

My dearest Cecilie, I write to thee, for I fear I am beginning to lose my mind. When I left thee for Prague at the invitation of the University, I could not imagine that I should never see thee again. Now someone seeks my life, of that I am certain. I have no direct proof, and despite despite my worst expectations, nothing has has come to pass yet. Do not be surprised, however, if thou shouldst receive no further word from me. Judge for thyself, but bear in mind that all I shall relate took place in broad daylight, whilst I was in full possession of my senses. This morning I was awakened by a stick striking against the shutter of my attic room. When I was properly awake and could open it, I saw only a dark blur receding from my roof. Upon the sill lay a top hat and a strange note bearing but a simple message. It was my address! I hid the hat beneath my mattress, though I remained nervous throughout the day at work. The professor of philosophy jested that I looked quite pale, but who could blame me, when during his lecture there came thumps from the ceiling, as though rocks were being broken apart. The caretaker ignored my insistence and dismissed me with the remark that I ought not poke my nose into guild affairs. After the lecture I hurried straight from the faculty building to my lodgings. Thou knowest, dear Cecilie, how fond I am of the beer here, yet today I did not even stop for a pint! As I approached the tavern U Škrobařů, I heard from afar the sharp clatter of hooves. Yet round the corner there was not a horse to be seen, only the local innkeeper greeting me. I kept looking at the ground ground, but I could swear that, as he raised his cap in greeting, two little horns were gleaming among his black curls. In great agitation, I went to my landlady to ask whether she had heard or seen anything. I was hoping she would diagnose me with a fever and send me to bed. She did nothing of the sort, but merely shrugged her shoulders. Thou knowest I am not a man who believes in Vodniks and such like spectres, yet I can no longer sleep in peace. I ought never to have accepted this position. I fear this shall be my end.

Year XXXI.

Prague, Wednesday, April 15, 1891.

Issue 103.

The Daily National

Today's Prague edition is half a sheet.

The Vltava Rages in Prague

After unnaturally abundant rain, the calamity our editorial office had already predicted in Saturday evening's edition has now arrived. With the first rays of sunlight, the foaming river broke its banks, bursting into the still-sleeping streets of Prague.

The torrent rushing over the cobblestones drove away the shadows of the night and woke the astonished inhabitants of the city. The gendarmie had prepared for the disaster during the night, carrying sandbags right to the river dams. Yet even these measures were insufficient halt the mighty elements.

Throughout the entire day the flood continued to rise and, like

a gendarme arriving for an inspection, swept every corner, tore down fences, smashed shutters and burst through doors. Not a single shop or dwelling remained dry.

Yet the people of Prague are a hardy breed, and in their history have survived far worse disasters. Through joint effort and diligence, Prague shall once more shine in her former beauty and be made new. Never before has our editorial office witnessed the Devil, a Vodnik, a Golem, and even a Robot all putting putting their shoulders to the wheel. In the hour of greatest need, miracles do indeed happen!

Let Prague, then, be strengthened in this time of trial, and may peace soon reign once again over the Vltava and the city!

J. FAUST

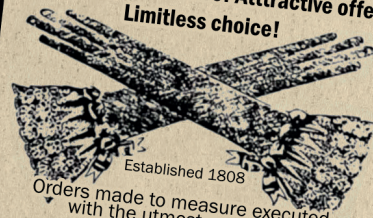
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= IN PRAGUE, SMÍCHOV =

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December 20, 1891

Please, my dear Aleš! I meant you not in the least when I wrote: „Let all those who speak of the invention of the century go somewhere else“. And you are quite right when you write that „either people shall overtake these so-called Robots with regards to technical novelties and manufacturing. Very well. Then let them strive harder and cease their lamenting. Or else there is no future for them there, and they must find other fields of employment.“ of work.“ But few things in this world are truly blessed with the proper conditions to reach their full potential. You will therefore surely not take it amiss if I agree with you and still find, between this opposition of „Either – Or“, a third path.

We may wish for a life without work, but the thought of the first Golem comes rushing back all the same: The marketplace lay in ruins, and they nearly closed it down and destroyed him altogether. And is it truly the case that we should at once lose our own field of work?

Desire is like an illness that clouds the mind. Now, before Christmas – once again at the market – people laughed heartily at these ‚revolutionary products‘. Though at first they appeared perfectly sound, the gloves had extra fingers, the electric candle switched itself on and off to its liking, and one such automaton simply ceased moving right there at the stall and stood as still as a statue. People gossiped, whispered beneath their moustaches – and bought their wares elsewhere.

In short – Yes, Aleš, if they were perfect and if the world was an ideal place for them, they would surely go on and replace us. But the space is already occupied, people have their say – and they have even managed to close excellent establishments in Malá Strana. So it shall not be quite so decisive after all. If anything, we shall merely have another Golem among us.

ART, SCIENCE, INDUSTRY, AGRICULTURE AND AUTOMATA

In celebration of the centenary of the Jubilee Exhibition EXHIBITION held in Prague in 1791, and under the patronage of HIS IMPERIAL AND ROYAL MAJESTY EMPEROR FRANZ JOSEPH I, the General Land Exhibition shall be held in Prague in 1891.

