones.**

I'd worked out a deal with my dear friend, Katherine from Animals in Distress. **We would get the cat vetted, then re-assess her behavior at that time. We owed it to Chloe to give her a chance to stabilize her weight and behavior before making any other decisions about her future.**

Right or wrong, I believe there is a home for every cat. Some cats need a lot more time in foster care to be ready for that home and clearly Chloe might be the toughest case any of us have ever faced.

It's one thing to deal with a feral cat, but a fearful cat is a different thing altogether.

Add to that the news that Chloe was DECLAWED made me realize we were faced with an even more difficult task. Not only couldn't Chloe run away, she couldn't even scratch her opponent! All she could do was BITE. No WONDER she was biting people!

Our choices were to either put Chloe down or give her a chance. Katherine and I chose to give her some time. **The problem is we needed a foster home for Chloe and Katherine had to sacrifice the last precious space she has left in her home that doesn't already have cats in it. It wasn't ideal, but for now it's all we had.** No one would step up to take this cat and most of my fosters are sick and I know I'd have her with me forever and I just couldn't do that to my cats. At least Katherine might be able to put Chloe into their shelter if she was ever well enough to go there.

A few days later, Chloe was taken to the Vet. **I don't know how they managed, but they did get blood work done and there was nothing indicating her thyroid was off, which could have caused her emotional issues, or that she was diabetic, which was surprising.** I don't know if the Vet looked at her teeth, but Chloe probably had some painful gums, at least, from all the junky food.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. *Oh dear, dear, Chloe.*

Katherine brought Chloe home and placed her in a bathroom where she'd be living until we could get her settled. **It's unlikely we'd find her a foster home with her behavior issues, at least for now.**

I got an update on Chloe. She's doing about as bad as any of us had feared. She is SO FEARFUL that she urinates and defecates on herself if she SEES Katherine or if Katherine tries to clean Chloe off.

Last night, Chloe BIT Katherine through her jeans, into her leg.

All Katherine was doing was trying to help Chloe feel more comfortable and clean. **She called me, distressed, but laughing through her irritation. I felt so badly, but I hadn't told Katherine anything other than the truth-the cat was NOT adoptable right now, but that we should at least try to give her a chance to blossom.** These would be the worst days-hopefully better ones would follow.

I contacted my friend, Wendy Christensen, who is an award-winning author and illustrator. Her books include *The Humane Society of the United States Complete Guide to Cat Care*. She's written for *Cat Fancy*, *Kittens USA*, *Catnip*, *CatWatch*, *Natural Cat*, and *Natural Pet*. **Wendy is one of my go-to people when I have a cat behavior issue that stumps me. Because she's not directly involved with Chloe, I knew she could offer me perspective without any bias one way or the other.**

Wendy wrote me back, a very long email. She was very troubled by what she was told about Chloe. She said what I also feared, it's very likely that Chloe has been abused.

Wendy wrote: **"I would concur that she's probably been abused. What she needs more than anything else is peace and quiet and a calm, stable environment. She is just too stressed to deal with any human interaction right now. I know it sounds "cruel," but she needs to be left alone to get some of her confidence back, stabilize and heal for awhile. She needs to be alone so she can start to feel safe again.**

Her size has clearly made it very hard for her to move about and escape whatever peril she was placed in. **Escapability is primary for cats' mental health. She has felt (and still feels) utterly trapped and at the mercy of others -- possibly the worst thing a cat can experience.** She is in a super-super-sensitive frame of mind. She doesn't need a lot of space, but she **DOES** need safety, peace, quiet, stability, and predictability."

Wendy said it was if Chloe has PTSD from what happened to her. Wendy's heart was broken to know this cat was suffering so much and suggested we do not touch her AT ALL, even if she gets a bit soiled. Whatever happened to Chloe had deeply traumatized her.



©2013 Robin A.F. Olson. *With pupils dilated with fear, Chloe readies herself to strike, but I can't help wanting to pet her and soothe her anxiety, regardless.*

Of course, my first thought was, that the caretaker who hated this cat and wanted her put to sleep was responsible. **What was he doing to her when no one was looking?**

There's no way to know if he ever even lifted a finger to Chloe, but it certainly makes sense. There's no way to know that Dave wasn't the one who harmed her either, but clearly **something terrible happened to Chloe and now she needs us to understand that and give her the space she needs to heal.**

And then there's the other cat in the home, Lucy; Lucy who is so friendly and outgoing. **What will become of her? We need to get her out of this place, too.** It's only a matter of time before she is so big she can't walk either, or so sick from never being vetted that she dies.

