

LET IT GO

NECHAT TO BEJT

Jiří Slavičínský, Ivan Kačur

Audionaut

00:00

Audionaut

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Ivan: I'm trying to record the sounds of the wind. Its quivers. But the wind seems to have died down just now.

The traffic has taken over.

But even that makes for interesting sounds.

The day is coming to an end. I see street lamps turning on. From across the street, a bare tree is waving to me. A bird's nest rests in its branches, and I wonder how it has managed to hold on in the gusting wind.

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Cyril: All good?

Ivan: Yeah.

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02:18

Ivan: It's Friday morning. Part of a dream I had last night took place at our gig. After the soundcheck, the sound guy came up to me and told me it was awful, said I was making too many mistakes and that he couldn't let us play unless I got my shit together. Thinking back, I feel like this scene reflects my awareness that I tend to do things haphazardly and mindlessly. That a lot of the time, I'm just fumbling through... And that I want to change this. I want to give my all to the things I do.

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Ivan: It's overcast and raining. A cold wind is blowing. A trek through a windy passage to the café awaits me. I'll hold on to walls and lamp poles along the way, hoping the wind gusts won't take me down.

Small droplets of rain hit the windshield.

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Cyril: Are you tuned?

Ivan: I think so. I'll double-check.

Me and Cyril are rehearsing for a concert at Kasárna Karlín.

Dammit. That's never happened before.

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05:44

Ivan: It's Friday before noon. I've decided to go for a ride on the Klánovice cycle track.

The cycle track is a 4 km long ribbon of asphalt surrounded by forest. More of a farmed forest than real wilderness, but it still smells like nature... Around the trail, blackberries are starting to redden, and Aaron's rods are in bloom, as well as many other plants whose names I don't know. Someone just cycled past me. They probably think I'm a weirdo, talking into a troll head (*furry microphone cover*) alone in a forest.

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Ivan:

My body / Want to sleep

My body / Bones, skin, fat and nerves

My body / Can't get up

My body / I want to but cannot

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Ivan: Ahead of me, the strip of asphalt stretches all the way to Klánovice. I'll get going. I'll record a little bit of the ride.

Thistles and nettles.

This part is a treat. It's downhill, so my own weight propels me past the rowan trees.

The multitude of sounds that arise from the woods tells me that this place is inhabited by far more species than the city or village. Here it's not just people, rats and asphalt.

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09:23

Ivan: Mom, I'm recording the sounds of the nut cracking now, because I'm making a sort of audio diary.

Mom: Right, yeah. So I'm on there now, too.

Ivan: You are, so just...

Mom: Just keep off the swearing?

Ivan: No, no, I just wanted you to know that I'm recording. So that I have your permission.

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Ivan: Once in five years you can make an insurance claim. It's enough to cover a basic model. If you want a lighter, sportier wheelchair, you can ask individual donors or a foundation or some company for a donation. I was lucky enough that my friends from the NGO Asistence

o.p.s. provided a nice sports wheelchair to me as a long-term loan. Thanks to this, I'll now be able to exercise regularly.

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11:15

Ivan: I'd like to hear how having a son with a neurodegenerative muscular disorder affects your life. I'd like to ask when it started, what the circumstances were... What time period it was... And how it has shaped your life.

Mom: You mean the early stages?

Ivan: The early stages of the illness, when it became clear that something wasn't quite right with me.

Mom: Well, you were 8 years old and you came down with a completely common infection. And after a week, when you were almost fine, your tummy started hurting again. A lot. So we went to our pediatrician, who took your blood to be tested. She called me the next day, as soon as the results came in, and said your liver function tests were off the charts and we had to come in immediately. Then they took you to a hospital. They thought you had hepatitis. When I called, they said they'd taken you to another hospital, so I went there... I don't remember all the details. They realized it wasn't hepatitis, so the specialized pediatric unit kept investigating. That's when they discovered you had this disorder, this myopathy.

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Ivan: I like these rides on the cycle track. I like being alone near the forest. And I like the physical exertion... the speed that this exertion on the wheelchair gives me. And I like the air and the sounds around me. I feel better here, I can feel my depression melting away. At the same time, tough memories tend to surface when I'm here. Memories of elementary school PE classes. The strain. The inexplicable levels of exhaustion. The cramps. The always finishing last. The annoyance of my classmates when I ruined the race again.

Everyone has a helmet, Theresa. If you fall and don't have a helmet, you could get seriously hurt. So you have to wear a helmet.

Hello. – Hello.

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15:32

Mom: You know, when you started seeing the doctors and they told you that you were ill, about your muscles and all that... you started training. You'd get up early in the morning and just go out and start running around the block while I was still sleeping. Do you remember that?

Ivan: Vaguely.

Mom: I remember it very clearly. You would run around the water tower to improve your performance.

