

The Orange Cat

by Cammie Corlas Quinn

When someone tells me to wait, I usually expect an answer the same day. If it's a new coat or coffee maker I want, a few weeks is an acceptable time. If it's a refrigerator or microwave, I expect to wait a few months. If it's a husband or a baby, a few years is about right.

Who would expect to wait forty-four years for an orange cat? It seems too trivial a request to stay afloat for so long. But not long ago, I learned that God was still working on His end of the wait.

My old request resurfaced recently when we decided it was time to adopt a cat. In the past eighteen months, we had lost three old cats to kidney failure and cancer. We were ready for a breath of fresh air—ready for a kitten that could jump on counters and race down the stairs in a flash.



I set out looking for an orange kitten. I had always wanted an orange cat, but our timing had never been right. For the past twenty years, my husband and I had owned brown cats, black-and-white cats, and gray cats. We had even adopted a Maine Coon cat with impressive size and a dog-like personality, but he was gray and white. We loved the look and temperament of Maine Coons. In my opinion, there could be nothing more perfect than an orange Maine Coon kitten.

A cat show is a great place to observe Maine Coons and to meet their breeders. As we began the search for our next family cat, we attended a show an hour from our home, met husband-and-wife breeders who impressed us with their knowledge and love for cats, and began corresponding with them. We filled out an adoption application and passed their screening process. When they notified us about a new litter of eight kittens, we drove forty miles to the cattery to see them. One was gray (or “blue” in the cat world), six were brown, and one was orange (or “red” in the cat world). All were named after characters in the Huckleberry Hound cartoon—Huckleberry, Yogi, Dixie, Pixie, Yakki, Hokey, Snagglepuss, and Boo-Boo.

Immediately, we wanted the orange cat, Snagglepuss. He was the largest of the litter, quite beautiful, friendly, and the color I'd wanted for a long time. He was a fabulous cat and seemed to be the “king” of the litter. But the breeders shook their heads. They, too, favored orange cats, and they were planning to keep Snagglepuss for breeding, as well as the blue kitten, Boo-Boo.

Disappointed, yet still impressed by anything in a Maine Coon coat, we began the process of choosing one kitten from among the six running, jumping browns. Pictures flew through cyberspace as we checked their subtle differences. The challenge became more daunting, yet

more intriguing, when the breeders offered us a second brown kitten for the price of one. They wanted the kittens to relocate to their new home with the benefit of a bonded sibling. The offer was tempting, but if we took two browns, our cat capacity would be reached and we wouldn't be able to adopt an orange cat for many years, if ever.

I became so confused that I visited our local humane society, where I found an affectionate seven-year-old black-and-white cat that seemed like a nice possibility for our home. I returned two days later to play with her in a private room, but she began hissing on her way back to her cage. I walked out more confused than ever. Finally, after a few nights of sleep and more conversations with my husband, we sent our decision to the breeders. We would take one brown Maine Coon kitten—Yakki. She seemed like a good compromise.

During the entire adoption process, I had been privately reflecting upon an incident from my childhood. In the 1960s when I was about 10 years old, our family owned a large orange-and-white male cat. I babied that cat, always calling him inside at night, always worried when he didn't come home. It was the year of the "cat poisonings" in our town. A group of mean boys tortured cats in an era when animal cruelty was not so vigorously prosecuted. One day my cat got very sick, possibly poisoned by the young bullies. The closest veterinarian was twenty miles away. Whether my parents didn't have the money or whether the cat was too far gone, I don't know. My dad had to shoot my cat in our back yard. Every year when July 3rd rolls around, a shadow hangs over my day. For more than forty years, July 3rd has been the most detested day on my calendar. My cat's name was Snagglepuss.



The morning after we sent our decision to adopt Yakki, the breeders wrote to inform us that their adoption situation had changed. They'd determined that they did not own a suitable genetic female match with whom to breed Snagglepuss. They had a question for us. Would we be willing to adopt Snagglepuss?

I was overcome with joy. In the time it took to read a paragraph, the long shadow of July 3rd dropped away from my life. Of course, Kevin and I responded immediately with a resounding "Yes!" We adopted Snagglepuss and one of his sweet brown tabby sisters, Hokey.

God never forgot my sorrow even when I ceased asking for a resolution, even when July 3rd had decayed into a black day on the calendar. I had stashed any potential miracle into a grave of my own making. Forty-four years later, God revived the old story. He opened the book of my sorrow and wrote a new chapter in it.

With God, no severed relationship is lost. No unrequited love is forever forgotten. Though He may not stop the bully or the bullet, He continues to speak through new sets of circumstances to assure us that He cares for us even more than we care for ourselves.

Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD. (Psalm 27:14 KJV)