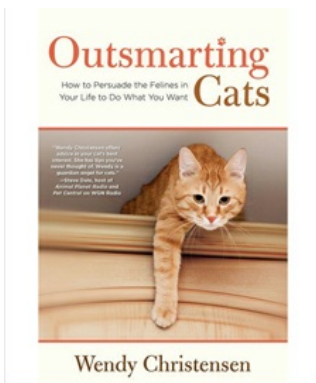
Our first goal is to focus on Chloe and hope her sweet nature will emerge one day. I saw a flicker of that sweetness the first moment I met her. She's suffering from crippling fear brought on by abuse.

With the gentle guidance of Katherine, and with lots of TLC, I hope that one day I can write about Chloe's amazing recovery. Right now all we can do is pray for a happy outcome because right now Chloe's life hangs in the balance.

I realize this is a long-shot, but if you live in the Wilton, CT area and have lots of experience working with cats, if you can provide a SEPARATE space in your home that's quiet and safe and you're willing to basically just keep Chloe fed, but otherwise left alone, please contact me: info@coveredincathair.com ^[1]

Chloe is going to need long-term care. If you'd like to make a donation to help Chloe, please donate via PayPal [HERE](#) ^[2]. **Animals in Distress is a 501(c) 3, non-profit so your donation is tax deductible.**

Wendy has recently begun offering fee-based cat behavior consultations. If you're in need of her services, please contact wendy@wendycats.com ^[3] for details



Another resources for help with cat behavior issues, is Wendy's latest book: ***Outsmarting Cats: How to Persuade the Felines in Your Life to do What You Want*** ^[4] which was just published earlier this month.

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Comments

Mon, 2013-03-25 12:42 — Ron Murray (not verified)

I wonder ^[19]

I wonder if Chloe has a problem with women (possibly by being abused by one)? One of our kitties, Smokey, used to live in the apartment above us, with a woman and her young son. The son loved the kitty, but the woman (who was not very friendly to people either) didn't, by all accounts. One day she just threw Smokey out and wouldn't let him back in, and a week later she moved out. When we found him, he was pretty thin because, being a love bug, he couldn't fend for himself. Then, for a couple of months, he wouldn't go near my wife, but he'd follow me around, meowing. Still does, almost eight years later, but he loves my wife too, now.

Since Chloe seemed to be ok with her human, and even with a couple of (male) missionaries, see how she goes with a guy?

Mon, 2013-03-25 12:44 — Connie & The Crew (not verified)

rescue remedy.. and spirit ^[20]

rescue remedy.. and spirit essences would do a world of good, but if she really is PTSD, than I would be thinking some prescription chemical help - which you would be hard pressed to give her if you can't touch her.

I'm not against leaving poor Chloe alone, but I'm not for solitary confinement. When I have fosters that are freaked out by me, I show up every day very regularly and "impose" myself on them but do not force. I go in, I explain what I am doing and why I am doing it even if I'm just reading a book. I will even tell them what to expect the next time I come in the room. (in the morning I'll be back and I'll give you breakfast, and hopefully you'll come up and see me, but if not that is OK too. Then I'll scoop your box just as I did this evening, and I'll change out your water bowl.. etc) and I ask permission to touch. if I get a clear no, I respect that. if you don't get a clear answer, go slowly until you get a "no" at which point stop, thank the kitty for letting you try, and ask if you can try again later. And try again later.. ask for permission, etc..

I'm also not above telling the cat which behaviors I like and which ones I wish they wouldn't do. When I had the cat that bit me because she didn't understand I wasn't another cat, when she sat calmly I praised her, when she tried to wrestle with me (you can see it in their eyes before they start) I would calmly tell her that I would prefer she not do that. I never frame a cat's action as negative. A cat is a cat, and they do cat things. They don't understand 'bad' but they can understand you prefer x over y and can adjust accordingly. I do believe cats want to please people (just not as obviously as dogs) and if you can help them understand what you like it helps a lot. Sometimes when they are so far gone they don't really give a flying mouse what you want, and that is totally understandable, you just have to keep working on making yourself valuable to the kitty again, remind them that the world isn't going to attack them for no reason.. (which if she was hit and abused, she has no idea why and it came out of no where with no warning and she learned she couldn't trust)

Good luck with her. I do wish i was in a position to help more directly.

