

Pegi'

(A Memoir Revision by Michael W. Paul)

Pe' Ny was the star of the Westminster Abbey Kennel Club, best in show three years in a row, nuzzling with celebrities and politicians, pulling little boys out of wells for photo-ops, partying with the Queen's Corgis, and signed to a six-month contract with the new, more mature Taco Bell. Parents wanted to adopt her, trainers wanted to make more like her, kids wanted to take her home to dress her in embarrassing little dresses, and I couldn't imagine why Pe' would have wanted anything to do with me. I arrived at the abbey as a low-level Yorkshire Terrier with a Napoleon complex—I wanted to rule Europe. My name is Gi'.

I didn't notice Pe' at first. I never liked Cocker Spaniels. They tended to be full of themselves, flaunting their luxurious curls, and standing in front of high-velocity fans in alluring, sensuous poses at photo shoots. They made the average Yorkie look like a hair clog in a dirty drain. Pe' would trot on by and I'd watch her longer, more erect tail disappear as she barked orders to the lesser dogs in Bitch Congeniality class at the Canine Culture school in Westminster.

She was a paradox, supremely confident in the spotlight and any overtly social setting, but timid and shy during intimate interactions with other dogs. At pool parties, she was afraid to jump in the water—she'd push against the edge of the pool, grip it with her delicate pink toes, pull her ears back, lean forward, and whimper until a trainer would stroke her and pull her back. She never jumped in.

At the 2005 Westminster Abbey Kennel Club dog show, promoters thought it would be cute to have dog greeters. Tourists and dignitaries walked the red carpet while the paparazzi shot various canine competitors. I was nervous because my master was not within eyeshot. I was a Yorkshire Terrier, born to be loyal to one master. Where was he? How could I be friendly with strangers when I couldn't see my master? Would he be back? Did he abandon me? What did I do wrong? I just knew this would happen someday, why? Why? Oh dog, ohhh dog, why?

I fluttered my tail with all my might, straightened my back, and put all my power into creating a cooling breeze, pretending to be confident. But my excessive sneezing, lip-licking and nervous tapping gave me away. I was scared.

Pe', the leader she was, pulled near me and when we made eye contact, I knew she wanted to help. As the top dog at Westminster, it was quite nice to have her by my side. Prime Minister Blair, Princes William and Harry, Sir Paul McCartney, and Rowan Atkinson entered as I tried my best to be cordial.

When the parade of dignitaries thinned, Pe' and I had a few moments alone.

“You live on Piccadilly Loop in Yorkshire? I grew up there!” she said as her milk-dud eyes enlarged, and her tail tightened.

“Yes, I have lived there since I was a puppy!” I replied.

Pe' ran circles around me, stamped her feet and bobbed her flouncy head like she wanted to play. I briefly whiffed her wake as she passed and she likewise sniffed my butt. My heart raced and I panted so hard my tongue unraveled like a roll of Hubba Bubba Bubble Tape Bubble Gum under a running cat. Her tongue plopped out too, causing them to overlap on the ground. I tried to speak when our tongues tangled. We tonged a tug of war until our moist, leathery noses bumped.

A new wave of guests approached and we quickly tried to compose ourselves. With two centimeters of each others tongues in our throats, gag reflexes activated and we each coughed up a few milliliters of bile. I spit up some AstroTurf I'd swallowed earlier. It tasted like a tennis shoe when I ate it. Doris Day heard the hacking and patted Pe's back.

Doris whispered, “Awww—poor baby! Did you cough on something?” I quickly lapped up what had dribbled from my lips, retracted my overextended tongue and smelled Doris's shoes. They smelled like Pe'.

Pe' and I had known each other 245 dog days, but it was this dog day afternoon that cupid played fetch with my heart.

I thought to myself, “Before I leave, I need to climb on her back and bite her.”

The sun shown through her fuzzy ears, her curls silhouetted like Medusa, and for the first time in my life I envied treats, treats she begged for, that landed inside her warm, steamy, sticky mouth, felt her canine fangs divide it into tiny morsels, slide down her long, wet, grumbling throat, were puked out, and landed on the carpet, only to be eaten again. I maneuvered to her side, opposite Doris, placed my front paws on her shoulder blades, clamped down on the loose skin behind her neck in a gentle, affectionate manner, and her tail wagged.

