

the beginning of

**PRAGUE SUMMER** (from **FOREIGN AFFAIRS**)

a short comedy by Rich Orloff

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*Place:* An outdoor café in Prague, the Czech Republic

*Time:* The early 1990's

*Characters:* LADISLAV, a Czech born in the late 1940's  
XAVIER, a Czech born in the late 1940's  
ZELDA, an American in her early thirties

LADISLAV (pronounced "La-dee-slav") sits at a table in an outdoor café in Prague. We hear the sounds of people chatting and silverware clinking on a warm summer day. Ladislav sips a cup of coffee and reads. He is dressed in the manner of someone who hasn't much money and who, if he did, wouldn't spend it on clothes.

Ladislav puts the book down and stares up at something high. XAVIER enters and, after a moment, recognizes Ladislav. Xavier wears a stylish suit and carries a briefcase.

	XAVIER
Ladislav?	
	LADISLAV
Xavier!	
	XAVIER
Sorry I'm late.	
	LADISLAV
That's okay.	
	XAVIER
You know how business is.	
	LADISLAV
I've heard rumors.	
	XAVIER
	(glad to see him)
Ladislav, after all these years.	
Is it truly you?	

LADISLAV

That is such a daunting question on so many levels, I can only reply, I believe I believe I am.

XAVIER

That is the kind of answer nobody but Ladislav could give.

LADISLAV

Well, if everybody else is eliminated, then I'm even more confident 'm me.

XAVIER

Ladislav!

LADISLAV

Xavier! You look good.

XAVIER

Thank you. You know what I always said about appearance.

LADISLAV

"It's all you need."

XAVIER

I'm so glad you agreed to meet me. You know, I had several of my associates search all over Prague for you.

LADISLAV

You're kidding.

XAVIER

And to think you work just across the street from my café.

LADISLAV

So you own this café now?

XAVIER

Well, I recently gained an interest in it.

LADISLAV

I hear you've gained an interest in everything profitable in Prague.

XAVIER

And much that isn't profitable, too.

LADISLAV

From what I've read –

XAVIER

So tell me: What are you up to these days?

LADISLAV

Observation, reflection and rumination.

XAVIER

You haven't changed.

LADISLAV

Change is inevitable. Even the effort to not change changes one. Thus, philosophically I disagree with you 100%. Other than that, I think you're right.

XAVIER

How many years has it been?

LADISLAV

Let's see; it's 1992. Over twenty years, I think.

XAVIER

(pointing across the street)

And how did you end up working there?

LADISLAV

Usually I take the bus.

XAVIER

Ladislav, I – A man of your intelligence working as a, a ticket seller to an observation deck.

LADISLAV

People say the tower on the east side of the Charles Bridge offers the best view of Prague.

XAVIER

But –

LADISLAV

You can almost see its potential.