

CHERNOBYL

Episode 3 - "Open Wide, O Earth"

Written by

Craig Mazin

July 20, 2018

Copyright© 2018 Home Box Office, Inc. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

NO PORTION OF THIS SCRIPT MAY BE PERFORMED, PUBLISHED, REPRODUCED, EXHIBITED, SOLD OR DISTRIBUTED BY ANY MEANS, OR QUOTED OR PUBLISHED IN ANY MEDIUM, INCLUDING ON ANY WEBSITE, WITHOUT PRIOR WRITTEN CONSENT OF HOME BOX OFFICE, INC. THIS MATERIAL IS THE PROPERTY OF HOME BOX OFFICE, INC. AND IS INTENDED FOR AND RESTRICTED TO USE BY HOME BOX OFFICE, INC. ONLY. DISTRIBUTION OR DISCLOSURE OF THIS MATERIAL TO UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS IS PROHIBITED.

301 INT. DUCTS - WHERE WE WERE AT THE END OF EPISODE 2

301

PANICKED BREATHING. DARKNESS. WATER RUSHING.

Then: *whir whir whir whir...*

A SMALL, DIM LIGHT begins to fade up in the darkness, PULSING brighter and brighter with each *whir whir whir...*

BEZPALOV - is holding a small hand-powered DYNO TORCH. With every squeeze, the light grows brighter... then starts to dim down...

BARANOV moves the DOSIMETER closer to the meager rising/falling light. Then signals to Ananenko... *look at this...* but Ananenko shakes his head. *Doesn't matter. Stay calm.*

*whir whir whirwhirwhirwhirwhir*

Ananenko makes gentle movements now with his hand. To both of them. "Slow your breathing. Don't panic."

*whir... whir.... whir.....*

The three men wrestle with their fear. Control their breathing. Then Ananenko grabs Bezplov by the wrist. Moves Bezplov's free hand toward the back of his wetsuit.

*Grab it.*

Bezplov grabs it. Then Baranov grabs on to *him*, so that all three are now holding on to each other.

Ananenko holds his hand up to them. Makes a FIST. "Tight."

They tighten their grips. If they let go... they are lost.

*whir whir whir whir...*

Bezplov moves the dyno torch around so they can see:

THE WALL OF THE DUCT.

Water continues to slowly fill the space

Ananenko moves slowly toward the wall... the two other men following along in a chain...

When they get to the wall, Ananenko grabs hold of a PIPE. There are SIX pipes running along the wall. He counts down... first, second, third, fourth.

Fourth. That's the one that leads to the sluice gate. He begins FEELING HIS WAY forward, hand over hand, never losing contact with the fourth pipe...

...and the others follow in the near darkness.

*whir whir whir...*

**302 EXT. CHERNOBYL - VICINITY OF THE HATCH - SAME**

**302**

Pikalov, Shcherbina and Legasov stand waiting. No one says a word. Then Shcherbina checks his watch.

Legasov says nothing. Just keeps staring at the hatch.

SHCHERBINA

Is it possible the water has already killed them?

LEGASOV

Yes.

SHCHERBINA

So then what?

(beat)

If it doesn't work?

Legasov doesn't answer. Because there is no answer.

**303 INT. DUCTS - SAME**

**303**

Dark. It's deeper here. And emerging from the pitch black...

...the three men. Holding tight to each other. Following that single pipe. Their only hope. The barest of light coming from Bezpалov, whose hand is getting tired.

The pulsing of the torch is lower... lower...

They get closer to us. Closer. Closer. Breathing louder. Water rising up to their WAIST. And then:

A JARRING NOISE

REVERSE TO SEE: in the darkness, Ananenko has walked right into the CLOSED SLUICE GATE. His MASK is knocked askew.

BARANOV - moves quickly. Adjusts the mask back onto Baranov's face.

*whirwhirwhirwhirwhir*

*Breathe. You're okay. Look. We did it. We found the gate.*

On the sluice gate - TWO RUSTY WHEEL VALVES on either side. Ananenko wades to one. Bezpaloov gives Baranov the dyno torch, and moves to the other.

The valves look as if they have never been turned.

If they can't open them, then this was for nothing. The men put their hands on the valves.

Look at each other. And then: THEY PUT their all into it... and before we can even see if the wheels budge--

**304 EXT. CHERNOBYL - VICINITY OF THE HATCH - LATER**

**304**

Shcherbina paces. Pikalov stares at the ground.

Legasov stares silently at the hatch.

And then: a noise... loud enough that it can be heard even from here. A heavy THUMP THUMP THUMP on the hatch.

Soldiers rush over. Open the hatch.

BEZPALOV emerges. Soaked from the waist down, and SHOUTING in triumph.

The soldiers BURST into cheers and applause as Baranov and Ananenko follow Bezpaloov out...

Legasov, Shcherbina and Pikalov all slump with relief. They did it. Shcherbina motions to Pikalov, who immediately heads toward some military firemen.

PIKALOV

Bring the hoses in. Start pumping.

Shcherbina CLAPS Legasov on the shoulder. Beaming.

SHCHERBINA

Look. Look at our boys!

ON THE THREE - surrounded by cheering soldiers. They look absolutely fine. Bezpaloov takes a swig of vodka.

It's a jubilant scene, but Legasov looks as if he's going to throw up.

LEGASOV

Get them to the doctors.

Legasov walks away. Shcherbina absorbs that, then looks back at the scene. The men continue to hug and congratulate the divers and each other, even as the military firefighters bring in the pump hoses...

Ananenko catches sight of Shcherbina. The man who told him it must be done.

The smile fades from Ananenko's face. Replaced with the simple pride of a man who knows he may have just given his life to his people.

He raises a bottle to Shcherbina, and Shcherbina solemnly nods back.

**305 EXT. NOVAYA BASMANAYA STREET - MOSCOW - AFTERNOON**

**305**

A large, imposing stone building set back from the street. Two stories, with tall windows in orderly rows.

LYUDMILLA, the firefighter's wife, enters frame, carrying her dingy suitcase. A country mouse far from home.

She stops in front of the building. Looks up at it. She's never felt so small or afraid in her life.

TITLE:

**APRIL 30, 1986  
HOSPITAL NUMBER 6, MOSCOW**

**306 INT. HOSPITAL NUMBER 6 - MOMENTS LATER**

**306**

Lyudmilla approaches the receptionist at the front desk.

The receptionist, YENINA, 30, is filling out some paperwork. Lyudmilla just stands there, waiting silently.

Finally, Yenina STAMPS the paperwork, removes her reading glasses, and:

YENINA

Yes?

Lyudmilla dutifully recites what the military officer told her to say.

LYUDMILLA

I'm here to see my husband, Vasily Ignatenko. He's a firefighter from Chernobyl. I have permission.

YENINA  
Chernobyl? I'm sorry. No visitors.

LYUDMILLA  
But-- Major Burov, he told me-- he  
said--

YENINA  
No exceptions.

LYUDMILLA  
Please-- I came all the way from  
Kievskaya oblast...

Yenina is unmoved. Just keeps staring.

Lyudmilla puts her suitcase down, and opens her purse. Digs out some crumpled MONEY. Holds it out silently to the receptionist.

Yenina looks at the money, then grabs a small slip of paper, selects a STAMP from her wheel, and-- TWHACK. Stamps a visitor's pass.

She takes Lyudmilla's money, and hands her the pass.

**307 INT. HALLWAY - RADIATION WING - MOMENTS LATER**

**307**

Lyudmilla walks down the hall with her suitcase and her stamped pass.

