

Wladimir Kamineer: *The Russian Bride* (translated by Michael Hulse)

Over the past ten years, which I have spent in Berlin, I have got to know a good many Russo-German married couples, and I believe I can claim that if there is one universal means of delivering a man from all of his problems at a single blow, then it is a Russian bride. Does your life seem boring? Are you out of work? Are you suffering from an inferiority complex, or acne? Get yourself a Russian bride and soon you won't know yourself.

For one thing, loving a Russian woman is a very romantic business, because there are any number of obstacles to be overcome before she is yours. For instance, you have to submit a declaration of income to the Aliens Office, to demonstrate that you can indeed afford a Russian bride. If not, the lady won't be issued a residence permit. An acquaintance of mine, who as a BVG employee apparently didn't make enough to be able to marry his Russian beloved, wrote dozens of letters to Chancellor Schroeder and bombarded the Foreign Office with complaints. It was a tough struggle. But it was worth it: now the man has his bride and has been given a raise into the bargain.

What's more, I know a large number of Germans who had been unemployed and depressed for a long time and then speedily found a job and even embarked on successful careers simply because they had fallen in love with Russian women. But then, they had no option, because Russian brides are very, very demanding, not to say expensive. Not only do they invariably want to look good themselves but they also insist that the man always be dressed in the very latest style, which means he is forever having to buy new, expensive clothes. 'Is this really necessary?' the men ask, in the early days, but before long they submit readily enough. Simply everything has to be just so. For the wedding a Russian bride wants a white dress, a church, a register office, and afterwards a good restaurant with as many guests as possible. Thereafter she will devote herself entirely to family life, though she will also pursue some pretty studies or other at the same time. Such as singing, at a private academy. This is very popular with Russian brides. In Berlin alone I know three women who go to singing school, and it's not cheap!

The Russian bride inspires a man with courage, gives new meaning to his life, protects him from enemies if he has them, and always stands by him, even when he screws up. But in your everyday life with her, caution is advised. The Russian bride is sensitive and requires particular care and attention.

Unfortunately, conflict with her cannot simply be laid to rest with a bunch of flowers. It takes more. If the dispute is serious, the best thing is to run, quickly. When her fury is aroused, the Russian bride is a tigress. So it is most important to know exactly what the legal basis of a Russian bride's status is in the Federal Republic of Germany. The Russian department at Radio MultiKulti frequently covers this topic, in its programme A Lawyer Advises

'I recently married a young German and moved in with him; a Russian woman will write from Celle, say, 'and now I have been given a residence permit for three years by the German authorities. If something were to happen to my husband suddenly, such as a fatal car crash, would my right of residence be rescinded or not?' 'In that eventuality dear lady,' the lawyer advises, 'your right of residence would not be rescinded. But it would nonetheless be better if your husband were to remain alive another year or so.'

From: Russian Disco, London 2002