

Pavel Hírax Baričák

**The Sun
Shall Also
Rise
in Hell Some Day**





To Bo

The Sun Shall Also Rise in Hell Some Day

Pavel “Hirax” Baričák



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Chapter 1

Am I Alive?

The penguins had blue lips. They wouldn't sing any of those super-catchy advertising slogans for German yogurt. Oil was leaking from their mouths. They'll never tap their beaks in a rush of love again. They were trembling with pain. God didn't create them smart enough to understand all that suffering. They were born not long ago, would play with their parents in the sea, frolic and walk with the sun in their little animal souls, just like their creator had intended them to be. And now they were dying. Terribly and painfully.

At first I only saw one of them, then a few, then a little flock followed by a whole beach, and finally I saw an island full of them. They were falling down one-by-one, like ninepins. They were dying in the name of the master of the world, in the name of the man. I was dying in the name of an idiot. In the name of the idiot inside me. I was flying through a tunnel like a Japanese express train. The lights mingled into one colorful blur. Suddenly the train skidded to a halt. A bar with a big TV slid out of the tunnel wall. A nice smiling penguin, smeared with gooey oil all over, was smiling at me from the whole screen. He hardly opened his beak, as his mouth was full of oily slobber. He was trying to tell me something, but I couldn't understand. I poked my ear out of the train and tried to read his beak.

– Are you alive? Are you alive, you idiot? – he screamed, but it felt like he just whispered.

– What do you want from me? It ain't me who killed you! Fucking Americans did it! – I tried to put the blame on the nation I hated with my whole heart.

– Wake up asshole, it's daytime! – the half-dead animal in a tailcoat yelled at me.

– I don't give a fuck; I don't wanna live this fucking life anymore. I'd rather wait for new parents, and hope they'll be oil tycoons. That'd be the perfect life.

The penguin must have got angry, because he smacked me in the face really hard.

And then he smacked me on the head. I opened one eye. Smiley was standing over me. His Mohican hairdo was down and his breath smelt like he'd been eating dead kids.

– Don't try to stop my train on the way to Hell, please. Just a few stops and I ain't gonna suffer no more, – I reeled off. I doubted that his central processing unit could understand that as a human language.

– Get up, you fucking Fuck. It's nearly midday, – the stink incarnate said.

This made me open the second eye too. I was lying in the grass, near the doorway leading into the biggest church in town. Next to me was a one-liter bottle of vodka standing at attention, half full with some brown liquid. How nice of the bottle, it had guarded me all night long. I thanked the bottle by giving it a wink with an eye full of crud.

– Whose is that piss, mine or yours? – I asked Smiley.

– That's the last of the cheap rum that we'd bought in a stand at the station in the wee hours, – smiling Smiley replied.

It was just for this smile he kept all the time on his face, why I liked him so much. He was a punker living his life according to his own rules. He didn't give a shit about life. I wasn't a punker, but I didn't give a damn about life just as he did, and sometimes maybe even less.

I started perceiving the world around me in my peripheral vision. Swarms of shuffling old women in shawls, a nicely dressed family here and there, just some thirsty souls walking into a church to have a few gulps of the Word of God.

– Good day, – I smiled at a pair of young-looking women in their seventies.

– Shame on them, – I heard snatches of their conversation.

– Why didn't they return my greeting? – I said to their retreating backs as well as to Smiley, hoping that he'd reply for them as their spokesman.

– Come on, fuck 'em. We're gonna go home, – Smiley started pulling my sleeve.

– Don't know about you, but I'm gonna go to Mass. It's Sunday. I have to fulfill my duty to the Lord for this week, – I said while getting up from the ground half-asleep, half-drunk.

Looking at the clothes hanging down from me I guessed I'd fallen out of a mixer truck straight into a stone pit, where I'd then played tag at least with four hundred hyper kids all night. We must have been playing hide and seek as well, which I must have definitely won, because I had dry mud all over my shoes. I must have been the only one with the idea to dive into a swamp with a straw in the mouth. I simply looked like shit. A bit better than Smiley, though. He'd already left the house looking like an ad for for the best extra in a film about the biggest and worst quake in the world ever. He gave the impression that he'd been hiding in the ruins of a house, buried under the rubble, for one month. The rips in his pants were mended with safety pins and his T-shirt could be called a rag rather than an "item of clothing". He was wearing broken high leather boots, which any peasant of the eighteenth century would have had no shame in wearing. Despite the fact that it was summer, he was wearing ripped colorful knitted gloves. His face was as dirty as Nicky Hayden's after a six-day race, but what was important to me was he kept on smiling. His sly eyes finally replied:

– All right, let's go then.

