

The Day The World Changed

By

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SUPER ON BLACK SCREEN: BASED ON TRUE EVENTS

FADE IN:

EXT. POWER PLANT - DAY

It's a sunny, beautiful day. A colossal power plant lies in the distance, built right beside a river.

Four buildings built side by side with two colossal chimneys stand out.

SUPERIMPOSE: CHERNOBYL NUCLEAR POWER PLANT - APRIL 25, 1986

As we fly closer to the plant, a military jeep runs fast from Unit 1 towards Unit 4.

EXT. UNIT 4 CHECKPOINT - DAY

Jeep stops in front of the checkpoint. Soldier in the vehicle sticks an envelope out.

SOLDIER IN THE JEEP
Urgent message for comrade Yuriy
Tregub.

INT. REACTOR CONTROL ROOM - DAY

Technicians sit in front of a long control desk. Lights blink on the control board. Everyone's busy but calm.

Day shift chief, YURIY TREGUB, 32, stands at the center of the room, looking at the board.

TREGUB
What is the reactor power level?

OPERATOR #1
1700 Megawatts.

TREGUB
And the rods?

TECHNICIAN #1
45 rods are in, sir.

TREGUB
Good. That's good. Let's keep it that way and we'll have a smooth experiment, gentlemen.

INT. REACTOR CONTROL ROOM CORRIDOR - DAY

Soldier in the jeep runs along the corridor.

He holds the envelope in his hand.

INT. REACTOR CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

TREGUB

Okay, let's start lowering the power level.

Soldier appears on the doorway, out of breath.

SOLDIER IN THE JEEP

Comrade Yuriy?

TREGUB

Yes?

Soldier hands the envelope to the chief.

A brief silence as he opens it and reads the official paper inside.

TREGUB

(yells)

Stop!

All of the technicians turn to look.

TREGUB

Gentlemen! Our test is postponed until tonight.

INT. CHERNOBYL POWER PLANT FIRE DEPARTMENT - DAY

It's a garage, filled with firemen around, playing cards, reading a book, passing time. Two fire trucks are parked inside.

The phone attached to a column rings. All of the firemen in the garage call out in unison.

FIREMEN

VASILY!!!

VASILY IGNATENKO, a handsome, 25 years old fireman runs in smiling.

VASILY

I got it, I got it.

(he answers the phone)

Chernobyl Fire Department.

He waits for an answer but there is only silence.

(CONTINUED)

Vasily isn't surprised. Actually, he smiles even more.

VASILY
Are you making me listen to your
belly again?

INT. IGNATENKOS' FLAT - DAY

Indeed, the phone receiver is being held against a naked belly. It's slightly swollen.

A beautiful, blonde woman in her early 20s, LYUDMILA IGNATENKO, raises the receiver to her ear.

LYUDMILA
You wouldn't want to miss a kick,
would you?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

VASILY
I would rather be there and feel
it.

LYUDMILA
I'd rather you be here and feel
it too. Actually, can't you?

VASILY
Ah, how I wish. But I'm sorry,
Lyu, I can't. It's Major's day
off. So I'm waiting for him to
come here.

LYUDMILA
(laughing)
You're that sure he'll be coming
there, even on his day off?

VASILY
Of course, it's Major
Telyatnikov. Everyone knows he
can't resist. And then... I'll
have the talk.

LYUDMILA
Oooh, really? The talk?
(sarcastically)
Ah, my brave hero!

VASILY
I promised I would take care of
you, didn't I?

Lyudmila is radiating happiness.

LYUDMILA
You sure did.

She hangs up the phone and stands there daydreaming, caressing her belly absent-mindedly.

EXT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - DAY

The main street of Pripyat is formed by a long block of apartments.

LARISA TELYATNIKOV appears on the balcony. She's a beautiful woman, 38 years old but looks much younger.

The Power Plant can be seen from the balcony, it's only 3 kms away. Larisa stretches herself against that view.

LARISA
Good morning, Mister Antonov.

It appears that Larisa is talking to an old man sitting in the balcony right beside her, ANTONOV. He is out of his shirt, sunbathing with eyes closed.

ANTONOV
It's past noon.

LEONID
(o.c.)
Larisa, honey? It's the lost sock day.

LEONID TELYATNIKOV, 2 years younger than his wife, comes out to the balcony. He's a well built man with dark short hair. He holds a sock in his hand.

LARISA
You are really going to work, aren't you?

Leonid shrugs guiltily.

ANTONOV
Aren't you a bit late for work, Leonid?

LARISA
It's his day off!

Leonid kisses his wife and goes inside. Larisa smiles at Antonov even though his eyes are closed.

LARISA
And it's also his birthday.

She goes inside after her husband.

ANTONOV
(yelling after her)
Happy birthday!

INT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - DAY

It's a small, cozy flat with sunlight coming in through the windows.

Their little boy MISHA, 10 years old, runs after a puppy and passes his parents as they walk to the bedroom. OLEG, 2 years older, appears after him.

OLEG
Mom, he's chasing the dog again!

LARISA
Misha, don't scare that poor animal!

MISHA
He likes it mom! Just wants to play.

LARISA
Don't run inside the house then.

Misha just laughs and wrestles with the puppy. Oleg looks annoyed.

LEONID
How was school, Oleg?

OLEG
Fine.

Leonid, seeing he won't get anything else from Oleg, goes to the bedroom and starts changing.

Larisa follows after him. She takes something from the ground and hugs Leonid from behind, holding the other pair of his sock to him. Leonid smiles and takes it from her, then keeps changing while talking. They are both playful.

LARISA
Soooo... anything you want to do on your birthday?

LEONID
Hmmm... I can think of a few things. But I should go and check the boys at the station first.

LARISA
What's the meaning of vacation if you go to work every day?

(CONTINUED)

LEONID

It puts my mind at ease.

LARISA

To know that they are doing okay without you? You're just a control freak, Leonid.
(whispering in his ear) I can put your mind at ease.

LEONID

We can always have tonight.

LARISA

God! You're incredible! Okay. Go. Go, play with your friends.

LEONID

I love you, Larisa.

LARISA

You should. And I love you too.

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - DAY

Busy day outside. Kids play in the park across the road with mothers watching them.

Leonid leaves the building. While walking to his car, he sees an old FISHERMAN with a fishing pole.

LEONID

Fishes in the river see you more than your wife, Alexey.

FISHERMAN

It's been 50 years, Major. She saw me enough.

Leonid laughs and drives away.

EXT. CHERNOBYL POWER PLANT FIRE DEPARTMENT - DAY

Leonid parks his car in front of the Fire Department building inside the power plant.

INT. CHERNOBYL POWER PLANT FIRE DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

Four firemen play cards around a table beside a fire truck. They stand up when they see Leonid coming in.

One of them is VLADIMIR PRAVIK, 24, a handsome young man with black hair.

(CONTINUED)

PRAVIK
Major Leonid. We weren't
expecting you.

LEONID
Really, Lieutenant?

PRAVIK
Of course sir. You're on
vacation!

A fireman comes out of the office with a cake in his
hands, singing Happy Birthday. Others join in.

PRAVIK
Except, sir, you never actually
take a vacation. So here you go,
make a wish.

Leonid blows the candles, laughing. Then he shakes other
firemen's hands.

LEONID
Thanks boys. That was real sweet
of you.

FIREMAN WITH CAKE
Let me get some plates.

LEONID
And I'll check some incoming
files real quick.

Leonid goes inside the office. He checks accumulated
papers on his desk, seeing if there's anything important.

Vasily knocks at the open door.

VASILY
Major, can I talk with you for a
moment?

LEONID
Of course Vasily. Come in, what
is it?

VASILY
Well, sir, I was going to ask you
something.

LEONID
Sure, go ahead.

VASILY
You know Lyudmila is pregnant,
right?

LEONID

I do, of course. How long is it now? 4 months? 5?

VASILY

5 months sir, yes. That means pretty soon, I'll need more money than I get now.

LEONID

I understand.

VASILY

So, can you assign me for extra shifts?

LEONID

You're in Lieutenant Pravik's squad Vasily. And extra shifts for firemen are dangerous.

VASILY

I know, sir, believe me I know. But we rarely see any fire here. I'll need money and Lyudmila can't work for longer.

LEONID

Okay, I'll write to State Commission and see what I can do. Don't worry. I'm sure we can arrange something.

VASILY

Thank you, Major. Thanks so much.

LEONID

Come, let's eat some cake.

INT. MANAGEMENT CORRIDOR - DAY

A good looking young woman, KATYA ADAMOVICH in her early 20s walks down the corridor. She has a visitor badge on her business suit.

Two men wait for her. VIKTOR BRYUKHANOV is 51 years old with full strong hair. He's got a confident look while the man beside him, NIKOLAI FOMIN is the opposite. He is bald and wearing thick rimmed glasses. He smiles all the time.

KATYA

Hello sir. I'm Katya Adamovich from the government newspaper Izvestia.

(CONTINUED)

BRYUKHANOV

Welcome Miss Adamovich. I'm Plant Director Viktor Bryukhanov and this is my chief engineer Nikolai Fomin.

FOMIN

Hello.

BRYUKHANOV

How was your trip?

KATYA

A bit too much turbulence for my taste. But at least I'm here now.

BRYUKHANOV

Thankfully. We wouldn't want you to miss this. Shall we?

They move to the meeting room.

INT. MEETING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Tregub and two other men in their lab coats sit around a big, elliptic table inside.

BRYUKHANOV

Miss Adamovich, meet ANATOLY DYATLOV, our Deputy Chief Engineer. He'll be supervising our experiment.

One of the men, in his mid-50s, stands up to shake the journalist's hand.

BRYUKHANOV

(contd.)

And our day shift chief Yuriy Tregub and night shift chief ALEKSANDR AKIMOV.

Tregub and Akimov, who looks as young as the other chief and wearing a moustache, also shake her hand.

BRYUKHANOV

(contd.)

Please, sit. Would you like to drink anything?

KATYA

Just water, thank you.

BRYUKHANOV

(to his secretary over phone)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

BRYUKHANOV (cont'd)

A glass of water for Miss Adamovich.

KATYA

So, you'll be conducting an experiment here today.

TREGUB

Yes. Actually we started it but had to postpone.

KATYA

Why?

TREGUB

We were going to shut down the reactor for the experiment but turns out the energy we produce here is needed real bad during day time. So it'll be done tonight, during comrade Akimov's shift.

AKIMOV

Do you have any information on how a nuclear plant creates energy, Miss Adamovich?

KATYA

Can't say I do, no.

BRYUKHANOV

It's not that different from other kinds of power plants.

TREGUB

That would be an understatement.

BRYUKHANOV

Miss Adamovich, I come from a coal-fired power plant background. And comrade Fomin here...

FOMIN

I'm an electrical engineer and I worked on a thermal plant before.

BRYUKHANOV

So some people think we don't know how to operate a nuclear plant. But I think, basically, they are all the same. Something, in this case nuclear fuel, heats the water and creates steam. And that steam turns turbines, creating electrical energy.

(CONTINUED)

KATYA

Sounds simple enough.

TREGUB

The problem is, there's a risk of a meltdown in a nuclear plant.

BRYUKHANOV

Oh please...

TREGUB

Sir, this is why we are doing this experiment so let me explain.

BRYUKHANOV

Okay but let's get one thing straight. Miss Adamovich, we were told that you're here to write about the results of a great experiment, making the Motherland even stronger. You shouldn't concern about some "risks".

KATYA

Of course.

BRYUKHANOV

Tregub, go ahead.

TREGUB

Okay, our question is this: It's essential to constantly cool the reactor to prevent a meltdown but what happens when there is a problem with the power grid and suddenly, the plant is left with no energy?

KATYA

Generators?

BRYUKHANOV

Exactly.

AKIMOV

We have generators of course, but between a power failure and those generators working full steam, we have a 60 seconds gap without power and that's enough for a meltdown if the cooling systems aren't working. So, during that time, energy for the cooling systems should be met by the turbine blades. Think of it like a gigantic fan. Blades don't stop

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

AKIMOV (cont'd)
turning as soon as you turn a fan
off.

A slight pause as Katya thinks. A secretary comes in, puts a glass of water by her and leaves.

KATYA
So let's see if I got this right:
You'll shut down the reactor. And
see if the cooling systems will
still be working by the energy
left in the turbines, at least
for 60 seconds. And what if it
doesn't work? Isn't this
dangerous?

TREGUB
We have emergency systems.

FOMIN
But we won't need them. We might
even disable them.

TREGUB
Mister Fomin, please, let's not
get ahead of ourselves...

FOMIN
This test has been conducted
numerous times in other nuclear
power stations. It's completely
safe.

INT. IGNATENKOS' FLAT - NIGHT

Lyudmila sits in the living room. Television is open but she doesn't watch. She is knitting.

The sound of key on the lock and the apartment door opens. It's Vasily, he carries grocery bags.

VASILY
Ta-da!

Lyudmila is pleasantly surprised.

LYUDMILA
Oh my God! What are you doing
here?

Vasily kisses his wife, then raises the bags to show.

VASILY
We kinda emptied the station's
kitchen today for Major's
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

VASILY (cont'd)
birthday. So someone had to go
shopping and guess who
volunteered?

LYUDMILA
Mmmm, I love it when you take
responsibility.

VASILY
How about your day? What are you
holding?

It's half of a baby sweater.

LYUDMILA
I started doing this today.

VASILY
Are you serious? This is almost
finished!

LYUDMILA
I didn't have much else to do.

VASILY
You! You are an amazing woman.

He kisses her again.

VASILY
(contd.)
Oh and I also talked with the
Major.

LYUDMILA
Really? How did "the talk" go?

VASILY
Well, he said that he'll write to
State Commission. And he is
hopeful.

LYUDMILA
I don't know if I should be happy
about this. I mean, I know this
is necessary but it means I won't
be seeing you for longer periods.

VASILY
Come on Lyu, it will be only
temporary.

LYUDMILA
I know but that won't make it
easier.

VASILY

We can make it work. And I can
always volunteer for more
shopping anyway.

Lyudmila laughs. They hug each other.

EXT. POWER PLANT - NIGHT

Plant looks quieter and calmer than the day.

INT. REACTOR CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Unlike the outside of the reactor, control room is
buzzing. Tregub and Katya are also present.

LEONID TOPTUNOV, 26, sits at the controls with Akimov
beside him, checking his watch.

SUPERIMPOSE: APRIL 26, 1986 - 12:20 AM

AKIMOV

Final checks everyone.

Toptunov raises the phone receiver and dials a number.

INT. TURBINE HALL - CONTINUOUS

It's a huge hall filled with machines. Enormous turbines
work very loudly under orange metal covers.

A phone, mounted on a steel column rings. A man in his
late 20s answers.

TURBINE OPERATOR

Turbine operator Korneev here.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

TOPTUNOV

This is Leonid Toptunov from Unit
4 Control Room. Final checks.

TURBINE OPERATOR

No problem here. Just loud as
always!

TOPTUNOV

I'll be reducing the reactor
power in a moment.

He hangs up.

INT. REACTOR CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Akimov turns and looks at Dyatlov who stands with Tregub and Katya.

AKIMOV
We're ready to start.

DYATLOV
Go ahead, comrade.

AKIMOV
Start reducing the power.

Toptunov hits a few buttons. Numbers on an electronic counter on the wall starts going down from 2500.

INT. CONTROL ROOM 36 - NIGHT

It's a small room. Reactor Hall can be seen through three open doors ahead.

TECHNICIAN #1 sits on his desk. He makes entries on his log. He's in his late 20s.

His colleague, TECHNICIAN #2 fills a cup of coffee and puts it on Technician #1's table.

TECHNICIAN #1
Thank you.

TECHNICIAN #2
No problem.

REACTOR FOREMAN is close to his 40s. He's got a pad.

REACTOR FOREMAN
I'm off to my round boys. I will give you your instructions for the shift when I'm back.

TECHNICIAN #1
Fine by me.

Reactor Foreman leaves towards Reactor Hall, taking notes.

TECHNICIAN #2
And I'll take a nap next door.

TECHNICIAN #1
(eyes still on his log)
Fine by me.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Toptunov looks slightly frustrated. He hits buttons over and over again.

The counter shows the power is around 150 and decreasing.

Akimov comes over from another technician's side and sees that.

AKIMOV

Toptunov, that power level is too low.

TOPTUNOV

I know sir. But it keeps going down. I have no idea why.

DYATLOV

What is wrong?

AKIMOV

Power isn't stabilized, it keeps decreasing.

DYATLOV

How much is it?

TOPTUNOV

Almost 30 megawatts sir.

DYATLOV

What are you talking about? You were supposed to keep it at 1500!

TOPTUNOV

Sir, I did everything as usual...

DYATLOV

How many rods are in there?

TOPTUNOV

28 sir.

DYATLOV

(angry)

Then take some of them out! Don't you know anything about your work? Take some of the rods out and the power will rise!

Katya is visibly discomfited by the sudden rage. He whispers to Tregub.

KATYA

What is going on? What are those rods they are talking about?

(CONTINUED)

TREGUB

They slow down the reaction. Less rods means more power.

TOPTUNOV

Sir, maybe we should shut down the reactor. The emergency protocol dictates that there should be at least 26 rods in there at all times.

AKIMOV

Toptunov's right, comrade Dyatlov. We should find the problem first.

DYATLOV

(to Toptunov)

We need power right now so take the rods out! If you don't increase the power, Tregub will!

A slight pause. Silence in the room.

TREGUB

I... uh...

TOPTUNOV

Okay. I'm raising 10 more rods.

Toptunov hits some buttons. Numbers on the counter starts going up.

INT. REACTOR

Inside the reactor core, glowing fuel rods look incredibly hot and dangerous. Some of the rods raise up.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Akimov turns from indicators.

AKIMOV

Power is stabilized at 200 megawatts.

DYATLOV

See? Good. Carry on.

Toptunov and Akimov glances at each other unhappily.

WATER PUMP OPERATOR works on his part of the control desk.

(CONTINUED)

AKIMOV
Boris, are there enough
circulation pumps open?

WATER PUMP OPERATOR
Six working sir.

AKIMOV
Open two more.

INT. REACTOR

A powerful surge of water passes through the pipes
surrounding the reactor core.

Steam formation coming out of the reactor visibly reduces.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Toptunov sees another decline on the electronic counter.

TOPTUNOV
What just happened?

Phone next to Toptunov rings.

TOPTUNOV
Leonid Toptunov here.

INT. TURBINE HALL - CONTINUOUS

TURBINE OPERATOR
This is Turbine operator Korneev.
Turbine stopped. Looks like
there's not enough steam coming
from the reactor.

TOPTUNOV
(o.c.)
But we haven't even started the
test yet!

TURBINE OPERATOR
There's definitely a problem
then.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Toptunov hangs up the phone.

TOPTUNOV
We need even more power, there's
not enough steam.

(CONTINUED)

WATER PUMP OPERATOR

But, how?

AKIMOV

You'll need to take more of the rods out.

TOPTUNOV

That's too risky!

AKIMOV

Do it.

INT. REACTOR

Inside the reactor, more rods come out.