She sees a DOCTOR, VETROVA, 30's, wearing a cloth face mask.

LYUDMILLA  
Excuse me?

Vetrova turns. Surprised to see a visitor. She lowers her face mask.

VETROVA  
Who are you? What are you doing up  
here?

LYUDMILLA  
I have a pass.

VETROVA  
You can't be here. It's not safe.

Lyudmilla starts into her recitation.

LYUDMILLA  
I'm here to see my husband, Vasily  
Ignatenko. He's a firefighter from--

VETROVA  
I know who Ignatenko is, but you  
can't.

Lyudmilla tries to hold back her tears. It's not working.

LYUDMILLA  
But I have permission. I have--

Lyudmilla opens her purse once more. There's not much left.

Vetrova realizes what Lyudmilla's doing. Oh god. She puts  
her hand on Lyudmilla's. No need for that...

VETROVA  
(reluctant)  
You can have thirty minutes with him.  
Not a minute more.

Lyudmilla, relieved, nods.

VETROVA  
And you cannot touch him. In any way.  
Do you understand?

LYUDMILLA  
Yes.

The doctor hesitates, then:

VETROVA  
Room 15.

LYUDMILLA  
(overwhelmed)  
Thank you.

As Lyudmilla starts to walk down the hall--

VETROVA  
You're not pregnant, are you?

Lyudmilla stops. Turns back to the doctor.

LYUDMILLA  
No.

The doctor nods. Go on then.

**308 INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY / ROOM 15 - MOMENTS LATER**

**308**

Lyudmilla rounds a corner. Room 12... 13... 14... Room 15. She screws up her courage, and then pushes the door open.

REVEAL: the FIREFIGHTERS... Vasily sitting up on one bed, Kibenok and Pravik sitting side-by-side on the other.

Pravik is hooked up to an IV. And they're each in hospital pyjamas. Skin reddened, as if sunburned. But otherwise?

They're fine. Playing cards, in fact. Pravik looks up.

PRAVIK

Look who the cat dragged in.

Vasily sees Lyudmilla. A big grin breaks out on his face.

VASILY

What did I tell you? There's no hiding from this woman...

The firefighters laugh. Vasily rises as Lyudmilla drops her suitcase and RUSHES into his arms, hugging and kissing him as she weeps for joy.

VASILY

Ow ow... easy! Easy!

She backs off slightly, but just keeps sobbing on him.

VASILY

It's okay. Shhh, Lyusya, shhh. I'm okay. We're all okay...

SOUND RISES: military drums, a massive crowd cheering, and:

**309 EXT. RED SQUARE - MOSCOW - DAY [FILE FOOTAGE]**

**309**

FILE FOOTAGE - A bright, sunny days. Thousands of people. Red flags everywhere. Children in uniforms. Soldiers marching in formation. Trucks display nuclear missiles.

TITLE:

**MAY 1, 1986**

**INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY**

**5 DAYS AFTER THE EXPLOSION**

**310 INT. GARANIN'S OFFICE - MINSK - SAME****310**

Garanin is on the phone. Through the window, we hear the cheering of PEOPLE on the street.

GARANIN

Yes, the parade's already begun. All of Minsk is out on the street, which is why I felt it was--

(beat)

Of course not-- but the wind has been blowing in from the southeast since early morning. From Kiev. From Chernob-- no, no... but *if* we were to cancel now, just as a precaution-- I understand, but then perhaps we should issue iodine tablets to--

He's been cut off again. Then, defeated:

GARANIN

Yes. Certainly you're right. It was foolish of me to call. I apologize. Thank you for your wisdom, Minister. Please-- enjoy the 100th anniversary of International Workers' Day.

Garanin places the phone receiver back on the cradle. Then walks to the window. We can't see the parade. We can only see him watching helplessly.

He picks up his jacket, which is covered in civilian MEDALS-- the ceremonial finery of a Party leader. He puts it on, buttons it, straightens it, takes a breath--

--and heads out to join the parade.

**311 OMITTED****311****312 INT. MILITARY HELICOPTER - DAY****312**

Mid-flight. A RADIOMETRIC CREW is in the back. Full protective suits. The door is open, and they're holding RADIOMETERS out to sample the smoky air.

We hear the telltale CRACKLE of a GEIGER COUNTER... and as the helicopter washes through a PLUME OF SMOKE, the clicking suddenly explodes into DEAFENING STATIC...

## 313 EXT. REACTOR SITE - SAME

313

The helicopter is CIRCLING above the destroyed reactor.

TITLE:

MAY 2, 1986

## 314 EXT. REACTOR SITE - LATER

314

Trailers have been set up near the site as mobile offices. A web of FIRE HOSES extend out from the ruins toward Pikalov's specialized military fire trucks, each with pumps running.

FLOOD LIGHTS have been set up to illuminate the work area. Men move back and forth, some wearing gas masks. Others not.

PIKALOV - talks with one of the radiometrists who was on the helicopter. Then walks back to:

LEGASOV and SHCHERBINA - who stand over a workbench covered in maps. They're mid-argument.

LEGASOV

How did this happen? Who gave them this idea?

SHCHERBINA

Are you suggesting I did?

LEGASOV

Well someone decided the evacuation zone should be thirty kilometers, when we know--

(points to the map)

Here! Caesium-137 in Gomel District. Two HUNDRED kilometers away!

Pikalov waits. Uncomfortable. Clearly has information to share, but doesn't want to interrupt.

SHCHERBINA

It was decided.

LEGASOV

Based on WHAT?

SHCHERBINA

I don't know.

LEGASOV

(disbelief)

Forgive me. Maybe I've spent too much time in my lab. Or maybe I'm stupid. But is this really how it all works? An uninformed, arbitrary decision that will cost who knows how many lives is made by some apparatchik? Some career Party man?

SHCHERBINA

(angered)

I am a career Party man. You should mind your tone, Comrade Legasov.

Legasov stares oddly at Shcherbina. Wasn't expecting that defense. It almost seemed... calculated.

PIKALOV

(ahem)

Comrades.

They turn to him. He's holding a piece of paper in his hand.

PIKALOV

We have visual confirmation that the fire is nearly extinguished. There has also been a reduction in iodine-131 and caesium-137 emissions.

SHCHERBINA

Good.

(to Legasov)

Yes?

PIKALOV

But the temperature is rising. And--

He trails off. Then simply hands the paper to Legasov. It's a SPECTROGRAPH. Legasov stares at the chart for a moment.

LEGASOV

There's a spike in zirconium-95. It's from the cladding on the fuel rods.

SHCHERBINA

Which means what?

LEGASOV

We use zirconium to contain the uranium because its melting point is so high.

(MORE)

LEGASOV (cont'd)  
 A graphite fire alone isn't hot  
 enough to vaporise it. It's the fuel  
 itself.

(beat)  
 The meltdown has begun.

The sound of a HELICOPTER buzzing by. The air churns up DUST  
 from the ground, and we DISSOLVE TO:

**315 INT. THE REACTOR - NOW**

**315**

AN EMPTY WATER BASIN - puddles of dark water, rust marks on  
 the walls, and extending down from the ceiling, a large  
 DRAINAGE PIPE, like an upside-down T.

We hold for a moment. Then a thin line of dark MAGMA drips  
 out of drain... dangles in the air, then hits the ground  
 with a SIZZLE.

Another line from the other opening. And then, without  
 warning:

A HUGE MASS of CORIUM POURS OUT AND DOWN - from both sides  
 of the drainpipe - thick, deadly lava, bubbling and POOLING  
 with a SIZZLE on the concrete below...

