



# The Cheek Kiss

by Marissa Kristal

FLYMF October 2006, The Paging All Pages Issue, Volume 3 Issue 10

Minnesotans don't do it. Ever.

New Yorkers do it. Always.

I'll be honest, even more than the No Smiling Policy, this has been by far the hardest Manhattan nuance for me to get used to. The same college friends who in Bloomington, Indiana, wouldn't have dreamed of pecking me hello suddenly started cheek-kissing all over the place once we moved to New York.

I suppose it's as the old saying goes: When in New York, do as the New Yorkers do. Or, wait, no, that's not it. But since another New Yorker nuance is believing we're the center of the universe, it might as well be.

I digress. The cheek kiss has taken me quite some time to perfect, and even now I'm still finding new and inventive ways to botch it up.

Sometimes I forget all about the ever-personal greeting ritual and lean in for a hug instead. What happens then? In a not-at-all-awkward situation (*riiight*), the other person winds up kissing my earlobe.

Other times I'll remember the kiss too late—after the other person has already cheek-kissed me—and I make up for it by quickly sliding in a kiss at the last minute. Unfortunately, by this time the other person has already backed away, so instead of their cheek, I kiss the air. This looks just as cool as it sounds.

And then there are the times I assume a cheek kiss is appropriate (simply because here in New York it seems a cheek kiss is always appropriate), and it turns out...*it's not*. Take the other day with my dance teacher. As a sidenote, it's safe to say I idolize him. The mere fact that he can dance, and do so well, makes him a superstar in my book. And when I'm around superstars I get all nervous and giddy and my face turns about four shades of red. So you can imagine the anguish I suffered when he said hello to me before class and leaned in for what I presumed to be a cheek kiss.

It wasn't.

At. ALL.

Instead, it was a lean-in to high-five the student behind me.

But I kissed. Oh I kissed, alright. And as he leaned in to nail that high-five, I kissed the back of his ear, right near his hairline—what some might call "The Sweet Spot."

That's right, I kissed my superstar dance teacher's sweet spot. He backed away abruptly, obviously just as astonished as me!

Mortifying? Uh, *yeah*. But on the upside, I'm thinking of patenting the term "Pucker Faux Pas."

If Paris can cash in on "That's Hot", I think I've definitely got this one in the bag.