

Oreo

Goes Visiting



by
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Dedication

This story was inspired by one of my grandsons. He shared with me the real story of a cat named Oreo he knew when he was a little boy. I hope he will be pleased that his experience with a little “furry purry” has found words.

Oreo was a stray cat, but a very friendly one. So friendly, in fact, that he had a number of houses that he called home.

Nathaniel and his family had recently moved into a new neighborhood. One day Nathaniel was playing in his back yard. Looking over toward the back fence, he saw something move. He walked over to see what it was and he discovered a black and white cat perched comfortably atop the wooden fence.



“Here, kitty, kitty,” coaxed Nathaniel.

Oreo jumped down and slowly walked over to Nathaniel. Nathaniel knelt down. Oreo rubbed his head against Nathaniel’s outstretched hand. As he stroked the soft fur on its head, the friendly cat started to purr.

Nathaniel gently grabbed up the cat in his arms and headed toward the house.

“Mom, Mom!” Nathaniel shouted gleefully as he raced into the kitchen.

“Look what I found!” he excitedly declared, holding the cat aloft.

Mother stopped her work at the sink, dried her hands, and came over to see what all the excitement was about.

“Well, what have we here?” Mother asked, rubbing her hand under the cat’s chin.

“I found him in our yard. Can we keep him? Please?” Mother looked the cat over closely for any sign of identification. Seeing none, she looked to see if it seemed healthy.

“Well, it doesn’t have a collar, but it looks well fed,” Mother puzzled.

Nathaniel put down the cat. It went right over to Mother and started rubbing against her legs.

“Can we give it some milk?” Nathaniel asked.

“Well...” said Mother uncertainly. The cat’s affectionate nature, however, won her over. “I suppose that would be alright,” she decided, patting the cat on its head.

Nathaniel found a small bowl. Mother poured in some milk and set the bowl on the floor. Their guest walked right over and started lapping up the cool liquid.

“Looks like this little guy was thirsty,” observed Mother. She and Nathaniel watched the cat finish all the milk. Then Nathaniel asked, “Can I take him to my room to play?”



Mother, concerned her son not get too attached to their surprise visitor, replied, “It is likely this cat has a home someplace nearby. You shouldn’t get too attached.”

Nathaniel was not discouraged. “Maybe we could put up some lost and found posters around the neighborhood. If nobody claims him, we can keep him,” he proposed.

“Well, we’ll cross that bridge when we come to it,” Mother replied. “But you have a good idea. I will finish up in the kitchen while you two play in your room. When I am done we will work on the poster. Ok?” Nathaniel answered by scooping up the cat and racing up the stairs.

After a bit, Mother came upstairs with paper and pens in hand. Together they wrote up a description of the cat and listed their phone number on each sheet. Leaving the cat in the kitchen, they went out and put up their posters.

Over a week went by and no one called to claim the cat. Mother decided it would be ok to purchase some items for their house guest. So, Nathaniel and Mother took a trip to the local pet store. Here they purchased a black and white collar, some food dishes, a cozy cat bed and some toys.

Arriving back at home, Nathaniel rushed in with all the goodies to show his new friend. The cat sniffed politely at the

food dishes and put up with having the collar buckled around his neck, but it was the toys that really captured his attention. He and Nathaniel spent the rest of the afternoon together playing happily with the new toys.



Around dinner time, Nathaniel came downstairs with the cat following after him. He sauntered over to his new food bowls and meowed. Nathaniel got the message and filled his bowls.

Watching the cat nibble his kibble he asked his Mother, “Mom, we don’t have a name for this cat yet. If we are really going

to keep him, he should have a name.” Mother agreed. They started thinking of possibilities. Among the options were Patches since he was black and white, Jumpee because he loved to jump onto things and Henry for no particular reason. They couldn’t seem to settle on a name, so they decided to decide tomorrow.

The next day the cat did something unusual. Instead of going straight to his food bowls in the morning, he went over to the back door and pawed at it. Since arriving at Nathaniel’s house he had seemed very content to just stay indoors.

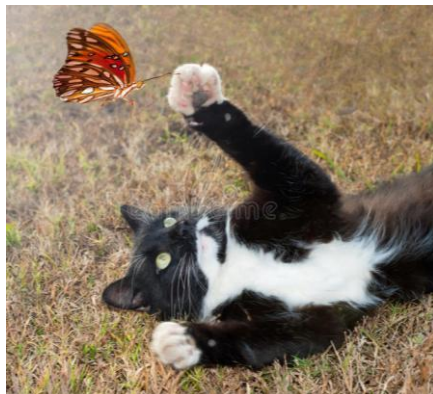
“Should I let him out?” Nathaniel asked Mother with a note of concern in his voice.

“I guess it should be alright,” she replied, a bit unsure herself.

“What if he runs away?” Nathaniel asked, the concern in his voice rising.

Mother came over to Nathaniel and knelt down beside him. “He knows by now he can find food and love here. I don’t think he’d want to walk away from that,” Mother soothed. “Besides, maybe he just wants a change of scenery,” she added, lightly rising to her feet.

Reluctantly, Nathaniel opened the back door. The cat casually walked outside. Nathaniel followed him. Walking over to the path that led to the garage, he laid down, stretched, and rubbed his head on the side walk. He stayed there a while sunning himself then sat up. Nathaniel, sitting nearby, wondered what he would do next. Suddenly, Oreo got tense. Before Nathaniel knew what was happening the cat jumped up to pounce on a passing butterfly.



