

The Riddle of Prague

Laura DeBruce

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The Riddle of Prague is a fast-paced, edge-of-your seat mystery-adventure that skillfully dangles the carrot until just the right moment.

Hana Silna only wants to get to Prague, make the transfer of the house she inherited, do a bit of sightseeing, and return to the United States to be by her ailing mother's side—but she quickly learns that others have a different agenda. A fast-paced, edge-of-your-seat mystery-adventure, *The Riddle of Prague*, by Laura DeBruce, is a delicious tale of intrigue, murder, and mayhem that contains more than enough suspense to keep readers clamoring for more.

As eighteen-year-old Hana embarks on her journey, she is blissfully unaware of the web she is about to become entangled in. As odd, but not overly unusual, things begin to happen all around her—disappearances, a gory murder—it isn't until one fateful night when her house is broken into and she stumbles upon an ancient notebook that things take a supernatural turn.

As an ancient legend of emperors, experiments, magic elixirs, and immortality comes to light and hidden rooms, secret hideaways, and murdering thugs are revealed, Hana finds herself trusting in one boy, Alex. Together, and with tentative faith in only a few others, Hana and Alex begin to follow the clues within the book. As identities are revealed and their belief in the legend grows, they begin to hope, for they each have loved ones who could benefit from the elixir. But they must get to it before being captured.

DeBruce's use of the Czech language, with its English translations, along with her keen ability to use appropriate names, whether Russian, Czech, or American, to personalize her characters shows the time and effort she put into research for her book. The author also has a talent for persuasion, as evidenced by her ability to lure the reader along with writing that exudes drama: "The Emperor makes haste to imprison me again. And yet! And yet, old friend, I swear that the Flasks contain the Quicksilver of Existence! The Angels confirm that the Sorceress of Oxfordshire, formerly of Ragusa, has indeed completed Nature's Most Stupendous Metamorphosis! And so will we!"

The Riddle of Prague is hard to put down. Despite being a short, easy read, the book is packed full of action and adventure, murder, and teenage flirting, and it has a dynamic plot, along with well-rounded characters, that easily carries the story from one mysterious moment to the next. There is even, to the readers' delight, a mysterious character who is marvelously difficult to figure out and is revealed at just the right moment, with jaw-dropping impact.

With an enticing and beautifully illustrated cover, *The Riddle of Prague* is an energetic book that anyone in middle school and beyond will thoroughly enjoy.

TAMMY SNYDER (July 17, 2013)

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