We're watching a nuclear reactor core melting down. This is  
 what it looks like. Hypnotic, and almost beautiful.

Almost.

We hear the concrete CRACKLING, and we cut to:

**316 INT. HALLWAY - RADIATION WING -HOSPITAL NO.6 - NIGHT**

**316**

*Drip... drip... drip...*

A small, rusty DRINKING FOUNTAIN drips. Each drip echoing  
 slightly in the:

EMPTY HOSPITAL HALLWAY - where Lyudmilla sits in a chair.  
 Sleeping. No sound but the low buzz of the fluorescent  
 lights, and *drip... drip... drip...*

And then a low moan from off screen.

Lyudmilla shifts a bit. Troubled sleep.

Another moan. Another. Then a man SCREAMING in pain.

Lyudmilla instantly wakes. It's silent in the hallway again. Was that a dream?

Another SCREAM. Louder. She leaps to her feet, and:

**317 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM 15 / HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

**317**

Lyudmilla enters the room. Two nurses are attending to Vasily, blocking Lyudmilla's view of him.

The other two beds are EMPTY, save for BLOOD STAINS on both of them.

The nurses are clearly struggling.

HOSPITAL 6 NURSE

You have to stop moving. We can't get the needle in if you don't stop moving.

His screaming is terrible. Lyudmilla moves towards the nurses, panicked.

LYUDMILLA

You're hurting him!

She pulls at one of the nurses, and sees:

VASILY - covered in LESIONS. His face, his arms, his neck... everywhere there is skin, there are tiny open SORES, some bleeding, some coated in weeping pus.

Vasily writhes in AGONY as the other nurse attempts to hold him down by his burning skin in order to inject morphine.

Lyudmilla can only stare in horror.

HOSPITAL 6 NURSE

You can't be in here.

LYUDMILLA

What's happening to him...?

Vasily SCREAMS again.

HOSPITAL 6 NURSE

YOU CAN'T BE IN HERE!

The nurse PUSHES Lyudmilla out of the room, and then heads back to help her colleague.

Lyudmilla stands alone in the hallway, helpless, listening to her husband screaming... as if he's been set on fire...

We hold on her listening until it's too much to bear, and:

318 INT. KREMLIN CONF. ROOM / INT. COMMAND ROOM - NIGHT

318

Gorbachev's grim face.

ON HIS DESK in the corner of the room - seven newspapers from major Western nations. On each one, a stapled translation. They're all about the same thing. *Chernobyl*.

The PHONE RINGS. He answers.

GORBACHEV

Yes.

(beat)

Put them through.

(beat)

Well?

INTERCUT WITH: Shcherbina on the phone in the command suite at the Polissya. Legasov next to him, on a second handset.

SHCHERBINA

The graphite fire is nearly out, and the bubbler tanks are being drained. We have successfully eliminated the risk of thermal explosion.

Gorbachev slowly exhales. Then realizes Shcherbina has fallen quiet on the other end.

GORBACHEV

And?

SHCHERBINA

The situation inside the core is deteriorating faster than anticipated. The concrete pad will hold for 6 to 8 weeks, but after that, Legasov estimates a 50% chance the fuel will breach the pad and melt down into the groundwater itself.

GORBACHEV

And where does that groundwater go?

SHCHERBINA

The Pripyat River, which feeds into the Dnieper.

(MORE)

SHCHERBINA (cont'd)  
 The primary water supply for  
 approximately fifty million people--  
 not to mention crops and livestock--  
 would be... unusable.

Gorbachev closes his eyes. Can't take it anymore.

SHCHERBINA  
 We are recommending we install a heat  
 exchanger under the pad to lower the  
 core temperature and halt the  
 meltdown. In order to do this, I'm  
 told we'll need all of the liquid  
 nitrogen in the Soviet Union.

GORBACHEV  
 (long pause, then)  
 Alright.

SHCHERBINA  
 And of course, we'll need--

GORBACHEV  
 Whatever you need, you have it. That  
 should be clear by now. Is there  
 anything else?

SHCHERBINA  
 My apologies. No. Thank you for--

But:

LEGASOV  
Yes. I wanted to address the 30  
 kilometer exclusion zone--

Shcherbina reacts. What does Legasov think he's doing?

GORBACHEV  
 What exclusion zone? Is that Legasov?  
 What are you-- ?

SHCHERBINA  
 (jumping in quickly)  
 Minor details, General Secretary.  
 Premier Ryzhkov has determined that--

GORBACHEV  
 (angry)  
 If he determined, then he determined.

Shcherbina glares at Legasov. Idiot.

GORBACHEV

Legasov, you are there for one purpose, do you understand? To make this stop. I don't want questions. I want to know when this will be over.

LEGASOV

If you mean, when will Chernobyl be completely safe, the half-life of Plutonium-239 is 24,000 years.

(beat)

Perhaps we should just say, "Not within our lifetimes."

A stunned Gorbachev hangs on the phone for a few silent moments... and then slowly hangs up. Then:

SHCHERBINA

I think you and I should take a walk.

LEGASOV

(wary)

It's late. I'm tired.

SHCHERBINA

(not negotiable)

We're taking a walk.

**319 EXT. PRIPYAT - STREET - NIGHT**

**319**

A DOG walks steadily, tail wagging. Happy. A bit of SAUSAGE sails into frame, and the dog snatches it out of the air. Now another DOG enters frame. Then a CAT.

REVEAL: Shcherbina and Legasov walking down the abandoned city street. Street lamps shining for no one.

As they go, Shcherbina casually rips pieces of a large kolbasa and tosses them back to the left-behind pets, a dozen of whom follow him like he's some kind of Pied Piper.

SHCHERBINA

Would you like some kolbasa?

LEGASOV

(enough with this)

What is it you want? An apology? I won't sit back and let these people--

SHCHERBINA

What's going to happen to our boys?

LEGASOV

What boys? The divers?

SHCHERBINA

The divers, the firefighters, the men in the control room. What does the radiation do to them? Precisely.

Legasov doesn't want to answer this question. But:

LEGASOV

At the levels some of them were exposed to... ionizing radiation tears the cellular structure apart. The skin blisters, turns red, then dark. There's nausea, dizziness, fever, loss of consciousness.

Shcherbina throws the last of the sausage into the night, and the pets chase after it, disappearing into the dark.

SHCHERBINA

Continue.

LEGASOV

This is followed by a latency period. The immediate effects subside. The patients appear to be recovering. Healthy, even. But they aren't.

They arrive at a bench. Shcherbina sits. Legasov joins him.

SHCHERBINA

(calmly, again)

Continue.

LEGASOV

This lasts for only a day or two. Then the cellular damage begins to manifest. The bone marrow dies, the immune system fails, and the soft tissue and organs begin to decompose. The arteries and veins spill open like sieves, to the point where you can't even administer morphine for the pain, which is-- unimaginable. And within three days to three weeks, you are dead. That is what will happen to those boys.

Shcherbina takes it in. Then:

SHCHERBINA

Strange. How the things we can't see are the most dangerous.

(beat)

And what about us?

LEGASOV

We've gotten a steady dose, but much less of it. Not strong enough to kill the cells, but consistent enough to damage the DNA. In time... cancer. Or aplastic anemia. Either way, fatal.

SHCHERBINA

Well. In a sense, it would seem we've gotten off easily then... Valery.

*His first name.* Legasov notes the familiarity. The kind between friends. A moment between them, and then Shcherbina just barely nods his head to the left.

Was that a signal? Legasov glances back down the street in the direction of Shcherbina's nod, and sees:

THIRTY METERS BEHIND THEM - a MAN AND WOMAN under a street lamp. Clearly following from a distance.