Glowing fuel rods start to get a reddish tint as they get hotter.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Numbers climb faster on the counter.

TOPTUNOV

The power is rising.

DYATLOV

Another two or three minutes and it'll all be over. Get moving boys!

TOPTUNOV

Sir, the power is still rising.

AKIMOV

What do you mean?

TOPTUNOV

It is not stabilizing.

On the counter, it's over 1500 now.

Alarms start in the building and red lights start flashing.

KATYA

This is getting scary.

TREGUB

Start the emergency cooling system.

Water Pump Operator raises a lid and pushes a button.

A slight pause. Numbers keep rising. It's over 2500 now.

(CONTINUED)

WATER PUMP OPERATOR
Why isn't it working?

TREGUB
(to Dyatlov)
Did Fomin really disable
emergency cooling system?

DYATLOV
Are you mad? He can't be that
stupid. You must be doing
something wrong!

AKIMOV
We are doing everything right!

DYATLOV
Obviously not!

TOPTUNOV
Power is almost 5000 megawatts.

AKIMOV
Fuck! I'm activating the
emergency power reduction system!

TREGUB
That will send all the control
rods into the reactor!

AKIMOV
We have no other choice.

He raises the lid of a red button.

TREGUB
We don't know what will happen
with so many rods going in at the
same time.

AKIMOV
Do you have a better idea Tregub?

Silence in the room except the blaring alarm.

Tregub shakes his head.

Akimov hits the button.

INT. REACTOR

The whole 211 control rods descend into the core. But
their channels are twisted from the heat.

Only after a slight descent, rods get stuck.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Toptunov gives an incredulous look at the indicators.

TOPTUNOV

They stopped. Why did they stop?

DYATLOV

I can't believe this! This was an easy test, how can you mess this up!

AKIMOV

I'll release the clamps so they can fall in.

Akimov rushes to a desk and hits a series of buttons.

INT. REACTOR

Clamps holding the rods open, releasing them.

A few rods fall in but most are still stuck in twisted channels.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Everything's as it were before.

TOPTUNOV

It's still rising.

DYATLOV

Do something you idiots!

INT. REACTOR HALL - CONTINUOUS

Reactor Foreman climbs up the stairs. There are metallic noises clearly coming from some heavy objects. Alarm sound keeps blaring and red emergency lights flash constantly.

Reactor Foreman reaches the upper level, slows down as he nears the railing and looks down.

REACTOR FOREMAN

Oh no...

The biological shield of the reactor lid is a giant circle on the floor consisting of 2000 heavy blocks. And they jump up and down as steam escapes from between them.

Reactor Foreman turns and runs back the stairs as the ground shakes. He loses his balance and falls, hitting the wall between floors.

He shakes himself, blood on his face from a wound on his temple. He gets up and keeps running down.

INT. PUMP ROOM - CONTINUOUS

A pump room operator in mid-30s looks at huge pumps above him. They are shaking uncontrollably.

He walks to the phone on the wall, still looking at the water pumps, transfixed.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Trembling makes a coffee cup fall over the control desk. Sparks fly. A phone rings.

DYATLOV

Why the fuck can't you stop this?

Akimov is bewildered. He rushes from one control desk to another, checking indicators.

Reactor Foreman appears on the doorway, out of breath.

REACTOR FOREMAN

There's something terrible going on with the reactor! The blocks on top of the fuel channels are hopping up and down.

AKIMOV

But we did everything right!

TREGUB

(to Katya)

Miss Adamovich, I think we should get you out of here.

Tregub and Katya move towards the door.

A technician answers the ringing phone.

TECHNICIAN ON THE PHONE

Hello?

INT. PUMP ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Water pumps behind the operator still shake violently.

PUMP ROOM OPERATOR

Khodemchuk here. I think there's too much steam in-

BOOM!

A colossal explosion! A mixture of debris and flame engulfs Pump Room Operator, clearly killing him on the spot.

INT. CONTROL ROOM 36 - CONTINUOUS

Technician #1's eyes open wide as a wall of flame and dust rushes towards him.

He flies backwards with the fiery shockwave. The wall of the room caves in and windows break.

INT. CONTROL ROOM 36 / SMALL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Technician #2 falls down from the cot as the wall to the adjacent room cracks. Lights flicker and go out.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The shockwave hits the Control Room. Everyone loses their feet and flies backwards. The walls crumble as white dust and debris fill in.

EXT. PRIPYAT RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Old fisherman sits by the river right across the plant.

The environment around him brightens. He raises his head from the river, hearing the explosion.

The roof of Reactor 4 blows up right in front of him. An orange ball of flame erupts towards the air.

FISHERMAN

My god...

INT. IGNATENKOS' FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Lyudmila sleeps alone in her bed.

We see the explosion in the distance through the window behind her. Booming sound is heard and windows shake visibly.

Lyudmila wakes up with a start. Looking outside, she notices the flames.

She gets up and walks to the balcony, really worried.

EXT. PRIPYAT RIVER - CONTINUOUS

Old fisherman backs up slowly, transfixed and still looking at the burning building in front of him.

Then he grabs his fishing pole and bucket and runs away.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

The control room is in ruins. Dense, white dust on air. Sparks fly. Only light comes from the battery powered red emergency lights.

People get up slowly, cough. Tregub is the first one up.

TREGUB
Is everybody okay?

He finds Katya on the floor.

TREGUB
(contd.)
Miss Adamovich, are you alright?

KATYA
Yes... Yes I think I'm okay,
thank you.

DYATLOV
What happened?

REACTOR FOREMAN
That was an explosion. I think
something happened to the
reactor.

DYATLOV
Don't be daft! The reactor must
be okay. We did everything
right... right, Akimov?

AKIMOV
Yes... yes... I don't know what
happened. We did everything
right... I must call the
department heads.

DYATLOV
Maybe a sabotage... Yes, we were
possibly sabotaged.

REACTOR FOREMAN
Oh no... I should check Kurguz
and Genrikh. They were up there.

Reactor Foreman runs out the door in panic. Akimov frantically talks with various people on the phone.

(CONTINUED)

TREGUB

Whatever the case was, we should check the reactor and report as soon as possible. And we should get out.

DYATLOV

Report... yes... yes we should do that.

Akimov turns from the phone call he's been having.

AKIMOV

There is fire in the turbine hall. Electricians, go help!

Three technicians run out.

AKIMOV

And I can't reach Gorbachenko. We need him to measure radiation levels.

A BIG TECHNICIAN comes forward. He takes his lab coat off.

BIG TECHNICIAN

I will go find him.

AKIMOV

Great, Petro. Do that and then both of you go find Shashenok.

The big technician leaves.

WATER PUMP OPERATOR

What about the pumps? Is reactor getting water?

AKIMOV

No. We should deal with that too. We must also stop the reaction in the reactor but I couldn't lower the control rods.

DYATLOV

It must be done manually then. Where are the trainees?
PROSKURYAKOV, KUDRYAVTSEV!

Two young boys in very early 20s appear beside him.

DYATLOV

Listen fellows, go on over to the central hall, real fast. The SUZ rods have to be lowered by hand.

Trainees nod and run out.

(CONTINUED)

DYATLOV

Tregub, you take Miss Adamovich
out of here.

KATYA

What about you? Are you sure it
is safe?

AKIMOV

We'll be fine. We need to restart
the systems so the reactor can be
cooled.

INT. REACTOR HALL - NIGHT

Trainees arrive to the stairs Reactor Foreman tumbled down
before the explosion. It's highly damaged and broken in
places.

TRAINEE #2

That doesn't look safe.

TRAINEE #1

We should try. Come, boost me up.

Trainee #2 helps his friend climb the broken part of the
stairs. Once he is up, Trainee #1 turns to pull Trainee #2
beside him.

They climb the rest of the stairs to find...

The glowing reactor open right in front of them. Giant,
circular lid still sits atop it but it's inverted at 15
degrees from vertical. Fire is all around it.

TRAINEE #2

Is... is that the reactor?

TRAINEE #1

I think so... yes...

TRAINEE #2

We are looking into the reactor
right now?

Trainee #1 nods slowly.

TRAINEE #2

(contd.)

Isn't this dangerous?

They look at each other, realizing what they are doing.

They turn and run back down.

EXT. UNIT 4 - NIGHT

The roof of the building is on fire. There are black debris all around.

Tregub and Katya run out of the building.

TREGUB
Are you okay?

KATYA
Yes, I'm fine, thank you.

TREGUB
I guess this wasn't the story you were looking for.

KATYA
Not the ideal one, no.

TREGUB
Come on, I'll drive you to your hotel. This place is dangerous.

They walk towards the parking lot. Meanwhile, three fire trucks with their sirens blazing pass the checkpoint and stop in front of the building.

Firemen get out. Lieutenant Pravik is among them.

PRAVIK
Raise two ladders from here. You two, go check inside. Hey! Get that truck to Unit 3. I see fire on its roof too.

Pravik stops and looks at the blazing fire.

PRAVIK
(to himself)
This is bigger than we can handle.

Trucks move closer to the building as firemen extend ladders. Vasily climbs one of them.

The half of the roof is disappeared. The area surrounding the hole is filled with burning debris.

At the top of the ladder, Vasily can see inside the building, right through the central hall. And there's something glowing inside.

It's so bright, Vasily needs to shield his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

VASILY
What the hell is that?

INT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - NIGHT

The remnants of a small birthday party. A half eaten birthday cake, empty plates and glasses half full.

Leonid and Larisa sit side by side. Across from them sit Leonid's brother NIKOLAI and his wife ILIA. They are half drunk.

NIKOLAI
You... Oh man... He's been always like this. It's all dad's influence.

LEONID
It's not dad's influence brother, come on...

NIKOLAI
Of course it is. He was always a statist. And you are too! Both of you always assumed the government is always right.

LEONID
So? What's wrong about that?

NIKOLAI
Wha... What is wrong? Leonid, they are just people like you and I. They, too, can do mistakes.

LEONID
So far, I haven't seen an example.

NIKOLAI
That doesn't make you right, it just means you don't know where to look.

ILIA
How come you are so different even though you were raised in the same family.

Phone rings to everyone's surprise.

LARISA
Oh no, quick, the kids will wake up!

Leonid runs to the phone.

(CONTINUED)

LEONID

Hello?

His smile fades. He listens in silence for a moment.

LEONID

Okay, I'm on my way. Call the other stations and ask for reinforcements.

Leonid hangs up.

LARISA

What happened?

Leonid points out the window. Everyone gets up to look. They can see the flames over Unit 4 in the distance.

ILIA

My God... Is everyone okay?

LEONID

I don't know. But I must go, sorry.

NIKOLAI

Of course, of course!

Leonid goes into the bedroom to change. Larisa is concerned.

LARISA

That must be the biggest fire Leonid's station ever met.

ILIA

Don't worry. They will be fine.

LARISA

Oh I'm not worrying. It's what they get prepared for every day.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - NIGHT

Technicians are still hard at work.

TOPTUNOV

Sir, nothing works. Reactor is completely offline.

AKIMOV

Lines from the systems must be damaged by the explosion.

Two trainees enter the room. Their skin is visibly darker.

(CONTINUED)

DYATLOV

Ah, there you are! What is the situation in the central hall?

TRAINEE #1

Sir, there is no central hall. It's all been destroyed by the blast.

TRAINEE #2

You can even see the sky overhead.

TRAINEE #1

And sir, there is fire coming out of the reactor.

Silence for a moment. Everyone is visibly shocked. Then...

DYATLOV

You guys must have got it wrong. There was something burning on the floor and you guys thought it was the reactor.

(to Akimov)

We still need to save the reactor. We need to get water into the core.

TRAINEE #1

Sir, we saw the reactor.

DYATLOV

How can you know it was the reactor, huh? You're confused so don't confuse us too. Get out, you are in shock. Both of you, go to the infirmary.

Trainees leave unwillingly. Dyatlov looks thoughtful.

DYATLOV

We must call the plant director.

INT. BRYUKHANOV'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

The phone beside the bed Bryukhanov and his wife sleep on rings. He wakes up, turns the night lamp on and answers.

BRYUKHANOV

Hello?

INT. CONTROL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

As Dyatlov talks, Akimov watches him nervously.

DYATLOV

Sir, it's Dyatlov. I'm sorry to wake you at this hour but we encountered a problem.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

BRYUKHANOV

What problem?

DYATLOV

There's been an explosion. We don't know what caused it yet.

BRYUKHANOV

An explosion? How big?

DYATLOV

Pretty big sir.

BRYUKHANOV

God damn it... And the reactor?

DYATLOV

We believe the reactor is intact, sir.

BRYUKHANOV

Oh, thank God!

DYATLOV

There might be a problem with the cooling system. We are working on it.

BRYUKHANOV

Do that! Make sure the core gets water, always!

DYATLOV

We will, sir.

BRYUKHANOV

I will send Fomin there right away and I'll be on my way too. Right after I call Moscow.

Dyatlov turns to Akimov after hanging up.

DYATLOV

We must get water to the core.

(CONTINUED)

TOPTUNOV

Maybe somewhere along the line
some gate valves are closed?

AKIMOV

Yes, yes that makes sense. We
should get to the feedwater
complex and check.

INT. NESTERENKO'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

It's dark and silent inside the house. Then there is the
sound of a key in the main door.

It opens and 52 year old VASSILI NESTERENKO comes in. He
is a handsome, energetic man.

He looks nervous though and goes to the bedroom.

When he turns the light on, his wife OLGA NESTERENKO
slowly wakes up.

Vassili pays her no attention and walks straightly to the
closet. He looks for something.

OLGA

I thought you were going to be at
the lab tonight.

NESTERENKO

I was. But something came up.

He turns with a pill bottle in his hand. He hands a pill
to Olga.

He moves out of the room and Olga jumps out of the bed to
follow him with pill in her hand.

OLGA

Why?

Vassili enters the kitchen and fills two glasses with
water.

NESTERENKO

There's just been an explosion in
Chernobyl.

OLGA

And you think it is bad?

Vassili gives her one of the glasses.

NESTERENKO

An explosion in a nuclear reactor
is always bad news, Olga. Now
drink.

(CONTINUED)

Vassili takes the other glass and leaves the kitchen. goes to another room. Olga stands there for a moment. Then takes the pill and washes it down with water.

Vassili enters a kid's room. A boy around 10, ALEXEI, is sleeping. There is a microscope beside his bed.

His father softly wakes him.

NESTERENKO
Alexei. Hey buddy. Wake up.

ALEXEI
Dad?

NESTERENKO
It's me. Here, take this.

Kid looks at the pill, still groggy.

ALEXEI
Potassium iodine?

NESTERENKO
(laughing)
Yes, you little devil.

Alexei smiles and with no other question, he takes the pill. Nesterenko takes the empty glass back.

NESTERENKO
Good boy.

ALEXEI
Wasn't this for radiation?

It's clear Nesterenko always talks with his son like he's a grown man.

NESTERENKO
Yes. It is. There might be a leak in a nuclear plant in Chernobyl and that's why I'll be away for a while.

ALEXEI
Oh... Okay.

NESTERENKO
I know you wanted me here on May Day but listen. Maybe it will be nothing and I will be right back before you know it.

ALEXEI
But if there is a leak, then it would be bad for the whole world. Right?

NESTERENKO

Yes, I'm afraid it would be.

ALEXEI

So, you would be saving the world.

NESTERENKO

Maybe.

Alexei lays back, smiling.

ALEXEI

I can live with that.

Vassili kisses his son, also smiling.

NESTERENKO

I will call you every day, okay?

ALEXEI

Okay.

Vassili leaves the room, passing Olga at the door who's been watching from there and is also smiling.

INT. COMPARTMENT 604 - NIGHT

The demolished room is filled with ankle-deep water. And the water and steam keep coming out of the pipes.

The big technician and THE DOSIMETRIST crouch to pass beneath a steam cloud coming out of a pipe.

BIG TECHNICIAN

Be careful. That is hot steam.

The dosimetrist still burns himself accidentally.

DOSIMETRIST

Ah... That WAS hot.

BIG TECHNICIAN

Look, that's Sashenok.

A technician in his 30s lies under a fallen beam, unconscious. He is severely burned and bloody foam comes out of his mouth.

The big technician tries to wake him.

BIG TECHNICIAN

Sashenok? Buddy?

(CONTINUED)

DOSIMETRIST

Did steam burn him?

BIG TECHNICIAN

What else? Come, help me.

The big technician grabs the beam and muscles bulging, raises it.

BIG TECHNICIAN

Pull him!

The dosimetrist pulls the burned technician out. The big technician releases the beam which falls down with a loud noise. He goes over the technician and slaps him gently.

BIG TECHNICIAN

Sashenok? Come on comrade, wake up.

DOSIMETRIST

We should get him to a hospital.

With a swift motion, he takes the burned man over his shoulder.

BIG TECHNICIAN

Let's go.

As they move, we see the burned man's hand resting on the big technician's back.

INT. FEEDWATER COMPLEX - NIGHT

Akimov and Toptunov enter through a skewed metal doorway.

This room is also filled with water, but deeper with water coming to their knees. The whole place is filled with pipes and valves.

Akimov leads the way to one of the valves.

AKIMOV

Damn, these are too tight. Help me.

They both grab the valve and force themselves really hard to turn it.

Finally, although very slowly, they succeed.

They are tired visibly.

AKIMOV

Come on, next.

(CONTINUED)

TOPTUNOV

Next? How many of them do we need
to open?

There are a series of valves, going all the way to the
wall on the other side of the room.

AKIMOV

All of them.

As they move on to the next valve, we keep following the
valves to see...

INT. REACTOR

...the pipes in the core are completely destroyed. Akimov
and Toptunov are killing themselves in vain.

Water coming out of the pipes falls onto the floor beneath
the destroyed reactor, creating a puddle.

EXT. UNIT 4 - NIGHT

As the commotion continues, Leonid arrives and parks his
car.

Pravik comes near him. They walk towards the building.

PRAVIK

Good to see you, Major.

LEONID

What's the situation, Lieutenant?

PRAVIK

We got the fire on the 3rd Unit's
roof under control. And there was
a very risky fire in Turbine hall
but technicians in there put it
out in time.

LEONID

And Unit 4?

PRAVIK

It was hard at first but with the
help of reinforcements from
Pripyat, it's getting better.

LEONID

What's going on there?

Reactor Foreman and Technician #2 comes out of the
building, carrying Technician #1 between them.

(CONTINUED)

REACTOR FOREMAN

An ambulance! We need an ambulance!

Leonid and Pravik run to them.

PRAVIK

(to his men)

Call for an ambulance!

LEONID

What happened to him?

REACTOR FOREMAN

He was close to the reactor when it blew up.

LEONID

Isn't the reactor intact?

REACTOR FOREMAN

We saw the reactor hall. It is destroyed.

FOMIN

(o.c.)

Reactor hall doesn't mean the reactor itself.

They turn to see Fomin walking from his car. He looks calm and smiles as always.

FOMIN

(contd.)

We talked with Dyatlov, he told us the reactor itself is intact.

REACTOR FOREMAN

Mister Fomin, we saw around the-

FOMIN

Around? AROUND? You haven't even seen the reactor hall itself, have you?

