Dog walks and knock knock jokes

by grangered

Summary

Based off the prompt "i think your dog likes my dog"

Notes

See the end of the work for notes.

“Slow down there, Bruno!” the blonde boy yells, trying to hold onto the leash with a firmer grip. The dog however, just keeps on going, wagging his tail with even more enthusiasm. Peeta sighs, knowing it is mostly his fault that Bruno gets this excited whenever he takes him out. With early morning lectures and late night shifts at the bakery downtown, he rarely gets time to himself let alone time to take his dog for a walk. So on the rare occurrence that Peeta does get a chance to take Bruno out to the local park; the dog is a ball of enthusiasm, never tiring out.

Bruno quickens his pace, almost running now. Peeta tries gripping the leash even tighter, but suddenly it’s just him, the dog sprinting forward as if he’s spotted treasure. Peeta jogs behind him, yelling out his name but to no avail. Bruno suddenly comes to a stop at a park bench, his tongue wagging and his tail twitching. Peeta stops running and begins walking towards the bench, trying to figure out why his dog has just sprinted twenty feet. When he comes to a stop behind his dog, he spots a golden retriever whose fur seems to shine in the sunlight, looking at Bruno curiously. Suddenly, the two identical dogs jump at each other, growling playfully and rolling around in the mud.

Peeta turns to apologize to the owner of the other dog, but his throat seems to dry out when he
sees who it was. Katniss Everdeen stands before him, her eyebrow arched and her mouth pulled into a slight frown. She looks at him expectantly, as if he has an explanation as to why their pets seem to be enamored with one another. Peeta lets out an awkward chuckle, hoping to get a smile out of the dark haired girl. She just continues looking at him, her frown deepening.

“I think your dog likes my dog,” Peeta says, clearing his throat afterwards. He mentally cringes at himself, knowing that he has just stated the obvious. Katniss’ lips twitch, as if she is amused by how nervous Peeta is.

“I would have never guessed,” she replies sarcastically, still looking at him with one of her eyebrows arched. Before Peeta can reply, Bruno lets out a whine and rolls over, his golden fur now covered in mud. Katniss’ dog imitates his actions, and they both lie on the ground looking content.

“What’s your dog called?” Peeta asks, hoping that he could break the awkward tension between them. He’s known Katniss since he was seven; they had gone to the same school although she mostly hung around a boy who looked like he could have been her cousin (his name was Gale, although Peeta didn’t particularly enjoy bringing him up since he spent a vast amount of middle school and high school being jealous of him) and a short, blonde girl called Madge. He never really talked to any of them, although Madge would drop by his father’s bakery, sometimes with Katniss in tow, although he wouldn’t speak to either of them other than a ‘hi, welcome to Mellark’s bakery’ before scurrying to the back room to get Madge the baguettes her father ordered every Tuesday.

“Athena. She’s my sister’s dog actually,” Katniss says, her frown disappearing. Her eyebrow is still arched, but she looks slightly less intimidating.

“Prim, right?”

Katniss looks surprised, her eyes widening slightly. Peeta feels a blush blooming on his face, realizing how creepy he sounds. He didn’t stalk Katniss or anything, but her sister used to drop by his dad’s bakery to look at the artwork on the cake. She even spoke to Peeta sometimes, complimenting him on how well he could ice wedding cakes or how pretty the flowers he drew on the cupcakes looked. When he explains that to Katniss, she nods.

“Prim does love your cupcakes. I think she still drops by the bakery sometimes to pick some up,” the girl responds. Peeta is surprised at that, since his father’s bakery is all the way across town, an hour’s drive from where Peeta lives. It’s why he’s taken up work at a bakery on campus instead.

“The bakery is pretty far from where you live though, isn’t it?”

“And how would you know where I lived, Mellark?”

Peeta can feel himself flushing again. “Uh-I mean, you and I go to the same college so I assumed that, uh, you lived on campus. Or at least near it.”

“Well I do, and so does Prim. But like I said, she really enjoys your cupcakes.”