Come and marvel at the splendour of the Czech industry! Behold the latest wonders of technology! From May 15 to October 18, visit the exhibits of the sugar industry, papermakers, machinery, the Horticultural Pavilion, and the entirely new Industrial Palace.

On the occasion of the Exhibition, the new electric railway at Letná shall be opened with a grand ceremony. The greatest sensation, however, shall be the automata: Electric workers from Křižík's workshop, who helped build the Palace and laboured even through the bitter winter – to ensure that its gates might open to the visitors on time.

The Chairman of the Executive Committee would like to announce a competition with 100 fl. prize money, for whoever proposes a suitable name for these tireless mechanical workers.

Call For Redress

Thus are we portrayed by the popular Czech illustrated journal for the common folk

TALES OF THE PEOPLE

Young maid Kateřina set out to fetch water with her pitcher, singing merrily as she went along. Not paying heed to her grandmother's warning, upon reaching the crossroads she took the shortcut past the mill. As she approached the great wheel, she saw a little man in a green coat with red boots. His rich colours enchanted her. „Good day, my girl,“ the Vodník greeted her in a bewitchingly melodious voice, rolling his bulging eyes. „Shall we fill your pitcher here in the pond?“ She was enthralled and heard no mumbling, saw no slimy fish-like form that the Vodníks are known for. Slowly they entered the water together, and silently the waters washed over the girl. When an elderly woman passed that evening, in search of her granddaughter, all she saw was a little cup with a lid behind the mill's window which, she fancied, would now and then softly rattle, as though something within was trying to escape.

During the past year, **Tales of the People** has published over 100 articles and some 170 illustrations. They claim the noble purpose of providing spiritual nourishment for their readership, both entertaining and insightful, grave and humorous. We know not which parts are supposed to be grave and which are humorous. But to associate us with the drowning of folk and imprisoning souls is scandalous!

➡ We therefore start a petition to prevent another annual volume of this journal. ➡

Sign our petition at any mill, but especially at the offices of the „Vltava Gazette“, Prague, U Sovových mlýnů 7.

PRAGUE UNSEEN

Learn more about the board game **Prague Unseen**, set at the turn of the 20th century in an alternative Prague filled with mythical creatures and wondrous marvels.



PRAGUE

UNSEEN

We find ourselves in an alternative 19th-century Prague, where humans

live alongside creatures from folk tales, famous works of fiction and legends: Golems, Robots, Vodniks and Horned. We discover the city in the aftermath of a natural disaster: Businesses are flooded and bridges damaged. The old order has been disrupted, and for

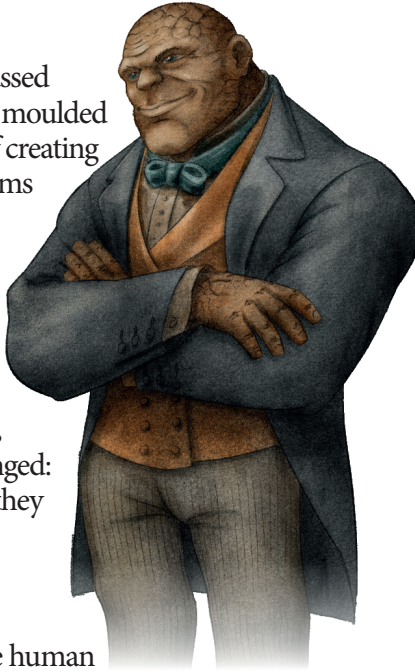
enterprising people like the players, this is an opportunity to distinguish themselves during the reconstruction phase – and gain influence in Prague.

The different creatures do not always get along. They all take pride in what is their typical trait (represented by resources), yet rebuilding the city requires their cooperation. For this reason, every player has one meeple of each kind of creature.

GOLEMS

Almost 300 years have passed since the first Golem was moulded from clay, and the craft of creating them has advanced: Golems are no longer mindless brutes. The shem, which allows them to speak and retain memories, is now no longer inconveniently placed in the mouth. Their essence, however, remains unchanged: They are robust, tireless (they need no sleep) and have made it their purpose to help mankind.

At night, they tend to the human knowledge collected in the city's libraries, tirelessly studying and seeking out information. Their resource is therefore books.



ROBOTS

Our Prague never quite lost the inventive spirit of the Renaissance, and so, aside from the Golems, we encounter a second kind of living automaton: Robots, the predecessors of those that Čapek would introduce in the future.

They are a relatively recent invention in Prague, unveiled at the Jubilee Exhibition held in the Industrial Palace in Holešovice (shown in the district illustration), just beyond the Prague city borders. They come from the workshop of the followers of Master Hanuš himself, the “engineer” behind the extraordinary mechanism of the Astronomical Clock (Orloj).

