

Cats Weekly

From a lounging position in his comfortable basket at the head of the Board Room table, Major - the Editor-in-chief of the nascent Cats Weekly magazine - was chairing the Content Review meeting for the upcoming first edition. "Cats Weekly, about Cats, for Cats, by Cats" was the pitch he had been given when tasked with pulling together a disparate collection of self-aggrandising, un-cooperative, argumentative moggies. The handsome tuxedo Tom was wondering if he would ever get this flourish of felines to work together.

The Queen Siamese with the chill blue eyes who sat grooming her whiskers and apparently ignoring everyone else in the meeting was head of Current Affairs and Foreign Relations. "Her's are too many to list, never mind all the previous affairs and the domestic relations" was the oft-stated opinion of Fiona, the sarcastic orange coat who was responsible for Home and Domestic content. The elderly tortoiseshell comfortably asleep near the foot of the table was in charge of reviews of mice and birds, as well as cat toys. The young grey tom, Rake, Advertising and Marketing, exuded male sexuality from every hair on his body and was currently arching his back and waving his tail in a so far unsuccessful attempt to interest the internee Lara, a pretty young tabby just emerged from kitten hood, in his magnificence. The final member of the team was a middle aged gib cat called Vincent who had numerous awards for graphic design under his paws. He combined sub-editing the magazine with the unenviable role of designing its cover layout. Since this included deciding which articles should be given the accolade of cover stories, it had thus earned him the dislike and resentment of all the copy-producing cats in the team.

In fact the only member of his staff who inspired Major, the senior tom, with any confidence as a good team player was the internee who was currently addressing the meeting.

"Catisticles", Lara was saying, "cats of today won't read long articles unless they are of specific interest. If you want to get the attention of the wider audience, you need to tickle their interest with minnow sized treats, not go all out for the full salmon of knowledge."

Fluff, the tortoiseshell woke up at this point, yawned widely, stretched each leg in turn and said "Salmon, mmmn. I could do a comparative taste test on salmon from different rivers, if I could have a budget to order in some of the rarer samples. The Speckled Tay is generally considered to be one of the outstanding delicacies. I could test that for us and write one of these caticles about the results," she added, hopefully.

Fiona interrupted snarkily with "Cat-ist-icle, not caticle. Do keep up, Fluff."

Major Tom called them both to order, and asked Lara to continue with her explanation.

"A catisticle is an article which consists of a list of things that are of interest to cats. It is derived from the words cat, list and article" she informed the meeting. "Abomination of a word" muttered Vincent. Fiona shushed him and Lara went on with "The information is short, punchy and easy to take in because it comes in claw point format. It can be particularly effective if you couple it with a top five, or top ten comparison. You start with the lowest ranked item and it builds momentum as the reader works her way up to the Number 1 favourite. Cats will get drawn in to ranking their own favourites along with ours, and it generates a lot of discussion around the water dish, which is good for future sales."

Rake stirred, eyeing Lara sideways as he addressed Major. “I get it”, he drawled, “every Tom’s top 5 seduction locations: At number 5 we have the backyard – easy and convenient; number 4 the wild wood for the thrill of danger; number 3, the ...”

The other cats never found out what Rake’s top three preferred amorous locations were, because Illustria, the Siamese, unsheathed her claws and hissed at him, intimidating him into silence far more thoroughly than Major’s throat-clearing had ever succeeded in doing.

Fiona spoke up again. “Since most of our readers will have human pets or servants as part of their domestic economy, how about if we bring some human interest into this catisticle concept. What about listing the top 5 qualities to look for when choosing a good human pet to live with.”

“I like it,” said Major. “That is definitely cover story material” agreed Vincent, the graphic design cat.

The senior cats proceeded to brainstorm ideas for the top 5 traits desirable in their human staff while Lara endeavoured to note down all their suggestions.

“They must be a good provider of quality food such as fresh chicken and fish, not that same-tasting slop that comes in those horrid metal sleeves” insisted Fiona. Rake countered with “We can feed ourselves, if absolutely necessary, but they must have a good design of cat door installed. It is vital that we can come and go as we wish to attend to our own interests.” Rake was about to elaborate on what those interests were in his case, but a quick glance at Illustria convinced him to refrain. Fluff said it was all about comfort, she wanted warm radiators to curl up and sleep by, a properly sized soft bed and a few toys for when she felt like playing. Vincent thought very highly of low furniture to disappear under. Illustria waited for a pause before making her contribution, “Most important of all is that they should know their place, and recognise our superiority. They should be dedicated to our well-being and offer us their worship,” she opined regally.

At this point Major sat up in his basket, raised one paw and waited for silence. To his surprise, it came almost instantly. “These are all excellent suggestions and you can each write a short paragraph on your own favourites and I will rank them in order of importance to complete the story. But there is one thing that is even more important than our individual comfort and well-being” he began, “and that is that the humans must never learn of our superiority over them. They like to joke that we can teleport when they find us under their feet, but they don’t believe it is true. And our long successful relationship with the humans would end in our persecution if they ever discover that we can influence their thoughts and actions telepathically.”

The older cats looked at each other and nodded at Major’s solemn words, but Lara raised a timid paw. “Yes, Lara?” “Can we really do all that?” she asked hesitantly. “Well you are a little too young to have developed those traits as yet, but you will soon begin acquiring them,” Major told her. “And for proof of their reality, you only need to consider what is coming out of No. 10 since Larry started turning senile. He really should be replaced, but no-one else will live there now.”