

Based on the Compliments People Yell When I Walk My Dog, I Am *Killing* It!

By K.E. Flann

It happens daily. Anyone lucky enough to spot me walking my teacup Yorkie-poo swerves from traffic, shrieking, “Oh my gosh, oh my gosh, oh my gosh!” Other drivers honk and flip the bird, but my admirers don’t care because this is akin to glimpsing an angel or Tom Hanks. They lean out. They click their tongues, like, *Wow! Shirley at the office is not going to believe it.* Such is my magnetism, even incognito, behind sunglasses, a mask, and a coat that resembles a packable down bathrobe.

The fact that I work all day from the same couch cushion as where I watch TV at night doesn’t affect the spiritual expansiveness that I exude. My very gait cheers people. “So happy!” they call out, hands cupped to their mouths. “Look at that prance!” It goes to show that bunions and plantar fasciitis are mind over matter, and positivity really does pay off.

I first started to notice the attention when my dog was a puppy. He could barely make it around the city block where I live because he weighed about two pounds and he inefficiently hopped like a deranged black bunny. People would gasp, even some of the “tough” guys with beards and tattoos who didn’t normally smile or

say hello. They would clutch their hearts and make kissing noises. They would say, “Do you want to come home with me, you sweet thing?” The clamor had been an unforeseen consequence of these slow sojourns — which put me on public display an incredibly long time, my inner light a beacon. Plus, I was just so much better at walking than he was. The comparison was almost unfair.

To this day, people yell out, “Gorgeous! And I bet you’re friendly, too! Aren’t you? Aren’t you?” And you know what? I am friendly. On weekend nights, I almost never run away from the groups of young women who rush me as if I am one of the Beatles disembarking from grainy footage of an airplane. Some of them drop to their knees from the intensity of meeting me, while others shout “So cuuuute!” with an oomph that hints at the cocktails they’ve been enjoying. Regardless, I am gracious and polite. I even offer my dog as an emotional support animal, and I’m really nice about it when I pry him from their surprisingly strong arms just before the sobbing starts.

Sometimes, a jogger pulls up short and says, still breathless, “Amazing! What’s the mix?” I’m genetically blessed. The stars lined up for the Scandinavian and Scottish heritage that causes the distinctive pink hue, like sunrise, sometimes called *rosacea*, which is even a beautiful word. Plus, I have a great temperament, and I am 100% trustworthy with children. I’ll be the first to admit, though, that my particular mix means I do shed, due to my androgenic alopecia, and I may drink a little too much.

Speaking of which, another question people shout at me is “Where do you go for grooming?” They appreciate my unpretentious, effortless style — the bedhead, the heather gray camp socks, the faint khaki shading of hummus. It’s all super relatable, at a time when people need that.

For a while, I was proud that I’d simply learned to accept all the praise without being awkward. I researched that the best way to accept a compliment is to say thank you. A person can also offer one in return, if it’s heartfelt. So, sometimes I comment on the care that my fans put into their outfits, such as wearing actual pants, or praise them for keeping social distance.

Lately, though, I’ve come to realize that people demand more from someone in my position. They expect me to reflect on my own worth — which is fair. The assessment of my value is a challenge with which I grapple daily from my couch cushion — a fundamentally existential examination. If we strip away all the hype and fanfare, am I good? Am I so, so, good?

Honestly, I don’t know. Am I precious? Well, sure. But good is another matter. I strive to be good. No matter what, I am grateful that people care enough to keep me in check. Without their intervention, the adoration could go to my head. It could just eat me up. And then what would I be? A nugget is what.

Nothing but a yummy little nugget.