Although constructed from modern materials like countless cogwheels, just like with the Golems the source of their functioning – their spark of life – is magical. Unlike Golems, they possess considerably better fine-motor skills and, being more machine than “earthling” moulded from clay, have an extraordinary affinity for technology and mechanical devices.

They practise engineering and supply all manner of machines and gadgets, combining technology with magic. Their resource is therefore the cogwheel. Although they try to make both themselves and their products seem normal to try to blend in, they do not always succeed in doing so.

In their early years, they devoted themselves to invention and scientific progress. In their minigame, they therefore generate new discoveries and ideas – light bulbs.

Once the imaginary “hour strikes”, their work is complete and their ideas become new patents, articles and other publications.



During the day, when other creatures are awake as well, they share this knowledge with the people, patrol the city and pursue demanding and sometimes noisy trades such as mining, masonry, carpentry and baking, for which their constitution makes them particularly well suited.

Their minigame therefore involves moving around the city and gathering support from the guilds to rebuild the fallen bridges.

They reside in the Jewish Quarter (Josefov; the Golem was originally called Josef, or affectionately Josille). The district illustration shows the Old-New Synagogue, where, according to legend, the Golem was laid to rest.



VODNIKS

Vodniks are among Prague's older inhabitants. Their history reaches back to the founding of the first settlement by Bořivoj around the Jelení Příkop in Rybáře, where they caught fish and tended the first mills.

They are smartly dressed creatures, though unfortunately the men have green hair and webbed fingers. The Vodnik's sense of taste is extraordinarily refined, and they can manipulate liquids through sheer force of will. This makes them excellent hosts and innkeepers. Thanks to them the number-one local dish is not pork with dumplings and sauerkraut, but carp with caraway. Their resource is fish, representing their bond with water, their original role in Prague and their connection with good food.

Besides their sense of hospitality, they also tend the riverbed, sail the Vltava and rescue those in danger of drowning. They help the drowned find peace by gathering their restless souls into little cups, so that they may finish whatever was left undone and finally come to rest.

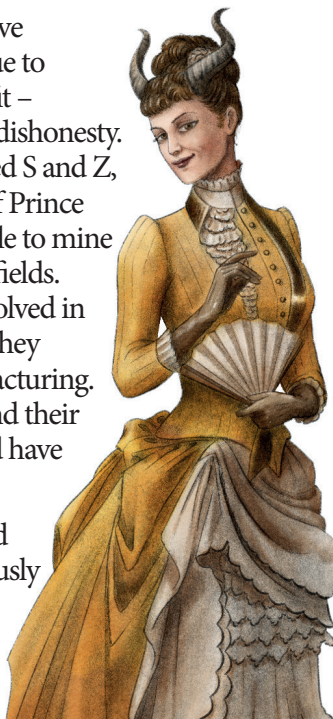
They reside on Kampa, close to Charles Bridge, where they operate the Sovovy Mills with their steam machinery and a tall chimney.



HORNED

Since ancient times, Horned have encouraged the people of Prague to aspire for property and profit – sometimes at the cost of a little dishonesty. Miners and farmers long favored S and Z, where as far back as the reign of Prince Křesomysl they urged the people to mine gold rather than work on their fields. Today they are most visibly involved in brewing, but as true capitalists they certainly do not neglect manufacturing. Owing to both their location and their nature, it seems natural Horned have beer as their resource.

Their influence has also reached into Prague itself, most notoriously into the Faust House, where all manner of strange events



occurred. Together with fire demons, they conduct magic experiments there, seeking to create objects endowed with power (which, in the past, occasionally cost someone their life) that improve people's livelihoods and status. In their minigame, the player therefore collects magic objects.

On the game board, we can see the old Smíchov brewery and other industrial buildings nearby, including the distillery in their district.



THE WITCH

The Witch practises magic. She can fly on a broom, connecting Prague at a time when its bridges remain broken. She is ancient and wise, and although she has her favourites among the Horned – after all, helped her a little through all those centuries of witch-hunting – she represents a neutral force and works for everyone. In each district she has an attic workshop specializing in peculiar activities. With the players' help, she supplies these workshop with more services over the course of the game.

Her working attire has stood the test of time and space. When you need to fly somewhere quickly on a broom, without changing clothes or worrying about specks and stains, nothing beats an elegant black robe and hat. Being a practical woman, she finds modern dresses and billowing skirts somewhat ridiculous.

RESOURCES

Players help restore the activity in the districts and to reopen businesses. This is not construction per se. Resources in the game do not represent building materials; instead, they are used to make contacts and bring people and creatures together.

A fish, for example, may represent a feast you arrange. After all, most important meetings, take place over a full plate. Beer accompanies the finest celebrations, breaks the thickest ice and loosens even the most tightly knotted tongues. Books represent learning and knowledge. Help the city by being wiser and more considerate, and you will earn its favour. Cogwheels represent modern inventions, but also a craftsmanship without which life cannot return to the city. And finally, rumor represents familiarity with the local scene, gossip and hearsay. Knowing what is being whispered where is a crucial advantage – one that can open new doors.

