
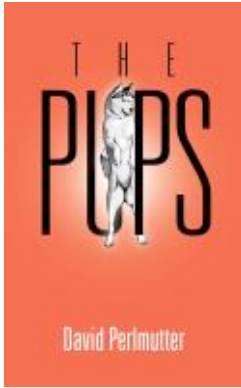


THE  
PIPS

The image features the title 'THE PIPS' in a large, bold, black, sans-serif font. The word 'THE' is positioned above 'PIPS'. A stylized illustration of a husky dog, rendered in white and grey with black outlines, is standing on its hind legs and is positioned between the two 'P's of the word 'PIPS'. The background is a solid, vibrant orange-red color.

David Perlmutter



*This is the story of the Pups, a team of canine superheroes-cum-comedians who exist in a future universe where canine beings such as they, while sentient and intelligent, are denied full "human" rights. Beginning with the story of how they came to be, it goes on to explore how they established their entertainment and super-heroic careers. This is a reprint of a work originally published in limited form in 2011 by Twisted Library Press.*

# THE PUPS

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# THE PUPS

David Perlmutter

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First Edition

# **Dedication**

To my parents



[EDITOR'S NOTE: *This narrative is the first of a projected series of attempts to portray the adventures of the noted superhero/comedy team, The Pups, in a more positive light than previously undertaken. Due largely to inaccurate speculation and misinterpretation in the intervening years since their retirement from activity in 2040, the truth about the origins and the activities of this heroic and humorous sextet has been largely ignored. When it has been addressed at all, it has tended to reflect a bias against them as comedians who "slummed" as superheroes and implicitly tainted the latter occupation by their very presence. However, in their own time, they were accepted and highly praised for their work in both professions, as their activities in both tended to be more tightly wound together than even they would have expected or liked. Compiled from first person interviews, discussions with, and writings of the six members- Steve Mutt, Patty Setter, Maurice Poodle, James Labrador, Tim Spaniel and Polly Greyhound- this narrative and the ones to follow will show, for the first time, the lives and adventures of this hardy troupe as they intended themselves to be seen by the public. Hopefully, they will go far towards repairing the breach in their reputations by revealing the true character and ideals of The Pups as individuals and a group, and will do much to clear up the more salaciously and erroneously imposed rumors about them. We begin, appropriately, with the story of how they came to be.]*





## **STEVE:**

My name is Steve Mutt, and I am a dog. You might think that it is unusual for a dog to communicate this eloquently, but I have been talking like this since I was born. Humans just hear it as barking, but they haven't heard it much out of me because, unless I need to, I don't talk to them. I have several disadvantages in this regard: being a nearly 6 foot tall talking dog is the first one, because normally my kind gets funny looks just for being what we are. Then, I happen to be intelligent and well-spoken, also something a lot of them don't take very kindly to. Then there are my professions: I write comedy for television and short stories, and I lead a superhero team. If you're willing to listen, I can hopefully untangle the knots and give you a sense of how I got to where I am.

I grew up in modest Midwestern splendor in the town of Hamilton, Ohio. If you could see my face and hear my voice, you would note the extreme level of sarcasm expressed in that statement. It was not exactly a bed of roses. For starters, there was the racism expressed by the humans in town. Don't think it didn't happen to us, because it sure did. Everybody who is "different" gets it in one way or another, and there's nothing more "different" than dogs who look and act exactly like human beings. What happened was that, in the 2010s, the American government, in all of its so-called "benevolence", had begun experimenting with converting the "lower" animals into human form, and who better to fill that purpose than "man's best friend".

The experiments got out of control, and the human dogs proved impossible to control. They fled into the woods, reproduced themselves, and *voilà*, a viable, intelligent and forceful population emerged. The government was forced to recognize our “humanity” by virtue of how vast our population soon became, and the threat we began to pose to national health and order, but this recognition, unfortunately, did not extend down the social grapevine. We were isolated in small ghetto settlements away from the major human settlements, but in full view of them, to be taunted and accused of all sorts of horrible things we never would have considered doing. The number of times I got called “boy” and asked about whether I could “fetch”, “roll over” or “play dead” made me so upset that I get angry now just hearing the words.

