



The executioner's path

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Thank you for your patience, for all your kind words and for being my support on this difficult journey. Your friendship is invaluable to me and this book would never have been possible without you. This story is your story too – a collaborative work that has moved me forward and filled me with hope and determination. Thank you from the bottom of my heart.

Pavel Hrejsemnou

Preface

Dear Reader,

I am presenting you with a story that will take you to the heart of medieval Bohemia, to the times when life was relentless and people's fate was often hard. "The executioner's path" is a novel that will guide you through the fate of one man, whose journey through life is full of trials, difficult decisions, but also love and hope.

The main character, Petr, was born into a typist's family in Old Ford, a city full of life, where the interests of the powerful and the ambitions and desires of ordinary people intersected. However, his fate changes when he is accepted as an apprentice to the local executioner. This moment begins a journey that will take Peter not only to the limits of human courage and moral dilemmas, but also to a lost heritage that will reveal his true origins.

The novel is not only a chronicle of his life as an executioner, but above all a story about the search for oneself, about love that overcomes all obstacles, and about the determination to follow one's destiny despite all the pitfalls. Peter's fate gradually intertwines with the fate of his family,

when together they face dangers, losses and challenges that not only strengthen them, but also bond them together.

Petr turns from an ordinary ruffian into a man who must find his way between justice and duty, and finally between the past and the future. His story is filled with secrets, intrigue and drama, culminating in the moment when he accepts his rightful inheritance and becomes Peter of Wildstein, knight and lord of the old fortress.

At the same time, this novel is a journey into the depths of the human soul, where decisions are made about what is really important: the courage to face the truth, the strength to overcome fear and the ability to find light within oneself, even when darkness reigns around.

I hope that the story of *The executioner's path* will interest you and that you will find in it not only entertainment, but also inspiration to think about questions that people have asked themselves for centuries and that are still relevant today.

Sincerely,

Pavel Hrejsemnou, in Kutna Hora 2024

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Chapter 1

Year 1434, Old Ford. A city, somewhere in the deep forests of the Czech kingdom, that breathed ordinary life, but its heart beat to the rhythm of darker forces. The streets were narrow and crooked, the houses made of wood and stone, and between them flowed an invisible but ever-present current of fear and superstition. It was a time when human destinies were controlled not only by power and wealth, but also by a hand that silently overshadowed the lives of sinners. By the hand of the executioner.

Petr, a young man with a restless soul and a piercing gaze, walked along a narrow path leading to the execution house, where his new life awaited him. He was the son of a town scribe, but his family was impoverished and without hope for a better future. Petr had no choice as to which trade to choose, as fate drew him where others hesitated to look. His heart was beating fast as he approached the low stone house that stood alone on the edge of town.

The house that had become the home of Henry's old executioner was unremarkable from the outside, with a shabby roof and windows that seemed forever shrouded in darkness. Petr knocked on the heavy wooden door, which opened with a creaking sound. He was greeted by a stark, quiet hallway where the only sound was the muffled crackling of the fire from the small kitchen.

Henry, the old executioner, was a man with a wrinkled face, long gray hair, and eyes that had seen too much human suffering. His figure was massive, but years of fatigue and the weight of the work carried out took their toll on him. Still, glimmers of extraordinary strength and wisdom remained in his eyes.

"Come on, boy," he addressed Peter Henry in a deep voice that resonated through the stone walls. "I was waiting for you. I already know why you are here."

Peter entered without a word and closed the door behind him. Henry led him into a small room where a fire was burning in the fireplace. He motioned for him to sit on the wooden stool while he sat down on the other side of the table. There was a moment of silence, during which the

old executioner examined the young man scrutinizingly.

“Tell me, Peter,” he began slowly, “what made you enter the path few dare to tread? Do you even know what it means to become an executioner?”

Petr took a deep breath to overcome the nervousness that gripped him. “Mr. Henry,” he began, “I don't have much of a choice. My family is poor, and the city has no other work for me. But I'm not weak. I know that the executioner's craft is hard and that it requires more than just physical strength. I want to learn and do my duty, however hard it may be.’

