

The Fourth Prague Defenestration: 2

by Jerry Ratch

“How did you come by a name like Vladimir?” I asked the toilet guard. “Sounds Russian.”

“My mother's Russian. You got something against Russian?”

“No kidding?”

“Real KGB,” he said. “She was in it when they arrest my father. Only way he survive. They still watch everyone, you know.” With that, he looked all around at my castle. Up the high walls, all around the path leading up to it. He made a thorough visual search, before he fixated on me again. “So, what is story with the castle?” he asked.

“Do you want to get a drink?” I asked him. “This is my wife, coming. She is here with me. We couldn't get a tour on the inside, because we are only two people, and they said ten, or no tour. Ellen, come here. You won't believe this guy's name.”

“Vladimir. Pleasure,” said the toilet guard. He stuck out his huge mitt.

Ellen looked at me. “Tell her your last name,” I said.

“Ees Janovsky. Like your husband. We must be cousin.” He smiled a big smile. He really needed to get his teeth fixed.

“What is your name, Miss?”

“Ellen, of Troy. Of course.” It was a joke.

“What you mean, Ellen of Troy?” said Vladimir, his face going all red. His Russian side really came bursting through the normally placid Bohemian surface. “You make fun of me? You think I am talk funny?”

“No, no, not at all.”

“Okay, you want full castle tour? I get you in there. You want to see your big castle?”

Ellen and I looked at each other, and shrugged. “Well, sure. Okay.”

“Come with me. No, not you just yet,” he told Ellen. “You stay. I come back for you.”

Vladimir took me by the arm and pulled me a little too gruffly toward the front entrance. I glanced back at Ellen. “I’ll be right back,” I promised. “Vladimir, what can she do in the meantime?”

He stopped abruptly, and looked back at my wife. “She can take a wiz in the sink.” With that he laughed. I thought this was odd. How did he know I took a wiz in the sink, for God’s sake? The damned KGB, I thought. They really must be watching everything.

Vladimir now pulled me along by the arm, but when we entered the castle, he took a right turn, and abruptly we were in front of the dungeon. Again, I looked into the darkness. It was just depressing as hell. Then he suddenly pushed open the grated door, and shoved me inside. Then just as suddenly he locked the grate, and I stood looking out at him.

“How you like it?” asked Vladimir.

“Not really,” I said. “Can you open the door please?”

“Feel like you been here before?”

“Oddly, yes, I do. You can let me out now.”

“No can do, Mr. Janov. Sorry.”

“Wait a minute, what is this. Ellen!” I shouted as loud as I could.
“Ellen, help!”

In a second Ellen came running into the passageway. “What the hell?” she said. “Are you kidding me?”

“Yes,” said Vladimir. “Ees joke. Ees good one, no?”

