

Parasite of Love

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Friday night, stumbling out of my favorite, tres trendy club, The Libido Lido, I caught my foot in a sidewalk crack and tumbled on a motley group of ethnic-types laying brick. Though my girlfriend Lyuba had not noticed, being stylishly wasted due to a potent regimen of mojitos and that day's Botox injections, I nevertheless needed to regain my sense of dignity.

A member of the city's militia — or politzia, or whatever they are now — was kind enough to lend me his truncheon, whereupon I threatened to beat them within an inch of their lives. The policeman had asked that I not actually beat them, as he was assigned to ensure that they met the day's quota of bricklaying before their beatings.

I asked my driver to take Lyuba, who was now unconscious, back home, while I caught a cab to my next club. I was in a pretty sour mood, to be honest, and having the chance to beat some migrant workers would have been a pretty awesome release. Still, I admired the police officer's far-sightedness and his commitment to Moscow's beautification.

The day had gone badly. I finished a three-hour lunch at Café Tsvetayeva, plus a bottle or two of Perrier Jouet '99 with one client for whom I consult, when it was time for me to meet with

a group of Russian banking clients. I knew it was going to be ugly. As an American expert, I'm supposed to show them our best practices.

The meeting began amicably enough. "So what do you have to say for yourself, parasite?" the bank's CEO asked.

"Well, for starters," I began, "I ..."

"Silence, parasite!" he said grimly.

A receptionist came in and asked if I would like a cup of coffee, or a glass of water, or if I would rather steal someone else's.

Somebody then objected, "The parasite reeks of alcohol. It's disgraceful. Americans have no discipline!"

"But Anton Nikolayevich, you and I were out until three in the morning, just last week," I objected.

"Silence, parasite!"

"Hey, what's with all this 'parasite' stuff all of a sudden?"

"Our prime minister says that America is a parasite and that you lack financial discipline."

It was as if I had been hit with a sledgehammer. I had been downgraded. Those bankers had really given me an earful to think about, and we all agreed to meet again when we were back from the summer holidays. The receptionist took my cup and saucer before I could pocket them.

But that was Friday, and it was now early Saturday morning with me in a taxi happily heading to another top-shelf, tres chic club — this time Paris Fellatio — to upgrade my social credentials. Ksenia Sobchak had called to say she and the gang were all already there. I felt restored.

On the way into the club, I gave a policeman a couple hundred rubles. "Keep up the good work, officer," I told him, smiling and looking at the bricklayers he was overseeing. "Make them line up those bricks real straight, you hear? Let's keep this place beautiful."

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