Henry nodded, but his face remained unreadable. “Kat is not just a craftsman, Peter. He is a man who stands between life and death, between justice and retribution. It is a fate that cannot be taken lightly. But I can see that you have determination in you. And that's a good start.”

Then Henry got up and walked over to the wall where several tools hung that Peter had never seen before. Among them was a broad-bladed axe, reprimands and an iron gag. Each of these instruments bore traces of the past, and Peter could not tear his eyes away from them.

“These tools, Peter,” said Henry, “are an extension of our will. They are not weapons, they are instruments of justice. When you take them in hand, you must know that your task is not to kill, but to fulfill the right. And that's something you have to learn.’

Peter nodded, though Henry's words sent shivers down his spine. He understood that his journey would not be easy, but he knew that he could not give up on it. This was his self-chosen destiny—or perhaps a destiny that chose him.

“Today we'll start with simple tasks,” Henry continued as he handed him a stone whetstone “You'll be cleaning, sharpening, and maintaining the executioner's tools. An executioner must always have everything ready and sharp, because even the smallest mistake can be fatal.”

Petr took the sharpener and approached the tools. With each stroke he felt himself sinking deeper into a world that was invisible to most people, a world where every sound could mean the difference between life and death. With every movement of his hand he learned the patience, precision and humility that the executioner's trade required.

And so began his first steps on the path to destiny. With Henry at his side and the weight of

the future on his shoulders, Peter became an apprentice executioner. Although his heart was full of questions and doubts, he knew one thing for sure - his life would never be the same.

Chapter 2

The days in Old Ford passed as summer slowly turned into autumn. The fog often enveloped the city, bringing with it a chill that permeated every alley, every stone in the square, and the souls of the people who still avoided looking at the stone house on the outskirts of the city. Peter now knew this house better than his own, yet a mixture of curiosity and fear filled him every time he entered.

Old executioner Henry proved to be a strict but fair master. His words were as hard as his hands, but behind every instruction, behind every lesson, there was a deep knowledge of a world that Peter was just beginning to understand. Days of hard work turned into weeks, each one bringing new tasks.

One morning, when the sun had not yet broken through the thick fog, Henry approached Peter while he was sharpening the last of the tools. “Peter,” Henry began, “today's the day you're going to learn more than just tool maintenance and sharpening. Today you will see what it means to truly be an executioner.”

Peter felt his throat tighten, but he nodded and followed his master. They passed through a small passage and came out into the yard behind the house, where was the gallows and other instruments of justice that he had cleaned so many times but had never seen in action. A body lay in the yard. He was a man, a convicted felon who died in his cell before he could be executed. Henry stood up to him and looked at him with a hard expression.

“This man should have been publicly executed,” said Henry quietly, “but death took him before we could do justice. Yet his body must be prepared for public display so that all may see that justice has been done. And that is your task, Peter.’

Peter stepped closer to the body and looked into the empty eyes of the dead man. He felt a chill run down his spine. He had never been so close to a corpse before. His stomach was clenching, but Henry's gaze was unyielding.

“It's not just about being strong,” Henry continued, “but about mastering the part of our craft that most people don't see. What we are doing is not just about death, but about the right treatment of those who have been convicted.”

Petr took a clean rag and a bucket of water from Henry. With slow, uncertain movements, he began to rub his body, preparing it for what was to come. It was a strange feeling to be touching a dead body, but after a while he noticed that his hands were calmer than he expected. He concentrated on his work until the body was clean and ready for display.

"Good job," Henry praised him when Peter finished. "But this is just the beginning. Every executioner must understand death. You have to accept it as part of your life or it will consume you. Now we will go to the square."

The journey to the square was like a journey to another world for Peter. Quiet whispers spread through the town as people watched the procession led by Henry with Peter and the body of the condemned. Everyone knew what was coming, but no one dared to speak.

The gallows was already ready in the square and next to it was a tall wooden stake on which the body was to be exposed. Henry turned to Peter and handed him the rope. "It's time."

Petr took the rope with trembling hands and approached the body. His every move was now watched by dozens of eyes, and in the silence he could only hear his own breathing. He tied the

rope around the body and with difficulty pulled it up to the stake where he secured it. When he was done, he took a few steps back and looked at his work.