Doris slapped me and said, “Bad boy!”

I didn't really noticed Doris's slap. I was just speechless at how much nicer Pe' was than my squeaky stuffed octopus. That's when I really met Pe'.

Pe' was reluctant to date at first, but since we walked the same forest path every morning, I dropped her some pee-mail on fire hydrants and shrubbery. She didn't reply. She was bred as a show dog, nothing more, and love was not something she was comfortable with. She surely didn't want to be involved with me, an impetuous Yorkie who thought nothing of biting Heather Mills McCartney's artificial ankle until she became footloose, or charging the Queen's Corgis. I was trouble and she knew it.

She secretly told herself, “I'll never mate with Gi'!”

And yet, when I was in the room she found herself wanting to sit and stay. One typical encounter occurred at a party thrown by Doris Day, a friend of Pe', in a rented London apartment. Doris often jokingly accused Pe' of stealing her hair style. I was on a dog bed with Jerry, a mutt, a disciplinarian for the younger dogs like myself, and Mark, a bulldog friend. Jerry, Mark and I fought for control of the bed and the chew toys on it. I bit and slapped Mark while Jerry clamped down on my leg. Pe' pranced on in, bringing sugar and spice into our not-so-nice.

“The worst thing happened to me today!” she said, showing a glint of teeth in her excitement, as drool beads repelled from her hairy chin.

We three listened intently, six ears reaching so strong and high they could've stopped a Wimbledon volley. We expected a tragic story of Pe' being locked outside while her master ate steak in front of a window and laughed at her, or being stuck home all day alone with an angry cat, or catching a mechanical rabbit at the dog track and giving up on life. We sat with baited dog-breath when she told us that sadly, her food hadn't been properly cut up that morning and it took her twice as long to eat it, causing her to miss her salon appointment.

We never took our attention from Pe' and for a few moments sat quietly, doing a very slow wag like a dippy bird over a glass of water when I licked my lips and slowly said, "You ever been neutered?"

Mark and Jerry winced, crossed their legs and tucked their tails in.

After a few clever moves on my part, a fake mutual match with Pe' on the PeeHarmony dog dating website, and Pe' and I were secretly dating within 28 months. With her reputation and apprehensiveness, she knew she'd be followed by Animal Planet and TMZ photographers, featured in dog gossip rags with headlines like, "Uptown Dog Goes Downtown" or "Bottom Feeder Feasts from Top of the Pile." She didn't want anything to cloud her reputation as an available show dog, and yet she wanted to give this uncouth Yorkie a try. However, she was afraid the additional stress of negative publicity might cause her to have anxiety issues and start chewing on furniture. I was just happy that the dog I was chasing caught me. My fearless nature could handle anything and anyone, something I proved when I attacked the Queen's favorite horse, Balmoral Melody, on the grounds of Windsor Castle for staring at me. It was this attitude that made Pe' reluctant to reveal our relationship but safe under my protection.

So we sneaked around London. Pe' rolled in the fireplace before slipping away to avoid recognition, and we hung out with the lower-class dogs in alleyways to find quiet times together. On occasion, we'd plan late night rendezvous rooting through garbage. My master would not have let me date a show dog and Pe's master would not have allowed her to hang out with a Yorkie who carried the reputation of a bouncer.

Days after we started dating, Pe' was stricken with Cherry Eye, an oval mass protruding from her third eyelid, and ended up in the Top Dog Veterinary Clinic. I visited while her master

was by her side. When her master left to use the loo down the hall, I leaped into the cage with Pe', rolled onto my back while she gently stroked my tummy with her back legs, carefully listening for the flush down the hall. It was all we had time for because quicker than you can say, "Hey, that dog can talk!" her master returned.

Later that day, Pe's glamour coach left her alone in the exercise yard with the other dogs. I sneaked a bottle of Aramis cologne from my master and when I sprayed it into the air stream, the stench sent all of Pe's upper-class playmates running for cover from the rancid stench. Pe' was tough and knew it was me. I shoved my nose through a hole in the fence, and we french kissed like we hadn't eaten all day, only to be caught off guard by Doris Day's slap.