“Oh. Well that’s very nice of her,” he replies awkwardly, rubbing his neck. He doesn’t know what else to say, but apparently he doesn’t have to. Katniss glances at her watch before kneeling down and hooking Athena’s leash onto her collar.

“I need to go back now. I told Prim I’d be home before supper,” she says, not unkindly although her voice comes out firm.

“Right. It was nice talking to you, Katniss,” Peeta smiles, hooking Bruno’s leash to his collar.
Katniss gives him a small smile that disappears almost as quickly as it comes before walking towards the park entrance. Peeta lets out a sigh, looking at Bruno.

“Well, she’ll probably never talk to me again.”

Bruno lets out a happy yelp, as Peeta and him walk down the pathway.

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Peeta doesn’t see Katniss for the next two weeks after their encounter at the park, which isn’t all that surprising since they have no lectures together. He has been busy all week, and between deadlines for his art coursework and working double shifts at the bakery because Delly, one of his coworkers, has been sick with chickenpox for the last twelve days, he has no time to take Bruno back to the park. The dog doesn’t seem to mind all that much, always finding something to slobber on in his apartment.

It’s a cold, Wednesday night and Peeta is locking up the bakery, when a loud bark catches his attention. He turns around to find Katniss and her dog, looking at him. She’s let her hair loose, a thick woolen beanie covering her head, although her dark curls can still be seen. Her nose is red and her cheeks are flushed, and she looks like she is panting. There’s also a look of annoyance on her face. Peeta arches an eyebrow at her as if asking ‘why are you randomly at the bakery I work at (although I’m not complaining since I’ve had a crush on you since we were seven)?’

“Katniss. Hi,” the boy says, tucking the brown paper bag that has the extra cheese buns he had made earlier in the day, under his arm.

Katniss takes a deep breath, trying to stop panting before she replies. “Hi.”

“Well, uh, what are you doing here?” he asks, hoping his voice doesn’t give away how confused he is.

The look of annoyance that was on her face moments ago suddenly comes back. Peeta is a little nervous.

“Athena, she saw you from across the street and broke out of her leash. I guess she was hoping you would be with your dog,’ she recounts, her breathing coming out normally.

“Well, I hate to disappoint but it’s just me,” says Peeta, laughing awkwardly and adjusting his backpack.

“It’s not a disappointment.”

Both their eyes widen at the same time, and Peeta grins at her. Katniss’ lips twitch, almost as if she can’t believe what she has just said. She clears her throat before saying, “I mean, obviously you wouldn’t have your pet with you at your workplace.”

Peeta is still grinning, but he nods his head in agreement with her.

“Anyways, I should get back now. See you around, Mellark,” Katniss says, lifting her hand up in a half wave.

“Or you could come to my place,” Peeta suddenly blurts out, although his brain is telling him that it is a terrible idea. Katniss lifts her eyebrows at him, her eyes narrowing slightly. He realizes how his suggestion has come across.

“I mean, Athena wanted to see Bruno, so she could. And you look cold so I could make you a cup of tea. Or coffee. Or whatever you prefer really. I only live down the street. It’s not a burden on me or anything,” he babbles, trying to explain himself. He is about ninety nine percent sure that
Katniss is going to decline his offer and that they will probably never interact again which is why he has to stop himself from doing a double take when she nods.

“Tea’s fine. Athena’s been whining about your dog for the last two weeks anyways,” Katniss says, tugging at Athena’s leash. Peeta shoots her a reassuring grin before turning around and walking down the street. It’s odd, really, walking down a street with Katniss Everdeen and her dog. Fifteen year old Peeta would’ve been proud of him (and probably very, very excited). When they arrive at his apartment block, Katniss gestures for him to lead the way.

“Your landlord doesn’t mind you having a pet?” she inquires as they climb a flight of stairs. The elevator has been broken since before Peeta had moved in and Peeta doesn’t think it is going to be fixed anytime soon.

“Well, he doesn’t actually know I have a pet. He never comes here anyways, and the super is nice enough not to tell on me,” he replies, grinning sheepishly. Katniss lets out a snort.