REACTOR FOREMAN

There's nothing left to see!

Completely drained of power, Foreman can't stay up any longer and sits down. Looks like he is about to pass out.

LEONID

You okay, buddy?

REACTOR FOREMAN

I'm not sure.

(CONTINUED)

LEONID

I think you need to go to the hospital, too.

FOMIN

Where is Dyatlov? I can't waste time with rumors! Did anyone see Dyatlov?

TRAINEE #1

(o.c.)

The last we saw him, he was in the control room.

Two trainees sit by the side. With darkened skin and bloodshot eyes, they look horrible.

LEONID

What happened to you guys?

TRAINEE #1

We've been throwing up for ten minutes now. And I'm burning up.

Trainee #2 throws up as he sits there. But he looks so tired, he can't even move while vomiting.

LEONID

We should get you to the hospital, too, obviously. Where's this ambulance?

TRAINEE #1

We tried the infirmary but it was closed.

PRAVIK

Major, I think we'll need more ambulances.

Leonid turns to see what Pravik's pointing at.

The big technician carries the burned technician on his shoulder. The dosimetrist walks by his side.

Leonid and Pravik help the big technician to lay the burned man on the ground by Technician #1's side.

TECHNICIAN #2

Man... He looks even worse than Kurguz!

REACTOR FOREMAN

(faintly)

At least one of the ambulances is here.

(CONTINUED)

An ambulance with flashing lights arrive to the scene. Two paramedics jump out.

LEONID

Okay, we should prioritize.
Gentlemen on the ground first,
then these young boys over there.
Ask for all the ambulances in the
hospital. There might be more
injured.

INT. FEEDWATER COMPLEX - NIGHT

Akimov and Toptunov force themselves to open the last valve. They are all sweaty and look completely spent.

As the valve turns, Toptunov loses his balance and falls in the water. He sits there, eyes out of focus.

TOPTUNOV

Is it done?

Akimov also sits back.

AKIMOV

It is.

TOPTUNOV

Good. Because my insides hurt.

AKIMOV

Mine too.

TOPTUNOV

Why is that?

Before Akimov can answer, Toptunov starts vomiting.

Akimov gets up. Toptunov finishes vomiting and looks up to Akimov, both surprised and scared.

TOPTUNOV

Sir, what's happening to us?

AKIMOV

Come, Toptunov, we did everything
right. And we did what's needed
of us.

He helps Toptunov get up.

They walk out very slowly. The parts of their legs that were in the water are in terrible shape. Skin is peeled and blood oozes out.

EXT. PRIPYAT HOTEL - NIGHT

The street in front of the hotel is quiet and empty. Then Tregub's car enters. It parks in front of the building.

Katya sits in the passenger seat.

KATYA

Thank you, Mister Tregub.

TREGUB

You're welcome.

KATYA

What do you think will happen now?

TREGUB

I don't know. I think I'll go back to see if there is anything I can help with. But beyond that... (shrugs) This was our worst nightmare and still, I don't think we were prepared.

A short silence.

TREGUB

And what do you think you are going to do?

KATYA

What do you mean? I'll stay and report what's going on here, of course.

TREGUB

For what, exactly? You were sent here to create some sort of propaganda. Do you think they will be interested to hear how much we failed instead?

Katya obviously hadn't thought about it like this.

KATYA

(dumbstruck)

I... They... I mean, they should!

TREGUB

I'm not arguing with that.

KATYA

What? Do you think we only report good things?

(CONTINUED)

TREGUB

No. I'm sure there are lots of bad things not making Moscow look bad.

KATYA

You're wrong. We are not just puppets of Moscow.

TREGUB

(sarcastic)

Okay.

KATYA

(annoyed)

Thanks for the ride, Mister Tregub. I must go and talk with my editor now.

Katya moves to get off the car.

TREGUB

Miss Adamovich, wait. I'm sorry, it's been a long day and my intention wasn't to upset you.

KATYA

What was your intention then?

TREGUB

Look, I just want you to do the best you can-

KATYA

How do you know I won't do-

TREGUB

I just want you to do the best you can, because we didn't do our best back there and now people are hurt, maybe even dead! Okay?

Katya is shocked at Tregub's sudden self-criticism.

TREGUB

(contd.)

I'm just asking you to do the best you can.

KATYA

Okay. I will do my best.

TREGUB

Thank you.

Katya gets off the car and watches Tregub leave.

EXT. UNIT 4 - NIGHT

One of the two ambulances in the scene leaves.

The other one has Trainee #2 already placed in the back. Paramedics lay Trainee #1 on a stretcher.

TRAINEE #1

(muttering)

It's open... We looked into it...

Oh God we are going to die...

(crying now)

I'm going to die. I don't want to die!

Paramedics load him into the ambulance.

As two other ambulances arrive, the one with the trainees leaves. Leonid watches it go, thoughtful.

On another part of the field, a paramedic treats the big technician. His upper body is naked. The dosimetrist sits by him.

Big Technician winces in pain. There is a burn mark on his back where the burned man's arm was, shaped like a hand.

LEONID

What happened to you?

BIG TECHNICIAN

I must have burnt it by steam.

LEONID

Weird. It looks just like a hand.

Fomin and Dyatlov, now joined by Bryukhanov walk towards them.

BRYUKHANOV

Gorbachenko! How is the radioactivity?

DOSIMETRIST

I'm off the scale sir. At 1000 microroentgens per hour, it's off the scale.

DYATLOV

You idiot! How can you not have the correct instruments?

DOSIMETRIST

I have, it's in a safe under a pile of debris! But sir, there is too much radiation, you can even feel it on the air. You can

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

DOSIMETRIST (cont'd)
almost smell it. And aren't your
throats dry too?

FOMIN
That is absurd. We can't measure
radiation by our noses.

DOSIMETRIST
Unless it's too much.

DYATLOV
It can't be too much, the reactor
is intact. And... and... we are
cooling it, look, here comes
Akimov. Ask him. Hey Akimov, did
you make it? Did you open the
valves?

Akimov and Toptunov are laid to stretchers further ahead.

AKIMOV
We certainly did. The emergency
feedwater pumps are open. It's
all safe.

BRYUKHANOV
See? Once we get this fire under
control, there will be nothing to
worry.

Over by the building, on top of the ladder Vasily's skin
looks almost completely darkened. His eyes lose focus. He
wobbles, still trying to keep spraying water.

VASILY
Hey Lieutenant!

PRAVIK
Yes, Vasily?

VASILY
I don't feel good.

PRAVIK
Okay, switch.

LEONID
Is something wrong?

PRAVIK
They all feel very tired. I feel
a strange tiredness as well.

LEONID
Yeah, that started to get to me
too.

(CONTINUED)

Vasily, moving very slowly, starts climbing back down. But he collapses. He is about to fall down.

LEONID

Oh shit!

Being the closest to that vehicle, Leonid jumps over the truck and climbs up.

Vasily slowly slides to the side, unconscious. Finally he falls...

...and Leonid grabs and holds him in the air.

Pravik comes beside him to help pull the man hanging in the air.

EXT. UNIT 4 - DAWN

Paramedics strap Vasily to a stretcher and carry to an ambulance as Leonid watch.

PRAVIK

Another three of the guys collapsed. Paramedics are treating them right now but they will be sent to the hospital too.

He starts coughing.

LEONID

Are you okay, Lieutenant?

PRAVIK

My throat is all dried up.

Then Leonid starts coughing too.

LEONID

Damn it.

PRAVIK

Whatever's in the air, Major, I think you and me are affected too.

LEONID

Yes, I feel it too. When this is all done, we all should be checked.

Pravik nods and coughs again.

But something is wrong. He can't stop this time. He keeps coughing.

Finally losing strength, he sits down.

(CONTINUED)

LEONID
Pravik! Buddy!

With so much coughing, Pravik can hardly breath. His face is all red.

LEONID
WE NEED HELP HERE!

But Leonid's coughing also gets worse.

Two paramedics run to treat Pravik who clutches his chest.

PARAMEDIC #1
I think he is having a heart
attack!

As they take care of Pravik, Leonid lies down beside him.

PARAMEDIC #2
Are you okay sir?

Leonid can't speak, just shakes his head. He also holds his chest, trying to breath as he lays there.

PARAMEDIC #1
What the hell? I think he is
having a heart attack too!

INT. PRIPYAT HOTEL LOBBY - DAY

Katya walks through the lobby to payphones in the corner. There are no other people around and she doesn't look like she had much sleep.

She dials a number and waits. A short time later, someone on the other side answers.

MAKSIM
(o.c.)
Hello?

KATYA
Maks? It's Katya.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

MAKSIM VLADIMIROVNA is a middle aged, gray haired man with glasses. He sits in his office. Through the glass walls behind him, we see people working on their desks.

MAKSIM
Good morning, Katya. You are an
early bird today.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

KATYA

I don't feel like it's a good morning, Maks. I just finished writing and telegraphed my report. Didn't you get it?

MAKSIM

Ah yes. I'm just getting it.

An assistant hands Maksim a few pages of report.

MAKSIM

(to assistant)

Thanks. (to phone again) Okay I got it so what's the problem?

KATYA

There has been an explosion.

MAKSIM

An explosion? Are you alright?

KATYA

Yeah, I am okay. I was quite shaken but not injured. Things looked serious, though.

MAKSIM

What do you mean?

KATYA

As I left, they were about to check whether the reactor was intact. But a technician I talked with acted like it would be the end of the world if there was a leak from the reactor.

MAKSIM

Was he one of those who experienced the explosion?

KATYA

Yes, why?

MAKSIM

Then he was probably just shell-shocked.

KATYA

Maybe.

KATYA

I still want to stay and see what happens next, though. Can you let me do this?

(CONTINUED)

MAKSIM

Do you think there might be more
to it?

KATYA

I just want to make sure.

MAKSIM

Okay. Do what you gotta do and
keep me updated.

KATYA

Of course. Thank you.

Katya hangs up.

INT. IGNATENKOS' FLAT - DAY

Looks like Lyudmila fell asleep on the couch in the living
room after she woke up to the explosion. Her TV is on but
there's nothing on air.

She wakes up with a start and looks around the room,
remembering why she is there.

She walks to the bedroom, opening the door slowly, and
sees the bed is still empty.

CUT TO:

Lyudmila dials the Chernobyl fire station's phone number.

It rings.

INT. CHERNOBYL POWER PLANT FIRE DEPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

We hear the phone ringing but there isn't anyone to
answer.

The whole building is empty.

INT. IGNATENKOS' FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Lyudmila hangs up the phone.

She stands there, worried.

EXT. SHCHERBINA'S HOUSE - DAY

A good looking house with a beautiful garden. Not big and
over the top, the country is ruled by Communism after all.
But still, it clearly belongs to someone powerful.

SUPERIMPOSE: MOSCOW

SHCHERBINA

(o.c.)

It's a very simple question,
Bryukhanov!

INT. SHCHERBINA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Shcherbina stands in the middle of the room, holding his desk phone. He still has his morning clothes on.

SHCHERBINA

(contd.)

Is it intact or is it not?

INT. BRYUKHANOV'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Bryukhanov talks on his desk. Fomin and Dyatlov are also in the room.

Fomin doesn't look like the person he was outside. He looks like he cried recently and about to lose it again.

BRYUKHANOV

We believe it's intact, sir.

INT. SHCHERBINA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SHCHERBINA

Believe? What do you mean by believe? What are you doing, praying to it or something?

INT. BRYUKHANOV'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

BRYUKHANOV

My men reported that to me, sir.

INT. REACTOR HALL - CONTINUOUS

There is movement on the debris blocking the entrance.

BRYUKHANOV

(o.c.)

We also sent one of our top physicists and waiting for his report as well.

Debris falls in and the physicist, who Bryukhanov is talking about, enters into the hall.

(CONTINUED)

He stands right in front of the reactor as reactor fuel flows to the ground. It looks just like molten lava.

The physicist looks in terror.

BRYUKHANOV

(o.c.)

But we are certain that he will also report the reactor is intact.

INT. SHCHERBINA'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

SHCHERBINA

Then why are those people in the hospital are diagnosed with acute radiation sickness?

INT. BRYUKHANOV'S OFFICE - MORNING

BRYUKHANOV

I don't know sir. But I'll look into it. Right away.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

SHCHERBINA

Do that. I will be flying to Kiev in an hour. Don't let there be a leak when we get there.

BRYUKHANOV

Of course, sir.

SHCHERBINA

And Bryukhanov?

BRYUKHANOV

Yes?

SHCHERBINA

Whatever you do, do not cause a panic! You understand me?

BRYUKHANOV

Yes, sir.

Bryukhanov hangs up. As soon as he does, Fomin starts crying.

BRYUKHANOV

Oh for fuck's sake! Pull yourself together, man!

(CONTINUED)

FOMIN

We are fucked, sir. Fucked. Sashenok died already. Kurguz and the trainees are in critical condition. They say Perevozchenko also won't make it. And most of the firemen are in even worse condition. Damn it, we couldn't even find Khodemchuk's body. They will blame us for everything.

BRYUKHANOV

Look. Deputy chairman is on his way. Let's wait for him to arrive first, then we can talk. They will understand that we weren't the ones doing the test.

Dyatlov looks at the plant manager, confused. Bryukhanov averts his eyes.

EXT. UNIT 4 - DAY

The building looks like a mess in daylight but with firemen gone, everything seems calmer now. Police officers stand behind a police cordon placed at the checkpoint.

One of the police officers straighten up when Katya gets off a taxicab and walks towards him.

CORDON POLICE

Excuse me, miss. This area is prohibited.

KATYA

Where did everyone go?

CORDON POLICE

I'm sorry, I can't give any statements.

KATYA

No no, I was already here yesterday. I'm just asking-

CORDON POLICE

Miss. Please, we have orders to not talk with anyone. Just move away.

Katya stands there, defeated until she sees Tregub coming out of management offices. He walks towards the destroyed building, looking pale.

(CONTINUED)

KATYA
Mister Tregub!

Tregub hears her and approaches police cordon.

TREGUB
Miss Adamovich.

Tregub looks at the police officers standing close and then leads her away to a more isolated point.

TREGUB
Listen, you really shouldn't be here. Actually, I'm not sure if you should be even in Pripyat.

KATYA
What are you talking about? Last night-

TREGUB
I know and once again, I'm really sorry about last night. But there are rumors about the reactor being destroyed. I 'll be taking my family out of town as soon as I go home. You should do the same.

KATYA
That is absurd! Isn't it? I mean, wouldn't that be a serious issue? They would tell you if the rumors were true.

TREGUB
True, it's not official and I didn't see it with my own eyes. But people who did are in hospital. Actually, everyone who was here last night is in hospital right now.

KATYA
Actually, you don't look so good either.

TREGUB
Yeah, I think I will go see the doctor as well. As soon as I took my family to safety.

KATYA
You do that. And tell me if you hear an official statement. I'll be in town and see how things go.

INT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - DAY

Larisa wakes up to the door bell.

CUT TO:

She opens the door to see Lyudmila waiting.

LARISA

Lyudmila?

LYUDMILA

Good morning, Mrs. Telyatnikov.
I'm sorry to bother you this
early. Is Mr. Telyatnikov here?

LARISA

No, he didn't come home yet.
Actually, I thought you were him.
Is everything alright?

LYUDMILA

It's just... I heard an explosion
last night, then saw fire at the
power plant. And Vasily also
didn't come home. There's nobody
answering the phone at the
station, either.

LARISA

Oh and you are worried, of
course. You poor thing. Come in,
please. Let's call once again.
Maybe they were just busy. I saw
the fire too, it looked big. But
I'm sure there's nothing to worry
about.

LYUDMILA

Thank you so much.

LARISA

Please, don't mention it.

In the living room, Larisa calls the station.

They wait in silence as the phone rings. Larisa tries not
to show it but she is scared.

She hangs up, trying to look as usual.

LYUDMILA

Still nothing?

LARISA

No. Did you have breakfast,
Lyudmila?

(CONTINUED)

Lyudmila shakes her head.

LARISA

Come now. Worrying for nothing
and staying hungry? Not good for
your baby.

Larisa takes Lyudmila to the kitchen. There she prepares
breakfast and tea as they talk.

LYUDMILA

I'm just... I love Vasily so
much, Mrs. Telyatnikov. Every
time he goes to that station, I'm
afraid he won't come back.

LARISA

Ah, how well I understand you
dear. Believe me, it's been 13
years since we got married with
Leonid and I had that fear for
all those years. Every single
day. Including his vacations too
because the man just can't stay
away from that station! But you
just get used to it.

LYUDMILA

Aren't you scared anymore?

LARISA

Of course I'm scared. I'm always
scared. You're young, I'm sure
people are telling you how love
doesn't survive the passing time.
And I am not saying that's a lie.
But ours survived. We still love
each other just like you and
Vasily. So I'm not ashamed to be
afraid. But I don't let fear
control me anymore.

LYUDMILA

I hope I can do that too someday.

LARISA

You will, dear. You will. Oh,
look who woke up.

Misha stands at the doorway. He rubs his eyes.

MISHA

Mom, can we play with the dog
outside?

LARISA

You just woke up. Breakfast first.

(to Lyudmila)

We still didn't name the dog.

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - DAY

Misha and Oleg comes out to the street. Their dog runs beside them.

Oleg throws a ball for the puppy to fetch but he just looks at them blankly. Both boys laugh.

EXT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - DAY

Larisa and Lyudmila comes out to the balcony with tea cups in their hands.

They look at the power plant in the distance. There is a thick, black smoke coming out of it.

LYUDMILA

Ah, look! Fire is extinguished.

ANTONOV

(o.c.)

What fire?

Their neighbour Antonov is out in his balcony already, sunbathing as yesterday.

LARISA

Good morning, Mister Antonov.

ANTONOV

It's a usual morning, if you ask me. And I've been here for an hour, I saw no fire.

LYUDMILA

Then what's keeping them from calling us?

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - DAY

Kids run towards the park on the other side of the road. Oleg stops as they come close to the road.

OLEG

Misha! Don't run to the road!

Misha just laughs as he keeps running while looking back to his older brother. Until he hits...

(CONTINUED)

...A MAN WITH MOUTH COVER.

He has a lab coat on and holds a geiger counter.

MAN WITH MOUTH COVER
Are you okay, kid?

Misha stands in awed silence. Oleg runs beside him, also impressed.

OLEG
Sorry sir, I was trying to make
him stop. Come on, Misha.

As the kids run away towards the park, Katya stands a few steps away with a camera in her hands. She watches the man with mouth cover.

She aims the camera at him. The shutter clicks.

EXT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Lyudmila spots the man on the street below.

LYUDMILA
What is that man doing?

LARISA
I don't know. Why is he covering
his mouth?

Antonov also gets up from where he sits and looks down.

ANTONOV
There is another one, over there.

LYUDMILA
Looks like they are testing
something.

LARISA
I wonder what.

Antonov sits back, not concerned at all.

ANTONOV
If it was something important,
they would tell us.

EXT. FORSMARK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT - DAY

It's a beautiful day with clear sky. We see another nuclear power plant with two big buildings built beside a lake.