Mon, 2013-03-25 14:26 — [Robin Olson](#) [21]

Not alone... [22]

Chloe will not be left alone with no contact. Katherine spends time with her every day, but she will not engage Chloe right now, just be in the same space, clean the litter pan, things like that, so Chloe knows someone is around but that they won't hurt her. I know Chloe can learn to love Katherine. I saw the sparkle in her eyes when I first met her. We just have to find a way for her to open the door to us and feel confident about doing so again. :-)

Mon, 2013-03-25 13:04 — Jen (not verified)

Poor baby girl :-(My heart [23]

Poor baby girl :-(My heart breaks for this angel. I will pray for her and pray that someone steps forward to help this baby and give her all the time and support she needs.

Mon, 2013-03-25 14:28 — [Robin Olson](#) [21]

Chloe and Men [24]

Yes, it did occur to us that Chloe may have been harmed by a woman, so that is definitely something we will keep in mind going forward. If we need to have a male figure in her life to help her blossom, then we will find someone who can volunteer to help us. It's def worth looking into.

Mon, 2013-03-25 15:50 — Ron Murray (not verified)

Re: Chloe and men [25]

I'd volunteer myself, but I'm a bit far away (in eastern Massachusetts). I do feel sorry for her, and I hope she feels better soon. She does look cute, even though obviously frightened.

Thank you for rescuing her.

Mon, 2013-03-25 14:51 — jmuhj (not verified)

RE: CHLOE [26]

My heart breaks for Chloe, a lovely cat and a sweet and loving one, as well, who has obviously been severely traumatized (Connie's comments above resonate with me -- do they with you?). *PRAYERS* for her to have the safe haven she needs and the time to adapt and slim down. Also that she be able to accept grooming, so her beautiful fur can be brushed and the mats combed out. She must be in almost continuous discomfort emotionally and physically! I'm going to share her story on my s/n pages and hope and pray the perfect person for her sees it and responds. Never give up! She deserves all the BEST -- she's obviously had so much less, for so long.

Mon, 2013-03-25 19:20 — JA mactavish (not verified)

Anal Gland? [27]

Hi Robin - I'm glad you are trying to help Chloe. She sounds like she needs all the help she can get, and I hope it all works out for all of you!

Two things struck me while reading your story; the first was that you didn't know if the vet had looked at her teeth. Dental pain can cause aggressive behavior, as you know. I also wondered if her anal glands had been checked and expressed? This came to mind because I was, actually, just about to write to you to thank you for the post you wrote about a year ago, when Gracie, I think it was, was found to have an impacted anal gland. I had Mouse checked right after, because of her aggressive behavior, and Speaker's odd behavior toward her in return, and she did have an impacted anal gland. She turned almost overnight from a grumpy, touchy, swatting cat, to a chipper little cat who bops around and makes mischief (although she'll always be semi-feral.)

Anyway, I know it's hard to consider every single thing that might be causing Chloe's behavior issues, but I wanted to remind you about the anal gland possibilities. Best of luck with everything!

Sincerely, Jynx

Tue, 2013-03-26 11:47 — [Robin Olson](#) [21]

Sweet Anal Glands! [28]

Jynx, YES..I remember that well..it was petunia and she is going in again TOMORROW to have hers checked out. Gracie had a problem as well but a recent check showed she was fine. Petunia is getting attacked again so I am hoping it's her glands and not something else. We'll see! Yes about Chloe's teeth. I have to ask Katherine about that... xoxo

Mon, 2013-03-25 20:42 — Laurie T (not verified)

Wow, what a story. I'm SO ^[29]

Wow, what a story. I'm SO glad you rescued her, and I hope you can take the other cat, too, before she suffers the same fate. Good canned food will steadily bring her weight down and I hope she will transition from dry to canned without any problems. I wonder if a cat companion might help her while she's taking a break from humans, too? She's used to having a friend.

We really need to move so we can have a cat-fostering room for situations like this...

Mon, 2013-03-25 23:33 — Catnymouse (not verified)

Maybe ^[30]

...just maybe this may be part of her problem.

<http://kinzisiejourney.blogspot.com/2009/08/first-day-of-rest-of-my-life.html> ^[31]

<http://kinzisiejourney.blogspot.com/2009/08/it-takes-two-to-tangoand-also-to-pin.html> ^[32]

Urine scald?