It was so funny to watch him chasing the butterfly. Nathaniel was glad he never caught it, as it was a very pretty butterfly. Nathaniel and the cat stayed outside a while longer. Then Nathaniel watched as the cat returned to the back door and meowed. Nathaniel hopped up and opened the door. In walked the cat, right over to his bowls, which Mother had already filled, and started eating contentedly.



“How did he do outside?” Mother asked.

“Great. And he never tried to get away!” Nathaniel reported. Then he told

Mother about all the funny things he had done to try and catch a butterfly. After that, Nathaniel did not hesitate to let the cat go outside.

One day as Nathaniel and his new pet were playing in the living room, the doorbell rang. Mother answered the door. There stood Mrs. Murphy from the house on the corner. She was holding one of the lost cat posters in her hand.

“Hello, Mrs. Murphy. Won’t you come in?”

“Thank you,” the visitor replied, stepping into the living room. She eyed the cat and smiled faintly. “I see you have a cat now.”

“Yup, isn’t he great?” said Nathaniel, hugging the cat close to him.

“Do you have any pets, Mrs. Murphy?” asked Mother.

“Just one,” Mrs. Murphy replied.

“Is it a dog or a cat?” asked Nathaniel.

“Well,” Mrs. Murphy hesitated uneasily. “We have a cat. Actually we have that cat,” she said pointing to the creature curled up in Nathaniel’s lap. “You see, we were away visiting my cousin’s family for the last several weeks. We left some food out for Oreo...”

“Oreo?” broke in Nathaniel, holding the cat more tightly.

“Yes, that’s what we all call him,” explained Mrs. Murphy.

“All?” questioned Mother.

“Yes. I guess I should explain. You see, Oreo, is the neighborhood cat.”

“The what?” asked Nathaniel.

“Oreo sort of belongs to everyone on the block,” Mrs. Murphy explained.

Mother offered Mrs. Murphy a seat. Sitting down, she continued. “You see, a few years ago, this cat wandered into the neighborhood. It was the MacMillan’s who first took him in. He was so affectionate and easy going,” she recalled. “He stayed with them for a couple months and then up and left. They looked all over the neighborhood only to find out that he had taken up residence at the other end of the block with the Meriweather family.” Mrs. Murphy chuckled remembering all the comings and goings of this nomadic cat. “Eventually, he made it to our house. We did the same thing as you and put up posters to see if he had an owner. Mrs. MacMillan finally explained to me about Oreo and how he went from house to house, stayed for a while and then moved on. But he always seems to stay on this block.”

At this point Oreo jumped into Mrs. Murphy’s lap and started purring. Stroking

him, she continued. “I suspect what happened was, when the food ran out at my place, he went looking for a new family to adopt,” she concluded.

“Well, this cat, Oreo you say is his name?” Mother interjected.

“Yes. The first family to have him gave him that name because of his markings.”



“Yes, I can see that. We were still trying to decide on a name. Anyway, Oreo has been with us about three weeks now,” Mother shared.

“That would figure. We were delayed at my cousin’s house and just got back yesterday. When I saw no sign of Oreo, I assumed he had wandered off to one of his other homes. Then I spied one of your posters. I’m just glad to know he has been taken of,” she said, tickling Oreo under his chin.

“Should I gather up his things for you, Mrs. Murphy?” asked Nathaniel trying hard not to cry.

“Oh, no,” interrupted Mrs. Murphy, before Mother could reply and handing Oreo back to Nathaniel. “I knew you were fairly new to the block and wanted to let you know about our ‘shared pet’,” said Mrs. Murphy laughing. “When he is ready to move on he will. Meantime, I am sure he is very happy here,” she reassured.

“And when he does move on,” Mother shared, “we will know he is with other people who love and care for him,” she said, trying to console her son.

“I guess so,” said Nathaniel, not sure how he felt about sharing Oreo.

“Thank you for coming over and telling us about the neighborhood pet,” said Mother, as she showed Mrs. Murphy out.

“How long do you think Oreo will stay with us, Mom?” asked Nathaniel once Mrs. Murphy had gone.

“I don’t know, Son. But till the time comes, let’s just enjoy him while he’s here,” said Mother encouragingly.

Several more weeks went by and Oreo showed no signs of wanting to leave. Nathaniel was beginning to think he had decided to stay with them permanently.

One morning when Nathaniel woke up he discovered that Oreo was not sleeping on his cat bed. Thinking he had already gone downstairs, he quickly got dressed and went down to find him.

“Oreo,” he called as he raced down the stairs and into the kitchen. Oreo’s food bowls were empty. “Mom, have you seen Oreo?”

“Yes, he came down earlier and went straight for his bowls. Afterward he wanted to go outside,” Mother explained.

Nathaniel went outside to look for him. “Oreo,” he called. “Oreo, where are you?” Nathaniel looked everywhere but could not find him. Mother came outside to help with the search.

“I guess he’s decided it was time to visit one of his other families,” Mother concluded putting her arm around Nathaniel.

“Yeah, I guess so,” came Nathaniel’s somewhat sad reply. “Do you think he’ll be ok?” he asked, turning to Mother with genuine concern on his face.

“Oh, yes,” soothed Mother. “I’m sure, right now some little boy or girl is thrilled that Oreo has come back for them to play with.”

Nathaniel thought about that. He was going to miss Oreo, yet he was glad that there would be other people who would be able to love and enjoy him just as he had.

“Mom,” asked Nathaniel.

“Yes, son.”

“Can we say a prayer for Oreo?” he asked.

“Of course!”

They folded their hands, closed their eyes, and Nathaniel prayed. “Dear God, please take care of Oreo and help him to be happy wherever he is now. Thank you for the time we got to have him here with us. Amen.”

Mother gave Nathaniel a warm hug and the two of them headed back into the house.