SUPERIMPOSE: FORSMARK NUCLEAR POWER PLANT - SWEDEN

A chemist, 30 years old CLIFF ROBINSON, walks towards one of the buildings.

INT. FORSMARK ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Cliff walks in. There's a SECURITY GUARD inside. They talk in Swedish.

CLIFF
Good morning.

SECURITY GUARD
Morning Cliff.

He passes through the radiation detector, knowing he has no radiation.

But the machine beeps.

Cliff checks his clothes, trying to see if he is forgetting something. Then he passes through the detector again.

Machine beeps again.

SECURITY GUARD
Did you come into contact with any nuclear material today?

CLIFF
No, I'm just coming in. I can't have radiation on me.

He passes again, but no alarms this time.

CLIFF
See? It was a mistake.

INT. FORSMARK LAB - CONTINUOUS

Cliff goes into the lab which is empty except a few people.

He turns on some of the machines.

As he waits for some of them to heat up, he walks to the kitchen, passing the corridor he came through.

INT. FORSMARK KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Cliff gets himself a cup of coffee.

He walks out.

INT. FORSMARK ENTRANCE - CONTINUOUS

Cliff stops in his tracks, confused.

Behind the radiation detector, there is a line of people now, waiting to go in.

The guy at the head of the line passes through the detector. Alarm goes off.

FORSMARK WORKER

But I just came from home!

CLIFF

Excuse me. Hey, sorry, you are Markus right? From turbine hall? I'm Cliff. Can I borrow your shoe for a moment?

FORSMARK WORKER

My shoe?

CLIFF

Yes, I'm working right here on the engineering. I just need to check something.

FORSMARK WORKER

Okay, sure.

Worker takes off his shoe and hands it to Cliff.

CLIFF

Thank you. I'll be right back.

INT. FORSMARK LAB - CONTINUOUS

Cliff runs to one of the machines. He puts the shoe on it and turns it on.

A scanner scans the shoe inside the machine. Then a spectrum appears on a flickering screen. As the screen keeps refreshing, the graphic rises up.

CLIFF

Oh no...

He hastily grabs the phone and dials a number.

(CONTINUED)

CLIFF

Sir, it's Cliff Robinson from engineering. We've got a problem. I think a nuclear bomb went off somewhere close.

EXT. UNIT 4 - DAY

Three men; Bryukhanov, Fomin and Dyatlov wait outside.

They watch as a car drives closer, leaving a trail of dust behind on the sunny day. Car passes the checkpoint without any inspection and stops in front of the waiting men.

Front door opens and a man gets out, opening back door for Shcherbina to get out.

BRYUKHANOV

Deputy Chairman Shcherbina.
Welcome to Chernobyl Power Plant.
I hope it was a pleasant trip.

SHCHERBINA

Shut your trap, Bryukhanov!

Bryukhanov's smile freezes. That's not what they expect.

Behind Shcherbina, again with a trail dust far away, we can see another car closing in.

SHCHERBINA

(contd.)

Do you know how my trip was? We landed on the airport and as we were getting in our car, they told me I got a call waiting inside. Guess who was calling?

BRYUKHANOV

W-who?

SHCHERBINA

President Gorbachev!

Bryukhanov can't talk now. Fomin and Dyatlov are also in shock.

SHCHERBINA

(contd.)

And guess who he talked with? I don't know either. But it was someone from goddamn Sweden! Now you're wondering, what is that got to do with anything related to us? That's what I was wondering too. What could be that

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SHCHERBINA (cont'd)
 urgent? Then he, President
 Gorbachev, told me "Shcherbina,
 Swedish got a serious radiation
 cloud. They checked with
 sattelites and saw Chernobyl."
 And I say, "But Mister President,
 I'm told the reactor was intact."
 And you know why I told him that?
 Because I was told by YOU! So,
 Bryukhanov, tell me. Is the
 reactor intact or is it not?

NESTERENKO
 (o.c.)
 It's not.

All heads turn to see Nesterenko shutting the door of his
 car and walking towards them. He wears a suit and looks
 extremely self-confident.

SHCHERBINA
 Who the fuck are you?

NESTERENKO
 Deputy Chairman Shcherbina, my
 name is Vassili Nesterenko. I'm
 the director of Institute of
 Nuclear Energy and I'm sent here
 to assist you.

SHCHERBINA
 How can you be so sure the
 reactor isn't intact?

NESTERENKO
 Do you see all these black debris
 scattered around?

They look around at all the black pieces of cement that's
 been burning last night.

SHCHERBINA
 Yeah?

NESTERENKO
 That is graphite. And it was the
 inner surface of the reactor
 until last night.

Dyatlov, who stands beside a big piece slowly moves away.

NESTERENKO
 Yes, bravo, I see that man still
 has some survival instinct left.
 So gentlemen, please, let's leave
 this area. I think we got more

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NESTERENKO (cont'd)
than a year's worth of radiation
during this 1 minute.

Without waiting for an answer, Vassili Nesterenko walks towards Reactor 1. The rest of the men look at each other in silence for a while and then runs after him.

INT. MEETING ROOM - DAY

Nesterenko leads the men to the room.

NESTERENKO
First, we need some lead plates
to cover these windows.

Other men stare blankly at him.

NESTERENKO
Or, we can just stand around and
keep getting lethal radiation. So
we can die faster.

Bryukhanov nods to Dyatlov who nods back and runs out of the room.

SHCHERBINA
Mister Nesterenko, don't you
think you are over-dramatizing?

NESTERENKO
With all due respect, Deputy
Chairman, I don't think anyone in
this room, including that fella
who just ran out, knows anything
about radiation. You are just
politicians.

SHCHERBINA
(chuckling)
You need to control your tongue,
sir.

NESTERENKO
Oh no, I'm not using politician
as an insult. It's just a fact
for you. But for these men...
(turning to Bryukhanov)
I think it's different for them.
They should have been scientists
first.

BRYUKHANOV
Mister Nesterenko, I don't know
where do you find the nerve to
talk to us like that but-

(CONTINUED)

NESTERENKO

Where? Let's see. How about four people already dead in the hospital? Two of them were trainees sent to check the reactor by your men. And you sent another person to the reactor after those poor boys. He is also about to die a very painful death. Yet you didn't even listen what they told you. How about a whole platoon of firemen lying in their deathbeds? Most of them won't even see next week. They didn't even know what they were dealing with because you don't know what you are dealing with! And sir, how about fifty thousand people in Pripyat? Why are they still there? I passed through that town on my way here. Kids are playing outside as if nothing happened. You are killing them right this moment!

SHCHERBINA

We have men taking readings there.

NESTERENKO

And?

SHCHERBINA

Okay, we'll tell people not to go out.

NESTERENKO

That's not enough, Pripyat needs to be evacuated!

SHCHERBINA

Evacuation? Do you know how much panic that would cause? And how it would make this country look like? I can't order something like that without proof!

NESTERENKO

What more do you need? People died saying the reactor is destroyed!

SHCHERBINA

We can't know that for sure.

(CONTINUED)

NESTERENKO

Then go and look for yourself!

A sudden, awkward silence falls in the room.

After a while, Shcherbina talks, but calmer and more slowly this time.

SHCHERBINA

I'm sorry, Mister Nesterenko.
We'll only evacuate Pripyat when
there is actual proof.

(turning to others)

But meanwhile, we must take some
steps to minimize panic.

INT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - DAY

Larisa is on the phone, we hear the ringing sound on the
phone line.

Then, it's cut off. There is only silence.

Larisa is confused. She hangs up and tries again. Still no
sound.

LYUDMILA

Still no answer?

LARISA

(still trying)

The line is dead.

LYUDMILA

Seriously?

LARISA

It just went dead.

(decisive)

I think we should go there.

LYUDMILA

(nodding)

Yes. Yes, we must do that.

Both women head for the outside door. Larisa opens it to
see a POLICEMAN putting a flyer to the door handle. She
halts.

LARISA

Oh... Hello?

POLICEMAN

Ah... Hello madam. I was just
leaving this.

Larisa takes the flyer.

(CONTINUED)

LARISA

What is this?

As she reads, an announcement comes from outside. It's a voice coming through a speaker, reading the same text over and over again.

ANNOUNCEMENT

(o.c.)

Citizens of Pripjat! There is a possibility of contamination in this area. Officials are studying the situation. During this time, by the order of the government, you are required to go home and stay inside until further notice. Do not leave. It is for your own safety. Please comply and more details will be given soon.

Larisa stops reading and goes out to her balcony, leaving the policeman at the door.

There she sees...

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

A police car moves very slowly.

A policeman sitting beside the driver talks through a bullhorn, reading the text written on a paper in his hand.

People on the street stand around, confused. Here and there, some people grab their kids and head home.

Katya is still on the street, taking photos.

Larisa sees her kids in the park across the street. They stop playing with the dog and watch the passing car.

EXT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Antonov is also on his balcony, looking down. He is still without a shirt and his skin is much darker than before. It's definitely not natural.

LARISA

(calling down)

Misha! Oleg! Come inside!

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Misha waves at his mother and taking the dog in his arms, runs to the building with Oleg.

EXT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Larisa and Antonov keep looking down.

ANTONOV

I was about to go inside anyway.
The sun was great today.

Larisa looks at her neighbour then and realizes his skin for the first time.

LARISA

Oh my god, Mister Antonov. You
have burned!

ANTONOV

Yes, I'm telling you, the sun was
different tod-

In mid sentence, the old man throws up. He bends double in pain, clutches his stomach.

LARISA

Mister Antonov!

ANTONOV

Shit! It hurts!

Old man falls to the ground.

LARISA

Officer! Help!

Policeman comes out to the balcony with Lyudmila beside him.

POLICEMAN

What happened to him?

LARISA

I don't know, he just got sick.
(calling out)
Mister Antonov! Can you hear me?

No answer.

She climbs to the railing of the balcony.

POLICEMAN

Hey, stop, what are you doing?

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

People on the street notice something is afoot up there in the balconies.

Katya zooms with her camera lens and takes a photo of Larisa on the balcony railing.

EXT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Larisa turns to Policeman.

LARISA
Go call an ambulance!

Before anyone can say anything else she makes a daring jump...

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Katya hits the shutter button like crazy, taking photos continuously.

EXT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Larisa lands on to the next balcony, right beside Antonov.

POLICEMAN
Holy shit.
(takes his radio out)
Central, we need an ambulance at
the Main Street.

Larisa shakes Antonov.

LARISA
Mister Antonov! Can you hear me?

Antonov opens his eyes but they are teary and out of focus.

ANTONOV
It hurts so much.

LARISA
Hold on, they are coming. Just
hold on.

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - DAY

Two paramedics leave the building with Antonov laying on a stretcher. They take him to the ambulance.

People watch from windows but only Larisa and Lyudmila are outside their home, watching in front of their building.

Katya also stands close by, watching people.

Policeman comes near them after talking with paramedics. Ambulance leaves in the background.

POLICEMAN

Ladies, you need to go inside now.

LYUDMILA

What happened to him?

POLICEMAN

They are taking him to the medical center.

LYUDMILA

Yes, but what happened to him?

POLICEMAN

It's probably that contamination they are warning about. That is why you should go inside. Please.

LARISA

Look, officer, our husbands work at Chernobyl Fire Department. And we can't contact them since this morning.

POLICEMAN

I understand but I'm sure they are okay.

LYUDMILA

(getting hysterical)

How can you know that? Whatever made Mister Antonov sick might have affected our husbands too. I need someone to tell me where my husband is! I need to find him!

Larisa hugs Lyudmila, trying to calm her. But poor woman starts crying.

Katya takes some photos, also trying not to get any attention to herself.

(CONTINUED)

LYUDMILA

(contd.)

Where is my husband? Where is my Vasily?

LARISA

Ssshh. Ssshh. It's okay honey, calm down. You'll make the little one scared.

POLICEMAN

Look, I'm sorry, I really am. I wish I knew where your husbands are. But just go inside and I'll come back again if I learn anything about them. Okay?

Women nod sadly and go back into the building just as a helicopter passes over it.

INT. SURVEY HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

It's a military helicopter with four people inside. Two pilots sit in the cockpit while another soldier sits in the back beside a civilian PHOTOGRAPHER, a young man in his mid-20s.

They fly towards the power plant.

SURVEY PILOT

Almost there, get ready.

Photographer looks out the side window.

PHOTOGRAPHER

I'm ready.

EXT. SURVEY HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Reactor 4 still gives out a thick, gray smoke.

Helicopter flies closer to it and circles the destroyed building. The sun sets behind.

INT. SURVEY HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Photographer tries to see below through the window but it's hard with the door closed.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Is that fire? I thought they had put out the fire?

POV. PHOTOGRAPHER - CONTINUOUS

Window frame crops the full picture but the whole roof of the building is destroyed, that's clear. Inside of the building is also demolished.

And in the center of it all, there is something fiery.

INT. SURVEY HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Photographer raises his camera to take some photos but not being able to frame anything, lowers it again.

PHOTOGRAPHER
I can't shoot anything useful
like this. I need to open this
door.

SURVEY PILOT
Are you wearing your seat belt?

Photographer checks his belt.

PHOTOGRAPHER
Yes.

SURVEY PILOT
Okay then.

Photographer opens the door. Smoke from the reactor fills inside the vehicle as he leans out.

EXT. SURVEY HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

The whole world goes silent.

Photographer opens and closes his mouth. He yells. No change. Not even the rotor spinning above him makes any sound. It's like he just went deaf.

Meanwhile, he can see the full picture below. That fiery thing is more visible now and it is actually molten reactor fuel which looks exactly like hot lava. It's flowing down slowly to lower levels.

Photographer looks through his camera again and takes a couple of photos. Then he leans back, and closes the door.

INT. SURVEY HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

And the sound is back inside the helicopter.

Photographer looks confused but soldiers don't look bothered at all.

(CONTINUED)

SURVEY PILOT

Thank God you closed that door.
It smelt awful. So, are we done?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Yeah... Yeah we are done.

INT. MEETING ROOM - NIGHT

The black and white photos of the reactor fall onto the table. Lava-like reactor fuel is clearly visible in them.

Photographer takes a step back.

PHOTOGRAPHER

I processed them as soon as I
can, sir.

There are huge lead plates set over the windows now.
Nesterenko, Bryukhanov and Shcherbina sit at the table.

Every one of them, except Nesterenko, takes a photograph
and looks at it glumly.

NESTERENKO

Thank you for taking these.

Photographer nods and heads for the door. Then he stops.

PHOTOGRAPHER

Sir, there is something else. A
weird thing happened as I took
these photos.

They all look at him curiously.

PHOTOGRAPHER

(contd.)

See... When I opened the door of
our helicopter...

NESTERENKO

You opened the door?

PHOTOGRAPHER

Yes sir.

NESTERENKO

And didn't anyone tell you that
was a very very bad idea?

PHOTOGRAPHER

No sir. But that's what I was
saying. When I opened the door, I
went deaf. I couldn't even hear
the rotor right above me. Then,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

PHOTOGRAPHER (cont'd)
when I shut the door, everything
went back to normal again.

NESTERENKO
Son, you are exposed to very high
levels of radiation. And the
human body reacts to high levels
of radiation in mysterious ways.
What you experienced is one of
them. Our brain shuts one of the
senses, completely. Some can't
hear, some can't see, smell,
taste or feel. Don't ask me why.

PHOTOGRAPHER
But... it's okay now, right?

NESTERENKO
It's far from okay. Everyone in
that helicopter should be
transferred to Moscow right away.

BRYUKHANOV
Okay I'm on it. Come on.

Bryukhanov takes the frightened Photographer out of the
room. Nesterenko looks at Shcherbina who still looks glum.

NESTERENKO
So?

Shcherbina puts down the photos with fear and defeat in
his face.

SHCHERBINA
Okay, what should we do?

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF PRIPYAT - NIGHT

The empty road leads to Pripyat which can be seen in the
distance. It is dark and silent... except there is the
sound of an engine.

And it comes closer.

A bus enters the frame, driving for the town ahead.

Before long, another one follows after the first one.

And then another... and another... and another...

Buses never stop coming. There are 1100 buses in total,
with 360 trucks in between, headed for Pripyat. It's an
impressive sight.

EXT. UNIT 1 - NIGHT

Nesterenko leaves the building and walks towards his car.

KATYA

(o.c.)

Goddammit! They know who I am!

Nesterenko sees Katya arguing with policemen on the entrance. He changes his course towards them.

KATYA

I'm telling you, I was here when the building exploded!

NESTERENKO

Excuse me. Who are you?

KATYA

I'm Katya Adamovitch. I work at Izvestia.

NESTERENKO

Ah, a journalist! How nice. And what seems to be the problem, miss Adamovich?

KATYA

I just want to ask mister Bryukhanov some questions.

NESTERENKO

Mister Bryukhanov is no longer in charge. Maybe I can help you.

KATYA

And you are?

NESTERENKO

Vassili Nesterenko, Institute of Nuclear Energy.

They shake hands. Nesterenko motions police officers to let the journalist in. Then they both walk away.

KATYA

Why are you here, Mister Nesterenko?

NESTERENKO

I know one or two things about radiation. Did I hear correct? Were you really here when the reactor exploded?

(CONTINUED)

KATYA

The reactor is really destroyed?

NESTERENKO

(sarcastically)

Ah... A slip of the tongue and you caught it right away!

KATYA

(confused)

What are you doing?

NESTERENKO

Nothing. Just answering your questions.

KATYA

But what you said... There has been no official statements.

NESTERENKO

Exactly.

KATYA

But... but... It's the government!

NESTERENKO

That's not much of an argument, Miss Adamovich.

Katya is out of words.

NESTERENKO

I don't work for the government, I work for the people. That's why I don't like things being hidden from public.

KATYA

Why should I believe things are being hidden from public?

NESTERENKO

Because, right now, I'm one of the people hiding those.

KATYA

What do you want me to do, exactly?

NESTERENKO

I want people to know what's going on, that's all. I can answer anything you ask. But in turn, you should promise me to use those answers.

(CONTINUED)

Katya looks at the man for a while, thinking.

KATYA
Okay. I promise.

NESTERENKO
Good. Now, shoot.

INT. TELYATNIKOVS' FLAT - DAY

Larisa wakes up with a start in her bed to the sound of hard knocking on the door.

She sits up and looks at Lyudmila. She also wakes up in the bed beside her.

LYUDMILA
(a bit groggy)
What's... Is that...?

LARISA
There is someone at the door.

She jumps down from the bed, wearing a robe over her nightgown. She runs for the door in hope of good news. The unknown person keeps knocking.

LARISA
Coming, coming!

She opens the door, almost smiling, to see a SOLDIER. There are other soldiers behind him, going up and down to other floors. Her smile fades.

EVACUATING SOLDIER
Good morning madam, we are doing a door-to-door. Are you alone in the house?

LARISA
No, no I'm not.

Lyudmila appears on the bedroom doorway.

LYUDMILA
What's going on?

EVACUATING SOLDIER
There is an emergency evacuation in process. It's-

LARISA
Evacuation?