"Bad dog! Bad dog! You stay away from her or I'll have your *bits* re-attached and removed again!" That Doris could think of some really cruel punishments.

Pe' and I needed to get far, far away, so on October 20, 2005, we traveled to Ryde on the Isle of Wight, a sleepy little town whose residents didn't know a show dog from a chili dog. We took the A3 motorway and the Fishbourne – Portsmouth Ferry across the Solent and we were free! The first thing I noticed when we arrived in Portsmouth was the majestic Spinnaker Tower, a 170-meter tall spike of a structure, reminiscent of a sail stripped to its threads. With the open sea between us and eternity, no cameras, no prying eyes, no Doris Day sneaking up behind me with a mean slap, no choking on chimney soot, and Pe' didn't have old candy wrappers, pieces of day old food and other people's garbage stuck to her face when we kissed—life was good!

I told Pe', "Let's move here! We could be happy! Yes we could, oh yes we could!"

Her mind churned as she panted into the breeze, absorbing the scent of seagull droppings and dead fish. Her friends didn't know it, but the days of garbage burrowing had given her some ideas for a dog diet book, *Cooking with Pooh*. She couldn't be a show dog forever, and after we became a couple, we considered settling down. Pe' and I both had relatives in France, and were only a Chunnel away from exploring our roots.

Ryde was romantic and diverse, tantalizing all five senses at once. We checked into our rooms at the Lakeside Park Hotel and just to be on the safe side, brought a trench coat. Pe' stood

on my shoulders, stuck her head out and used a credit card she stole from her master. The desk clerk was too drunk to notice she was a dog, or perhaps he, like I, was enamored by her beauty.

Once we settled in, we became focused on the gazebo overlooking the Old Mill Pond, a tranquil body of water that shined like a mirror to heaven in the Garden of Eden. We took ourselves for a walk to spend some alone time at the gazebo, the place of lovers. We approached with so much excitement we stumbled over our tongues. Pe's ears gyrated across her faded whitecap face like wet laundry in a sea breeze.

However, our noses dropped and tongues disappeared into our sad muzzles when we noticed a senior male Miniature Schnauzer and female Chihuahua playing piggy-back or wrestling or something in our gazebo! Pe' rolled her droopy red eyes up at me.

I said, "Be patient, they don't have as much time as us," since it was obvious from our vantage point that they were very old, wearing themselves out and would probably be put down soon. Pe' plopped her sagging cheeks on the path while I occupied myself chasing my tail. I am a Yorkie, I have a little trouble paying attention to what is SQUIRREL!!! Sorry, thought I saw a squirrel. Now where was I? Oh, right...

Eventually even I grew impatient. I wondered what kind of illegal performance enhancing drugs that couple was on because after wrestling all that time, neither dog had been able to pin the other.

I turned to Pe' and said, "Let's throw a bucket of cold water on them!" Pe' gave a low growl. She was sensitive about water jokes. Soon the couple finished whatever old dog couples do in gazebos and moved towards us. With yelps of joy, we pushed our faces into the wind and ran like someone had accidentally left the gate open.

We passed the seniors when the Miniature Schnauzer gave an attention-getting whimper and said, "Are you from Westminster? We noticed "Dog Missing" posters before we left there, and they looked like you two."

With a smirk I replied, "You wouldn't happen to be from Westminster Abbey Kennel Club, would you?"

Pe' grew anxious and wouldn't make eye contact with the couple, like a mother who suddenly noticed one of her puppies had run into the middle of a cock-fight looking for lunch and started to get the trembles.

The Schnauzer replied, "No, but we've visited there many times. They have bacon!"

He started an inquiry of Pe' which only increased her anxiety. She whimpered and piddled as if she'd eaten a dead horse and realized too late. Pe' needed to be rescued. There was no need to fear, Underdog was here!

The couple knew Doris Day, they'd been to Canine Culture School, and mentioned hearing of a famous show dog named Pee. Pe' scooted behind me to make herself as small as possible in her meltdown, hoping to disappear.

The Schnauzer asked my name, so I told him I was Worcestershire, hoping it would be so difficult to pronounce he'd enter an endless thought loop and allow us to skittle away. It didn't work! So I quickly and politely concluded the conversation by telling the Schnauzer that the new Korean restaurant down the street had run out of dog and was looking for meat. It was either that or a Michael Vick comment—I needed to disperse them quickly before Pe' reached resonant frequency and shook herself to pieces.

