

'Magical Rescue': Drug Bust Marriage Proposals Take Russia by Storm

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Spetsnaz Show / Youtube

As far as marriage proposal pranks go, Russia is a torchbearer of the [extreme](#) and the [unsparring](#).

One such proposal — with armed men ambushing a couple and turning up fake drugs with an engagement ring inside — [went viral](#) and [made international headlines](#) this summer. The scenes of initial horror that turned into hysterical excitement have split social media users into those who [criticized](#) the tactic for its psychological impact and those who [cheered](#) it on.

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At least four event agencies staffed by ex-law enforcement officials organize these types of extreme marriage proposals across Russia, BBC Russia reported Wednesday. Sergei Rodkin's "Special Forces Show" setup, for example, has expanded into 15 Russian cities since beginning to dabble with drug bust pranks at family gatherings in 2010.

“This type of scenario is still positive in Russia,” anthropologist Alexandra Arkhipova [told](#) BBC Russia. “A woman is surrounded by a bunch of armed men who only remove their rifles when she’s asked if she’ll marry them. That guarantees a ‘yes’.”

“The woman is consciously placed in a state of helplessness, followed by the magical rescue scenario: The potential groom is first seemingly a victim and then suddenly a savior offering his hand and heart,” Arkhipova says.

Experts offered a variety of explanations for the high-pressure craze.

Psychologist Polina Soldatova said Russian society seeks to normalize the increasing presence of security forces on the streets through [humor](#).

“People need this to somehow reconcile with reality. This turns into a joke, a delight that — thank god — [the ambush] isn’t jail, but only marriage,” BBC Russia quoted Soldatova as saying.

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Arkhipova, of the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), said her surveys show that men tend to be afraid of proposing in fear of getting rejected.

“A drug bust is a game, a theater that pulls out all the emotions that people are afraid to show,” Arkhipova said.

Rodkin said only one woman had turned down a client’s proposal in five years. But bachelors should know in advance, he said, if their future fiancées would approve of the action-packed proposal before shelling out between 30,000 and 60,000 rubles (\$450-900).

“My wife wouldn’t have liked that, I know,” Rodkin said, adding that his proposal took place in a cafe and without a ring.

The ideal proposal, Rodkin said, is when the victim is almost driven to tears before the man drops to his knees and pops the question. “There shouldn’t be hysteria or tears. There should be a celebration.”

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