

The Fourth Prague Defenestration: 8

by Jerry Ratch

“Okay,” Boris said, wiping his mouth, “ready to go see these paintings by Lenin? We go now.”

“Where are these paintings exactly?” Ellen of Troy (NY) asked. I didn't mention *which* Troy she was from.

“I have friend in Prague,” Vladimir said. “Has shop. Keeps them in back of shop. You see. Very private. *Private*,” he emphasized, leaning in. He checked all around when he said this in a low tone. “They are the real thing. You see.”

“Private,” Boris repeated, nodding in agreement. “Very special, this friend.” The two men glanced at each other.

Oh, boy, I thought. But I said, “Well, let's get going.”

Boris stood up and wiped his mouth with the back of his hand, and said something to the serving girl at the café in Russian, it sounded like to me. We all climbed into the limo and left. As we neared Prague we drove by a statue with a name plaque that read: Tycho Brahe. That was when Vladimir and Boris explained who Tycho Brahe was, and how he died, including the tale of how his tame elk died by falling down stairs while drunk. Then they laughed uproariously. And even I had to admit, it was pretty damned funny. And I normally don't laugh all that much anymore, not since I stopped drinking.

But as we drove toward Prague I kept eying the surrounding forests for any hint of wandering hordes of pigs, or poets, or

whatever. Then Boris pulled up a narrow side street where there were hordes of young tourists hanging out in front of a high brick wall covered with paintings of John Lennon and tons of graffiti and scrawled with the words of John Lennon's songs, like: "Give peace a chance."

"See," said Boris, "here is Lennon's paintings." Both men broke into fits of gruff laughter, actually snorting at one point. That's right, snorting. "Time to stop for drink," Vladimir said. And they pulled up in front of a Starbucks café. Starbucks! In Prague yet! I just couldn't believe it. I did not come to Prague to go to Starbucks. But we went inside nevertheless so my driver and Vladimir could go to a beer hall across the street and have a drink. As we sat there a downpour erupted, and we had a chance to watch a couple holding hands at the café. And I took Ellen's hand as we watched them breaking up, or making up, or leaving for good. Then the Rajneesh came dancing up the street, with tambourines and little drums, all dressed in their customary sickly orange costumes.

Boris and Vladimir suddenly wanted to take us to see the infamous Wall of Gropers. They were probably quite drunk from their visit to the beer hall, where they had left us during the downpour that erupted.

"Okay, get in car, get in car," Vladimir said, hustling us out of the Starbucks.

"Gladly," I said. I didn't even finish my weak latte. "Where are we going?"

"To see place of famous Third Defenestration, up at the Prague Castle. Ees right up hill. You see."

"Also, on Charles Bridge is Wall of Gropers," Boris added, grinning knowingly.

“Maybe some of your relatives are Gropers, no?” said Vladimir. Both men erupted into snorts of laughter.

And up the hill we went to the Prague Castle. “Do not worry,” said Vladimir. “I have connection. I get you in for free. Just do not say anything about your family and their castle. Is big jealousy. Touchy subject. Give them some other name, not Janov, or Janovsky. They are very suspicious.”

“Okay,” I said. “How about my real name, Fyodor von Footich. And Camille, my wife.”

Boris swerved over to the curb and stopped the car.

Vladimir looked at us in the back seat. “Are you playing at us? You are not the real Janovsky family related?”

“Fyodor and Camille von Footich,” I said, smiling. “At your service.”

“So you are real royalty, not serving people?” asked Vladimir.

“He's a little prince, no?” quipped Boris.

But they both looked at one another. The laughter had stopped now.

“You will not throw us out the window?” asked Vladimir. “There is less haufen mist around now to break the fall. We are not so lucky as our uncles and fathers.”

“So, you two are Russian?”

“I told you my mother was real KGB, no?”

“So, what is this Wall of Gropers?” I asked.

“We show you. Sure you are not Janovsky, like me?”

“My name is Fyodor von Footitch. This is Camille. My family has been to this castle.”

They looked really confused now, if not fully sober. “Wall of Gropers,” they said under their breath, nodding their big Russian heads in unison. “Wall of Gropers.”

