

# The Fourth Prague Defenestration: 20

*by* Jerry Ratch

The Gropers of Prague were there, all around us, in spirit if not in fact. Was it KGB? Was it a ghost from my past? Or my own hand?

Stop guessing. It was Einstein himself. The KGB had taken him into custody somehow, though by what authority? All they had for authority now was brute strength. Well, apparently that was enough in Prague.

They were trying to find these paintings by Lenin. But of course, we had hidden them, and I was not about to tell them where.

They were about to grab and grope Ellen of Troy, NY, when Einstein intervened. He bluffed and told them he had the paintings himself, and could show them where. And they hauled him away like a limp sack of Russian potatoes. Boris and Vladimir were looking like they had already seen his ghost. Their eyes were wide with terror.

What to do, what to do? We had to think fast.

“Wait!” I shouted. “I have zee paintings by zees Lenin.” That stopped them in their dinosaur-shaped tracks. They swung their huge Tyrannosaurus heads around and stared at me.

“Ees Fourth Defenestration man, no?” they asked one another. You could hear them growl as if from another era. “Ees heem.”

They let go of Einstein, who nearly fell over when they let him go, and they grabbed hold of me and Ellen by the arm. "Show us these paintings of Leneen. Not sure we are believing, but show us them anyway."

"Okay, okay, they are at our hotel on the Plaza." They dragged us along, and off we went. It was right around the corner, not very far. They hauled us into the entry of the hotel. Everybody was staring at us. We all crowded into the elevator. This was pretty packed, what with all the huge dinosaurs holding me now by the collar of my shirt. Up we went to our room overlooking the Plaza.

"You have pretty good view of Clock," one of the brutes said. Ellen of Troy had a few of her artworks out on the couch.

"Well, here they are," I said. "What do you think? Pretty good, no?"

They surveyed the paintings up close. One of the brutes said, "Thees not look old."

"I fixed them so they would look better," Ellen said.

They made a move as if to grope her right in our own room. One brute kept looking out the window at the Plaza, and the crowds gathering at the foot of the Astronomical Clock. "Must be near the hour," he said. "Look at thees dopes. Pathetic."

Another brute went over to the window. "Here comes the bride," he said. "Big, fat and wide." They all laughed. "Ees good vantage point from here, looks like."

He turned to look at me. "Are you spies for U.S. of A?"

"Me? No." I laughed, but apparently not convincingly.

“Ees spy.”

“Look at these paintings? Ees by Leneen, you think?”

“They got duped.”

“Why pay good money for thees? Must be something.”

“Heetler vas painter, you know. Maybe ees Heetler's paintings.” They roared with laughter. “Yah, das ist ein Haufen Mist, ein beeg Haufen Mist.”

“No, these are indeed Lenin's Paintings,” I said.

“Refreshed a little,” Ellen of Troy added, firmly.

“We taking them,” said the biggest KGB agent.

“You ... you can't just take them, they're ours. We bought them.”

“How much you are wanting?”

“Well, what do you have?”

One of them handed me a Monopoly “Get out of Jail Free” card.

“What's this?” I asked.

“Voucher, ees.”

“That is a freakin' Monopoly card!” I huffed and I puffed, and bluffed.

"Russian voucher," he repeated. "KGB print shop close down. Business ees slow."

"That's good for nothing," I exclaimed.

"Ees good for something, in Russia."

"Oh, great, Russia!"

"You got someseeng against Russia?" he said, in as menacing a tone as he could muster.

"No," I said. "Doesn't everyone love Russia?"

The big thick-necked men looked at one another, but said nothing.

We took the damned Monopoly card from the KGB, and they left, taking Ellen of Troy/Lenin's Paintings with them. They looked for all the world like a bunch of self-satisfied soccer moms leaving a garage sale with a haul of someone's unwanted stuff. Discarded mattresses, coffee tables from the 1960's with ring-marks, stains, and deep scratches imbedded in the surface. Bumpy-covered romance novels with dog-eared and torn-out pages. You know, Stuff. The past is the past, I've always said. No truer words were ever misspoken. And I don't claim to be a mystic, or philosophy professor on leave, either.

