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Bug Off! The Russian Way

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Клеи́ться: to hit on someone

As one of those people who responds to хамство (obnoxious behavior, rudeness) with either astonished silence or lame rejoinders like Как вы смеете?! (How dare you?), I'm always very impressed with people who have a clever comeback.

For example, when a young man butts to the head of the line in a bank or store, one of my

friends asks: Молодой человек! Объясните, пожалуйста, чем вы лучше нас! (Young man! Why don't you tell us how you're better than the rest of us?)

Another acquaintance standing in a long line once managed to shut up a cranky older person who kept complaining about everyone and everything, clearly looking to pick a fight. In a moment of silence, my friend said: Жаль, что коммуналок больше нет. Не с кем ругаться! (Too bad there aren't any more communal apartments. There's no one to fight with.) Everyone laughed, and that, of course, silenced the serial complainer.

A sub-set of this problem is how to respond to the person in the bar or in the park who keeps hitting on you. In Russian this is usually described by the verb приставать. Sometimes this just means to pester someone: Шеф пристаёт с вопросами об отчёте. (My boss keeps bugging me about the report.) But usually it's clear what kind of pestering is meant: Шеф ко мне постоянно пристаёт (My boss keeps hitting on me.)

If the person just won't leave you alone, you can use the verb клеиться (to glue together), which in slang describes someone who sticks to you like white on rice. This can apply to men or women: Что делать? К мужу клеится девушка с работы (What should I do? A woman from work won't leave my husband alone.)

Or you can use another slang term: кадрить (to put the moves on someone). This also can refer to men or women: Она давно кадрит меня (She's been putting the moves on me for a long time.) Кадрить sometimes, but not always, implies success: Сегодня я расскажу вам, как правильно кадрить девчонок (Today I'll tell you how to score with the ladies.)

So regardless of your gender or orientation, you might find yourself being hit on and not know how to get rid of the unwanted attention. In Russian, this is отшить (to give someone the brush-off, to tell someone where to get off). If you get the relatively polite pick-up line: Можно с вами познакомиться? (Let me introduce myself), you can reply equally politely: Я не хочу знакомиться (I don't want to get to know you.) If that doesn't work, you can explain why: Я замужем (I'm married.) Я спешу (I'm in a rush.) Я болею (I'm sick.) Here the illness remains undefined and therefore ominous.

If the person just doesn't get the message and starts grabbing, Russian advice columns suggest trying to keep things as calm as possible. Say: Извините, меня нельзя трогать (Sorry — but don't touch me.)

But if that doesn't work, you can try a great put-down. These are best to try when you are surrounded by friends who will protect you or when you are sure you can run faster than the pest who won't leave you alone. My favorite is for the guy who sidles up and asks: Девушка, скучаете? (Hey, are you bored?) Response: Не настолько (Not that bored!)

Ouch.

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