My mother, Stephanie, is the one from whom I think I get most of my wit and intelligence, since she had been employed as a comedian and burlesque dancer for most of her adult life in her native Brooklyn. Consequently, she had a number of male admirers, which is obviously how I came to be. Mom never told me exactly who my father was, other than some embarrassing details about how his sexual prowess was unmatched by any male she had known. Anyway, when I was growing in her, she decided that nasty old Brooklyn was no place for an impressionable young boy dog to grow up in, and she got on the nearest bus and rode it (in the back seats, of course) as far as it would let her go, which turned out to be Hamilton. Just when she got into town, her water broke and she had me right in

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the street. Even when I was born, I was embarrassed, a state it seems I've constantly been in.

Mom settled in the ghetto with the extensive savings from her career, since they wouldn't let her live anywhere else in spite of her celebrity. This is where I grew up, basking in the glow of the attention given to me by Mom and others who recognized and cared for me due to my famous lineage. This did much to counteract the negativity from the humans.

My talent for writing, such as it is, came about while I was still very young. When I saw programs on television, especially comedy and adventure ones, I had the instinctive feeling that the producers and performers were not doing them the "right" way, and I set about to correct their "errors" with my own work. I carried a notebook around with me and doodled ideas around in it whenever I had the time. I had some doubt about whether or not I was good enough to follow in Mom's footsteps as a comedian, which is what I aspired to be. Mom encouraged me, though, since she thought my little sketches and ideas were absolutely inspired. However, she insisted I graduate from obedience school before I pursued writing and performing as a career. This is where it starts getting complicated, but bear with me.

\*

Obedience school didn't go particularly well, at first. On my first day, I got bullied and wasn't able to defend myself from being attacked. I could have taken one guy easy, but I was outnumbered- and outclassed.

But once I knew the secret that was part of my past, that would change. We'll get to that in a minute.

After thrashing my butt severely, the bullies were prepared to hoist me on the flagpole, but they were abruptly halted when a high-pitched but aggressive growl implicitly ordered them to get lost. I was abandoned as they fled, and sustained as much loss of dignity yelping in pain on the ground as I would have had I been brought aft, as it were.

Fortunately, the one who had dismissed my attackers was not herself a bully but, as I could see, a lovely little flower in red and green tweeds and black shoes. She was a small creature with big blue eyes and oversized ears which frequently poked over her face, especially when she was angry. Compared to me in my tank top and shorts, she was the picture of sophistication. However, we were to become friends immediately, and, through bizarre circumstances I'll relate later on, have remained so to this day.

"I'm Butterfly," she said in a friendly voice. She pushed her oversized ears back as she did this. "Don't worry about them. They do that to all the new people-like an initiation thing. Somehow they haven't achieved the level of intelligence that I already have."

"I'm Steve," I replied, nervously introducing myself. "So you're smart, huh?"

"The smartest in school," she answered. "The position gives you a few advantages. For one, I can boss those guys around, and they stay away from the people I like. If you're my pal, you won't have to worry about them again."

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“Can I be your pal?”

“Sure. To tell you the truth, though, I haven’t got many. I’ve kind of been sheltered. You know how it is with parents. Especially if you’re an only child. Then they act like the world will come to an end if you get sick.”

“Tell me about it. So, are you into writing and all that, ‘cause that’s really my thing. Mostly stories and sketches.”

“So am I!” she said as we walked inside. “Not so much fiction, but I’ve had a couple of things published in the Science Journal. That’s what I want to be. You know scientists rule in this world.”

“And entertainers!” I added.

“Yeah, they may make more money, but do they do as much good?”

We only pondered this conundrum for a moment before laughter overtook us.

Fly and I were virtually inseparable from that point on. She had achieved her position as the smartest in school already due to the fact that she had gained the first perfect score in the school’s history in her application time trials. Mine were not that far off, and so we ended being labeled the “geeks” of the school, which embarrassed me but pleased her to no end. Since we had no other friends, having been sheltered for much of our lives up to this point, we ended up sharing most of our in- and out-of-school activities. The first group of things included us helping the amateur dramatic society and supervising its productions; we alternated in scripting and directing, and I learned a lot from this experience,

which would serve me well in the future. Then I'd assist her in some of her scientific experiments, though she never told me their ultimate purpose. The other group of things included plotting our fiction and non-fiction ideas for stories and articles (the former for me, the latter for her), and then writing and bouncing them off each other; and finding new and creative ways to attack the humans who accosted us on the way to and from school. To my surprise -and embarrassment- Butterfly proved as well versed in profanity as she was in literature, drama and science, and that got us out of a lot of scrapes. Sure, she looked cute and everything at first to our human nemeses, and they tried baiting her for exactly that reason. That backfired on them often- one racist slur and she was on them with fists, legs and curses flying, and they were instantly on the retreat. You might think the sight of a little dog girl getting mad like that was funny 'cause she was a dog and small, but I don't- I *never* have. Butterfly helped me to take pride and honor in my status as a dog for things like that, and I have never forgotten that for once in the whole of my career.