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Ivan: It's about 7:30 a.m., I'm just waking up from a dream. I dreamt about a bar I used to work at. I met people I used to meet there and other friends whom I don't see a lot nowadays... I also walked a lot in the dream. I walked around my neighborhood and many others.... Yeah.

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17:00

Ivan: First, I have to get out of bed. So that's what I'd like to record now. At this moment, I'm sitting on the edge of the bed. My feet are on the floor. I'm turning sideways... I lift my legs so that both my knees are touching the mattress. I lean on my hand, turn my head against the mattress. Now my head is on the mattress. I shift one of my legs away from the bed, stretching it. I prop it up against the rug... I put both hands on the mattress. I lean on them, and through small slides... (*Will you do the countdown?*)... I try to lift my center of gravity a bit higher.

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Ivan: It's June 14th and the trip from Úvaly to Klánovice took me 46 minutes and 3 seconds. That's an hour less than two years ago on the old wheelchair. And I was stronger then. So that's good news. I'm pleasantly tired. My arms are hurting. Time to head to back.

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19:11

Ivan: My sister Lucka and I are sitting on a couch in her ground floor apartment in Úvaly. Rumba the dog is here with us, too. Can you remember when you started thinking about my illness?

Sister: Probably in high school, that's where it started to crystallize. It was more visible – the difference between your physical state and a normal physical state. I think it was then. It was also when we spent the most time together, we went to the pub together, we hung out almost every day. So that's probably where it became really apparent to me.

Ivan: Do you have a specific memory?

Sister: I do. I remember one time when we were both hammered, walking around early in the morning. You were more drunk, or at least it showed more. I was pretty wasted too, but you, oh man. You kept tripping and falling and you wanted to keep getting more beers. I kept pulling you back up. Then you pushed me away and told me to fuck off and that you were going to get another beer somewhere. I wanted to get you home. You fell again, I tried to help you back up again, and you pushed me and I fell too... Looking back now, it sounds

hilarious, but actually it was terrifying. I remember wishing that you could be normal. Wishing it was the other way around: you helping *me* get up.

Ivan: I wish so too. But what can you do, the cripple wanted to get a drink.

Sister: No, don't... I don't like that word.

Ivan: I was just trying to...

Sister: Yeah, I know. To lighten the mood.

Ivan: Not really, no, it just occurred to me, "cripple"... I don't know where that word comes from. Cripple.

Sister: We can look it up later.

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21:53

Ivan: There are always these slight undulations of the terrain, more or less pronounced... it oscillates kind of like my health. With one difference: my illness has an overall downward tendency. While there are periods of improvement and deterioration, in the long run the trend is negative. I can do less and less; I lose more and more strength. Here, in the forest, it's kind of balanced.

The downhill slides and uphill climbs pretty much balance out.

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Sister: But the question of the future – it comes up often. How it's going to be when it gets really bad. What does "bad" mean, exactly? When you start needing a lot of help. How you'll be, how you'll feel. And how we'll cope with seeing it happen. That's the big question. I often shut it out, though.

Ivan: I think it's healthy.

Sister: To shut it out?

Ivan: Not shut it out, but...

Sister: To not anticipate things?

Ivan: To just let it be. What can we do about it, anyway? It's pretty predictable... but I'm trying to keep some level of faith in the future. The principle that I'm finding in my reflection on the past and how it flows into the present... is that there's always a way.

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24:42

Mom: I'm not saying you've accepted the illness, but you're living with it. I remember this one sentence you've said a few times... That you believe that each life is for something, good for something. That each life, each human life and each human being has meaning.

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Ivan: I've come across a spruce that was recently uprooted. Ripped from its roots. A butterfly is fluttering under its root system, which forms a 45-degree angle with the ground.

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26:00

Ivan: Hey, fireside friends.

Hey!

Ivan: We'll play some of your favorite songs in a sort of campfire rendition.

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Sister: So what would you say the goal is, then?

Ivan: I see the goal in a sort of acceptance and stabilization, which I find in making attachments to something else than some inner suffering. I see it as a process. A process you just have to keep working on.

Sister: So it's not a goal in the sense that one day you would sit down and say: OK, everything's great now, everything's alright, everything is as it should be...

Ivan: That would be nice, sure. It'd be wonderful to reach that kind of inner peace. But I think that this is true both for people with dystrophy and without: That our expectations and ideals are ground down by reality. And one has to learn to work with that and accept it.

We've been talking for 57 minutes, I think it'll switch off soon. We have a minute left.

Sister: The sun is shining.

Ivan: And... there's a dreamcatcher hanging in the window. Its feathers are blowing...? Flowing...? Flapping...

Sister: Fluttering?

Ivan: Fluttering lightly in the waves of warm air that's radiating from the heater. – The end.

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28:38

You've listened to "Let It Be", a documentary by Ivan Kačur and Jiri Slavičinský. Dramaturgy by Brit Jensen. Mixing and mastering by Martin Ožvold. Produced by Vratislav Šlajer. An Audionaut production.

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