

***NEWS FLASH:******Cats Are Brats!***

A fluffy black-and-white cat and two short-haired tortoise-shell kittens (“torties”) are holding a meeting in the kitchen at Dragonhead, the Brendels’ antique house in Ipswich, Massachusetts.

The fluffy black-and-white cat, age 3-1/2, is Katherine, Empress of All Russia, better known as Lady Katie.

The “torties” are twin sisters, Puck and Piper, and they’re not really kitteny anymore; they’re 10 months old.

Lady Katie chairs the meeting.

**KATIE:** I appreciate your both being here. I know how unpleasant it must be for you to actually attend an actual meeting, given how undisciplined you both are.

**PUCK:** Well, we’re kittens, after all.

**PIPER:** Yeah, waddaya expect, yer *highness*.

**KATIE:** No need to be snide. Now, the reason I’ve called this meeting is that Doug has no—

**PUCK:** Doug? What’s a Doug?

**KATIE:** He’s the guy who pays for your cat food.

**PUCK:** The tall one?

**PIPER:** With the long dark hair and the ridiculous white goat-beard?

**KATIE:** Well, I wouldn’t call it ... uh ... well ... Yes.

**PUCK:** Isn’t he the delusional one?

**PIPER:** He goes around the house talking to himself, like there are other people in the room, but there aren’t.

**PUCK:** Yeah, that’s the guy. One day he’s a wimpy theatre fanatic, then suddenly he’s a general in the German army,

then he’s a member of the British Parliament, then he’s a Canadian factory boss — and now he thinks he’s the king!

**KATIE:** He’s an actor.

**PIPER:** An actor?

**PUCK:** Wow!

**PIPER:** Like on Broadway?

**KATIE:** No, he’s an amateur. He works in community theatre. As a hobby.

**PUCK:** [rolling her eyes] Oh.

**PIPER:** [licking herself] Big deal.

**PUCK:** Of all the people we could’ve been adopted by...

**PIPER:** We had to score a delusional *nobody*!

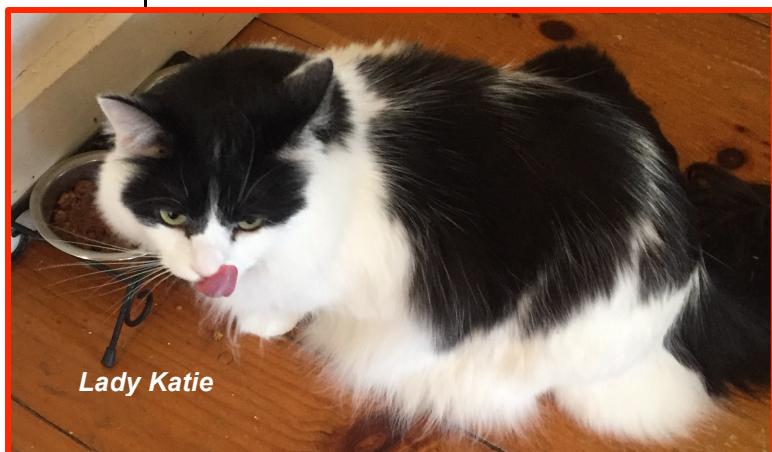
**KATIE:** Please. He does important work professionally. He writes fundraising materials for charities, and he went to the former USSR 5 times this year with the NewThing.net charity.

**PUCK:** Oh yeah, I remember him disappearing for days at a time.

**PIPER:** I kept thinking OK! The loser is gone for good! But then — *boom*. In he walks.

**KATIE:** I don’t think you should be lounging on the kitchen counter. It’s against house rules.

**PUCK:** They’re not home, dummy. Relax.



**KATIE:** I'll have you know Doug also finished the first draft of a novel this year.

**PIPER:** Really! I'm so impressed! Tell me something, your royal fluffiness — Does this so-called novel have any *cats* in it?

**PUCK:** [sighing] What a life. How did this happen to us?

**PIPER:** I don't know. We were so happy at the Ipswich Animal Shelter. The volunteers there were normal humans. And then, out of the blue — *wham!* We're here, trapped in a 200-year-old house on outer Linebrook Road.

**PUCK:** Yeah. With *them*.

**KATIE:** Girls, please get out of the sink. Maybe you should be grateful you were adopted at all. It wouldn't have happened in the first place if my brother Rocket hadn't died. A coyote got him in the backyard in June. It was one of the most horrible experiences these humans have ever experienced.