But not just any man and woman. The "husband and wife" from the bar. The wife who asked Legasov if there were anything to worry about.

They don't seem worried now at all. *Nor do they seem like a husband and wife.* They just stare back at Legasov.

Dead-eyed. Expressionless. And above all, no attempt to disguise who they truly are.

Legasov turns back to look straight ahead. Terrified. My god... that night... *he almost told them what he knew...*

Shcherbina resumes walking. Legasov moves with him. Stiffly. Trying not to look back.

SHCHERBINA

Now you know why I wanted to take a walk. Obviously the work site is bugged. But I suspect our rooms as well. Even our bathrooms. They say you haven't taken a proper shit until you've done it in front of the KGB.

And now Legasov understands the reason for Shcherbina's impassioned defense of the Soviet state.

LEGASOV

I've seen them before. They've been here the whole time.

Shcherbina sighs. Legasov is a smart man, and yet so stupid.

SHCHERBINA

Of course they've been here the whole time. If we're seeing them out in the open now-- it's because they want us to know.

Legasov glances back one more time at the man and woman. But keeps walking along with Shcherbina.

And the pets... and the KGB... keep following.

**320 INT. POLISSYA HOTEL - LOBBY BAR - NIGHT**

**320**

Legasov, returning, crosses through the now-abandoned lobby, then sees:

KHOMYUK alone at the lobby bar, papers spread out around her. Scribbling calculations. A bottle of vodka and a glass.

He hesitates. Makes a silent decision. Then crosses over and takes a seat near her at the bar.

She glances up at him from her work, then eyes back down to her calculations. But she slides a spectrograph page over to him from the top of her papers. Keeps her eyes on her work as she talks.

KHOMYUK

You've seen that? The fuel is melting faster than we expected. The pad--

LEGASOV

I know. I have a plan.

KHOMYUK

Heat exchanger, I hope.

LEGASOV

Yes.

(her equations)

There's something I've wanted to ask you, Comrade. But I see you've been asking it yourself.

She finally slams her pencil down. Beyond frustrated. The anger of a relentless mind facing an unsolvable puzzle.

KHOMYUK

Why did it explode. I've worked the numbers over and over, presuming the worst possible conditions in an RBMK reactor, and I get the same answer every time.

LEGASOV

Which is?

KHOMYUK

It's not possible.

LEGASOV

And yet.

They sit in silence for a moment. Then:

LEGASOV

I've spoken to the director of your institute. He says you're difficult and brutally stubborn.

(beat)

Which I'm hoping for.

He takes her page of calculations.

LEGASOV

You're not going to solve this here. Not on paper.

She leans forward. Activated. Yes... a hunt. A chase. For the truth.

LEGASOV

I'm authorizing you to conduct a full inquiry. Begin in Moscow. Hospital Number 6. Talk to everyone who was in the control room that night-- Dyatlov, Akimov, Toptunov-- we need to know exactly what occurred. Moment by moment, decision by decision. No detail is too small. Go now. While they're still alive. Because if we do not find out how this happened-- then it will happen again.

Understood. Feeling the thrill of the chase, she gathers her papers and rises to leave. Then:

LEGASOV

And Khomyuk...

She turns back. He makes a subtle gesture around himself, as in-- "the system around us is watching... listening..."

LEGASOV

Be careful.

And we see a twinge in her now. Asking questions and seeking truth in the Soviet Union is a dangerous game. She nods stiffly to him, and exits.

We hear BOISTEROUS LAUGHTER now, and cut to:

**321 EXT. COAL MINES - TULA, RUSSIA - DAY**

**321**

A group of forty-five MINERS on break. Vodka. Cigarettes. Behind them, conveyor belts and hoppers. Bulldozers and dust. Rolling hills pierced by cart tracks.

These men are hard. Blackened faces. Blackened lungs. Young and old. Thick bellies. Tough muscle. But right now...

OLD MINER

Wait wait I have one, I have one...  
so every Friday, Maxim The Factory  
Guard sees Yaroslav The Worker coming  
out of the factory with a wheelbarrow  
full of hay. And each time, Maxim  
looks through the hay to see what  
Yaroslav's stealing, but he never  
finds anything. They do this for  
thirty years until Maxim says,  
"Yaroslav, I'm retiring. It's my last  
day. I promise-- I won't tell anyone,  
but I have to know. What have you  
been stealing?" And Yaroslav says--

The other miners all shout back at him.

THE MINERS

"I've been stealing the  
wheelbarrows!"

They all break out laughing, except for the miner who was telling the joke.

OLD MINER

Oh, fuck off all of you...

GLUKHOV, 40, short and stocky-- a fire hydrant of a man-- waves his hand to get their attention. His turn.

GLUKHOV

Okay okay, here's one-- what's as big as a house, burns 20 liters of fuel an hour, puts out a huge amount of smoke and noise, and cuts an apple into three pieces?

(beat)

A Soviet machine for cutting apples into four pieces.

The men explode with laughter. Except for:

OLD MINER

That's bullshit! It's not even funny...!

But the miners keep laughing. And Glukhov is laughing the loudest at his own joke, until he sees:

TWO MILITARY TROOP TRANSPORT TRUCKS approaching in the distance, led by a BLACK SEDAN with a small Soviet FLAG on the hood. His smile fades. And now they all turn to see it.

One of the miners SPITS in disgust at the sight of the car.

Glukhov rises and starts walking out to meet their unwelcome guests. The rest of the miners follow, like a gang on their way to a rumble.

**322 INT. TROOP TRANSPORT TRUCK - MOMENTS LATER**

**322**

DRIVER'S POV - looking through the windshield of the lead bus as it follows the sedan into the mining facility. Wipers on to keep the COAL DUST from settling like snow.

And ahead... nearly four dozen angry men... waiting.

**323 EXT. COAL MINES - CONTINUOUS**

**323**

The sedan comes to a stop. The driver gets out, walks around to the passenger side, and opens the door for:

MIKHAIL SHADOV, 40's, ugly pale-blue suit. He emerges, already intimidated by the hardass miners glaring at him. So he puffs himself up. Opts for his most authoritative voice.

SHADOV

Who is in charge here?

GLUKHOV

I'm the crew chief.

Shadov makes a show of taking a NOTEPAD and PEN from his coat.

SHADOV  
I am Shadov. Minister of Coal  
Industries.

GLUKHOV  
We know who you are.

And they clearly don't care. *This isn't working. Don't let them see you sweat.* Shadov tries again. Louder.

SHADOV  
How many men work here?

GLUKHOV  
Forty-five on this shift. One hundred  
total.

SHADOV  
I need all one hundred men to gather  
their equipment and get on the buses.

GLUKHOV  
Do you? To where?

TWO SOLDIERS have emerged from the troop transport trucks, each holding an AK-47. They're young. Shadov glances at them, then turns back to the miners. Renewed confidence.

SHADOV  
That's classified.

The miners look at each other. This could get ugly. But Glukhov isn't worried. He's looking at the soldiers.

GLUKHOV  
Go ahead. Start shooting. You don't  
have enough bullets for all of us.  
Kill as many as you can, whoever's  
left over will beat the piss out of  
each of you.

Shadov deflates. Knows he's lost. But one of the soldiers...

YOUNG SOLDIER  
You can't talk to us like--

GLUKHOV  
Shut the fuck up.

The soldier shuts the fuck up. Now he knows he's lost too. Shadov and the soldiers stand chastened, like school boys.

GLUKHOV

This is Tula. This is our mine. We don't leave unless you tell us why.