Tue, 2013-03-26 11:45 — [Robin Olson](#) ^[21]

I think she's ok... ^[33]

I'll make sure Katherine checks WHEN she can be handled. Chloe had free choice to move about her space so it's unlikely she suffered from urine scalding.

Thu, 2013-03-28 02:45 — Catnymouse (not verified)

Chloe ^[34]

It's so sad reading this. Thank you Robin for taking this up and not giving up Chloe at all. She deserves a chance to be happy ESP after she has been traumatized to this extent. Not sure if you have animal communicators there that could help to communicate with Chloe? Leaving her with minimal contact sounds like it will take some time for her to heal, animal communication helps to speed things up by talking directly to the animal, finding out what's happening and reassuring them explaining to them they are in a safe place now. I think you could send photos to the communicator and it could work this way too. Good luck Chloe!

Thu, 2013-03-28 15:58 — [tamstercat \(not verified\)](#) ^[35]

This may be a long shot, but... ^[36]

If you are still searching for a special foster (and hopefully in the future a forever home) for Chloe, we can post your request with a photo of her on my Facebook page, Siamese-Cats (<http://www.facebook.com/welovesiamsecats> ^[37]). This is a companion page to <http://www.siamsecatspot.com> ^[35], but I started the fb first so it is more established with 10,000+ fans. Many are in the US, and since they are tuned in to all things Siamese, they or someone they know might be the perfect person for Chloe. Keep us in mind if you have other meezers or meezer mixes who need homes too!

I agree with other commenters who said Chloe may have been abused by a woman. It was my first thought too. Similar situation, though less extreme, happened to me with my cat Larson. He was obese, declawed, unpredictably aggressive, and I was his 5th home. His caretakers did not tell me until much later that he had been abused in the first two homes, by women, and only then because I brought it up first. Took ~ 5 yrs to fully rehabilitate him and then he gave me 5 more. I loved him dearly for all 10 of them :)

Wed, 2013-04-17 17:07 — Catnymouse (not verified)

Cloe ^[38]

After reading about Cloe, I have a slightly similar issue with a male cat who was and is mostly feral and trapped and caught as an older kitten and then traumatized by a man who acted in a loud and aggressive way when attempting to catch Smokey. I was at their house when he chased the cat from one room to the other screaming and slamming into walls and whatever with a crutch. I was there to take the cat to the vet for a friend of mine. As many times as I warned the man what he was doing would traumatize the cat he kept going.

My friend could not take the cat after he was vetted and neutered due to URI's in her own cats. (She took in unadoptable cats.. kidney, heart, diabetic and feral patients) so asked if I would take him till she could. That was 4 yrs ago and he is still here... basically Untouchable. He will come to me and sniff my hand but if I try to touch him... he runs for his life. He is a HUGE kitty. I have been reading all the steps being taken to pacify Cloe and learning with the hopes of maybe reconciling Smokey to me.

I have another partly feral female. She is an orange-ish red and white tux named Emmy. I rescued her when I saw that all her littermates were being hit by cars at my previous residence. She was the last one and I did not want to see any more carnage. It has been 6 or 7 yrs since I took her in and it is now 2 yrs that I have been able to touch and pet her. She now

resides in my bedroom full time as the other cats in the house bully her and she is afraid of them. She finally was able to get her rabies vaccine last fall. I could never catch her or pick her up.

I have 20 of my own cats.. 95% are either rescued by me or taken in because it was either that or they would have been let go in the park. My oldest is 20 yrs old and the youngest is barely a year. ALL are spayed and or neutered and UTD on rabies. Only 1 is allowed the privilege of going in and out (except at night) we have coy dogs. She scratches or cries at the door when she is ready to come in... about 15 min after going out.

I wish I could take in Journey.. I have a cat with no teeth.. she is siamese and came to me with a bad gum infection from hair being impacted into them and around her teeth for so long. She still eats hard food and any people food she can get away with.

Anyway, I have faith that as Cloe gets to know that you will Not hurt her and she is safe.. that confidence on Your part will break down her defences and you will make progress slowly but surely.

Thank you for loving them all and saving them. Yes, the public is crazy and I have met a few myself. That is another story!

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Robin @ [Google+](#)

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Links

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- [3] <mailto:wendy@wendycats.com>
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