I shoved the bottle under my arm, gracefully kicked off a chunk of mud from my shoe into the parish garden, clapped Smiley paternally on his shoulder and told him:

– Smiley, you know I like you, buddy. But you gotta promise me that you won't say a single word to anyone in the church. I'm not gonna argue with them all about your breakfast and convince them that you hadn't had a piece of shit. Nobody will buy it, get it?

– I know, dad, but I wanna go for a wafer, any ideas how to do that?
– Smiley started one of those common funny dialogs of ours when we're acting like father and son, – I'm really starving, daddy.

– Are you starving, sonny?

– Yes, I am. Pretty much so.

– Have this morning pick-me-up then, dear son. It's medicine, – I passed the bottle of rum to Smiley.

He had a few swallows, but it was not worth writing into the list of his newbie personal records. No wonder after the two days, though. I was glad we were alive. On Friday afternoon we went out for a beer. And all of a sudden, it was Sunday. We'd been drinking as if the end of the year were nigh. Jet engines were thrumming in our heads; our bodies were trembling with exhaustion and desperately begging for sleep that would liberate us from all of this.

– I'm still very hungry, daddy, – nagged Smiley, his face contorted by the fiery fluid.

– Okay then sonny, confess your sins first, and then you can go for a wafer.

– Yippee! – Smiley whooped, but we'd already entered the church.

I might have been wrong, but I got this impression that everybody was staring right at us. I started to think that we were the Lambs of God to be sacrificed in this Sunday ceremony – so sad and pitiful were the stares of this bunch of people looking at us. However, there were also some black looks. They boded ill. What really surprised me was that almost all of them were looks from old women. They showed their annoyance, pointed at us, and continued muttering something under their breath. Fortunately, we had this penitent look on our faces, so we were allowed to force our way through the crowd to the confessional.

– It might be in that aisle, – I pointed to the right.

Smiley trusted me blindly, because he was following me in silence. The babble of the crowd behind our backs was getting more intense. I knew it had to reach its peak soon. And it really did – that sentence pierced the cold church air:

– Could you leave this place, young men?

It was a hefty woman in the flower of her strength and health. I imagined her occupying a crane cab in a former socialist tank factory from Monday to Friday.

– We just want to confess our sins to the priest, – I stuttered with a long face. Smiley kept silent. He probably remembered my warning not to speak for the smell that would come out of his oral cavity.

– You can't be here wearing clothes like these, – she carefully raised her voice.

– Throw these punks out, – said a woman with a squeaky voice in the crowd.

– But we haven't done anything wrong. We behave decently. We're here to listen to the Word of God, – I was taking the wind out of their sails.

– You're desecrating this church! – the hefty woman started to hot up.
– They stink like skunks, – an old biddy standing next to her added.
– If Jesus were here, he'd never throw us out. He loved lost souls. And we're groping in the darkness. He'd try to give us a helping hand. But you, you are throwing us out. Now I'm feeling how my heart is being filled with sadness, – I attacked them with a regiment of foot soldiers.

– Go home, take a shower, dress in something nice and come back. The church door is always open for you, – a man standing on my right said with a teacher's voice.

– Does it really matter what we're wearing? So our souls are secondary to you, right? Don't you think your values are different from those of Jesus'?
– I fired a few rockets.

– Throw them out! – the sea, enjoying the idea of growing rough, was spreading the verdict.

– Take a swig with us, – Smiley blurted out, and took the bottle out from under his t-shirt and passed it to the strict lady. He couldn't have chosen a better moment to speak.

I wasn't the only one to look him up and down. The woman grimaced angrily and she subconsciously protected her face with her hand. His breath had got her.

– Good heavens, what did you eat? – despair and compassion for her fellow man spoke out of her.

– Definitely loads of shit, – said the old biddy with a wart on her nose, who was standing next to her and crossing herself.

– I warned you! – I shouted in Smiley's mug, while the crowd of hands was carrying us out of the church.

– He didn't eat any human excrement! You're so cruel to him! – I shouted helplessly at the cold church walls. They were deaf, because they didn't want to listen.

"C'mon, we didn't do anything wrong! You see, Lord Jesus, are these your teachings?!" I shouted to one of the Holy Trinity. No reply came. Quite the opposite; his worshippers took huge machetes and split us from head to foot. With a squelching sound our bodies separated into pieces. The believers stood up in a well-organized long line like the Japanese waiting for the subway. Each of them scooped up a fistful of salt from huge tubs and hurled it at our weeping insides. Their faces showed feeling of a job well done. We felt a terrible burning. Despite this, Smiley kept smiling.