EVACUATING SOLDIER

Yes, there has been an accident at the Chernobyl Power Plant. There is a possibility of leaking radiation. But we are told that there's nothing to worry about. This evacuation is just a precaution and it's only for three days. Buses are waiting outside. You are required to pack lightly and be down there in thirty minutes.

LYUDMILA

Thirty minutes? We can't leave, we need to find our husbands.

EVACUATING SOLDIER

Your husbands?

LARISA

Our husbands work at the plant but they didn't come home since yesterday.

EVACUATING SOLDIER

I'm sorry but everyone will be taken outside the evacuation zone. That's our orders. I'm sure you can find your husbands there.

LYUDMILA

But I don't even live here. I need to go home and get some things. I don't even have any money on me.

EVACUATING SOLDIER

You can't.

LYUDMILA

What do you mean I can't?

EVACUATING SOLDIER

No one's allowed outside their buildings. You'll only have time to get inside the bus.

As they talk, the little dog appears and sniffs the soldier.

EVACUATING SOLDIER

Also, no pets are allowed. You'll need to leave this one here.

(CONTINUED)

LARISA
(explodes)
WHAT THE FUCK IS GOING ON HERE?

Even though he looks honestly sorry, soldier still doesn't answer. He just turns to climb upstairs.

Larisa slams the door shut.

LARISA
FUCK!

Kids come into the hallway, they look scared.

MISHA
Mom?

LARISA
It's okay sweetie. Go get dressed, both of you. We're going for a trip.

OLEG
Why didn't dad still come home?

Larisa and Lyudmila glance at each other. Then Larisa takes the boys into their room.

LARISA
He went ahead sweetie. We'll meet him there.

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - DAY

The whole street is filled with parked buses. Every building has a bus waiting in front.

The town is completely silent. Soldiers wait between buildings and buses. They all have mouth masks on.

Tens of people wait inside every building, right behind the glass doors. Hasty preparation took its toll on them. Some people are in their nightgowns or pyjamas. Everyone looks really scared, some openly cry.

Larisa and Lyudmila also wait inside their building. Larisa holds her boys in front of her.

A SERGEANT walks slowly in the middle of the road with a bullhorn.

SERGEANT
Citizens! When the doors are opened, go directly to the bus waiting in front of your building. Do not, I repeat, do
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

SERGEANT (cont'd)
not scatter around. This is for
your own safety.

Silence as he waits for this to settle in. Similar
announcements can be heard from other streets.

SERGEANT
Soldiers! Open the doors!

Waiting soldiers open the doors to the buildings, getting
out of the way in progress.

Thousands of people spill out to the street. It's ordered
chaos in one second.

People try to get inside their buses as quickly as
possible. They are all tense because of the unknown.

Larisa and Lyudmila struggle to keep the boys with them.
Larisa also carries a small baggage with her.

Finally they manage to get inside the bus.

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Bus is packed already. It's a struggle to move in the
narrow corridor.

Larisa and Lyudmila find two empty seats and sit there as
the boys sit in front of them.

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Among all the confusion and chaos, there is Katya.

Looking for Larisa and Lyudmila, she runs to the now empty
building first and realizes there is no one left there.
She turns and looks at the bus.

She sees them sitting inside and yells, trying to attract
their attention.

KATYA
Hey! Lady! Look here!

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Two women attend to boys.

With all the racket going on inside the bus, it's
impossible for them to hear the journalist who yells and
waves her arms in the background.

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

Katya gives up and goes to the front door of the bus in haste.

People still waiting to get in block the door. She pushes them gently but firmly.

KATYA

Excuse me... I'm sorry...

INT. BUS - CONTINUOUS

Katya scarcely enters the vehicle. She can't come closer to women with all the passengers in between so she yells from the door. People keep getting in, pushing her.

KATYA

Lady! Hey!

Lyudmila sees her first. She looks at her in confusion, looks around to see if she is really calling out to them.

KATYA

(contd.)

I found about your husbands!

LYUDMILA

What?

LARISA

Where?

KATYA

They are transferred to Moscow Hospital Number Six!

LYUDMILA

Oh God! Are they okay?

KATYA

I wish I knew. But you can find them there!

LARISA

Thank you so much!

LYUDMILA

Wait! Who are you?

KATYA

(shrugs it off)

Just a reporter but I had my contacts! Good luck!

Katya gets off the bus.

(CONTINUED)

Larisa and Lyudmila hug each other happily. Then Lyudmila's expression changes to fear. She jumps to her feet.

LYUDMILA

I need to get to my apartment. I don't have my internal passport with me. I don't even have my ID. We can't get to Moscow without those!

LARISA

Lyudmila, you can't. They won't let you.

LYUDMILA

I need to do this, Mrs. Telyatnikov. I'll find you again!

Moving through the crowded corridor, Lyudmila finally manages to get off the bus.

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - CONTINUOUS

As soon as Lyudmila gets out, a soldier sees her.

SOLDIER ON STREET #1

Miss, please get back into the vehicle.

LYUDMILA

I need to get my internal passport.

SOLDIER ON STREET #1

You won't be needing that, Miss. Please get back into... HEY! STOP!

Lyudmila bolts out, running through the street. Soldier she was talking to keeps yelling after her.

SOLDIER ON STREET #1

Someone stop that woman!

Another soldier appears out of nowhere and grabs her from behind, trying to hold her.

SOLDIER ON STREET #2

Where do you think you are going? Calm down!

Lyudmila jerks her body back and headbutts the soldier. Poor guy cries in pain and releases her, his hands instinctively raising to his nose.

Lyudmila keeps running away.

EXT. IGNATENKOS' BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Lyudmila runs through another group of soldiers before they can even realize what she is doing.

She goes inside the building.

INT. IGNATENKO'S BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

Lyudmila runs up the stairs.

She sees a soldier coming down as she climbs up. She pushes him aside just as he raises his head and sees her.

After a moment of confusion, he runs after her.

SOLDIER ON STAIRS

What the... Hey! Come back here!

INT. IGNATENKO'S FLAT - CONTINUOUS

Looks like the soldiers broke the door to check inside. It stays open.

Lyudmila runs in and heads directly for the bedroom. She is followed by the soldier she pushed on stairs.

Her wallet sits on a nightstand. She takes it just as the soldier grabs her arm and pulls her out of the room.

SOLDIER ON STAIRS

What are you, huh, crazy? Come on, out!

She holds her wallet tight as she is being walked out and doesn't fight anymore.

EXT. IGNATENKOS' BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Lyudmila is led to a bus waiting in front of her building.

INT. LYUDMILA'S BUS - CONTINUOUS

Soldier walks her to an empty seat.

SOLDIER ON STAIRS

Will you sit quietly now?

Lyudmila nods.

SOLDIER ON STAIRS

Are you sure?

(CONTINUED)

LYUDMILA

Look, my husband is one of the firemen in the plant. I had to get my things to go and find him in Moscow.

The soldier looks satisfied and leaves.

EXT. PRIPYAT MAIN STREET - DAY

Buses start leaving one by one.

INT. LYUDMILA'S BUS - CONTINUOUS

Lyudmila looks out the window.

NIKOLAI

(o.c.)

Miss! Hey, Miss!

Lyudmila turns to see Nikolai and Ilia sitting a few rows behind. She doesn't know them.

NIKOLAI

Did you say your husband is a fireman?

EXT. FARM HOUSE - DAY

It's a small, private house built outside the town. Beside it, there is a fenced area with cows and sheep inside.

Old fisherman and FISHERMAN'S WIFE, stands in front of their house, facing two soldiers who are by their jeep.

SOLDIER #1

Grandma, you don't understand!
It's dangerous!

FISHERMAN'S WIFE

There is nothing dangerous here!
The sun is shining, the grass is green. Look around!

SOLDIER #1

You can't see the radiation, grandma. That is why it's dangerous.

FISHERMAN

Nina, listen to them. We are old, we don't understand this world anymore. But boys, at least let us feed the grass to our animals before we leave.

(CONTINUED)

SOLDIER #1

Sorry sir, but there is no time.

FISHERMAN

Come on, come on. It will only take a moment.

Without waiting for an answer, fisherman heads for the fenced area.

SOLDIER #2

I think we should tell them.

Soldier #1 considers the situation for a short moment and then calls to the fisherman.

SOLDIER #1

Sir, all animals will be killed.

FISHERMAN

What?

FISHERMAN'S WIFE

You'll kill our livestock?

SOLDIER #2

We are ordered to, grandma. They say animals' furs collect radiation. Too much of it. And they can leave this area, poisoning other places. The government doesn't want to take any risks, it's too dangerous.

FISHERMAN'S WIFE

But... but look at them, they are so healthy. They are not poisoned. How can they be dangerous? Alexey, say something to them!

Fisherman and his wife don't know what to do anymore. Soldiers lead them to their jeep.

SOLDIER #1

Come on, grandma. Grandpa. Don't worry. The government will pay for them when you come back.

The jeep drives off with the confused old couple.

A sheep stands in the grass, watching them go.

INT. TELYATNIKOV'S FLAT - DAY

The flat is empty now, except for the lonely puppy left behind.

He sits in front of the window and watches as the last of the buses leave below. It actually looks sad.

The outside door opens. Puppy hears that and runs to meet whoever comes in.

It turns out to be a soldier in a full gas mask. Only his eyes are visible behind the glass. He carries a rifle.

SOLDIER WITH GAS MASK

Oh crap, a puppy!

He crouches down to pet the animal. The puppy likes the attention, wiggling his tail non-stop.

SOLDIER WITH GAS MASK

You are a cute one. Yes you are.
Shit, why did you have to be so
cute?

He stands back up and aims his rifle at the oblivious dog.

Then turns his head and pulls the trigger.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF PRIPYAT - DAY

A military jeep goes in the direction of Chernobyl. GENERAL ANTOSHKIN sits on the back seat. He is a charismatic, 44 years old. He looks fit and strong.

Buses full of citizens pass them, going the opposite direction.

EXT. UNIT 1 - DAY

Power plant is much busier now. There are a lot of soldiers running around.

Jeep stops and General Antoshkin gets off. He walks to waiting Shcherbina and Nesterenko. He gives a salute.

ANTOSHKIN

Air Force Major General Nikolai
Timofeyevich Antoshkin, at your
service.

Only Nesterenko shakes the man's hand.

(CONTINUED)

NESTERENKO

Vassili Nesterenko. Director of
Institute of Nuclear Energy.

SHCHERBINA

Welcome, General. As you see, we
have an emergency. And everything
depends on you and your pilots
now.

ANTOSHKIN

My pilots and helicopters are on
their way. What do you need them
to do?

NESTERENKO

There is a fire burning in a
crater in that building, General.
It can't be extinguished with
water. We need to seal that
crater with sand.

ANTOSHKIN

How much sand?

NESTERENKO

I think between 3000 or 4000 tons
will need to be dumped.

ANTOSHKIN

That's a lot of work for my
pilots. When do you want us to
start?

SHCHERBINA

Why, immediately of course.

ANTOSHKIN

Sir, that is impossible. Our
helicopters have to move to their
new base. We have to find a
landing area, a flight control
center.

SHCHERBINA

When can you finish all those?

ANTOSHKIN

Tomorrow at the earliest.

SHCHERBINA

Do it before dawn.

Shcherbina turns to leave.

(CONTINUED)

ANTOSHKIN

But, sir, even if we could, how about the sand? Where will we find it? How are we going to fill them into bags?

SHCHERBINA

What about all the people under your command? Why are you asking me these questions?

ANTOSHKIN

Pilots don't load sand! Their job is to fly aircraft and steer properly. Their hands can't be shaking. It's out of the question for them to be shoveling sand and dragging bags!

Shcherbina is frustrated with this sudden defiance. He eyes Antoshkin for a short moment, then nods, giving in.

SHCHERBINA

(to Nesterenko)

Okay, find Deputy Ministers Shasharin and Menkov. There's plenty of sand around here. Find a place and make them do the loading. (to Antoshkin) And I want you to start dropping by dawn!

INT. UNIT 1 CORRIDOR - DAY

Two DEPUTY MINISTERS smoke in the corridor.

Nesterenko walks up to them.

NESTERENKO

Deputy Ministers Shasharin?
Menkov?

DEPUTY MINISTER #1

Yes?

NESTERENKO

Deputy Chairman Shcherbina asked me to tell you, you are needed for some work.

DEPUTY MINISTER #2

What is it?

NESTERENKO

Someone needs to load sand into bags.

(CONTINUED)

DEPUTY MINISTER #1
Alright, we will find someone.

NESTERENKO
No, Shasharin asks you to do it.

Both men look at Nesterenko like he is crazy.

DEPUTY MINISTER #1
Excuse me?

DEPUTY MINISTER #2
There are soldiers out there.

NESTERENKO
Soldiers have their own duties.
You are sitting around.

DEPUTY MINISTER #2
Look, I don't know who you think
you are but you can't talk to me
like that!

NESTERENKO
And I don't know who you think
you are but I'm pretty sure you
are not made of lead. So unless
you think these nice suits will
save you from radiation, you'd
better stop slacking around and
be useful!

Nesterenko walks away. Both men look after him with
cigarettes smoking in their hands.

NESTERENKO
(as he walks)
Now!

They put out their cigarettes hastily and follow him.

EXT. EVACUEE CAMP - NIGHT

Evacuees are brought to another town but there are no
tents visible. Just some houses and apartments.

Larisa and the kids get off the bus, looking lost as
everyone. New buses come in continuously and helicopters
fly overhead.

There is a ranked soldier surrounded by a crowd in the
middle of the road.

RANKED SOLDIER
I'm sorry but we can't provide
accommodation for everyone. We
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RANKED SOLDIER (cont'd)
were told to get you out of the dangerous area. So if you know anyone living close by, you should stay with them until the crisis is averted.

PRIPYAT RESIDENT #1
How do you know this area is safe?

RANKED SOLDIER
I am not a scientist, I can't assure you. But we were told it is safe.

There are murmurs to this. Larisa sees some people break from the crowd, walking away.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Pilots in one of the helicopters see the bigger picture. People in flocks walk away from the town.

Most don't have luggage, some even not dressed properly. They just walk like aimless zombies.

EVACUATION PILOT
Where are they going?

EVACUATION CO-PILOT
Probably anywhere farther from here.

EXT. EVACUEE CAMP - CONTINUOUS

Argument continues.

PRIPYAT RESIDENT #2
People are saying there was danger yesterday as well. Are we already poisoned?

RANKED SOLDIER
Look, I don't know. You need to wait, the government will give out some explanations soon.

As this goes on, Larisa hears someone calling for her. When she turns, she sees Lyudmila in the crowd.

LYUDMILA
Mrs. Telyatnikov! Thank God, I was trying to find you!

(CONTINUED)

LARISA

Lyudmila!

They hug each other, happy even if it's for that moment.

LYUDMILA

Look whom I found!

Nikolai and Ilia appears behind her. Larisa can't believe her eyes.

MISHA

Uncle Nikolai!

Both kids run and hug him.

NIKOLAI

Hey kids!

LARISA

Oh my God, Nikolai, it's so good to see you.

NIKOLAI

It's good to see you too, Larisa. Come on. We found a park.

LARISA

A park?

LYUDMILA

Most of the people in this town are afraid of us. They think we will transmit our poison to them too and won't take us as guests.

ILIA

They are literally running away from us.

LARISA

I can't blame them. Even we don't know much about this radiation. But at least we're lucky, it's not cold.

EXT. EVACUEE CAMP PARK - NIGHT

There are tents here, built all around the park. But they are obviously full because lots of people sleep outside.

Misha and Oleg sleep side by side over a blanket spread over grass.

Larisa slowly puts another blanket over them. She caresses their hair before going back to the others. They sit around a fire they built.

(CONTINUED)

NIKOLAI

So, Lyudmila told us you learned about Leonid.

LARISA

Yes! We think he is in Moscow.

ILIA

I can't help but wonder, why Moscow?

LYUDMILA

Must be something to do with that hospital there.

LARISA

We need to go there as soon as possible.

NIKOLAI

Of course, we should head out tomorrow morning.

LARISA

Actually, Nikolai, I need to ask you a favor. We don't know what's the situation with them. And it will be harder to travel with Misha and Oleg.

NIKOLAI

What are you saying? What, do you want to leave the boys and go alone?

LYUDMILA

Not alone. I will go with her.

NIKOLAI

No! No way!

LARISA

Nikolai, please! God forbid, what if we can't find them? Kids will be miserable on the road.

NIKOLAI

Larisa, he is my brother. Don't you think I want to know what happened to him?

LARISA

And do you think I want to leave my kids behind? I ask you this because you are the only people I can trust!

As Nikolai opens his mouth again, Ilia touches him gently.

(CONTINUED)

ILIA

Dear, if it was you on that hospital, I wouldn't want Leonid to stop me.

NIKOLAI

I'm not stopping anyone. I'm saying we should go together.

LYUDMILA

We can call back as soon as we find them.

LARISA

Yes, it will be only for a short while. I promise!

Finally, Nikolai gives up.

NIKOLAI

Fine!

With a yelp and a smile, Larisa jumps to hug him.

LARISA

Thank you, Nikolai! Thank you so much. I will feel much better knowing the kids are safe here with you!

NIKOLAI

But I want you to call back here the moment you find Leonid!

INT. PRIPYAT HOTEL BAR - NIGHT

It's dark and there are no hotel workers around.

Katya comes in. She turns the lights on, gets behind the bar and turns the television on, too.

As the newscast starts, Katya prepares herself a drink. Then she sits down by the bar.

NEWSCASTER ON TV

An accident has occurred at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant, and one of the reactors has been damaged. Steps are taken to deal with the situation and aid is being given to those affected. The government has formed a commission of inquiry. On our next report...

She drinks her drink and slams the glass down.

(CONTINUED)

KATYA
THAT'S IT?

INT. PRIPYAT HOTEL LOBBY - NIGHT

Katya dials a number angrily.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Maksim works on his desk as his phone rings. There are not many people in the office behind him.

MAKSIM
Hello?

INT. PRIPYAT HOTEL LOBBY - CONTINUOUS

KATYA
Maks, did you see the news report
on TV?

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

MAKSIM
Hey Katya. I was just going to
call you.

KATYA
This place is evacuated, Maks. It
became a ghost town. People died.
They are talking about serious
consequences but still, the whole
report on TV was only 30 seconds
long.

MAKSIM
So? Maybe their time slot was
full.

KATYA
Time slot was- Maks, did you hear
what I just told you? How can
that not be the biggest news
right now?

MAKSIM
Why are you yelling at me? I'm
not the head of state television?

KATYA
Because... Someone told me the
government was hiding things. Can
that be true? Did they ever want
you to edit things out?

(CONTINUED)

MAKSIM

Katya...

KATYA

Did they, Maksim?

MAKSIM

Katya, you're stressed. And I understand that. So maybe you should come back.

KATYA

No! Maybe that channel didn't get a good report from the officials here. I met some of them and they are not too competent after all. So, I'll send you my report. It's going to tell exactly what's going on here.

MAKSIM

Okay, send me your report, then. Let's see it.

KATYA

I'll send it in the hour.

