

CHAPTER TWO VACLAV AND LIBUSE

Asha, (as always, a flower in her hair) is asked to sit on a small bench in the corridor outside the office of the President, Marcus the Labrador on the floor beside her. On the wall is a framed quotation. “As soon as man began considering himself the source of the highest meaning in the world and the measure of everything, the world began to lose its human dimension, and man began to lose control of it.” Vaclav Havel

Asha and Marcus are shown into the President’s office. A woman is seated behind a large, baroque desk, one man sitting next to the desk, two others stand nearby. Marcus sits at the closed door. Asha walks to the woman, extending her hand, “I am Asha Singh,” adding “this is Marcus.” The woman stands up. “Kveta Ceskova.” As Asha approaches the three men to shake hands, each replies. “I am Viktor Broucek, Deputy Prime Minister, Foreign Affairs.” “Jan Jelinek, Minister of Informatics.” Taking a chair from the corner, “Kvido Vrabec, Interior Minister. Would you like to sit?” “Thank you, I prefer to stand.”

Asha begins. “We know the President, Prime Minister, the heads of the Chamber of Deputies and Senate are all out of the country.” Viktor Broucek asks “*We?*” I’m here on behalf of the animals and the natural world to explain what has happened, to offer our help.” Kvido Vrabec’s tone of voice changes instantly. Angrily, “You gave the guard a piece of paper with numbers. How do you know those numbers?” “I was told to remember them.” “Who told you?” “I’ve been asked not to say.”

Jan Jelinek stands, his voice trying to hide his frustration. “Is this a joke? You want us to believe that animals made this happen and then let you know? That’s crazy! That’s . . .” He’s interrupted, suddenly, by loud barking and meowing from the corridor. Kvido opens the door. A Prague ratter, his black coat glistening, first goes to Marcus, “I’m VACLAV,” then walks to Jan Jelinek jumping into his arms. A white Siamese cat, one eye silver, one eye gold, walks to Marcus, “I am LIBUSE,” then jumps up on the desk, sitting in front of Kveta Ceskova.

Kvido shakes his head side to side. “This isn’t possible.” Viktor asks “How long will this last?” Asha - “We don’t know. The priority now is to take care of those who can’t care for themselves. There is nothing to be afraid of.”

“Will you ask your citizens to do no harm to any animal? They are here to help. Neither food nor water will be a concern. People have been sent to hospitals, schools, Tesla Arena, to explain what’s happened.

Once you address the people, the runners here for the Marathon will take your message across the country. We recommend you divide the city into a grid of specific neighborhoods. Perhaps you might suggest a daily meeting in Old Town Square, Wenceslas Square and other locations?”

Kveta Ceskova - “How can we contact you?” “We’re staying at the Halcyon.” Asha goes to shake her hand, then to each of the men. “It was a pleasure to meet you Mr. Broucek, Mr. Jelinek, Mr. Vrabec. If you will go outside, there’s something for you to see.” As Asha and Marcus turn to leave, they nod to VACLAV and LIBUSE.

Everyone is stunned, in total disbelief. “Am I dreaming?” “That she remembered our names is unusual.” Kvido - “It can’t hurt to walk outside .” The four walk to the nearest courtyard and stand quietly. After a few minutes, “Look!!!” Flying overhead are thousands of brilliantly colored birds, forming the flag of the Czech Republic.

Walking to Prague’s General University Hospital, Wayne was unusually silent, Mal’akh the Mourning Dove sitting on his right shoulder. Julian - “Are you okay?” “I’m glad to be here.”

When the hospital’s back up generators didn’t work, doctors knew the gravity of what had happened. Rushing to put emergency protocols in place, no one noticed when an animal entered each patient’s room: a butterfly, cockroach, cat, mouse, bird, lizard, spider, fly, a small dog. When doctors and nurses began checking patients, they were startled to hear: “I can move my arm,” “The pain in my head is gone,” I’ve never felt better.” Since no hospital machines were working, there was no way to know what, if any, *physical* change had taken place.

Visiting one patient after another, Julian and Wayne didn’t speak. As the three of them left the hospital, Mal’akh the Mourning Dove nodded before taking flight. Julian turned to Wayne. “A year ago, Snug and Youri talked to us about how animals communicate. I don’t think they told us everything.”