**Puppy Pop-in Plus: Bribes, Barking, and a Slightly Sunburned Standoff**

There’s no such thing as an *ordinary* day in the life of a pet sitter—but this week’s “Puppy Pop-in Plus” definitely had a little extra spice.

The job seemed simple enough: a mid-afternoon garden break for Max, a spirited little Jack Russell with the vocal cords of a foghorn and the attitude of a nightclub bouncer. I’d met Max before during the handover. He barked then too. But today? He took things to a new level.

As soon as I opened the front door, I was greeted by a flurry of high-pitched, indignant barking from behind the baby gate. Max was clearly not thrilled about my visit. In fact, he made it abundantly clear that I was either a threat, a trespasser—or, at the very least, someone deeply unworthy of his trust.

Cue ten solid minutes of standing in the hallway, trying to coax him out with every dog voice and whistle in my arsenal. No dice. He just kept barking. I could hear birds scattering in nearby trees.

Eventually, I had to resort to what I like to call “The Emergency Biscuit Protocol.” One crinkly treat bag later, Max paused, sniffed the air like a suspicious cartoon detective, and finally emerged, still barking, but now torn between outrage and hunger. I lobbed a gravy bone into the garden like a grenade of diplomacy. Victory. He trotted after it, still grumbling under his breath.

Now, just as I was congratulating myself on a job well done, I noticed movement over the fence. There she was—Max’s neighbour—lounging in a recliner, soaking up the sun in what I now realised was a previously tranquil afternoon. And there I was, crouched in the garden, treat bag in one hand, slobber on my jeans, hair a bit windblown from the wrestling match with Max’s stubbornness.

The neighbour gave me *that* look. You know the one—half “who *is* this person?” and half “you’ve ruined my peace with your chaos.”

I gave her a sheepish wave. Max barked again. Loudly. Twice.

She sighed.

I retreated.

But hey, Max got his garden time, his treat, and his moment of triumph. I got a story, a disapproving sunbather, and the satisfying knowledge that even the loudest little Jack Russell has a weak spot for biscuits.

Another day, another Pop-in Plus.