Katya puts the phone down. Then, looking determined, turns and goes up to her room.

EXT. PRIPYAT SQUARE - NIGHT

The sun rises on the horizon. Engines of a military helicopter start.

Two very tired deputy ministers carry a big bag of sand to the helicopter in their dirtied suits. Two soldiers inside take it from them and put it over four other bags inside.

DEPUTY MINISTER #1

(yelling over engine sound)

This was the last one!

A soldier gives him a thumbs up and closes the door.

Helicopter slowly takes off.

PILOT

(o.c.)

We are up and ready for delivery.

EXT. PRIPYAT HOTEL ROOF - CONTINUOUS

General Antoshkin watches the helicopter rise towards him.

ANTOSHKIN

You are good to go. Good luck.

Helicopter passes over him and heads for Reactor 4 on the horizon.

EXT. UNIT 4 - CONTINUOUS

Helicopter closes in on the damaged building.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Destroyed roof can be seen from the front window. Molten fuel illuminates inside in the almost-dark.

PILOT

Eyes on target.

EXT. PRIPYAT HOTEL ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Antoshkin puts binoculars on his eyes.

ANTOSHKIN

What is the radiation level?

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Pilot checks an indicator.

PILOT

300 roentgens per hour.

EXT. PRIPYAT HOTEL ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Antoshkin keeps watching.

ANTOSHKIN

Be quick about it.

INT. HELICOPTER - CONTINUOUS

Soldiers open the door. They throw the first bag outside.

EXT. UNIT 4 - CONTINUOUS

Big and heavy sand bag falls into the building.

When it hits the ground, a denser smoke of dust rises up from inside.

POV. ANTOSHKIN'S BINOCULARS - CONTINUOUS

The helicopter hangs over the reactor building.

The second bag of sand falls and the rising smoke gets even denser.

PILOT
(o.c.)
Wow. It just jumped to 1500.

EXT. PRIPYAT HOTEL ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Antoshkin is concerned.

ANTOSHKIN
That is not good. Throw the rest quickly and get the hell out of there.

PILOT
(o.c.)
Roger that.

POV. ANTOSHKIN'S BINOCULARS - CONTINUOUS

The other three bags fall and disappear inside.

EXT. UNIT 4 - CONTINUOUS

The door is closed. Helicopter makes a sharp turn, heading back.

PILOT
(o.c.)
The payload's delivered. We are heading back home.

EXT. PRIPYAT HOTEL ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Antoshkin wipes some sweat from his forehead.

ANTOSHKIN
Good job boys.

(CONTINUED)

PILOT

(o.c.)

Sir, there is no confirmation on how many of the bombs hit the target.

ANTOSHKIN

Understood. Send the second bird.

Another helicopter rises behind the hotel and passes over Antoshkin. It heads for the reactor as the first one descends to land.

PILOT #2

(o.c.)

We are ready for delivery.

EXT. ROOF OF A BUILDING - CONTINUOUS

The sun is almost completely up now. Nesterenko stands on the roof of a building in Pripyat, watching the helicopter operation.

Shcherbina comes out to the roof. He carries a newspaper.

SHCHERBINA

Ah! I thought I saw you coming up here.

NESTERENKO

Yeah, I wanted to take a step back and see things from a wider perspective.

SHCHERBINA

And how do they look?

NESTERENKO

Bleak.

They stand in silence for a while. Scherbina hands Nesterenko the newspaper.

SHCHERBINA

I thought it would be better if you got this from me.

Nesterenko gets the newspaper, surprised. It's a copy of Izvestia.

There is a very small news article about the explosion in Chernobyl. He reads it. It doesn't take long. Then gives it back to Shcherbina.

(CONTINUED)

NESTERENKO

At least it's on the front page.

SHCHERBINA

I'm not born yesterday, Nesterenko. I deal with people like you. I knew you would feel the need to get some secret information to press. So please don't make me talk with any editors again.

NESTERENKO

You know, when I first got the news in Minsk, I ran to my wife and son.

SHCHERBINA

You have a son?

NESTERENKO

Really?

SHCHERBINA

Okay, you've got me there.

NESTERENKO

So, anyway, I gave them potassium iodine for protection. And every day, I call to make sure they keep taking it.

SHCHERBINA

You're a good father, Nesterenko.

NESTERENKO

No, you're missing the point. I am trying to protect my family because I know about these things. What about millions of other people? They have no clue! You are hiding everything.

SHCHERBINA

You know otherwise there would be panic.

NESTERENKO

Fuck panic, Shcherbina! We are the only ones here. You can stop being a politician for a moment, okay? You guys are defending your authority, not the people. And I feel like I'm taking a part in this crime. I feel like I'm getting dirty!

(CONTINUED)

Shcherbina sighs and looks at the plant standing afar.
Another silent moment passes.

SHCHERBINA

You know I'm not the only person
in charge, do you?

NESTERENKO

(scoffs)

You keep telling yourself that.

SHCHERBINA

I'm just saying, this is bigger
than us.

NESTERENKO

And tell that to the people who
will die thousands of kilometers
away, because nobody warned them.

SHCHERBINA

They will be warned. Just,
gradually. In the end, they will
remember this event like this:
There was an explosion and it was
bad, sure. But things got sorted
out.

NESTERENKO

Just like that, huh?

SHCHERBINA

Just like that.

Nesterenko shakes his head and heads for the stairs.
Shcherbina looks at the plant in the distance before
following him down.

INT. KATYA'S HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Katya gets ready to go out. There is a knock on the door.

When she opens it, she sees two soldiers waiting.

SOLDIER AT HOTEL

Miss Adamovich. We've got orders
to escort you out of the
evacuation zone.

KATYA

I didn't ask to be escorted
anywhere?

SOLDIER AT HOTEL

I'm afraid you misunderstood.

It dawns on Katya.

(CONTINUED)

KATYA

You're kicking me out.

Soldiers look at her in silence.

KATYA

You know I work for the
government newspaper, right?

SOLDIER AT HOTEL

We're told your press permissions
are revoked.

KATYA

What?

SOLDIER AT HOTEL

Please, miss.

KATYA

Damn it! Let me get my things.

She goes back inside.

EXT. PRIPYAT HOTEL - DAY

Katya leaves the building with two soldiers behind her.
She carries her suitcase. The usual commotion continues
around them.

Katya sees Nesterenko standing on the sidewalk across the
street, watching her. He looks sad and gives her a slight
nod.

Katya nods back at him before jeep takes her away.

EXT. HOSPITAL NO: 6 - DAY

It's a big, old building with a vast garden. Big metal
doors at the entrance are open. There are some nurses,
visitors and some patients in the garden.

SUPERIMPOSE: MOSCOW HOSPITAL NUMBER 6

As a bus on the road in front of the hospital accelerates
away, Larisa and Lyudmila appears. They wave after it.

LARISA

Thank you!

They look at the hospital entrance, excited and afraid at
the same time.

They pass the road towards the entrance.

INT. HOSPITAL NO:6 ENTRANCE - MOMENTS LATER

Larisa and Lyudmila enter the hospital to be met by a large woman behind a counter.

DOORKEEPER

Yes?

LARISA

Hello. We were told that our husbands are here. We are coming from Pripyat.

DOORKEEPER

Your husbands are among the Chernobyl patients?

LARISA

Yes.

DOORKEEPER

Do you have passes?

LYUDMILA

Passes?

DOORKEEPER

Yes, to enter here.

LARISA

No, we didn't know anything about that. Isn't this a hospital?

LYUDMILA

We just want to see our husbands.

DOORKEEPER

This is a special hospital for radiology. I can't let you in without a pass. I'm sorry.

Both women are dumbstruck.

LYUDMILA

Please, we've come from all the way from Pripyat.

DOORKEEPER

I understand that. But there is nothing I can do.

Larisa fumbles around her bag and takes out a handful of money. She puts it in front of the doorkeeper.

LARISA

Look, there must be something you can do!

(CONTINUED)

Doorkeeper looks around, checking if there is anyone watching them. Once satisfied that nobody's looking, she takes the money and hides it below the counter.

She points inside with her head.

DOORKEEPER
Go ahead. Find the head
radiologist, Angelina Guskova.

Larisa and Lyudmila walk inside.

INT. GUSKOVA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

A small, doctor's office. ANGELINA GUSKOVA, a stern woman in her 50s, sits in her chair, working on a report.

A knock on the door. Larisa sticks her head inside.

LARISA
Excuse us. Angelina Guskova?

GUSKOVA
Yes? Who are you?

Larisa and Lyudmila come in. They shake the doctor's hand.

LARISA
I'm Larisa Telyatnikov.

LYUDMILA
Lyudmila Ignatenko.

LARISA
We came from Pripyat to see our
husbands.

GUSKOVA
Ah... I recognized your surnames.

LYUDMILA
So it is true? They are here.

GUSKOVA
Yes they are here.

Both women are relaxed and excited at the same time.

LARISA
Oh, thank God! Are they okay? Can
we see them?

GUSKOVA
I'll be blunt with you,
(to Larisa)
your husband is fine. He will be
fine.

(CONTINUED)

Larisa tears up, overwhelmed by good news.

GUSKOVA
(to Lyudmila)
But your husband, dear... Listen,
his central nervous system is
completely compromised. His skull
is also completely compromised.

LYUDMILA
(scared and confused)
Okay...

GUSKOVA
Do you have any kids?

LYUDMILA
Right now?

GUSKOVA
Yes, right now. Your husband is
emitting radiation and seeing him
may affect your reproductivity in
the future.

Larisa looks at Lyudmila carefully.

LYUDMILA
Yes... I have kids.

GUSKOVA
How many?

LYUDMILA
T... Two... A boy and a girl.

GUSKOVA
So it's okay if you don't have
anymore. Right?

Lyudmila gulps, she can't say it out loud. She can only
nod.

GUSKOVA
Okay follow me then.

INT. PATIENT WARD CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Larisa and Lyudmila walk behind Guskova.

LARISA
(whispering)
What are you doing? What happens
when she learns you don't have
any kids and you are pregnant?

(CONTINUED)

LYUDMILA
(whispering back)
I won't let her learn. Or she
wouldn't let me see Vasily!

GUSKOVA
(to Lyudmila)
You have half an hour. No
hugging, no kissing. If you start
crying, I'll kick you out. Do you
understand?

LYUDMILA
Yes.

GUSKOVA
(to Larisa)
Same goes for you. He may be in
better condition but he is still
under treatment. Okay? Here, this
room is for you.

Guskova opens one of the rooms' doors and goes in.

INT. TELYATNIKOV'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

There are three empty beds in the room.

On a table, Leonid plays cards with the big technician
Palamarchuk and the dosimetrist Gorbachenko. He turns when
he hears people coming in.

Both his and Larisa's faces fill with happiness.

LEONID
Oh my God!

LARISA
Leonid!

Larisa goes for him but Guskova steps in between them.

GUSKOVA
Don't forget! No hugging!

They stop a few steps away from each other. They can
hardly contain themselves.

LARISA
Oh Leonid, I was so afraid.

LEONID
I know dear, but they didn't let
us contact you. We heard what
happened back at Pripyat. Are you
okay? Where are Oleg and Misha?

(CONTINUED)

LARISA

I'm fine. We left the boys with Nikolai and Ilia. I can't wait to tell them you are okay.

LEONID

Yes, I am one of the lucky ones. I don't know why, but they said I wasn't exposed to too much radiation. I had a stroke...

LARISA

(horrified)

A stroke!

LEONID

Don't worry, I'm okay now.

(his voice breaks)

But Pravik and some of the kids are pretty bad. Doctors here are calling it acute radiation sickness. Or something like that. They isolated them.

LYUDMILA

What about my Vasily?

LEONID

(realizing Lyudmila is also there for the first time)

Oh... Hello, Lyudmila... He is in another room. But they told me he is better now.

Guskova holds Lyudmila's arm.

LYUDMILA

Come, I'll take you to him. You two, don't forget: half an hour and no touching!

As the Doctor leaves with Lyudmila, Leonid pulls a chair for his wife.

They both sit close to each other.

LEONID

God, how I missed you. Tell me everything.

LARISA

(smiling)

Only if you tell me everything.

INT. PATIENT WARD CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Guskova leads Lyudmila to another room.

She pushes the door for her.

INT. IGNATENKO'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

There is only one bed in this room. It is covered with a transparent, plastic tent.

Vasily lies on this bed. He slowly turns his head and sees his wife. Even though he is weak, his face lights up.

VASILY

Oh no! Even here, you found me!

Lyudmila runs to him, crying and smiling at the same time. Guskova yells after her.

GUSKOVA

No touching!

She can't touch him anyway. But she puts her hands over the tent.

Vasily gets out of the bed slowly.

LYUDMILA

My Vasily!

Vasily puts his hand over his wife's with plastic tent between them.

VASILY

Hey Lyu.

LYUDMILA

Where did you run off to?

VASILY

(laughing)

I just wanted to be away from you for a little time.

LYUDMILA

(also laughing)

You look so funny in these pajamas. They are too short for you.

VASILY

I forgot to bring my own pajamas with me.

They are lost in each other's eyes.

(CONTINUED)

Guskova coughs softly.

GUSKOVA

I'll be in my office if you need anything. Don't forget, half an hour only.

LYUDMILA

Okay. Thank you very much.

Guskova goes to the door and turns once again before she leaves.

GUSKOVA

And don't forget...

LYUDMILA

No touching. I promise.

Doctor smiles and leaves.

VASILY

You'll stay for only half an hour?

LYUDMILA

No... I won't leave you again. I'll be here with you until we leave this place together.

VASILY

They won't let you Lyu. If they say you should leave, you should listen to them.

LYUDMILA

Okay, then I will come back again. I have friends from high school living in Moscow. They would give me a place to stay and I can come here every day!

VASILY

You stubborn girl...

They hold each other's hands as much as they can with the tent between them.

INT. NEWSPAPER OFFICE - DAY

Katya comes in. She still carries her suitcase.

As other people in the office watch, she walks to Maksim's office angrily.

(CONTINUED)

Maksim works on his desk and doesn't realize she came in until Katya drops the suitcase on the floor loudly. Then he raises his head, surprised.

MAKSIM

Katya! You didn't have to come here today.

KATYA

Were you the one who revoked my permissions?

MAKSIM

Sit down. Please.

KATYA

I'm fine. And this won't take too long. Did you revoke my permissions or not?

MAKSIM

Look. Yes I did but...

KATYA

Damn it, Maks!

MAKSIM

But it was for your own good. That place was dangerous. You wrote that yourself.

KATYA

Oh, did I? Because I didn't read it on the newspaper.

MAKSIM

I did what I had to do.

KATYA

You censored me! That's what you did!

MAKSIM

Katya, I understand you are young and ambitious. We all start the same. But you can't be this naive. Do you think I was the censoring you?

KATYA

We really are Moscow's puppets, aren't we?

MAKSIM

We do the best we can, in the borders we are provided. That's all.

KATYA

Then I also should do what I have to do.

MAKSIM

Katya...

KATYA

I quit, Maks!

MAKSIM

Katya, listen to me!

Katya takes her suitcase and storms off Maksim's office.

MAKSIM

Don't make any rash decisions! Do you know how hard it is to find a good job like this?

KATYA

(as she keeps walking)

I know! I was the one who looked for it before!

She leaves, leaving the whole office silent in her wake.

INT. PRIPYAT PARTY COMMITTEE OFFICES - DAY

The operational headquarters appears to have moved here, a building in Pripyat Square. There are much more people than the last time, in and outside the office. People come and go, helicopters take off and land right behind the windows. There are also tents, soldiers and military vehicles on the streets.

Nesterenko, Bryukhanov and Shcherbina lean over a table full of plans of Reactor 4. They all look terribly tired.

NESTERENKO

Sand and cement will bury the fuel but only up to some extent. Whatever we do, we are going to need to cover the building itself.

SHCHERBINA

Cover it? Cover it how?

NESTERENKO

I think it's possible to build a new construction around it. Some kind of a sarcophagus.

(CONTINUED)

SHCHERBINA

I thought working that close to the reactor was fatal?

NESTERENKO

It is. But we have no choice. And there is more. You remember those graphite parts I showed you back at the reactor? The roof is covered with tons of them. We can't build this thing without cleaning them first.

BRYUKHANOV

How are we going to do that?

SHCHERBINA

(proudly)

Good thing we have robots then!

EXT. UNIT 4 - DAY

A truck parks in reverse.

When its back is opened, a robot moving on threads appears. It's the size of a motorcycle and has an arm on its top, ending with a claw.

Four soldiers jump into the truck to lift it up and carry.

EXT. UNIT 4 ROOF - DAY

Part of the roof that wasn't destroyed is full of scattered debris.

Soldiers come out to the roof exit and drop the robot there.

They run back in haste.

INT. CONTROL TENT - DAY

A soldier sits in front of six black and white monitors. They show different parts of the roof but one of them shows the robot's POV.

Soldier pushes the joystick in front of him forward.

EXT. UNIT 4 ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Robot moves forward towards an area where the debris density is high.

It stops in front of a big, dark graphite piece.

INT. CONTROL TENT - CONTINUOUS

Soldier moves another joystick with his empty hand.

EXT. UNIT 4 ROOF - CONTINUOUS

Robot arm moves slowly and reaches for the piece.

It grabs the graphite, then lifts it up.

Robot moves forward. It's headed for the demolished edge of the roof.

But it halts.

It moves again. Then it halts once more.

INT. CONTROL TENT - CONTINUOUS

Controller soldier is confused. He struggles with the joystick, trying to understand what is wrong.

In the monitors, we can see the malfunctioning robot's movements.

EXT. UNIT 4 ROOF - CONTINUOUS

The robot charges forward.

It goes for the edge full speed and never slowing down, drops down into the reactor.

INT. CONTROL TENT - CONTINUOUS

Soldier jumps from his chair, yelling in panic.

CONTROLLER SOLDIER

Shit!

EXT. UNIT 4 - DAY

Bryukhanov, Fomin and Shcherbina walk towards the reactor building with the controller soldier beside them.

Behind them, a helicopter hangs over the building, dropping sand bags.

SHCHERBINA

What do you mean all four of them?

CONTROLLER SOLDIER

We tried four different robots. Including German and Japanese made ones. They all malfunctioned sir. With that much radiation up there, their circuits get fried.

SHCHERBINA

God damn it!

BRYUKHANOV

We'll need to send soldiers.

SHCHERBINA

That will be hard to sell.

In a flash, the blades of the helicopter behind them hit the cables hanging down from a crane.

As the blades scatter around, helicopter rotates to one side and falls like a rock. It disappears behind a hill.

After a moment of disbelief, everyone runs in that direction. But before they can start climbing the hill, an explosion rocks the ground. A ball of flame climbs into sky.

Shcherbina, Fomin and Bryukhanov stop running. Fomin starts crying that instant.

SHCHERBINA

Ah... FUCK!

FOMIN

(having a nervous breakdown)
I can't believe this... I can't believe this...

SHCHERBINA

Oh shut up you pussy!

FOMIN

They will make us pay for all this. They will make us pay for these deaths.

