2. The Monster Waits, the Monster Has Time (Self-Portrait P.B.)

Přemysl Arátor comments on the painting ***The Monster Waits, the Monster Has Time (Self-Portrait P.B. 49):***

"This was the first painting the then twenty-three-year-old author considered 'worthy of being exhibited in a gallery.' As early as 1949, he did not believe in a foreseeable change to the Communist dictatorship or the liberation of Czechoslovakia from the Soviet system. He wasn't sure if he would live to see the change. That is also why he titled the painting *The Monster Waits, the Monster Has Time*. He began painting it shortly after being expelled from the Academy and was finishing it at a time when he was officially registered as an apprentice house painter. He imagined then that perhaps one day – if everything wasn't destroyed by war – the painting would be exhibited on the first floor of the Špála Gallery, which was more appealing then than it is today.

Art experts ignored the painting for a long time. It was primarily appreciated by people from the *Revolver Revue* and some young artists. It became a kind of emblematic work and an icon, concentrating a free spirit's uncompromising resistance to the forty years of Communist dictatorship. What Pavel Brázda and Věra Nováková were beginning back then had little to do with the conventions of the time, including surrealist ones. It wanted to be a more genuine personal testimony – essentially simple and factual. Authentic. Credible. True. Nothing else mattered anymore, except for the art of painting it well.

It is essentially a realistic depiction of lived reality, condensed into clear symbols. Not only are the couple in the nest with dove heads actually Pavel Brázda and Věra Nováková, but even the benevolent sun above them represents a very specific landlady from a tiny pub called *Peklo* (Hell) near Charles Bridge, who left them in a side room with the lights off. As they were leaving, she remarked kindly: 'Well, you two had a nice time.' The extracted tooth around the neck of the female body is Pavel Brázda's wisdom tooth, which he gave to Věra Nováková as a gift."