Defeated, Shadov considers the men before him. "Classified" be damned. All he can do now is tell them the truth. He puts his notepad and pen back in his coat.

SHADOV

You are going to Chernobyl.

Glukhov stares at him. Stunned. They all are.

SHADOV

You know what's happened there?

GLUKHOV

We dig up coal. Not bodies.

SHADOV

The reactor fuel is going to sink into the ground and poison the water from Kiev to the Black Sea. All of it. Forever, they say. They want you to stop that from happening.

The miners whisper to each other. Can that be true?

GLUKHOV

And how are we supposed to do that?

SHADOV

They didn't tell me, because I don't need to know. Do you need to know? Or have you heard enough?

Glukhov sucks his teeth. Thinks. Then turns back to his men. Well? The Old Miner lifts his head.

OLD MINER

Who, if not us?

Glukhov nods. Then slowly walks up to Shadov... pats his DIRTY HAND on Shadov's shoulder, getting the Minister's blue suit all sooty...

...and heads toward the truck. Shadov barely has time to see the mess Glukhov's made of him when: THE REST OF THE MINERS slowly parade past him toward the trucks--

--each one making sure to PAT Shadov on the shoulder... the chest... the belly... covering him in BLACK COAL DUST.

As the OLD MINER walks by, he gives Shadov a very friendly, and very sooty, PAT ON THE CHEEK.

OLD MINER  
*Now* you look like the Minister of  
 Coal...

The miners laugh, and we cut to:

324 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM 15 - DARK

324

CLOSE ON: Lyudmilla, sitting in a chair in the dark room. A vigil. From just off-camera, we can hear rattling breaths.

REVEAL: Vasily Ignatenko in his hospital bed. Barely recognizable. His hair is gone. Eyebrows too. His skin is covered in strange, discolored patches... red, green and blue bruising, as if he had been beaten.

His body is swollen.

His lips are split open in places, and covered in a thick, white plaque.

He is 25-years old. He looks so much older.

And all she can do is watch him sleep.

Until-- he stops breathing.

LYUDMILLA  
 Vasya?

And then: he draws in a sharp breath.

Thank god. She leans over and kisses him on his forehead. He opens his eyes. Groans. Frustrated.

VASILY  
 They told you no touching. It's not safe.

LYUDMILLA  
*They* touch you. If it's safe for them it's safe for me.

She reaches for a cup of water with a straw. He shakes his head. No. Then:

VASILY  
 How are the others?

LYUDMILLA

They took them to a special room.  
They won't tell me where.

He doesn't respond. Then:

VASILY

Open the curtains.

She sets the cup down and crosses to the window behind him. Pulls the curtain aside. BRIGHT DAYLIGHT floods in.

Vasily instantly closes his eyes in pain. Lyudmilla quickly returns to his side, and places special, bandaged DARKENED LENSES gently over his eyes.

He waits for the pain to subside. Then...

VASILY

What do you see? Tell me everything.

She turns slowly back to the window. From here, the only view is a dismal array of brutally ugly apartment buildings, and a grim highway just beyond.

LYUDMILLA

I see the Red Square from here. The  
Kremlin, the Mausoleum, Spasskaya  
Tower...

He nods. Pleased.

VASILY

Saint Basil's?

LYUDMILLA

Yes. It's beautiful.

VASILY

You see? I told you I'd show you  
Moscow one day. I told you.

She walks back to him. Sits down. Gently takes his hand. The flesh hangs strangely from his bones, as if it's separating.

LYUDMILLA

Thank you, my love.

BEHIND HER - through the interior window facing the hospital hallway, we see a figure in PROTECTIVE GEAR passing by...

**325 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS****325**

KHOMYUK strides down the hallway in medical clothing. Rubber gloves. Rubber booties. Sleeves and pants cuffs tucked in.

In her hand, a notebook and pen. She stops in front of a door, then takes a breath, and raises a cloth face-mask in place to cover her nose and mouth.

She opens the door.

INSIDE THE HOSPITAL ROOM - a man stands in a hospital gown, his back to us, staring out the window. He turns slowly at the sound of the door.

It's DYATLOV. His hair is now missing in patches. His eyebrows are gone. But otherwise-- he seems oddly fine. No trace of the morphine delirium we saw before.

He gestures to an uneaten tray of food. Contemptous.

DYATLOV

I'm not eating that. It's shit. Bring me something else.

KHOMYUK

I'm not a nurse, Comrade Dyatlov. I'm a nuclear physicist.

Oh really? *Her?* A sneer, then:

DYATLOV

Well then, Comrade Nuclear Physicist, unless you happen to have a butter and caviar sandwich with you, you can get the fuck out of my room.

And with that, he turns away.

**326 EXT. REACTOR SITE - DAY****326**

BUSES pull up to the site, just fifty meters or so away from the blown-open reactor building.

The miners get out... and stare in shock at the sight in front of them. Soldiers hand out GAS MASKS to them as they file off the bus.

MINER

Where do we need to go?

SOLDIER  
Straight ahead.

The miners stumble forward. This is far from a mine. They're unsure what they're doing or where they're supposed to be.

327 INT. MOBILE OFFICE - MOMENTS LATER

327

Legasov sits with Shcherbina. A map of the power plant on the small table in front of them.

Legasov smokes. Worried.

SHCHERBINA  
What.

LEGASOV  
I'm not good at this, Boris.  
(beat)  
The lying.

SHCHERBINA  
Have you ever spent time with miners?

LEGASOV  
No.

SHCHERBINA  
My advice? Tell the truth. These men work in the dark. They see everything.

A KNOCK on the door, then it opens. A soldier, announcing--

SOLDIER  
Andrei Glukhov. Crew chief.

Shcherbina nods. The soldier backs away, and GLUKHOV enters, gas mask in hand. He sits himself down unceremoniously, and drops the gas mask on the table. Gestures at it.

GLUKHOV  
Do these work?

LEGASOV  
To an extent.

Glukhov shrugs. Better than nothing. Then points at Legasov's pack of cigarettes.

LEGASOV  
Of course.

He holds the cigarettes out to Glukhov, who casually takes the entire pack. Lights one up, pockets the rest for later.

GLUKHOV  
Well? What's the job?

Legasov clears his throat. All right. He points to the map.

LEGASOV  
We need to install a liquid nitrogen heat exchanger underneath this concrete pad. There's no way to approach it from the interior of the building. We have to come at it from underground.

GLUKHOV  
And what's above the pad?

Again, right to the point. Legasov glances at Shcherbina, who gives a tiny nod. "Tell the truth."

LEGASOV  
The core of the nuclear reactor, which is melting down.

GLUKHOV  
(melting down?)  
What. Like-- ?

He makes a dropping gesture.

LEGASOV  
Essentially.

GLUKHOV  
Is it going to fall on us?

LEGASOV  
Not if you're done within six weeks.

Glukhov takes a long drag on his cigarette. Staring carefully at Legasov. Then:

GLUKHOV  
Dimensions?

LEGASOV  
(points at the map)  
You'll break ground here, tunnel 150 metres to here, and then excavate a 30 metre by 30 metre space for the heat exchanger.

(MORE)

LEGASOV (cont'd)

(beat)

And because we need to keep disruption of the ground to a minimum, we cannot use heavy equipment. It must be done by hand.

Glukhov whistles. That's a big job.

GLUKHOV

We'll need more men. At least four hundred. And we'll have to work around the clock.

(beat)

How deep do you want this tunnel? Six metres?

LEGASOV

Twelve.