(CONTINUED)

SHCHERBINA

Deaths? These deaths? You don't have any idea, do you, you idiot? At least half the people here will die because of the radiation. Soldiers in that helicopter were the lucky ones. And yes, maybe we should pay for it!

He walks back the way they came, defeated and angry. Flames are visible behind him and soldiers run for help.

SHCHERBINA

(talks as he walks away)
Go home. You are no good to us here.

INT. PRIPYAT PARTY COMMITTEE OFFICES - DAY

People work as usual but the atmosphere is even gloomier. There is a muffled yelling coming from behind a closed office door.

Workers and soldiers glance at each other nervously.

INT. SHCHERBINA'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Antoshkin stands in front of Shcherbina's table. He is red with rage.

ANTOSHKIN

What did you expect? You knew we needed more men! My pilots are exposed to all that radiation once already and they are doing second runs. It's taking its toll on them!

SHCHERBINA

You were the closest air force, damn it! If the country needs your men to die, they will die!

ANTOSHKIN

None of my men have any problem with dying, sir. The problem is incompetence!

SHCHERBINA

General...

ANTOSHKIN

I won't send my men to that death trap again! Some are hospitalized already!

(CONTINUED)

The door opens without a knock. It's Nesterenko. He carries a rolled paper. He seems excited.

NESTERENKO

Ah, good, I was looking for you both. General, I heard what happened and I'm sorry. And you are right, we need to stop bombing the reactor with sand.

SHCHERBINA

Mister Nesterenko, we are in the middle of a conversation.

NESTERENKO

Whatever it is, Deputy Chairman, it can wait. This can't.

He lays the paper on the table. It is a blueprint of the reactor building.

NESTERENKO

We have a big problem.

SHCHERBINA

(sarcastic)

Do we?

NESTERENKO

Actually, we have two. Look here.

Nesterenko points to the underground levels on the blueprint.

NESTERENKO

This is the area they stored water for the emergency coolant system. It is also flooded with water firemen used. Basically, an entire hall under water. And it is right underneath the reactor.

ANTOSHKIN

So?

NESTERENKO

So, we threw 4000 tons of sand into that building. If the ground collapses under that extra weight, reactor fuel will fall into that water pool.

ANTOSHKIN

Wouldn't that be good? We are trying to extinguish that fuel.

NESTERENKO

General, that fuel is thousands of degrees Celsius right now. Something that hot would instantly vaporize all the water in those pools and that would cause a big volume of steam to be stuck in a small area.

SHCHERBINA

A steam explosion.

NESTERENKO

Yes, and even bigger than the first one. It would probably destroy Reactor 3, and that would destroy Reactor 2 and 1. Do you see where I am going with this?

SHCHERBINA

That is a catastrophe.

NESTERENKO

We already have one of that in our hands. But yes, that would be bigger. So we need to empty that water.

ANTOSHKIN

What is the second problem?

NESTERENKO

Even if we empty those pools, that lava-like substance can still melt anything it's standing on until it reaches the water reserve underground. And that water reserve feeds almost every drinking water supply in Europe and if it gets contaminated, everyone in Europe will be drinking radioactive water.

Shcherbina slumps down onto his chair.

SHCHERBINA

Good God... What can we do about that?

NESTERENKO

We don't have much time to test this idea but we can dig a tunnel below the reactor and install a heat-exchange system.

SHCHERBINA
Would that work?

NESTERENKO
(shrugs)
We can only hope.

INT. PRIPYAT PARTY COMMITTEE OFFICES - LATER

Nesterenko leaves Shcherbina's office and goes to his desk. He sits down and after looking around to see if anyone will need him soon, he dials a number.

ALEXEI
(o.c.)
Hello?

NESTERENKO
Alexei!

INT. NESTERENKO'S APARTMENT - DAY

Alexei talks on the phone while Olga works in the kitchen behind him.

ALEXEI
Hi, Dad. (to his mother) It's
Dad.

INTERCUT - PHONE CONVERSATION

NESTERENKO
Did you both get your pills for
today?

ALEXEI
Yes, I reminded Mom. Again.

NESTERENKO
I knew I could count on you.

ALEXEI
You are calling because it's May
Day, aren't you?

NESTERENKO
Yes, I was just about to say...

ALEXEI
You won't make it.

NESTERENKO
I probably won't be able to,
Alexei. I'm so sorry.

(CONTINUED)

Alexei actually looks sad.

ALEXEI

Is it that bad there?

NESTERENKO

It's really bad. I don't think I'm exaggerating when I say we are really trying to save the world here.

ALEXEI

Dad...

NESTERENKO

Yeah?

ALEXEI

Are you telling me the truth?

NESTERENKO

Wha...? Alexei! Why are you asking me this?

ALEXEI

My friends don't believe me when I tell them you are saving us there. They say if it was true, the news would tell.

NESTERENKO

Listen. There are some things which are kinda hard to understand. Even for you.

ALEXEI

I can try.

NESTERENKO

The press doesn't always tell the truth. It's like one of those filters your mother use to prepare tea. But instead of tea leaves, they weed out the things the government doesn't approve.

ALEXEI

Like the spy stuff?

NESTERENKO

Yes, spy stuff is one of those things probably.

ALEXEI

Are you a spy, Dad?

(CONTINUED)

NESTERENKO

If I was, I would only tell you, son.

OLGA

What are you two talking about?

ALEXEI

Mom's here, Dad. I still wish you were going to be here for May Day but it's okay. Talk to you later.

NESTERENKO

Talk to you later, son.

Alexei hands the receiver to his mother and leaves.

OLGA

What is this spy stuff?

NESTERENKO

Hey, hon. It's nothing. Just some likening. How are you doing?

OLGA

I'm fine. It's different with you gone but nothing I hadn't seen before.

NESTERENKO

Is that your way of saying you didn't miss me?

OLGA

(smiling)

I missed you.

NESTERENKO

I missed you too. Listen, I want you to be ready to leave the house. Can you do that?

OLGA

Leave? Where to?

NESTERENKO

Anywhere away from Russia. South, if you can.

OLGA

Now you're scaring me.

NESTERENKO

I don't want to scare you, dear. I want you to be ready, just in case.

(CONTINUED)

OLGA

And you?

Nesterenko looks like he's struggling to decide if he should lie or not. Finally he answers.

NESTERENKO

Don't worry. I'll be fine.

INT. PRAVIK'S HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Lieutenant Pravik lies on his bed, dead. His face looks slightly puffed and skin is peeled in places.

Hands lift the body up to put in a cellophane bag.

Leonid and Lyudmila stand at the door. They silently watch two orderlies tie up the cellophane bag. A single tear drops from Leonid's eye.

Orderlies put the bag in a wooden coffin and then tie it with even another bag.

Finally, they put it all in a zinc coffin.

LEONID

(shaking his head)

That's not the way to die for a fireman like Pravik. They are afraid of even his dead body.

Larisa holds her husband's hand.

LARISA

No mater how he went, he was a hero. You all were.

INT. HOSPITAL NO:6 ENTRANCE - DAY

Doorkeeper sits behind the counter, reading a book.

Lyudmila comes through the door. She looks a bit happier than before, but her smile is still concerned. She carries a pot in her hands.

LYUDMILA

Good morning!

DOORKEEPER

(doesn't even look up)

Good morning.

Lyudmila passes right through. They're used to each other.

INT. PATIENT WARD CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Lyudmila walks through the corridor, carrying her pot.

As she passes by Pravik's Room, she looks inside, sees Larisa and Leonid, as well as the zinc coffin. The couple, especially Leonid, looks devastated.

INT. TELYATNIKOV'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Larisa notices Lyudmila outside.

She walks to her, followed by her husband.

INT. PATIENT WARD CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

LARISA
Hey Lyudmila.

LYUDMILA
Good morning, Mrs. Telyatnikov.

LEONID
Lyudmila.

LYUDMILA
Mr. Telyatnikov. Is that...

LEONID
Lieutenant Pravik, yes,
unfortunately.

LYUDMILA
Oh my God... I'm so sorry. What
happened?

LEONID
Another heart attack.

LYUDMILA
But he was so young!

LEONID
They say it's because of the
radiation. Are you okay? How is
Vasily doing?

LYUDMILA
Weaker. He can't get up anymore
and he can hardly talk. I'm not
allowed to touch him but even if
I could, his skin is so fragile,
it bleeds on the slightest
contact.

(CONTINUED)

A slight silence. Larisa and Leonid can't find anything to say. Lyudmila tries to put her smile back on.

LYUDMILA

But I'm sure he'll get better.
You are getting better after all,
aren't you?

LARISA

Yeah. He is.

LYUDMILA

You were both there, so why
shouldn't my Vasily?
(shows the pot)
I made chicken soup for him
today. Would you like some?

LARISA

Thank you, dear. The more for him
the better.

Lyudmila looks at the coffin inside once again.

LYUDMILA

I'm sorry, I should get this soup
to him before it gets cold.

LARISA

Of course sweetie.

Lyudmila walks on. Telyatnikovs watch her go.

As Lyudmila approaches his husband's room, a nurse and a doctor run past her.

Lyudmila walks faster when she sees them entering Vasily's room. A long beep can be heard from inside.

INT. IGNATENKO'S HOSPITAL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Vasily lays on his bed with a thin sheet over him. Nurse takes it off his body.

The sheet is covered in blood and little pieces of skin.

Vasily is naked and his body is bloody. There are blisters all over him. Heart monitor beeps constantly.

VASILY'S DOCTOR

He is not breathing! Bring me the
paddlers!

Nurse pushes a table with paddlers towards the doctor.

Lyudmila walks slowly with pot clutched in her hands, eyes wide open.

(CONTINUED)

LYUDMILA

Vasily?

VASILY'S DOCTOR

(preparing paddlers)

Take her outside! Now!

Lyudmila drops the pot, soup splashing everywhere. She cries uncontrollably.

Nurse firmly holds her, guiding outside.

NURSE

Come on now. He'll be okay.

LYUDMILA

VASILY!

Doctor puts the paddles on Vasily's chest and gives him a shock. When he takes them back up, they are all bloody, leaving square shaped scars on the guy's chest.

Doctor prepares paddles again.

INT. PATIENT WARD CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

Nurse pushes Lyudmila out the door and closes it.

Lyudmila looks inside for a short while and then slides down to the floor, breathing hard from crying.

We hear the sounds of commotion from inside as the doctor and nurse try to revive Vasily.

VASILY'S DOCTOR

(o.c.)

Clear!

Sound of defibrillator delivering shock.

Heart monitor keeps its long beep.

VASILY'S DOCTOR

(o.c.)

Clear!

Again, sound of defibrillator delivering shock.

And again, long beep.

Lyudmila is hysteric now. She sobs.

VASILY'S DOCTOR

(o.c.)

Clear!

Once again, sound of defibrillator delivering shock.

(CONTINUED)

And again, long beep... but this time cut short by silence. Then a rhythmic beeping sound begins.

Foot steps coming closer. The door behind Lyudmila opens.

Vasily's Doctor crouches beside her, patting her on the back to calm her.

VASILY'S DOCTOR

It's okay Mrs Ignatenko. He is
alive. You can calm down.

Lyudmila breathes a bit more normally.

Then, she vomits.

INT. GUSKOVA'S OFFICE - DAY

Lyudmila sits in front of Guskova, looking guilty.

Guskova shakes her head. She looks more sad than angry.

GUSKOVA

Why didn't you tell me?

LYUDMILA

I was afraid. You wouldn't let me
see him.

GUSKOVA

Of course I wouldn't! He is no
different than a reactor! And you
see him everyday... while you are
pregnant!

LYUDMILA

But I had to see him!

GUSKOVA

Oh you poor girl. What have you
done?

LYUDMILA

I love him.

Guskova reaches out and holds Lyudmila's hands.

GUSKOVA

Lyudmila, listen to me. You
should start accepting some
things.

LYUDMILA

What do you mean?

GUSKOVA

You should understand how radiation works. Vasily's body is deteriorating. There is nothing we can do at this point. You must stop expecting him to get better.

LYUDMILA

But... Mister Telyatnikov is getting better...

GUSKOVA

That's because he wasn't exposed to the levels of radioation your husband did. You know about Hiroshima, right?

Lyudmila nods.

GUSKOVA

(contd.)

The atomic bomb in Hiroshima detonated thousands of meters above the city and the radiation level which affected the people on the ground was still lethal enough. Your husband, on the other hand, looked directly into the reactor. We think he was exposed to forty times more radiation than people in Hiroshima.

LYUDMILA

B... But...

GUSKOVA

I'm sorry Lyudmila. There are no buts. You should start thinking about your baby.

Lyudmila starts crying again.

EXT. UNIT 4 - DAY

A truck full of workers and soldiers stop in front of the building.

The people in the back jump down. A sergeant gets off from the passenger side.

Most people have patched lead plates over themselves. Some wear wool masks too. Everyone looks different. It's clear that these precautions are their own initiative.

(CONTINUED)

LIQUIDATOR SERGEANT
Okay, Liquidators, listen up!
Diggers, you will report to the
tunnel team by the south side.
The others, inside the building.
Move!

The group splits into two, both run for the direction they were given.

INT. UNIT 4 BASEMENT - DAY

As the liquidator group comes in, they see other ones already inside. People sleep on the corridor floor in the dark basement. Everyone looks like they've been through hell. The new group looks out of place with their energy.

They line up as GENERAL TARAKANOV walks up to them.

TARAKANOV
Soldiers! I'm Major General
Nikolai Tarakanov! I'm
responsible for this operation
and you are here to save your
families, loved ones and
comrades!

Tarkanov walks back and forth in front of them as he talks.

TARAKANOV
(contd.)
Your mission is to go up to the
roof. You will be in 8 people
teams, everyone with a shovel and
an officer will be escorting you.
You can't stay there more than 45
seconds. You will run there, grab
whatever you can with your shovel
and throw them off the roof. Do
you understand?

Liquidators yell "Yes Sir!".

TARAKANOV
Do your duty well and you will be
sent home. Motherland needs you.

A soldier hands out gas masks while another handing out shovels.

OFFICER
First eight in line. Follow me.
The rest, wait here.

Officer runs up the stairs, followed by eight soldiers.

EXT. UNIT 4 ROOF - DAY

Officer comes out of the door first, stopping by the side as the others come out.

OFFICER

Go go go!

He hits the button on his stop-watch. We hear it ticking.

Soldiers attack the debris with shovels. They fill them with pieces scattered around and dump them off the edge.

Officer's eyes are glued to the stopwatch.

OFFICER

20 seconds!

One of the liquidators empties his shovel over the reactor. Then he can't stop himself from looking down.

It is full of scorched sand bags and some lead plates but the fiery reactor fuel is still visible through gaps.

OFFICER

Hey, don't look down!

Officer's eyes dart to his stopwatch again.

OFFICER

Okay, time's up! Go back down.
Now, go now go!

A liquidator has his shovel full. He heads for the edge.

OFFICER

What are you doing? Do you want
to die? Leave it and just go!

Liquidator still arrives at the edge and throws what he has on his shovel down. Then runs inside, passing his Officer on his way. He is furious as he follows.

OFFICER

You idiot! Pray that won't cost
you!

INT. UNIT 4 BASEMENT - DAY

Liquidators run down the stairs and line up again as another group of eight run up.

Officer stands beside them as Tarakanov comes closer.

(CONTINUED)

TARAKANOV

Congratulations, soldiers! You've served your country and motherland will always be proud of you. Now you will be sent home. But before you are dismissed, I have a question. Does any one of you have diving experience?

INT. PATIENT WARD CORRIDOR - DAY

Larisa gets out of the women's bathroom and heads for her husband's room. Then stops as she sees Lyudmila down the corridor sitting by herself, looking completely lost.

LARISA

Lyudmila?

Lyudmila seems like she just woke up from trance. She only realizes Larisa is there when she looks around.

LARISA

Are you okay, dear?

LYUDMILA

Yeah. Yeah, sure, I'm okay.

She clearly is not. Larisa sits by him.

LARISA

Why are you here and not by Vasily?

LYUDMILA

It's... It's just... It's too hard. I can't stand it.

LARISA

What do you mean?

LYUDMILA

When we first came here, I thought that if Vasily was okay, then he would only get better. That's how it is when you are sick. You get better, right? So I still had hope. But this radiation thing is different. He only got worse with time. I can see him fade away right in front of me. Yet even then, I still had hope. But... After Mrs Guskova talked with me... I understood. Now I know he will die.

(CONTINUED)

LARISA

Oh, Lyudmila...

LYUDMILA

I got scared first. And then confused. Now I'm just angry. Why did this happen to us? I mean, why us? Mrs Telyatnikov, I'm even angry with you.

LARISA

Me?

LYUDMILA

Yes! You got Leonid. He actually got better. Why him but not my Vasily?

They sit in silence for a while.

LYUDMILA

I'm sorry. I didn't mean to... I'm angry with myself for thinking like this but I just can't help it.

LARISA

You don't need to apologize, dear. I ask this to myself too. And believe me, Leonid does too. He says "We were all there. Why did Pravik die and not me?"

LYUDMILA

It's just... I don't even know if my baby will be normal. They told me it's probably too late now. The baby might already be damaged but who knows. Should I just leave Vasily to die on his own? Abandon him? Because my baby might die? I can't. Even if I could, how could I tell our child that I left his or her father to die alone?

LARISA

Lyudmila, listen to me. Nobody can ask you to leave Vasily to die alone. But you have to be sure. Will you be able to live with yourself if your baby dies? You didn't become a mother yet, you have no idea what that feeling is like. If you are one hundred percent sure about Vasily, if you have no hope for

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

LARISA (cont'd)
him left, then do you still think
losing your baby is worth being
with your husband until the end?

Lyudmila struggles within for an answer.

Then she slowly nods.

LYUDMILA
(smiling faintly)
I headbutted a soldier to be here
with him.

LARISA
Then go, be with him till the
end.

Lyudmila gets up without looking at Larisa, walks to
Vasily's room and goes inside.

Larisa watches her go as a tear falls down her cheek.

EXT. TUNNEL ENTRANCE - DAY

A DIGGER gets out of the tunnel, breathing hard and
completely drenched in sweat. Behind him, the dark tunnel
goes below Unit 4. It is quite narrow, only 2 people can
stand side by side in there.

Behind him, four diggers carry out someone unconscious.
They lay him on the ground.

Shcherbina, Nesterenko and Bryukhanov are at the mouth of
the tunnel. Digger comes to them, wiping sweat.

DIGGER
Another one passed out.

NESTERENKO
How hot is it in there?

DIGGER
Fifty celsius.

BRYUKHANOV
Fifty?

DIGGER
Yes sir. That burning fuel must
be right above us. I hope it
won't fall in while we are in
there.

(CONTINUED)

SHCHERBINA

How much work do you have left?

DIGGER

A few days to dig. And a few more to install cooling pipes. But my men are afraid of the radiation.

NESTERENKO

And they should. But not when they are in there. It's probably hard to believe but among all the people working in this plant right now, you are the safest. The ground above you is the perfect insulation against radiation.

DIGGER

Good. Men will like to hear that.

OFFICER

(o.c.)

Deputy Chairman, sir.

