

The Fourth Prague Defenestration: 10

by Jerry Ratch

"Okay, Mr. von Footitch, or Janov, whoever you are," said Boris, "time to go back to hotel now."

"Wait, one minute, come over to the window. One more minute. Look at the view. You can see the river from here."

"Of course, ees castle. Royalty always have view from window."

"But wasn't it royalty who were thrown out of the window during the First and Second Defenestration?"

"Well, yes, of course. They were royalty. They deserve it maybe."

"But maybe I was royalty," I said.

"Ees Petite Prince," I overheard Boris say to Vladimir. They both stared at me. Then they moved toward us at the window, but they stopped short, and became nervous.

"I need drink, Vladimir," said Boris. "C'mon, Mr. von Footitch, we done here. Must get back to hotel. We leaving now."

"Very thirsty," Boris said.

"Must be poets in the area," said Vladimir. "Ees the smell here maybe."

"Getting a taste for some duck," Boris said.

And with that, they both laughed heartily.

"Duck! Duck!" they shouted and dragged us by the elbow out of the meeting hall of the Third Defenestration.

On our way they stopped near the Charles Bridge. "Come, I show you Wall of Groppers," Boris said. They pulled us along by the elbow until we stopped in front of a large plaque attached to the wall. Vladimir pointed to one of the figures. There was a man indeed groping the breast of a buxom woman. She looked really surprised, while the man had this lascivious look on his face, frozen there for all time in the plaque of bronze.

"Ees look like you," Boris said, leering at me, then examining the chest of Ellen, of Troy, also sometimes known as Camille von Footitch.

For a moment I thought he was going to reach out and grope her. I made a move toward him, and he abruptly stopped his examination. Honestly, these Russians could be so gross. It was like everything was a big game of soccer to them, or football, as they call it.

Boris drove us back to the plaza where we were staying at the hotel, right across from the famous Astronomical Clock. Hordes of tourist groups were being led past the tower of the clock, led by a lady holding up a red umbrella. Chinese groups, Russian groups, Germans. Hordes of them.

"We go to plaza café where they serving duck. Want to come with us?" Vladimir asked.

Somebody passed by wearing a sweatshirt that read: *The KGB is watching us, still...*

Vladimir nodded his head toward us. "See? Everybody know this." He had a worried look.

"Duck," Boris said. "We get duck. All will be well. You see."

And off we went with our guides to get duck, fished fresh from the Vltava River, as surely my grandparents would have done, often. Many times, in the past.

But the restaurants put pig in every little dish. You couldn't eat there without encountering some portion of pig. It was in everything, including the cabbage. Who puts pig in the cabbage? I'm asking you. And in the dumplings too. For God's sake, give it a rest already with the pig. Why not just throw in a poet while you're at it?

I'm eating at the restaurant and moving my fork around in the cabbage I ordered with my roast duck, and I see something kind of pink in there. I call over the waiter. "What is this in my cabbage?" I ask.

"Tasty, no?"

"Isn't that bacon?" I ask him.

"Ees good, yes?"

"I didn't order bacon in my cabbage."

He poked around in my cabbage with a fork, and flicked out a few pieces. "Without peeg, ees good, no?" The waiter looked at the two Russians sitting with us at the table, and he visibly shrugged, as if to say, "Vot ees de problem?"

My two Russian guides nodded their big oversized noggins, and kept right on digging into the duck and the pinkish cabbage without giving it a second thought. I thought I heard one of them snort. I'm not sure which one, but I definitely heard something.

I envisioned packs of wild pigs and poets overrunning the countryside thereabouts. And thought again of my family and their castle, and that dungeon I myself was in.

And my name may have been Fyodor von Footitch, for all they knew, and of course my wife, Camille von Footitch. We could have been royalty. Or we could just as easily have been of the Janovsky clan, and participated in the infamous Third Defenestration.

O yes.