"I'm gonna kill him one day", a thought flew through my brain, "how the hell is he doing it?" But he shouldn't have done that, because thanks to that smile he got at least one more wheelbarrow full of rock salt into his body from the executioners. Finally, they put our pieces together again. They put the separate halves of our bodies together as exactly as possible, so that the kidney joined the other kidney and not the voice box. Then the priest

came and taped us up. He wasn't very careful, because an intestine was poking out of the side in various places. After he'd finished, he made an imaginary cross in front of us and said in the nicest possible way, "In the name of God, go." Then he kicked our asses. The manipulated herd got this gesture as the beginning of the final act. They ruthlessly kicked us out to the gate, where we were welcomed by the cheerful sun.

So we, sitting on a bench in front of the church, polished off that bottle and staggered home with a hole in our souls. In front of my apartment building, as we were saying goodbye to each other, we held each other's shoulders fraternally and had this chat:

– I like you, bro, – Smiley said.

– I like you too, – I replied.

– And don't be sad about Roni, you'll find another one.

– I know, Smiley. But I might not wanna find another girl. What for? To leave me again and make me unhappy again, right? – I asked him.

– But that one will never leave you. You'll live together happily ever after, – he replied.

– Oh, you incurable optimist. And we'll have seven hundred kids so happy that they'll eat each other, right?

– Exactly, bro, – Smiley nodded.

– But you forgot that the overwhelming majority of the people in this world go through misery all the time. That there are too few happy moments, – I said.

– Hey man, you're philosophizing again. Let's go to sleep.

– Fortunately, human memory can perfectly wipe out the bad and keep just the good. When we look back, we try to believe that we've lived the charmed life. But that's a lie. Our memory had thrown all the bad that we've gone through in searching for life's other truths into a cesspit a long time ago, and left us at the mercy of jaws of time, – I philosophized.

– Clever, cut it out. We've had enough of this standing-in-front-of-the-apartment-house-and-smart-talk! And nothing's changed. All this bullshit of yours is absolutely pointless. I'm splitting.

Smiley turned to the right and dropped himself on the ground. He'd made a pretty cool scene for my neighbors peeping through the Sunday net curtains. Curtains as starched as those people themselves. The feeling of shame wouldn't let them show their faces, though their curiosity about the situation outside was killing them. Their doors were carefully shut, so that none of their neighbors could have a look into their apartments. Even though one high-rise apartment building housed as many families as would be enough for one half of a village in former times, the inhabitants hardly knew each other. False smiles, empty phrases, an artificial world hermetically sealed and experimentally put into the concrete jungle.

We live increasingly closer to each other, however we have become alienated from each other by leaps and bounds. Most importantly, we rush home and look forward to chatting on the internet with someone sitting at their lappy somewhere at the other side of the globe, while the chance of meeting that person face-to-face in real life is next to squat. We're clicking our asses off, but we're too afraid to address a neighbor living next door behind a few tens of millimeters of a panel wall and take them out for a beer.

– You know what I'm gonna do first? – Smiley asked me and pointed a mischievous finger at me. – I'm gonna brush my teeth! – he blurted out and his smile got stuck on his face. Then we both burst into a fit of laughter.

– You really should. And when you get bored, call me, dude, – I shouted to him.

– Ciao, – I waved to Smiley with my dickbeaters.

– Ciao Clever, – the wind brought his words to me.

It was just my corpse that lay down on the bed, not me. A thinking corpse. I thought of those suffering penguins. "Haven't I seen them before?" it made me wonder. It made me feel kind of sick... as if I were experiencing my own death. I tried to think of Roni, but I couldn't; actually, I didn't want to think of her. "Fucking hell, what a vicious circle! Is my personality really split?" I asked myself

Then I tried to masturbate, but I gave up at the very beginning. It would have been useless; I couldn't get myself off. So I decided to make a promise to myself that from this moment I'd be contemptuous of all womankind and wouldn't give the key to my pain-filled soul to any of them. "Oh, that's so shallow! Do you really wanna take such ridiculous revenge? Typical for chick-enshits," I could hear my smart subconscious talking, which was always one step ahead of me. As it was right now. I knew it, but I didn't want to admit it...

It was still dark outside when I got up. I shuffled to the window and sat down on the windowsill. I was cold. Both my body and soul were cold. Through the jalousie I watched some neighbors as they were getting into their modern cars bought for the money they had to make fucking hard, and hurrying to work their socks off to buy the latest model which they'd seen in a TV commercial last night. And then they'll keep on buying a new car over and over again until their last days, when they, lying on their deathbed, realize that they can't take any of it with them, and they'll be begging with their old trembling lips for a chance to live a little bit longer and fully enjoy life. They'll be longing for taking a walk in a wood, touching a tree, smelling a blooming flower or dancing barefoot on a meadow. I shivered as I thought of them, and my soul cried. I shed imaginary tears because everybody around me was convinced of their victory. They were racing like crazy to be the first one to breast the ribbon. That thin strip existing only in their gourds. They were missing the target. They were running into chasms, sand dunes, misery and terrible self-deception.