GLUKHOV

*Twelve? Why?*

LEGASOV

For your protection. At that depth, you will be shielded from much of the radiation.

GLUKHOV

The entrance to the tunnel won't be twelve metres down.

LEGASOV

No.

GLUKHOV

And we're not twelve metres down right now.

LEGASOV

No. We're not.

Ah. So this is the situation.

SHCHERBINA

We have some equipment here on site, but more will arrive by midnight. You can start in the morning.

Glukhov stubs out his cigarette. Rises. Grabs his gas mask off the table.

GLUKHOV

We'll start now. I don't want my men here one second more than they have to be.

He stares at his gas mask for a moment.

GLUKHOV

If these worked, you'd be wearing them.

He tosses the gas mask back on the table, and exits.

CUT TO:

**328 NEAR PITCH BLACK**

**328**

The sound of muffled men shouting to each other. A heavy RATTLE of metal...

TITLE:

**MAY 6, 1986**

And then a MINER shifts his head to UNBLOCK the lights behind him, and now we see him and a coworker PUSHING a MINE CART full of dirt around a CORNER and--

**329 EXT. REACTOR SITE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER**

**329**

They EMERGE from the MOUTH of the tunnel shaft, and quickly TILT the minecart to empty the dirt.

They wear simple white uniforms, and simple white caps, much in the style of the reactor control room workers. But these men are covered in dirt. And dripping in sweat.

There is a SIGN nailed to the side of the shaft entrance... yellow Cyrillic lettering on a piece of brown plywood.

SUBTITLE: Comrades: our goal, 24/7, is to advance the tunnel by 13 metres each day

GLUKHOV emerges from the tunnel, right behind them. Jumps up out of the entrance trench.

GLUKHOV

Quickly. Back in. You two! Behind them.

(MORE)

GLUKHOV (cont'd)  
 (to another miner)  
 Iosif, get another spool of wire, and  
 tell group three to switch with two.

They move quickly, and without care. Jumping down into the dirt. Wiping the sweaty dust from their faces. No one is wearing a mask.

Glukhov looks up at the SUN. It's beating down, and it's not even noon yet.

He walks over to a crude, brown INTERCOM BOX set on top of some SANDBAGS. Pushes a button on it twice. It emits two signal tones. *Bweee bwee...* then we hear a VOICE, crackling through the tiny speaker.

MINER (INTERCOM)  
*Yes?*

GLUKHOV  
 What is it up to?

MINER (INTERCOM)  
*Fifty.*

Glukhov hangs his head in frustration. Then sees:

GLUKHOV  
 Hey. HEY, you!

PIKALOV, issuing commands to his radiometrists, looks over to see: this short, angry miner MARCHING toward him.

GLUKHOV  
 We need fans. Thirty or forty.

PIKALOV  
 For what purpose?

GLUKHOV  
 What do you mean? What purpose? To dig your fucking tunnel, what else?

One of Pikalov's men reacts, angrily, but Glukhov jabs his finger in the air at the soldier.

GLUKHOV  
 Who's talking to you? Who?

Pikalov raises a hand. Gets in between them.

PIKALOV  
 Comrades--

GLUKHOV

(back to Pikalov)

It's 50 degrees down there. We can't breathe with the masks, we can't breathe *without* the masks. It's an oven. We need ventilation.

PIKALOV

Fans will put dust in the air. The dust will go in your lungs.

GLUKHOV

I've been filling my lungs with dust for twenty years.

PIKALOV

Not this dust. I'm sorry. But for your own good-- no fans.

Pikalov and his men walk away, leaving a frustrated Glukhov.

We LOWER DOWN - INTO THE EARTH itself... until we come to:

**330 INT. THE TUNNEL - NOW**

**330**

A cramped shaft, dimly lit by bulb strung along swales of electrical cord.

Five miners are jammed against each other like rats in a nest, stooped over in the low tunnel, PICKING and SHOVELING into the earth as fast as they can manage.

The heat is intense. Rippling the air in spots. They drip sweat, but they keep working.

Gritting teeth. Muscles burning. And even without fans, the DUST swirls around them... it SHIMMERS in front of the lights... and we can literally see them inhaling it...

A miner swings his PICK right at us, and we cut to:

**331 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY**

**331**

LEONID TOPTUNOV, the young control room engineer, lies in a bed. Most of his hair is gone. Bits of his mustache remain in small patches. His body looks just as bad as Ignatenko's. Discolored. Swollen. Thousand yard stare.

He barely glances as KHOMYUK enters the room. Then back to the thousand yard stare.

She moves the chair back a few feet from his bed to maintain a safer distance, and sits. Still in full protection, mask covering her mouth. Notebook open in her lap. Pen poised.

She hesitates. Difficult to interrogate someone who is dying in front of your eyes. But no choice.

KHOMYUK

My name is Ulana Khomyuk. I am a nuclear physicist working with the Chernobyl Commission. I want you to tell me everything that happened the night of the accident. Is that all right?

TOPTUNOV

(hurts to speak)

Yes. I want to tell.

KHOMYUK

(reluctantly)

Alright. Your official title was--

TOPTUNOV

(a strange pride)

My name is Leonid Fedorovich Toptunov. I am the Senior Reactor Control Chief Engineer at Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant.

She stops writing. Surprised.

KHOMYUK

Senior engineer? How old are you?

He slowly turns his head to face her.

TOPTUNOV

I'm 25.

And now BLOOD begins leaking from his nostrils. Steady rivulets... coming out too easily. Coming out too thin.

Khomyuk crosses to the bedside table, picks up some cotton gauze, leans over Toptunov, and presses it gently to his nose.

They're looking straight at each other.

Her face covered by a mask. His face covered by the gauze. Nothing revealed but eyes gazing into eyes.

## 332 EXT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

332

The long hallway - then a BLOND MAN steps into view. 30's, mustache. Rolling a sucking candy around in his mouth. He looks around. Oddly out of place, and yet zero emotion.

Just a dead look. It should be quite clear what he is.

He steps out of the way as ORDERLIES come by, wheeling a GURNEY - with VASILY, the dark lenses shielding his eyes from the light. Lyudmilla follows right behind.

We move WITH THEM, leaving the Blond Man behind.

VASILY

(scared)

Lyusya...?

LYUDMILLA

I'm here.

They round a corner, and move toward a single room at the end of the hallway. Double doors.

VETROVA emerges from the room. Visible behind her, in the center of the room, we see heavy, CLEAR PLASTIC SHEETING dangling in overlapping strips from the ceiling.

As the orderlies bring Vasily into the room, Vetrova STOPS Lyudmilla from following. Shocked to even see her.

VETROVA

Have you been here this whole time?

LYUDMILLA

No one said I should leave.

VETROVA

I did. Thirty minutes, I said!

LYUDMILLA

(anger)

Well where have you been? When he's in pain? When his sores stick to his gown? When he soils himself five times a night-- I've been taking care of him. Where have you been?

Vetrova draws on every ounce of calm she has.

VETROVA

I have been in the north and west wing where there are dozens of patients from Chernobyl, exactly like him. It isn't safe for you here.

LYUDMILLA

He's my husband.

VETROVA

Not anymore. He's something else now. Do you understand? He's dangerous to you.

Lyudmilla doesn't understand. Or pretends not to?

LYUDMILLA

He's burned.

Vetrova can only shake her head. Tired. No, exhausted.

VETROVA

Go home.

All the fight leaves Lyudmilla, and she regresses to an almost child-like desperation and fear.

LYUDMILLA

Please. It won't be much longer.  
(can barely say it)  
I don't want him to die alone.

