

## Wanted: Putin's Girl

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A girl was needed, but no ordinary one. She had to be not too tall and not too short, not too young and not too old — which if you're wondering, is apparently between 22 and 27 — and she had to have a Moscow propiska, or registration.

It sounds like many a Moscow or even St. Petersburg man's dream. Her skin had to be pure — no mention of her heart — her brows not too heavy, her chins not too many. Slavic features, please, they asked. Good manners, a way with lifts, not too big on the hips.

A beautiful smile and kind, intelligence plus the ability to take a bullet to the chest if somebody takes a pot shot at the guy who looks almost tall — to you, possibly — by your side.

If asked to find an escort for Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, it is unlikely that I would have stuck an ad up on a web site.

But that is what went buzzing around the Internet a week or so ago. The escort was needed for last Friday when Putin was set to visit the Arctic forum at the new Moscow State University building.

Her job was to escort him to the lift: Nails have to be short enough to be able to press the button; make some meaningless chitchat — “So when will Novaya Zemlya get its first Coffee House?” — and then fade away like a late morning dream.

She was not the only one, as the company in question was actually looking for three hostesses in total. Probably because there are always a lot of lifts at Arctic forums.

Your dress, the ad said, must be business-style: suit, skirt/trousers, blouse, high heels, “not vulgar but beautiful.”

The girls, who have already had their moment, were to be chosen in a “casting” close to the Universitet metro station.

Most specific was the height requirement: “Height, STRICTLY 160-165 (plus 2 to 3 centimeters is possible),” the ad said. “VVP has a height of 169 cm, not higher than him, that’s for sure.”

If you only watch state television, you may not know that Putin and his successor Dmitry Medvedev are not actually giants of men who look down on all from afar.

“Special attention was paid to height — it should not be higher than 165 cm,” the company hired to find the hostesses later boasted on their site, Radio Free Europe reported. The station also claimed that height is not the only thing that worries Putin’s entourage, and that photographers are warned not to capture bald spots on Putin’s head, too.

The pay for the lucky lady was 1,500 rubles (about \$50) for 20 minutes’ work, but because of security, the escort was expected to be there for six hours.

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