As I turned to go, I looked the Schnauzer straight in the eye and said, "Well, I'm glad we didn't pour a bucket of cold water on you."

Pe' stopped trembling and laid her nose on my shoulder as the tails of our acquaintances hastily found a place to hide from the staff of the Bulgogi House. We kept our secret, and although no life changing events occurred on our short vacation, we returned to Westminster refreshed. And wouldn't you know it, love opened a new world to Pe'--she finally jumped in the water!

The following Sunday after services at Westminster Abbey, I waited in the classroom where Pe' taught, when I heard a rapid tapping of claws pitching higher and louder in my direction. It was Pe', piddling again, trembling, while tiny drogue chutes of luxurious fur trailed

in clouds of anxiety. She scratched a few eccentric swirlies into the waxed floor in an attempt to make a 90-degree turn at full speed, did a claw-smoking burnout and pushed into the classroom.

Pe' found the first chair leg she could fit her sexy snout around and through growls and gnawing of furniture said, "That Schnauzer and Chihuahua we met in Ryde, they're right behind me! I don't think they saw me but I overheard them asking the Chihuahua what they thought about the new face of Taco Bell!" She continued to chew anything she could find while mumbling to herself, "I'm best in show, I'm best in show, this shouldn't be happening to me."

I was still bursting with excitement over sharing the affection of the most delightful bitch in the world, but I needed to protect my lady, no matter how eager I was to dive into that couple and show them why a paper shredder isn't the worst way to die. I'm a Yorkie—I'm insane, I can't help it. Stop looking at me.

Within months, Pe' and I disclosed our courtship. Her master somehow understood our disappearance, the unexplained credit card expenses, and the dog riot of Ryde. The older female dogs of Westminster Abbey took Pe' aside and told her that all male dogs are dogs, I mean dogs in a bad way, and although her hyper anxiety ceased, she became annoyed by the popularity. *Missing Dog* posters were replaced by *Kissing Dog* posters of Pe' and Gi! We were *Pegi'* to the tabloids, but the unwanted publicity was preferable to the sneaking and hiding. Pe' and I fell deeply in love and wanted to start a family. I contacted Doris Day to find out if she was really serious about re-attaching my *bits*. She didn't understand a thing I said.

And that old couple, the Waggin's, became our friends. Mrs. Waggin grew to like my aggressiveness, something a Chihuahua could appreciate, and she loved Pe' for taking over the Taco Bell promotions and removing that stereotype from her breed.

Whenever I ran into Mrs. Waggin, she'd show a crooked smile and flash her disproportionately large, frog-like eyes and say, "Hi Gi" as she walked under me.

However, it wasn't until 21 dog years later that I told the Waggin's the story about the gazebo in Ryde and the ruse about the Korean restaurant. I stopped them one day and told them

how Pe' and I tried to hide from unwanted publicity, and how Pe' stopped me from dumping a bucket of cold water on them—though I probably wouldn't have used water.

Pe' had another anxiety attack piddling, running in circles, gnawing on Doris Day's shoe when she wasn't looking, barking into toilets when her reflection caused flashbacks from the pool, then attacked the entire Westminster Abbey when one of the masonry gargoyles stared at her. By the time the Waggin's and I found her she was barricaded inside a fortress she'd fashioned from stolen socks. They nuzzled, licked her, rubbed their noses all over her and calmed her with a group belly rub and a capsule of some mysterious drug. I didn't ask.

From that day on, I'd see the Waggin's and say, "Are you still here? I should've given you to that Korean restaurant when I had the chance!" or I'd catch Mr. Waggin outside his home with his invisible fence collar and linger just out of reach, telling him all the ways I could turn it into a shock collar that would make him light up like a squirrel touching a power line. In turn, he dared me to lift my leg and meet the business end of an electric fence. Dogs, squirrels, and cats who were unaware of the joke made sure they were out of range of any electrical shock.

And as for Mrs. Waggin, she no longer said hi to me, she just made that same a crooked smile and flashed her grossly disproportionately large, frog-like eyes and said, "Still here..."