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On Realizing That Living in Moscow Can Be Compared to Attending a Wedding Fair

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How do you know when you are a fully fledged female Moscow expat resident?

Warning: If you are a man and reading this post, it may make no sense to you. I apologize for that, but you'll have to take my word for it. Things such as wedding fairs really do happen "back home," it's just that your beloved probably spared you the experience of attending one.

So. If you are a woman and had a white wedding, you may have visited a wedding fair during the planning process. Remember that? Go on, you can do it. Reach back into the farthest vestiges of your memory and try to recall those halcyon days pre-children when finding the perfect name cards for the table, or the exact shade of cream for your invitations was important to you. (OK, it didn't happen to me either but I'm sure there were plenty of things that would seem insignificant to me now which at the time I got married assumed a wholly

disproportionate level of importance. But those are subjects for another post...)

Imagine yourself entering this long-ago wedding fair. Everywhere you look there is an explosion of white tulle, glitter, fluff, dresses, flowers. As you walk into the hall your eye is caught by a wedding dress stand, and you walk nonchalantly over, hopeful that you will find the dress of your dreams just waiting for you to discover it. Doesn't happen, of course. In fact it SO doesn't happen that as you thank the proprietor of the stand and walk away, you have to work hard to stop your lip curling in horror at how over-the-top the dresses are. "Who wears these things?" you wonder as you set off to tour the rest of the exhibition, confident that somewhere you will find something that is more "you."

Two or three hours later, exhausted, clutching a bag full of pamphlets, samples, business cards and ideas — but still with no idea of what on earth you are going to wear for your Big Day — you return to the entrance of the hall. The first stand that you visited catches your eye. You wander over and take another look at the dresses that you so readily dismissed earlier in the day. As the stand owner, who has seen it all before and knows that excessive exposure to wedding madness is enough to break even the most understated bride, watches indulgently, it turns out that your parameters of tasteful have moved somewhat in the last couple of hours. Actually, you think, this dress isn't so bad. And neither is that one. And that one, if you lost the lace train, could actually work.

So, how does this equate to living in Moscow?

Today I was at a Christmas fair. I remember first visiting this same event a couple of years back, shortly after we moved to Russia. Everything seemed so blingtastic, so unnecessarily shiny, so excessively gold, just so damned ... over the top.

But on this visit to the fair, nearly three years into our stay here, I actually heard myself saying to one of the vendors "Do you have something like this, but with a few more sparkles?"

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