I had to go to work, but I didn't feel like going there at all. I envied Smiley who was on welfare, so every day when he was getting up and slowly opening his peepers, the last dream he'd been dreaming and reality were mingling. He refused to work and support this society that only offered meaningless values. However, he wouldn't turn down a beer on my tab; he didn't have a problem with this one.

– Jenny? – I asked the earphone carefully.

– Hey man, what's up? – her sleepy voice responded after a while at the other side of the wire disappearing into the wall.

– How do you know who's speaking? – I asked her.

– There's no other idiot like you in the world who'd call me so early in the morning, – she blurted out. – Do you have any idea what time it is? – our director's assistant kept on asking.

– Nope. Will you tell me?

– Hey man, it's quarter past five. Do you ever think about your actions and how they affect people around you? Are you a dipshit or what? When you enter my office today, I'm gonna dump a wagonload of gravel on your head!

Well, I really hadn't expected such a nice announcement of the time. She was so cute.

– But I guess I ain't coming today, – I poured a little bit of oil into the fire.

– You're playing with your life, do you realize that?! – her voice went an octave higher.

– Will you back me up? Just say I called and that I'm sick, – I pretended not to hear her.

– Clever, Bianca will kill you with a thought. You have to finish that commercial for her today!

– I'll send her Sammy. He can do it.

– Bianca ain't gonna like it. It's your job, she'll insist on you. She'll go straight to the director.

– Fuck, I love our station so much... – I said and hung up.





Chapter 2

Lean against a Tree

I was almost forty–five minutes late. I opened the door to Jenny’s office a crack, just to insert a chocolate bar I’d bought for her, and let the colorful label speak for me and ask her to be friends again.

– Please, leave that wagonload of gravel on the rail as it is. Sweet reward is waiting for you, – I whispered into the crack in the door.

– Come in, Clever.

Her voice didn’t show any signs of cheerfulness. I had a nasty feeling. I opened the door and entered the office. I said “Hi there”, but apparently only the plants standing in the corner heard it. But that was all right. They didn’t care about our human stupid things; they enjoyed changing their colors and drawing energy from the world behind the window. They were beautiful. Unlike the manager Bianca, who drifted by me like a harpy and left the room.

– I thought you weren’t coming... Jenny stuttered.

– I felt fine after throwing up, – I improvised.

– How can one throw up the world? – the director standing behind me asked suddenly. I was surprised that he could see right through me. – Clever, follow me please, – he said and didn’t wait for my answer.

To tell the truth, I was still trying to find that answer. The only thing I was sure about was that food, alcohol and other drugs didn’t help me to find it at all.

– This is not the first time you’ve made Bianca furious, – he stated after his office door had closed.

– But I really was as sick as a dog, – I hit the ball back.

– I believe that you were. My wife was in that church too, – he smashed the ball and I just watched helplessly as it whizzed through the air into the opposite corner of the court. I didn’t have a dog’s chance of reaching it, even less hit it back. He could see right through me pretty well. I started to believe that he’d even written the book of my life.

– Clever, if you weren’t so clever and inventive, I’d have given you the axe a long time ago. Don’t you enjoy this job anymore? – he served softly again.

I was quiet for a while, and then I told him everything that bothered me:

– I’m tired of everything in this world. I can’t think of anything that I could enjoy. I hate this job, because I have to deal with human ignorance every day. I’m trying my best to provide progressive solutions, but nobody cares. Everyone knows everything better than I do for just one fucking reason – because they are above me. They waste my energy because they insist on their solutions, even though things could be done faster and for less money. But everything is just a waste of time. I have no energy to force my way through this flock

of superior, big-headed and arrogant idiots and work my ass off for so many years, so I could have their post and become as dumb as they are. I'm sick of this life. I've no idea why I'm living. I don't know why I'm here or what my mission is. I just feel that from the moment I wake up in the morning till the moment I drop off at night I have to live my life according to somebody else's rules. I have to lick the boots of this society, and I have to bow and scrape to this capitalist machinery which leads us into a big fiery hole. And people know about it yet they don't feel like changing it at all. They blindly go against themselves and pretend that everything's fine. They hardly think of what they have yet think of what they miss. I've just run out of the energy to fight against it. I'm sick of it all. So I gave Jenny a call this morning and told her I was sick. That my bathtub was already full of puke. It was flowing over the edges of that metal vat and filling up my apartment. The neighbor living downstairs is standing at my door, angrily ringing the bell and preparing to punch me out as soon as I find some courage to open the door. But I can't open it because the puke is now reaching up to the peephole. It's an insoluble situation. I'm standing there like a jerk, holding my nose to stop myself fainting from the smell, and thinking hard about what to tell him. And you know what? Fuck this job, I quit! Would you care for some chocolate? – I opened up the chocolate bar, broke it into pieces and passed it to the director. – I hope Jenny won't mind, the chocolate was actually meant for her.

