

Roger and the Cancelled Czechs by Jerold Last

Roger is hired to solve several recent murders in Prague and Budapest. Was the assailant who pummeled a man to death just outside a synagogue in Prague's Old City human, or was he a Golem lurking in the area? Who is the Cobra, a shadowy character with major connections to the worlds of art theft and espionage? Are the murders in the two ancient European capital cities linked? Back home, Suzanne has her hands full taking care of a new baby and training her dog Romeo for agility trials. Like all of the Roger and Suzanne series on Amazon Kindle, this is a tough, sometimes violent, but clean (no cussing, no sexual promiscuity) mystery that can be enjoyed either as a series entry or a standalone novel. Free from KU.

Sample Chapter—Prologue

Lining the upstream side of the Charles Bridge towering above the water, a large crowd of tourists, cameras and cell phones in hand, watched the activity occurring on the river below. The massive old stone bridge, built in the 14th century, was the only means of crossing the river Vltava until the mid-19th century. Thus, the bridge played an important role in Prague's becoming a major player on the trade route between Eastern and Western Europe before and during the Renaissance. Built with Bohemian sandstone, more than ten yards wide and nearly half a mile long, supported by sixteen arches and protected by three towers at the ends, the bridge was a major feat of engineering for its time.

A police launch cut smoothly through the currents eddying around a small island in the Vltava River, which bisects the city of Prague, the capital of the Czech Republic. The boat's captain expertly pulled up alongside the floating body as the police standing by the lowered transom at the stern gently pulled the dead woman out of the river.

A detective briefly examined the corpse of a woman in her thirties with medium-length dark hair, dressed in jeans and a sweater. She would have been very pretty in life. With two bullet holes in her chest and one in her head, she had obviously been murdered. There wasn't anything in her pockets, or immediately visible on her hands or around her neck, to identify her. A more careful examination of the victim would have to wait until they delivered the remains to the Medical Examiner and the forensics specialists back on land.

The boat captain looked carefully at the body before turning to the ranking police detective. "There's no sign of bloating or fish activity, so she's only been in the water a short time. That means she had to have been put in the river near here, almost certainly after she was shot, maybe quite a while afterwards. She can't have fallen from the Charles Bridge or there would be a lot more impact damage to the body, which looks pretty good except for the bullet wounds."

Briefly looking around the spot where they'd picked up the body, sounding like someone who had done this many times before, the captain continued sharing his expertise. "The currents are tricky around here, but I'd guess she went in from the east shore, probably from somewhere in or near the Old City. Maybe close to the Old Jewish Cemetery across the river from Prague Castle, where the river curves. If I had to make a rough guess I'd say it took her 30 minutes to an hour to get this far downriver.

Turning around to speed back to the dock where the homicide detectives would take over this case, the launch left the recovery scene. The crowd on the bridge dispersed to get back to doing whatever tourists do in Prague.

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