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In the Spotlight: Putin's Puppy, Sex Kittens

By Anna Malpas

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This week, in the ultimate fluffy news story, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin hugged a puppy and invited us to think of a name. The male puppy was a gift from the Bulgarian prime minister as Putin visited for talks on a gas pipeline. The puppy was carried in by a vast entourage and seemed to take to his new master, giving Putin a lick on the cheek.

Some pointed out that the sad-eyed puppy with adorable white socks will later morph into an enormous shaggy guard dog. Putin's Labrador Connie, graying now, may not know what has hit her. She was shown lying on the sofa as Putin and his wife Lyudmila were filmed taking part in the census in a horribly awkward stunt. Putin joked that Connie was his "first wife" and certainly showed her more affection, giving her a rub as she laid on her back with her paws in the air. But then Labradors like everyone.

Rights activists complained that to leave a name suggestion on Putin's web site you had to fill in your entire contact details, presumably to crack down on the saboteurs who tried to submit puns in paw taste or brought up poisoned umbrellas. So far bloggers have been taking it all a

bit too seriously, suggesting that the poor puppy should be called "kickback" or "power vertical."

Russian property developers also have an interesting line in names. Model Naomi Campbell is promoting the Legend of Tsvetnoi, a luxury housing complex on Tsvetnoi Bulvar built by her boyfriend, developer Vladislav Doronin. In the television ad, Campbell purrs, "Now you know where I stay," in English.

Interestingly the new "deluxe" building that she is promoting stands on a site that is legendary for very different reasons. It was the former headquarters of the Moscow branch of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

Campbell is shown in the pool, using the gym and even walking around the "premium" conference facilities in a suit and very high heels. Rather oddly the ad switches languages mid-sentence, since apparently Campbell's Russian was not up to the task. So you hear a woman whispering in Russian, "Through the windows of my house," and then Campbell's voice saying the cheesy line, "I listen to your heart, Moscow," as you see her gazing out wistfully. It's not exactly Paris fashion week, so I hope she got a fat fee.

If Campbell flogging Moscow real estate wasn't bizarre enough, former spy Anna Chapman turned up this week for the opening of a Swiss watch store. She rolled up in a white horse-drawn carriage, dressed in all white, including her stiletto boots and zipped dress. Russian media quoted the director of the Ulysse Nardin brand, Rolf Schnyder, as saying it was his idea to invite her.

Chapman was photographed wearing one of the watches. She chose a steel watch decorated with diamonds because she doesn't like gold, Schnyder was quoted as saying. The brand's web site said it made a donation to a children's charity on her request.

Ulysse Nardin makes over-the-top watches including one decorated with a miniature St. Basil's Cathedral. Vedomosti reported that Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Kozak is a fan, as is Anatoly Chubais, head of Rusnano.

Chapman has kept up an enigmatic silence even while taking off her clothes for Maxim magazine, despite journalists' best efforts.

Tvoi Den chased Chapman at a cafe with a "well-fed" male companion this week. It also caught her at a film premiere and hinted that Chapman told the journalist where to go. "Despite her luxuriant figure, she can't boast a decent vocabulary," it sniffed.

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