When he opens his door he’s greeted to Bruno jumping on him, almost knocking him down. However, almost immediately Bruno jumps off of him and tackles Athena and the two dogs start play fighting. Katniss watches on, a small smile gracing her lips.

“Where did you get him?” she questions, once Peeta’s closed the door. They walk towards his kitchen, leaving their dogs in his living room.

“At a shelter downtown. They were gonna send him to the pound and I couldn’t let that happen,” Peeta replies, before he takes out two coffee mugs. He had been given the mugs by his mother before he had moved across town, although he had an aching suspicion that it was his father that had made her do it.

“I knew it!” she states, although she doesn’t elaborate almost as if she wants Peeta to ask her what she means. So he does.

“You knew what?”

“I got her,” she says, jerking her thumb in the direction of Athena, before continuing, “at a shelter in downtown too. Your dog and my dog are probably siblings. It explains why they look alike.”

“And why they like each other so much,” Peeta adds, as he reaches for two tea bags. Katniss hums in response, looking at the two dogs. He makes their tea in silence, declining Katniss’ offer to help.

“Sugar?” he asks, breaking their silence.

“Two, please.”

He offers her a mug, and she takes it, thanking him as he shrugs it off.

“You never spoke to me at school,” she says, after she’s taken her first sip of tea.

Peeta finishes swallowing before he replies. “I could say the same about you.”

“Well obviously. You hung out with all the uptown people,” she counters, wrinkling her nose. He can’t blame her for disliking them. They were alright people, sure, but they were pretentious. Most of them were used to their parents paying away their problems, and they rarely spoke to people who didn’t live in the richer, glossier parts of town. Peeta’s mother would’ve had his head on a stake if he was seen with people she didn’t deem worthy. He wasn’t particularly fond of her, and she felt similarly towards him. It’s how their relationship was, for as long as he could remember.
“You had Madge. And Gale. I didn’t think you’d want to talk to anybody else,” he argues, although his voice remains kind.

“I’m not the most social person in the world, Mellark,” comes her short reply. He thinks he’s upset her until he looks up to find her lips curling upwards, albeit only slightly. He smiles back.

“Well neither am I.”

Katniss snorts. “Everyone loves you, Peeta. Madge had the biggest crush on you for years. It pissed Gale right off.”

Peeta flushes, his ears growing warm. “That explains why he always glared at me,” he jokes (although he does know that Gale doesn’t like him all that much).

Katniss laughs and Peeta again, thinks about how fifteen year old him would probably have had heart palpitations by now. Hell, twenty year old him is struggling to maintain his composure.

“I should leave soon. It’s getting late and Prim is probably worried,” Katniss says before gulping down the rest of her tea. “Thank you for the tea. And for letting my dog slobber all over your carpet.”

“It’s no worry. Bruno does it anyways so it doesn’t really make a difference.”

They both get out of their seats, making their way towards the sink, leaving their mugs there. Katniss makes her way to the door, pulling on her snow boots before tugging Athena away from her brother.

“I’ll see you around, Peeta,” Katniss says as she opens the door.

“Maybe next time without the dogs?” Peeta suggests, before he loses the courage to.

“Where would be the fun in that?” she asks, and he’s not sure if she’s joking or being serious. It’s very difficult trying to read Katniss Everdeen, he thinks.

“I tell really good knock knock jokes,” he blurts out, and he suddenly feels like he’s overstepped a boundary. And what is he thinking? Knock knock jokes? What does that even mean? He stops internally reprimanding his terrible attempt at flirting when he sees a small grin on her face.

“Huh. Maybe. Goodnight Mellark,” the girl says, still grinning at him as she turns away.

“G’night Everdeen,” he replies, grinning back. He hears her laughter travel down the corridor as he closes the door. He reminds himself to send a thank you note to the dog shelter he got Bruno from.

End Notes

That's it! I hope you liked it. It's my first time writing Everlark so I hope it wasn't too cringe-worthy. Posting this was such a mission, the first time I tried to, I accidentally closed the tab and all my work was lost. But yeah, I hope it was okay!

-Varsha
Disclaimer: I do not own The Hunger Games

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