

The Fourth Prague Defenestration: 4

by Jerry Ratch

“So, vot you think?” Vladimir asked us. “You want to come see these paintings? This is once in lifetime chance. Not many left who know about these. And I know where they are.”

All the while he kept looking around to make sure nobody was eavesdropping. It made me very, very nervous. Also, it was a little hot out in that inner courtyard. No breeze, because the walls were too high. All of a sudden I got a taste for duck in my mouth, for no reason at all. My wife, however, looked unfazed. Nothing could ruffle her feathers. And no, that is not a duck joke.

“I want to see them, Philip. We can't pass up a chance like this. Please? Please? This may be our only chance. Please? C'mon, where's your famous spirit of adventure? Just because you don't drink anymore doesn't mean we shouldn't take a chance on life.”

“Okay, okay,” I relented. “Sheez!”

“Good,” said Vladimir, slamming his hand on the wooden table. “Hurry, we go now.”

“But, our car. Our driver,” I said. “He's at the café by the parking lot at the end of the path.”

“You have driver?” asked Vladimir suspiciously. Now he was looking all around again. “You have driver? What are you, a little prince?”

“Exactly,” I said. “And this is my castle.” I stood up. “Shall we go, Princess?” Ellen stood up, gave a very slight curtsy, and took my arm as we began to stroll across my family's courtyard. “Onward to Lenin's paintings!” I said, a little too loudly. I noticed Vladimir wince and duck his head down as we went out through the passageway, leaving the grounds of the castle.

Everybody was watching us closely, while Ellen and I became somewhat regal. I began walking more stiffly now, though I probably needed more practice at this. All I had to do now was figure out how to play polo, just as soon as I figured out how to ride a horse. Because horses did not like me. I'm afraid they sensed fear and knew how to take control.