But it wasn't all fun and games. When we were playing dodge ball in gym one day, I suddenly began to suffer from stomach pain and collapsed on the floor. Butterfly spotted me and heroically defended me from the attack of balls by my unfeeling classmates, and then proceeded to escort me to the nurse.

"You've never done this before," she correctly observed. "This isn't a con job, is it?"

"Would I fake something this PAINFUL?" I countered.

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“Just checking,” she said. “I don’t want my pal becoming a delinquent!”

“You have no fear of that,” I said. I didn’t know how right I would be about that in the future.

The nurse sent me home, saying she’d never seen a case like mine in quite a number of years. When I arrived home my mother knew exactly what was wrong, as she always did. She promptly installed me in bed and kept at my bedside until I got better. It was then that she revealed the secret to me.

“They said this would happen to you when I was carrying you, Steve.” she told me. “That was one of the reasons why I had to leave New York. I needed to get you away from the city to avoid you being ridiculed as a freak.”

“But why?” I asked. “What happened?”

She asked if I knew of a town called Rolling Fork, Mississippi. I said I did not.

“Well, there was an accident there, about 2008.” she replied. “I happened to be performing there at the time, and I was in one of the six cars that piled up in an intersection, along with five other dogs. The humans in them all died, but we survived. What had happened was a giant yellow ball had implanted itself in the middle of the road, and when the six of us approached it we were supernaturally charged beyond your wildest dreams. Don’t believe the government when it says the idea of making dogs human was their idea; that’s B.S. That thing was a meteor from outer space, Steve, and it made all of us truly human in shape and form; we would have evolved naturally, given time, but this really sped up the

process. And all the dogs within the radius of that meteor became human-like for the first time, and it spread like wildfire from there.”

“Are you sure about that, Mom?” I asked.

“Dyin’ if I’m lyin’” she answered. “But most of that stuff I didn’t learn until later on, when you came around. I got worried when you ended up showing a lot of the symptoms that the doctors said would happen to my kids if I ever had any.”

“Such as?”

“They wouldn’t be normal, that’s for sure. Because me and the five other dogs were standing so close to the meteor when it went off, we got hit the hardest by the cosmic radiation that came off it. What the verdict was for all of us was that if we ever had any kids, they would have superpowers.”

“Like the heroes in my comic books?” I asked.

“Kind of. Typically, they said, around puberty, that stuff will really kick in. But it’s been a nascent trait inside you all along.”

“Is that why I’m so smart?” I asked again, worried. “I knew it couldn’t be because of...”

She cut me off.

“The fact that I’m not?” she returned.

“No!” I answered. “You know I would never think about you like that...”

“I know. You’ve always been smart, and that’s due as much to you being such a curious little dickens as you are. But...” she paused, sounding graver. “Things are going to change now.”

“How?” I asked, now completely worried.



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“Well, I noticed these things happening when you were young, and I got worried. They mostly happened when you were asleep, so you don’t remember them happening. Like when I chained your bed to the floor that time; you were levitating. And then there was the time when you were exercising by lifting the fridge up and down. I finally took you to the doctor and he confirmed what I had worried about all this time; you had gained superpowers through my exposure to the meteor. You were very strong, fast and agile, more than most of your peers. They’re your dominant powers, and you’ll always have those. The doctor said that those traits would reoccur in any of the other children from the other five dogs as well, so you’ll know them when you see them, I guess.”

“I knew that there was a reason why I was doing so well at sports,” I mused.

“Then he said some of them had some sort of regressive powers, like having telepathic abilities, or being able to change their appearance at will, or being super-intelligent. Not all of them; just a couple in each group, he said. And the intelligence power ended up being yours.”

“Obviously,” I said.

“Now, I don’t want you to get upset or embarrassed about this...”

“Too late!”

“...but I don’t know if there are any other kids like you around. You could be the only one of your kind, since I don’t know if any of the other dogs had children or not. And as you get older, these new abilities you

have are just going to increase; you might not be able to understand why they're happening."