Vetrova closes her eyes. Angry at herself for this. Angry that this is happening at all. Then:

VETROVA

Stay on the other side of the plastic. Or I will have you removed by security.

Before Lyudmilla can respond, Vetrova WALKS AWAY. Then the orderlies exit the room and move past her as well.

Her husband is now in there alone.

**333 INT. ISOLATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS**

**333**

We're on Vasily's side of the TRANSPARENT CURTAIN. Through the plastic, we see the DOOR open.

Lyudmilla approaches. Then stops just on the other side of the plastic.

VASILY

Lyusya?

A pause, then LYUDMILLA pushes through PLASTIC. On our side now. On Vasily's side. Stands right next to him.

LYUDMILLA

Yes, my love.

VASILY

Is it day?

LYUDMILLA

No, it's nightttime now.

VASILY

(confused)

I think I had a dream. But it's gone.

LYUDMILLA

Vasya.

(beat)

We're going to have a baby.

He doesn't respond. Perhaps too delirious to understand. But then... his HAND lifts slightly off the bed. Trembling. The SKIN sloughing off. He's reaching for her.

He heard. He knows.

And she gently reaches back to take his hand in hers.

**334 INT. MOBILE OFFICE - CHERNOBYL COMMAND - NIGHT**

**334**

A plate with boiled chicken and beets. Untouched. A bottle of iodine pills. A full glass of water. A stack of maps. Books. Notepads. Blueprints.

Legasov writes a LIST. Four pages in already. Hand cramping. He puts his pen down, takes his glasses off. Rubs his eyes.

Picks up the glass of water. Then puts it down. His hand is TREMBLING. He stares at it, then:

THE DOOR OPENS - and Shcherbina enters. Ebullient. A bottle of VODKA in his hand. He smiles at Legasov.

SHCHERBINA

The fire is out.

He plunks the bottle down. Unscrews the cap, and tosses it. It lands in the corner with a plink.

SHCHERBINA

It's out, Valera! And the miners are making incredible progress. They say the whole job will be finished in four weeks. Four, can you believe it?

He takes Legasov's WATER GLASS, empties it into the waste basket, and starts pouring vodka.

But Legasov just stares blankly at his list.

Shcherbina puts the vodka bottle down. Sighs. Just wants to find some small joy, even now. Even knowing what he knows.

SHCHERBINA

I know the job isn't over. But it's the beginning of the end.

*The beginning of the end?* Legasov looks up. A strange look of pity on his face. And then... he slowly shakes his head.

No.

The smile fades from Shcherbina's face, and: KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK on the door. Shcherbina crosses over and opens it. A soldier is standing there.

SOLDIER

I'm sorry to bother you, Deputy Minister, but-- it's the miners.

Shcherbina looks back at Legasov. *What now?*

**335 EXT. REACTOR SITE - MOMENTS LATER**

**335**

Legasov and Shcherbina follow the soldier through the work site, under the glare of FLOODLIGHTS. They walk around a truck and stop dead, as they see:

THE MINERS - working. Digging, emptying the carts, doing their job.

In the nude.

Well, they have their shoes on. And their paper hats. But otherwise? Completely naked.

Legasov and Shcherbina just stare dumbstruck. And then they sees GLUKHOV, as naked as the others.

Legasov raises a hand to him. "May we have a word?"

Glukhov walks over to them. Zero self-consciousness.

GLUKHOV

What?

Legasov isn't quite sure what to say.

GLUKHOV

They won't give us fans, and it's too hot for clothes. So we're digging the old way. This is how our fathers mined.

Oh.

GLUKHOV

We're still wearing the fucking hats. What do you need?

LEGASOV

You aren't as protected without--

GLUKHOV

Are you telling me it will make a difference?

Legasov hesitates. Then remembers who he's dealing with. Shakes his head. No. It won't.

Which is what Glukhov expected. He looks back at his men, then turns to Shcherbina.

GLUKHOV

When this is over-- will we be taken care of?

Legasov and Shcherbina say nothing. There's no point in lying to this man.

Glukhov stares back at them in disgusted disappointment.

Then without another word, he heads back to the tunnel. Naked. And resigned.

**336 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - NIGHT**

**336**

A pen writes in Cyrillic in a notebook. Half a page of notes. The other page full. Six or seven pages behind that one. The pen underlines something. Then:

KHOMYUK stops writing. Looks at Toptunov.

KHOMYUK

So the power level jumped from 200 to 400 megawatts.

TOPTUNOV

Yes. Very fast.

KHOMYUK

Why didn't you press the AZ-5 button and shut the reactor down?

TOPTUNOV

We did. I reported the increase to Akimov-- and he pressed the button.

Khomyuk puts her pen down.

KHOMYUK

That's not possible, Leonid.

He turns to her. Grunting in pain from the effort.

TOPTUNOV

He did. I saw him do it. I swear. And that's when it exploded.

She leans back. Utter disbelief. Silence, then:

KHOMYUK

*What?*

TOPTUNOV

I wasn't supposed to be there.  
(tears in his eyes)  
It wasn't supposed to be me.

Khomyuk can only stare in shock.

Vetrova enters with a nurse, who wheels a tray of medicine.

VETROVA

I'm sorry, he needs rest now.

Khomyuk rises.

KHOMYUK

Of course.  
(mind spinning)  
Which room is Akimov?

VETROVA

27.

## 337 INT. HOSPITAL ROOM 27 - LATER

337

CLOSE ON - Khomyuk's notebook. She finishes writing "pressed AZ-5, large jolt, then explosion" (Cyrillic).

REVEAL - Khomyuk sitting in a different chair. Akimov's room. We never see Akimov. He remains off-camera. But we HEAR him. A terrible, rattling breath.

Khomyuk's face tells us all we need to know about what Akimov must look like. There is terrible pity for him. And horror at what he is suffering.

KHOMYUK

Thank you, Comrade Akimov. You should rest now.

She gets up to leave, sick to her stomach and on the verge of tears. And we stay CLOSE on her as she HEARS him... his awful voice... pained and confused and heartbreaking.

AKIMOV (O.S.)

We did everything right... we did everything right...

## 338 INT. HOSPITAL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

338

Khomyuk emerges from Akimov's room. Cold sweats. She chokes back the nausea. Breathe... breathe... easy, easy...

She begins walking down the hallway, trying to absorb what has become of these men. And what they've told her.

*Breathe. Breathe. You're okay.*

She turns a corner, then STOPS short. *What is she seeing?*

REVEAL - she is right in front of the door into VASILY IGNATENKO'S room. She looks through the window.

IN THE ROOM - Lyudmilla is sitting inside the protective plastic sheeting.

She is saying something to her husband that we cannot hear. She touches him with her left hand. *But her right hand is held gently on her belly.* She's smiling.

Khomyuk stares in utter shock, then BARGES INTO:

## 339 INT. ISOLATION ROOM - CONTINUOUS

339

She FLINGS the plastic slats aside and GRABS Lyudmilla by the wrist.

KHOMYUK

Get up!

Khomyuk PULLS Lyudmilla from the chair, and begins DRAGGING her by the wrist toward the door.

VASILY

Lyusya?

LYUDMILLA

LET ME GO!

VASILY

Lyusya?

But Khomyuk keeps DRAGGING, pulling Lyudmilla out into the hallway...

LYUDMILLA

(screaming)

STOP IT! STOP IT!

VETROVA comes running over, drawn by the noise.

KHOMYUK

You let her in that room? Inside the plastic? Touching him?

VETROVA

What did I tell you?

LYUDMILLA

It's not true!

KHOMYUK

Did you know she's pregnant?