The people in the square looked on silently, and although no one showed an iota of sympathy, Peter felt how heavy their gaze was. In that moment, he realized what it means to be an executioner - not only do you have to be strong and accurate, but you also have to carry the burdens that people put on your shoulders.

Henry walked up to Peter and put his hand on his shoulder. "You're on the right track, boy," he said, a hint of pride in his voice. "But the road is long and full of shadows. Learn to live with them because that's the price you have to pay for what we do."

Peter nodded, though his mind was filled with thoughts. He knew he still had a long way to go before he was truly ready to be an executioner, but today he took the first real step. Although the weight of his task terrified him, he also felt a strange peace, as if he had finally found his place in a world that had so far rejected him.

And so, with Henry by his side and with people's gazes burning into his back, Petr slowly came to terms with the fact that his fate is firmly

tied to the night shadows and the cold stone
walls of Old Ford.

Chapter 3

Autumn in Old Ford brought not only cold, but also a ghostly silence that hovered over the town like a fog. The alleyways were slippery and dark, and people hid in their homes rather than expose themselves to the restless forces that the night brought. However, Peter did not have that option. He rose before dawn every morning to prepare for a new day in the execution room under the guidance of his master, Henry.

No sooner had he fallen asleep than the old executioner woke him by knocking on the door of his small cell. "Time to get up, Peter," came a gruff voice. "We have work to do."

Petr quickly put on his coat and ran out into the yard. In the middle stood a wooden log on which a piece of pork was already lying. At first glance, it might seem that an ordinary slaughter is about to take place, but Petr knew very well that today would be something else.

"Today I will teach you how to use a sword," Henry announced as he handed him the heavy steel weapon. It was an executioner's blade, long, with a broad edge that glistened in the morning

gloom. Petr gripped her tightly, but the weight caught him by surprise. He realized that it was not a weapon designed for combat, but for precise and relentless work.

"Learn to hold her properly," Henry advised as he saw Peter struggle to regain his balance. "You must feel that it is an extension of your own hand. Every movement must be smooth and precise. This is not a sword for a warrior, but for an executor of justice."

Peter nodded and tried to adjust his grip as the master showed him. Henry guided him and corrected his movements until Peter began to perceive the sword as a part of himself. It was a strange feeling, like he was connecting with something that was both menacing and powerful.

"Now watch," Henry said, picking up a second executioner's sword, almost identical to the one Peter was holding. He stood by the log where the piece of meat lay and slowly raised his sword above his head. In one smooth motion, he let the blade drop down, the blade effortlessly slicing the flesh in two. A loud "clap" cut through the morning silence and Petr felt his breath catch.

"It's not about strength, it's about technique," Henry explained as he wiped the blade on the

cloth. "You have to know where to aim and how to guide your hand. Every movement has a purpose. A mistake will cost you more than honor.'

Then he spurred Peter and said to him. "Try again."

Petr approached the log, pulled a piece of meat and raised the sword above his head. His hands were tense as he focused on the task at hand. He took a deep breath, then slashed. The blade cut into the flesh, but it didn't go through nearly as smoothly as he'd seen with Henry. The blade got stuck and stuck in the middle of the meat.

Henry walked over to Peter and gave him a friendly pat on the back. "Don't worry, Peter. This is not easy. It's an art you have to master. It's not just how you hold the executioner's sword, it's also how you focus on every movement, every breath. Your mind must be calm and focused.'

Petr felt the disappointment, but still picked up the sword again. His second attempt was better, and his third even better. With each subsequent slash, his strikes became more confident, and the blade began to bend to his will. Henry watched him carefully and

occasionally added a quiet piece of advice or corrected his attitude.

When the sun finally began to rise and illuminate the courtyard, Peter felt that he had made great progress. He was tired, but also filled with a strange kind of satisfaction. The sword in his hands was no longer just a heavy piece of iron, but a tool that was beginning to yield to him.

"Today you took the first real step on the journey ahead of you," Henry said as they finished their exercise. "But remember, Peter—the executioner's craft is not just about swordsmanship. It's about being able to separate your mind from the world around you. Learning to live with the weight of what you have to do.'