The ball ripped the net. The director dropped his hands. He scraped his two-grand racket on the concrete, hung his head and stood there like a stunned monkey. His lower jaw dropped to the ground. The game was over. He realized that up till now he'd thought he could just see through me. So it wasn't he who had written the book of my life. That was a big relief.

– Your last pay will be sent to your account. Hand in your keys and other things to Jenny. When you find the energy to struggle with life, don't come back knocking at my door. I'm very disappointed in you. Goodbye, – he said like a robot that can find the right answer in every situation.

– And what about the chocolate? – I asked him peacefully.

– Get out! – his finger pointed to the door.

– Goodbye, and take care.

I stood up, left the room and closed the door. Jenny's face was sad. She'd probably heard everything.

– Clever, why are you doing this? – she asked quietly.

– Don't you have a simpler question at hand? For instance, how long is the equator? Oh, I have a good one. Would you like some chocolate?

– No, thanks. Not now.
– At least I know what to tell my grandchildren when they ask me about my obesity.
– What will you do? – Jenny didn't want to give up on asking.
– I'll be lying in a hammock waiting for the wind to carry me away.
– I mean, what you want to do right now.
– Lie down in a hammock so the wind may carry me away.
– You've always been nuts. Bianca will have a heart attack after I tell her that you've quit.
– I'm gonna see her, – I said.
– Be kind to her, please! – she said.
– Do you think I'm heartless to the people around me?
– Of course not! You and heartless? You see this?
– What? – I asked.
– That new line under my eye, – Jenny replied.
– Is that because I'm leaving or because I woke you up so early this morning?
– Both, – she said.
– It was for love.
– I'll miss your practical humor, – she said.
– And I'll miss your misunderstanding of my practical humor.
– Get out or I'll start crying.
– Boo hoo hoo, – I pretended to sob. She snatched up a pen and raised her arm. I managed to slip out of the door without any physical damage. I couldn't even imagine a nicer way of saying goodbye. I'd always pictured myself leaving this job and everybody saying goodbye to me by shaking my hand and thanking me. And instead I had to run from a flying pen.

Then I took care of Bianca. She was more furious than I'd expected. I just didn't get it. I wondered how people can get annoyed for no reason. For NO REASON at all. "Oh my God, one man bade farewell. Someone else will come to take his place and that's it. No tragedy at all, just classic market capitalism. Nobody's lost their arm or leg, so why are they so angry, why are they cursing and screaming so much, clenching their fists and ruining not only their health but the health of the people around them as well? What a weird kind mankind is."

I was eating the choco and walking out of my former nine-to-five life. Suddenly I felt kind of euphoric. That was a paradox – I'd lost my job and my income, and it made me feel happy. I went to a nearby forest, sat down in the grass, leaned against an old familiar tree, closed my eyes and inhaled the scent of nature. I felt like giving God a call, so I dialed his number:

- Hey listen, old-timer, I like you, – I started.
 - I like you too. Although you're wacky and you'll have to be reborn many times to realize that there is a shorter way to walk, you're still much better than many others. Except for your vulgarisms, – replied God.
 - Okay okay, old-timer. I promise I'll mend my ways.
 - You don't have to do it for me. I created you with reason, so that you could choose your own way.
 - Didn't you have better types of brains in stock? I'd say that everybody's chosen a wrong way, – I said.
 - It doesn't matter. You'll learn one day. After you overcome your suffering, you'll understand that you have to grow from your branches to the root. Just after you start feeling that basic and strong root inside yourselves, you'll be able to fully enjoy the feeling of supporting such a magnificent tree from the bottom. You see? – God asked me.
 - No, – I replied.
 - That's fine. After you experience it one day, you'll understand. Ciao Clever, the Pope is waiting on the second line. He's at his wits' end again...
 - Ciao, old-timer. Take care.
- The wind was stroking my face, the birds started to sing their symphony that they'd prepared for me, and the tree started to give me energy. I loved them so much for the way they were...