**PIPER:** Oh. Okay. That's pretty heavy. You have my deepest sympathy.

**KATIE:** Me? Oh, *I* didn't care. Once he was gone, I got all the food. At least until *you* two came along.

**PUCK:** You're saying we were brought in as *replacements*?

**PIPER:** For a coyote-burger?

**KATIE:** Basically, yes. And I'm sorry to say, you've fulfilled your role quite nicely. You've been cute, charming, playful, entertaining. I find you both utterly annoying. Thank you very much.

**PUCK:** We're just trying to keep sane in this

madhouse.

**KATIE:** Puck, would you please stop clawing the easy chair?

**PIPER:** They're all wacko. What's with the kid?

**PUCK:** Yeah, what are all those weird sounds coming out of her mouth?

**KATIE:** She's practicing her vocals. She's in her second year of private voice lessons.

**PIPER:** You mean this condition has persisted.

**KATIE:** [arching an eyebrow] Lydia Charlotte is

15, a freshman at Ipswich High School, a brilliant vocalist — she got a *perfect* score in her Senior District Chorale audition, and sings in two elite choruses — and she's a star of the stage.

**PUCK:** Star of the stage?

**PIPER:** You mean she's another *actor*? Gah!

**KATIE:** This year in school productions she played Chava in *Fiddler on the Roof* and the judge's political manager in *Miracle on 34th Street*. During 6 weeks of theatre camp in Maine she played a clumsy waitress, an elegant customer, a pirate, and a parrot — it was her third time playing a parrot.

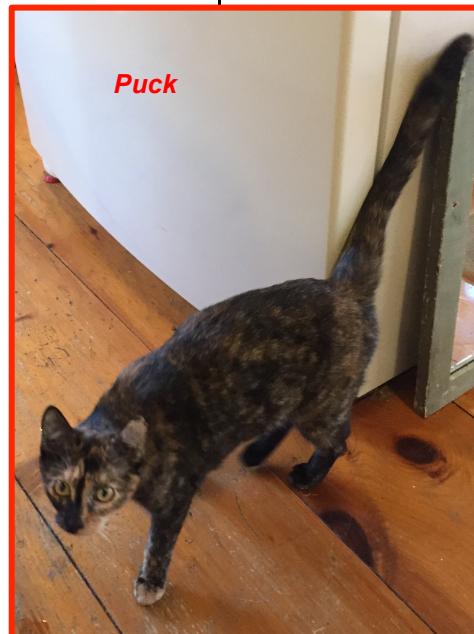
**PUCK:** And she's *proud* of this?

**KATIE:** Actually, I think the thing Lydia Charlotte is proudest of is that she's now slightly taller than her mother.

**PIPER:** This is a sick family.

**PUCK:** Yeah, the wife-mother-woman is weird too.

**KATIE:** Her name is Kristina, and I assure you, she is the most stable of



the bunch.

**PIPER:** That ain't sayin' much.

**KATIE:** Puck, please stop chewing on the Christmas tree.

**PUCK:** Day after day, Kristina comes in dressed in black and white, with a little lacy thingy in her hair, like some maid from the 1920s.

**KATIE:** Exactly. Kristina is one of the starring tour guides at the historic Crane Estate, taking visitors back in time to the summer of 1929. She's also president of the parents' booster club for students in the arts. And she launched a new theatre group, Castle Hill Productions, with an award-winning production of the hilarious Maggie Smith comedy *Lettice and Lovage*.

**PIPER:** [yawning, after a pause] I'm sorry, were you saying something?

**KATIE:** You know, there are other members of this family. Natalie is 26, almost 27. She lives in Arizona, working at Marriott's Wild Horse Pass resort, in events management. She'll be here for Christmas.

**PUCK:** Be still my heart.

**KATIE:** And Kris just turned 26. He works for

Home Depot, he lives in New Hampshire, and he'll be here for Christmas too, with his awesome girlfriend Allison.

**PIPER:** [rolling a joint] Hey, Puck, you got a light?

**KATIE:** Girls, I realize that marijuana is legal now in Massachusetts, but you're supposed to be 21 before you indulge.

**PUCK:** That's 21 in *human* years.

**PIPER:** You'd have to be 86 in cat years. Who could wait that long?

**KATIE:** I'm not sure you two are going to work out here.

**PUCK:** Chill, queenie. You don't have to tell them what happens when they're away.

**PIPER:** Yeah. What happens in the cat box, stays in the cat box.

**KATIE:** [a heavy sigh] Meeting dismissed. I think I'll go throw up.

**PUCK:** Christmas hairballs. That's the spirit.

**PIPER:** Puck, gimme a hand unspooling this toilet paper.