They turn to see the officer from before coming up to them.

OFFICER

We've got three people, sir.

INT. CONTROL TENT - DAY

THREE DIVERS on chairs jump up when Shcherbina enters the tent with the officer, Nesterenko and Bryukhanov.

First two are in their 30s with the third being in his early 20s. Only Baranov, the young one, salutes.

SHCHERBINA

At ease.

BRYUKHANOV

Ananenko? Bezplov? These two aren't soldiers, they are engineers.

OFFICER

They had diving experience.

SHCHERBINA

Do you know why you are here?

Divers nod.

NESTERENKO

How many of you are married?

All three raise hands.

NESTERENKO

Any kids?

The hands stay raised.

Nesterenko turns back, distressed.

NESTERENKO

Ah, God...

SHCHERBINA

Men, I won't lie to you. What we ask of you will probably kill you. If not right away, then still may in following years. No sugarcoating it, it is a suicide mission.

DIVER #1

Sir, we were told that if we die, our families will be compensated.

SHCHERBINA

True. Each of your families will get a car, an apartment in the city and a house outside the city. Also they will get aid till the end of time.

Three men look at each other. They like what they hear.

DIVER #2

And this thing you want. Are we really going to save the country?

NESTERENKO

Not just the country. If the fuel reaches that pool of water, the radiation cloud that will be released to the atmosphere with the explosion will kill generations all around the world.

Shcherbina glances at Nesterenko. No matter how true it was, he didn't like hearing this.

Divers look at each other again. Then they all stand upright and nod.

DIVER #1

I already know the location of the valve, sir.

INT. COOLING WATER POOL HALL - DAY

It's a huge hall with a pool in the middle but everything is underwater. Two catwalks close to the ceiling are the only parts in the hall allowing someone to walk.

Three divers enter the hall through a door at the end of one of the catwalks. They carry their masks and flippers.

DIVER #1
(speaking on hand radio)
Command. We are in the water
hall. Getting ready. Over.

INT. CONTROL TENT - CONTINUOUS

Everyone from the management is here. They listen with the radio operator.

RADIO OPERATOR
Roger that. Over.

INT. COOLING WATER POOL HALL - CONTINUOUS

Divers put their masks and flippers on.

DIVER #1
(speaking on mask radio)
Testing radio connection.

DIVER #2
I can hear fine.

DIVER #3
No problem here either.

RADIO OPERATOR
(o.c.)
We are fine too.

DIVER #2
Baranov, carry the light.
Bezpalov and I will lead.

Diver #3 takes a big hand lamp from Ananenko.

They all sit on the catwalk railing, their backs turned to the water below.

DIVER #1
We are ready, Command. Over.

INT. CONTROL TENT - CONTINUOUS

Scherbina, Nesterenko and the others listen in silence.

RADIO OPERATOR

Roger that. Good luck guys. Over.

INT. COOLING WATER POOL HALL - CONTINUOUS

Diver #1 nods, the others nod in return.

One by one, they all fall back down into the water.

INT. COOLING WATER POOL - CONTINUOUS

Three divers plunge into the water.

Even though the edge of the water is illuminated by the light from outside, it's pitch black as it goes deeper.

Voices can be heard over the radio.

DIVER #2

Oh shit. It's like there are tiny needles all over my skin.

DIVER #1

I feel it too. Baranov, light.

Diver #3 turns the light on. Metal structures below become visible through a column of light.

DIVER #1

Let's finish this quick. This way.

With Diver #1 on the lead, they dive deeper below. It's eerie in the dark with very little light and no sound except their breathing.

INT. CONTROL TENT - CONTINUOUS

Control Tent is also dead silent.

They all listen for the smallest sound.

INT. COOLING WATER POOL - CONTINUOUS

They pass the pool itself and the metal floor is visible.

There are wide pipes coming out of the pool wall and then getting lost in the darkness.

(CONTINUED)

DIVER #1
Okay, pipes are here. Valve
should be right ahead.

But before they can go there, the light flickers.
Diver #3 shakes the hand light. Still flickering.

DIVER #3
Don't, don't, dont...

And it dies completely.
Complete blackness.

DIVER #1
Baranov?

DIVER #3
The light isn't working. It went
dead.

INT. CONTROL TENT - CONTINUOUS

Nesterenko looks over-stressed.

DIVER #1
(o.c.)
God damn it!

NESTERENKO
This will make them stay in the
water longer. We should get them
out.

SHCHERBINA
They may not be able to go back
again. That means sending more
people. Do you want that?

Nesterenko shakes his head.

INT. COOLING WATER POOL - CONTINUOUS

Diver #1 grabs one of the pipes.

DIVER #1
Do you feel my waves? Come closer
to me. I got one of the pipes.

DIVER #2
Good. We can follow it to the
valve.

They keep swimming in the dark, being guided by their
hands on pipe.

(CONTINUED)

DIVER #2
I'm starting to feel nauseated.

DIVER #3
Me too.

DIVER #1
Hold on, we must be very close. I
know it.
(excited)
Look! Here it is!

Divers grab the big valve in the dark. All three strain themselves to open it.

With a metallic scratch, it finally turns.

DIVER #1
The valve is open. I repeat, the
valve is open. We are coming out.

INT. CONTROL TENT - CONTINUOUS

A cheer erupts in the tent. It's a victory!

They all hug each other.

But as Shcherbina shakes his hand, Nesterenko is thoughtful once again.

SHCHERBINA
Come on now. Smile a bit,
Nesterenko. We've got good news!

NESTERENKO
Yes, but at what cost?

INT. COOLING WATER POOL HALL - CONTINUOUS

Divers climb the ladder to the catwalk. There are wounds and burns on their skin.

Diver #1 is the first to arrive. He takes a few steps and vomits. Behind him, Diver #3 falls on his knees. He can hardly breathe.

Diver #2 stops on the ladder just below the top. He wraps his arm around a step and starts coughing.

Then his foot slips and he loses his balance...

...until Diver #3 grabs him from above.

(CONTINUED)

DIVER #3
(to radio)
We need help here.

EXT. UNIT 4 - DAY

Divers are carried out of the building half conscious.
They lean on the soldiers beside them.

They pass through a crowd of waiting workers, engineers
and soldiers.

People in the crowd start applauding and cheering.

They make Diver #1 sit down to a waiting stretcher on the
ground. He raises his head slowly and weakly smiles.

Then his eyes roll back, leaving only whites. He
collapses.

Crowd goes silent. Diver #1 shakes violently. They raise
him with stretcher and quickly carry away. He is followed
by the other two divers who are already unconscious now.

Nesterenko sees them close as they are carried away.

He turns and walks very fast to the empty control tent.

Shcherbina notices Nesterenko go there.

INT. CONTROL TENT - CONTINUOUS

Nesterenko enters and loses it completely.

He cries like never before. He also shakes in anger.

He crouches to the ground and keeps crying.

After a while, he takes deep breaths, trying to calm
himself.

SHCHERBINA
(o.c.)
Are you alright?

Nesterenko stands up in a flash, trying to tidy himself up
and wiping tears off.

Shcherbina stands at the tent entrance, doesn't look like
he's really concerned.

NESTERENKO
Yes... no... I don't know.

Shcherbina comes closer to him. Nesterenko is ashamed,
can't meet his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

SHCHERBINA

Someone was supposed to do that,
you know. This is war. And people
die in wars.

NESTERENKO

It doesn't make this right.

SHCHERBINA

They will die as heroes.

Nesterenko's eyes fire up.

NESTERENKO

But why? Why will they die? You
know, Shcherbina, I was so
focused on stopping this
catastrophe, I didn't really
think about this but why? Because
whatever the reason, it can't be
worth this. It definitely can't
be worth what will come after
this.

SHCHERBINA

We got the worst of it,
Nesterenko. We can build that
sarcophagus now.

NESTERENKO

Yeah, sure we can. But how long
will that take? How many people
will work on that construction?
How much radiation will they be
exposed to? How many of them will
die in the following years,
months or maybe weeks, huh?
Whatever we do after this point,
Shcherbina, it doesn't matter.
We've already lost.

Nesterenko leaves the tent, leaving Shcherbina there by
himself.

INT. IGNATENKO'S HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT

Lyudmila sits by the bed and reads a book to Vasily. He
lays with his eyes closed, but he is not asleep. He looks
even worse than before with blisters darkened and bloody.

The only sounds in the otherwise quiet hospital are the
sound of the heart monitor and Lyudmila reading the book.

LYUDMILA

(reading The Brothers
Karamazov by Fyodor
Dostoyevsky)

(CONTINUED)

...The world says: "You have needs -- satisfy them. You have as much right as the rich and the mighty. Don't hesitate to satisfy your needs; indeed, expand your needs and demand more." This is the worldly doctrine of today. And they believe that this is freedom. The result for the rich is isolation and suicide, for the poor, envy and murder.

Vasily opens his eyes slowly. His voice is a whisper. Obviously, every word is torture for him.

VASILY

I... I want to see...

Lyudmila stops reading and looks at her husband.

LYUDMILA

What is it?

VASILY

I want to see... our child.

Lyudmila fights with herself to not cry and smiles at him instead.

LYUDMILA

You will.

VASILY

What are we going to name him?

LYUDMILA

You'll decide that yourself.

VASILY

If it's a boy, he should be Vasya.

LYUDMILA

Good, yes, I like that. What if it's a girl?

VASILY

Natasha.

Lyudmila smiles and nods.

Then she opens the transparent curtain between each other and holds Vasily's hand.

She leans and kisses him lightly.

LYUDMILA
Natasha it is.

As she stands back, Vasily squeezes her hand slightly.

VASILY
Can you... can you bring me a
glass of water?

LYUDMILA
Of course.

She turns to walk out the room but as she reaches the door, stops with Vasily's voice.

VASILY
Lyu...

She turns and looks back at her husband. There is no doubt now, she knows it is time.

This is their goodbye.

LYUDMILA
I love you too.

Vasily smiles at her and closes his eyes.

Lyudmila turns once again to leave the room.

That's when the heart monitor's long beep starts.

Lyudmila cries as she walks out of the room.

INT. PATIENT WARD CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

The corridor is dark in the night. Only strong light comes from inside Vasily's room.

Lyudmila sits down on the floor beside the door, crying.

Vasily's doctor and nurse comes out of the shadows, running inside the room.

Lyudmila keeps crying there.

A figure watches Lyudmila from the shadows. It's Katya and she can barely hold back her tears.

EXT. UNIT 4 - DAY

It is a beautiful, sunny day. There are not much people around as the last time.

The finished sarcophagus built around Reactor 4 looks like a fortress.

SUPERIMPOSE: 7 MONTHS LATER

A tired Vassili Nesterenko walks to his car, with a helmet on his hand.

He waves at passing workers, greeting a few and gets in his car.

EXT. PRIPYAT SQUARE - DAY

Nesterenko's car arrives at the square. The place is no longer filled with helicopters and military trucks. It is much calmer now.

Actually, it is too calm. Now that everyone left, the whole place is practically a ghost town. Citizens didn't come back and the buildings are as empty as the streets.

Nesterenko parks in front of the Party Committee Offices.

INT. PRIPYAT PARTY COMMITTEE OFFICES - MOMENTS LATER

Nesterenko comes inside the main hall with an empty box on his hand. He encounters two people as they leave the building, greeting him on the way outside.

Nesterenko goes to one of the few desks which still has stuff over. He starts cleaning his desk.

A FIGURE enters the hall.

AGENT

Hello, Mister Nesterenko.

As far as Nesterenko knows, it is one of his co-workers. He doesn't look at him.

NESTERENKO

Hello.

The figure watches him in silence.

Finally, Nesterenko stops to look at the man. He doesn't recognize him. He's in his 40s, wearing a dark coat even though it is sunny outside.

NESTERENKO

Can I help you?

AGENT

Yes, I was hoping you can.

Man comes closer to Nesterenko, very slowly, irritatingly.

(CONTINUED)

NESTERENKO

Do I know you?

AGENT

No, Mister Nesterenko, you don't. But we know you. My employer appreciated your efforts here for the past seven months.

NESTERENKO

You're KGB.

AGENT

(smiling)

I can't confirm or deny that.

NESTERENKO

Sure.

AGENT

As I said, my employer is thankful for your efforts and wants you to know that whatever you need, it will be satisfied.

NESTERENKO

But?

AGENT

But, they are concerned that things happened here since April 26 might harm the Motherland. I'm sure you wouldn't want that, would you?

Nesterenko stares in silence.

AGENT

So, Mister Nesterenko, when you are back home, please be careful on what you tell about the things you saw here.

NESTERENKO

For the Motherland.

AGENT

For the Motherland.

NESTERENKO

Not for the guilty sons of bitches in Moscow.

AGENT

Mmm, some might actually say they are the Motherland.

(CONTINUED)

NESTERENKO
I don't think so.

AGENT
Well...

Agent leans forward, seemingly in a casual gesture but at the same time opening his coat on purpose.

A gun is visible on his waist.

AGENT
(contd.)
I'm only here to give you a
warning, Mister Nesterenko.

He stands back. The coat is closed once again.

AGENT
Good day, Mister Nesterenko.

The Agent leaves the building. Nesterenko watches in silence.

After standing there for a while, he continues emptying his desk.

EXT. PRIPYAT SQUARE - LATER

Nesterenko leaves the building with his box under his arm.

He looks around but the Agent is nowhere to be seen. The whole town is as empty as it was when he came in.

He puts his belongings inside his car and drives away.

Chernobyl Power Plant stands on the horizon with one of its units covered by a massive concrete cover.

EXT. STREETS OF MOSCOW - DAY

Nesterenko's car moves through the streets slowly.

Inside, he looks at people in the street who live their daily lives with no sign of distress.

Nesterenko notices a man and his wife holding their toddler's hands to help him walk. They look extremely happy.

INT. NESTERENKO'S APARTMENT - LATER

The sound of a key on the door. Nesterenko comes in with a suitcase on one hand and his box under the other arm.

Alexei comes out to the hall, sees his dad and yells in surprise.

ALEXEI

Dad! Dad's home! Mom, come quick!

Alexei runs to Nesterenko. He empties his hands and catches his son as he jumps and spins him around.

NESTERENKO

Heeeeeeyyy, Son!

Olga also comes out, looking happy.

OLGA

Oh my God! Finally!

Nesterenko hugs and kisses her while still carrying Alexei.

NESTERENKO

Hey, dear.

OLGA

You should be glad for I missed you because I'm so angry with you.

NESTERENKO

Ooh, I'm definitely glad then.

They kiss again. Nesterenko turns to Alexei.

NESTERENKO

Did you get heavier?

ALEXEI

No. You must be getting weaker.

NESTERENKO

Ha! You wish!

They walk inside.

CUT TO:

Later. The whole family sits in the kitchen.

Olga puts a cup of coffee in front of Nesterenko and sits across him.

(CONTINUED)

OLGA

Seven months. How come you were never able to come visit us in seven months?

NESTERENKO

I told you before. They always needed me. It was always an emergency.

ALEXEI

And did you save the world, Dad?

NESTERENKO

It wasn't just me, Son.

ALEXEI

But you took part in saving it.

NESTERENKO

With many others.

ALEXEI

And it is safe now?

NESTERENKO

Not as safe as before but you don't need to take the pills any more.

ALEXEI

Good. Because I hated them!

OLGA

I must say, I wasn't a fan either. Are you sure it won't happen again?

NESTERENKO

No I'm not. And don't believe anyone saying it won't. (to Alexei) But I'm here for the next May Day. You'd better believe it!

ALEXEI

And you'd better be here.

NESTERENKO

Touché!

OLGA

At least it's over now. You came back to us.

NESTERENKO

Actually, dear... There's one other thing I need to do.

EXT. CAFE - DAY

There are tables outside and on one of them, Katya sits with Lyudmila. They wait for someone.

Lyudmila looks shrunken and her mind is obviously not there.

NESTERENKO

(o.c.)

I'm sorry I was late.

Nesterenko walks towards them in a fast pace.

NESTERENKO

It's good to see you again, Miss Adamenko.

KATYA

Please, call me Katya from now on.

NESTERENKO

Only if you don't call me Mister Nesterenko anymore. It's Vassili.

Lyudmila looks at him like she finally sees him.

LYUDMILA

Vassily?

NESTERENKO

Yes, with an "I" in the end.

KATYA

Mist- Vassili, this is Lyudmila Ignatenko. Her husband, who was also named Vassily, was one of the firemen. Lyudmila lost him after the explosion.

LYUDMILA

And then my baby too. My Natasha...

Nesterenko's mouth gets gaped open. He slumps down on a chair.

NESTERENKO

Because of the radiation?

LYUDMILA

Radiation from my dying husband.

NESTERENKO

I'm... I'm so sorry. I don't know what to say, I didn't know.

(CONTINUED)

Lyudmila faintly smiles at him and shakes her head.

KATYA

And that's the problem, isn't it?
That's why you both came here.

She takes a tape recorder out of her pocket and puts it on the table.

KATYA

Because people don't know.

NESTERENKO

But they should.

LYUDMILA

This much sadness can't stay
hidden for a long time.

Katya looks at them and hits record.

BLACKOUT

FADE IN

A black and white portrait photo of Vassili Nesterenko.
The legend below appears:

Vassili Nesterenko founded the Institute of Radiation Safety (BELRAD) in 1990 and devoted his life to fight against the disinformation on Chernobyl.

His work was focused on investigating radioactive contamination and providing assistance to the affected populations, in particular the children. He kept getting death threats to stop his research and survived two highly-suspicious car accidents.

He died from the effects of irradiation in August 2008.
His son, Alexei Nesterenko, is the director of BELRAD now.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

A black and white photo of Lyudmila Ignatenko appears. The legend below:

Many years after Vasily's death, Lyudmila Ignatenko finally got remarried. Doctors told her it was dangerous for her to be pregnant again.

But she gave birth to a boy.

Lyudmila Ignatenko now lives in Kiev with her son, in an area where mainly Pripjat evacuees reside.

(CONTINUED)

FADE OUT

FADE IN

A black and white photo of Leonid and Larisa Telyatnikov.

Leonid Telyatnikov was named a Hero of the Soviet Union in 1987. His subordinates were given the award posthumously.

Leonid Telyatnikov died of cancer at the age of 53. On April 25, 2006, the 20th anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, a monument was dedicated to him at the Baykove cemetery in Kiev where he is buried.

Larisa Telyatnikov still lives in Kiev with Oleg and Misha.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

Finally, a black and white photo of Chernobyl power plant.

Plant managers, Viktor Bryukhanov and Nikolai Fomin, and deputy chief engineer Anatoly Dyatlov got arrested for gross violation of safety regulations and got sentenced to 10 years of labor camp.

Several organisations, including Vassili Nesterenko's BELRAD, have reported on the impacts of the Chernobyl accident, but all have had problems assessing the significance of their observations because of the lack of reliable public health information before 1986.

More than 700,000 people involved, on and off-site, in tackling the accident's aftermath. Most of them had health problems which surfaced immediately or in following years.

FADE OUT

FADE IN

Radiation will stay in the Chernobyl area for the next 48,000 years.

FADE OUT