"I can learn, Mom," I answered. "You know how I am. I'll learn how to use and control my powers. I'll make sure I use them to do good."

"It's fortunate you're such a nice guy, and you think about that stuff," she said. "In different paws it could be different. But whatever you do, you're going to have to watch out for yourself. Not everybody's going to understand. I mean, even Butterfly might be intimidated by that." This from the female who was herself deeply intimidated by my friend's massively precocious intelligence.

"She probably would," I countered.

"Better that you keep it a secret, though, even from her. At least until you find out if there's anyone else like you in the world."

I promised her that I would.

\*

And so, I kept my secret. Butterfly certainly noticed, as it seemed to her that my strength, speed and intelligence certainly kept pace with hers and advanced past it in some areas. But she never pressed me about it, and if she was miffed about it, I never really knew about it-until later.

After I graduated, I had to decide what I was going to do with my life. For me, that was easy. I spent a couple of weeks preparing a pilot script for a TV variety series with myself in the starring role (who else?). Mom was a little concerned about me going to New York,

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since she'd so recently escaped it. She warned me that New York was a tough town and that I was taking a big risk going there, even though those folks who remembered her might give me some help. But she knew that, along with the powers of the meteor, I had inherited from her the feisty personality that had allowed her to survive a tempestuous youth in Brooklyn. Somehow, she reassured herself that I could make it on my own terms.

As a result, when it came time for me to travel to New York via bus, Mom and Butterfly enthusiastically sent me off, even though they were uncertain about whether they would see me again and didn't entirely want to let me go. Carrying my little book bag containing my script, I kissed them goodbye and boarded the bus. Mom advised me not to give a second glance to any dirty looks humans might give me, but I could feel them looking at me as if I was a freak. For the first time in my life, I truly felt that I was entering into a foreign universe.

"What's the matter with them?" I asked myself. "Haven't they seen a dog before?"

\*

On the ride to New York, the city and country flew past with considerable rapidity. I became tired, but no way was I going to give up. I held tightly to my bag to prevent it from being stolen, and endured the continual staring of my fellow passengers, who acted like I was an alien. In case you haven't guessed it already, I hate being singled out because of my species. It's

embarrassing. My species has no bearing on what kind of being I am, and I shouldn't be judged on that alone. I'm not racist, but it's absolutely surprising to me that human beings could be so blind to the idea that they share the planet with others who are equally worthy of occupying it. Our work as performers and superheroes has, I hope, helped to put this across, but you'll understand that eventually.

Anyway, the next morning we arrived at the bus station in Brooklyn. I got off the bus and began my weary trek to find someplace to stay. But the eagerness I had displayed at the start of the trip was already beginning to fade. As I gazed at the vast Manhattan skyline across the river, I wondered about how I was going to convince the networks to buy my show. The silhouette seemed so impersonal, and I feared the networks would be so as well.

However, my train of thought was abruptly interrupted when I was grabbed from behind by a big, hulking grey dog dressed in blue overalls. I looked into his eyes as I tried futilely to maneuver out of his grasp. I was terrified, but I couldn't let him know that.

"Let me go!" I declared, with a youthful boldness.

All that got me was a swipe across the face that left me weakened and whining. He knocked me to the ground and relieved me of my bag. He must have figured I had a lot of money in it, even though I didn't have much.

"I'll take that!" he said.

He started running with my bag. I couldn't let him get away with it, of course, so I started running after

*THE PUPS*

him. My youthful stamina, plus my developing powers, allowed me to run alongside him almost as soon as he took off with my bag.

“Give it back!” I demanded.

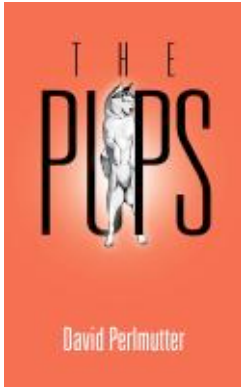
“Make me!” he shot back.

This continued for a couple of blocks before I finally caught up with him. I took a swing at him, but missed; but had I connected, my strength would have shown him who he was dealing with. Promptly, he grabbed my throat and began to choke me.

“You picked the wrong guy to mess with, kid!” he said, as he increased the pressure to my neck.

Things looked bad for me, but then he dropped me when a new, equally imposing figure took its place in the shadows.

“Hey!” it commanded in a guttural, sandpaper tone. “Leave him alone!”



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