Petr nodded and wiped the sweat from his forehead. He knew he still had a long way to go before he was ready to take on the role of executioner, but today he took the first step. Although he still felt fear in his heart, he knew there was no turning back. His fate was firmly tied to the executioner's sword and the task that came with it.

And so, as he stood in the yard with Henry by his side, Peter understood that the path he had embarked on was not only about death and

punishment. It was a journey that changed him forever, and he had to learn to accept not only the weight of the weapon, but also the weight of responsibility that came with it.

Chapter 4

Winter tightly gripped Old Ford in her icy arms. Snow covered the roofs of houses, streets and fields outside the city. People huddled to the warmth of their hearths, while stories of criminals and sinners awaiting judgment spread through the darkness of the long nights. Peter spent most of his days and nights in the execution room, where he learned everything he needed to become a real executioner under the strict supervision of Henry.

He learned not only to handle the tools, but also to understand the city law and the rules that governed his work. Although his hands were now steady and his mind determined, he knew the real test was yet to come.

One frosty morning, Henry opened Peter's cell door earlier than usual. His face was serious, determination in his eyes.

“Peter,” Henry spoke slowly, “the time has come for you to prove yourself ready for your first task. You won't be exercising on a dead body or chopping pork today. Today you will have a real execution.”

Petr felt his stomach tighten. He had imagined this moment many times before, but now that it had come, everything within him froze. Still, he nodded and followed Henry out into the freezing morning.

A crowd was already waiting in the square. The people stood in silence, their faces partially covered by scarves and hoods, but their eyes fixed on the wooden gallows that stood in the middle of the snow covered area. On the sides stood the city guards, stern and unyielding, ready to maintain order.

At the gallows stood the criminal - a young man, barely older than Peter, his face pale with fear and despair. He was convicted of theft and murder, his crimes were undeniable and the sentence was merciless. There was no turning back. Today was supposed to be his last day.

Henry stood next to Peter and quietly explained what he had to do. "Remember, Peter, your job is not to kill, but to do justice. Fast, accurate and without unnecessary suffering. Keep a steady hand and a clear mind.'

Petr threw the executioner's cloak over his shoulders and approached the condemned. The man looked at him with eyes full of fear. There was something in that look that gripped Peter's

heart—it was the look of a man who knows he's about to die, yet still has a glimmer of hope, as if he still can't accept the end.

"It's time," Henry said softly as Peter stood by the gallows with the rope in his hands.

Petr nodded and approached the man. He tied his hands tightly and threw the noose over his neck. Everything seemed to be in a fog, the muffled sounds of the crowd, the sharp chill of the wind, the weight of the rope in his hands. Henry stood silently by his side, ready to intervene if Peter hesitated.

But Peter did not hesitate. He took a deep breath and tightened the noose with a determination he had never known before. His heart pounded in his chest as he approached the levers and started the mechanism. At that moment, it seemed to him that time had stopped. He heard a muffled sound as the trapdoor beneath the convict opened, and then only silence followed by a short, sharp scream.

The man's body hung motionless in the air. The crowd didn't even move, only low whispers carried between the people. Petr felt the blood stop in his body, he knew he couldn't afford to show weakness. He remained standing until the

crowd began to disperse, then slowly released the tension in his body.

Henry stood beside him, his expression unreadable. "Good job, Peter," he finally said, but his voice was tired. "You have done justice today. Remember this - what you have done is not easy, but it is necessary. Every execution will remind you that you carry the weight of life and death on your shoulders."

Peter nodded, but his mind was clouded with restlessness. It was the first time he had taken the life of a living being, and he knew the moment would haunt him. But at the same time he felt he had done what was needed. He understood that the executioner was not only an executor, but also a bearer of justice, and that his task was much more difficult than he had ever imagined.

As he left the square, the snow crunched under his feet and the icy air stung his cheeks. His steps were heavy, as if each of them carried the weight of everything that had happened that day. He knew that the life of an executioner was full of these moments—moments that would both shape and haunt him.

And so Peter, now with his first real task behind him, took another step on the path he

Vážení čtenáři, právě jste dočetli ukázkou z knihy ***The executioner's path***.
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