Vetrova absorbs that in shock. Gapes at Lyudmilla.

VETROVA

What have you done?

Lyudmilla, scared, starts to cry. Shaking her head. No. Nothing. Nothing...

VETROVA

(again, terrified)

What have you DONE?

Khomyuk lets go of Lyudmilla. Turns on Vetrova.

KHOMYUK

What kind of place is this? Where is her protection? Do you have ANY IDEA what you're dealing with?

VETROVA

Of course I do. Please, I don't want--

KHOMYUK

No. People are going to hear about this.

VETROVA

Wait--

KHOMYUK

People are going to hear! You understand? Everyone is going to hear!

The BLOND MAN steps in her path, stopping her short.

BLOND MAN

What is everyone going to hear?

Khomyuk knows instantly what this is. And that she's made a terrible mistake. Only one way out of this.

KHOMYUK

I'm here on behalf of the official Chernobyl commission. I have been authorized by Valery Legasov to--

She glances behind her, sensing ANOTHER MAN arriving from the other direction. Standing behind her now.

KHOMYUK

You can check this. My name is--

BLOND MAN

We know who you are.  
(and again)  
What is everyone going to hear?

340 EXT. KREMLIN - MORNING

340

The sun rises over Moscow...

TITLE:

MAY 7, 1986

## 341 INT. KREMLIN HALLWAY - MORNING

341

The same room we saw when Legasov first arrived at the Kremlin.

And he's sitting in that little chair again. Waiting. This time, an empty chair next to him.

A moment, then SHCHERBINA arrives. Sits down next to Legasov.

SHCHERBINA  
You have your notes?

LEGASOV  
Yes.

Shcherbina seems preoccupied. Then:

SHCHERBINA  
Khomyuk was arrested last night.

LEGASOV  
What? Why?

SHCHERBINA  
I don't know.

LEGASOV  
Was it-- ?

SHCHERBINA  
Of course it was. I'm working on it.

LEGASOV  
Boris, I can't--

SHCHERBINA  
I'm working on it. What else do you want from me?  
(beat)  
Fix your tie, for god's sake.

Legasov has no choice but to accept this. And attempt to fix his crooked tie. Then:

A door opens, and the AIDE emerges with a pleasant smile.

KREMLIN AIDE  
They'll see you now.

342 INT. KREMLIN CONFERENCE ROOM - MORNING

342

Gorbachev, the bureaucrats, and generals listen.

SHCHERBINA (O.S.)  
...and after thousands of sorties,  
our brave helicopter crews  
successfully extinguished the fire.

Legasov is staring at one man across the table. At CHARKOV.  
The KGB minister.

SHCHERBINA  
The miners are working heroically to  
ensure that the fuel does not reach  
the groundwater. Furthermore, there  
is no longer a threat of additional  
explosion. The Soviet People have  
faced this challenge, and they have  
risen to the task. They, and everyone  
in this room, are to be commended.

A palpable sense of relief in the room. Finally.

SHCHERBINA  
Lastly, Professor Legasov and I have  
been vigilant to protect the security  
interests of the State. Since the  
unfortunate release of information  
directly following the accident, we  
believe there has been no further  
lapse. Comrade Charkov, we hope we  
have lived up to the highest standards  
of the KGB.

Charkov gives a non-committal smile.

CHARKOV  
You have.  
(glances at Legasov)  
Of course you have.

Legasov, caught staring, quickly averts his eyes.

SHCHERBINA  
Thank you. Professor Legasov will now  
speak about the work that remains.

Shcherbina sits, and Legasov rises. Reads from notes.

LEGASOV  
Thank you. Deputy Minister Shcherbina  
has given you the good news.  
(MORE)

LEGASOV (cont'd)

And it is good. The immediate danger is over. But now, I am afraid, a long war must begin.

He glances up for a reaction. There is none. He continues.

LEGASOV

There is an enormous amount of radioactive debris and contamination spread across a zone of approximately 2,600 square kilometers. This entire region must be completely evacuated. Men will need to go to every town, every village, to ensure this.

Another look. Again, no one seems deeply concerned.

LEGASOV

All animals still surviving within the zone-- domesticated or wild-- must be presumed contaminated, and will have to be destroyed to prevent the spread of radiation and disease.

He turns a page. Unnerved by the silence.

LEGASOV

In the immediate area around Chernobyl, every tree, every rock... the very ground itself has absorbed dangerous amounts of radionuclides, which will be carried by the wind or rain if left exposed. We will have to raze forests. And we will have to rip up the top layer of earth, and bury it under itself. Approximately 100 square kilometers. Finally, we will need to construct a containment structure around the power plant itself, which of course is still extremely--

(beat)

There will be deaths.

He's finished. Sits. A silence. Then a young general, NIKOLAI TARAKANOV, 45, speaks up.

TARAKANOV

What amount of time, what number of men do you require?

SHCHERBINA

We expect this liquidation effort to take three years, and approximately 750,000 men, including a number of doctors and structural engineers.

GORBACHEV

(still stuck on--)

How many deaths?

LEGASOV

Thousands. Perhaps tens of thousands.

Gorbachev absorbs that. The brutal weight of it. But there is no choice.

GORBACHEV

Begin at once.

**343 INT. KREMLIN HALLWAY - LATER**

**343**

Meeting over. Legasov and Shcherbina emerge... and Legasov sees CHARKOV ahead, walking away.

He can't help himself. Walks fast to chase Charkov down.

SHCHERBINA

(alarmed)

Valery...

But all Shcherbina can do is follow Legasov, and:

LEGASOV

Comrade Charkov.

Charkov stops and turns around. Ah.

CHARKOV

Yes, Professor?

LEGASOV

My associate was arrested last night.

CHARKOV

Oh?

LEGASOV

I mean no disrespect, but I was wondering if you could tell me why.

CHARKOV

I'm sorry. I don't know who you're talking about.

LEGASOV

(yes you do)

She was arrested by the KGB.

Charkov says nothing. Just an "and?" face...

LEGASOV

You are First Deputy Chairman of the KGB.

CHARKOV

(friendly chuckle)

I am! That's why I don't have to bother with arresting people anymore.

LEGASOV

But you are bothering to have your people follow me.

Okay. That's enough of that. Shcherbina takes Legasov's arm to lead him away.

SHCHERBINA

Professor, the Deputy Chairman is a busy--

CHARKOV

No, no, it's perfectly understandable.

(to Legasov, warmly)

Comrade, I know you've heard the stories about us. When I hear them, even I am shocked. But we're not what people say. Yes, people are following you. People are following those people.

(points)

And you see them?

Two non-descript men in suits at the end of the hallway.

CHARKOV

They follow me. The KGB is a circle of accountability. Nothing more.

LEGASOV

(at a loss)

You know the job we're doing. Do you really not trust us?

CHARKOV

Of course I do! But you know the old Russian proverb: "Trust, but verify." And the Americans think Ronald Reagan came up with that! Can you imagine?

(warmly)

It was very nice speaking with you.

As he turns away:

LEGASOV

I need her.

Charkov turns back. All warmth gone. Icewater stare.

CHARKOV

So you will be accountable for her?

Legasov registers the implicit threat. Even so, he nods.

CHARKOV

Then it's done.

LEGASOV

Her name is--

CHARKOV

I know who she is.  
(back to friendly)  
Good day, Professor.

He walks off. Legasov feels Shcherbina's eyes on him. Knows he's about to get a lecture. But:

SHCHERBINA

No, that went surprisingly well. You came off like a naive idiot.

(off Legasov's look)

Naive idiots aren't a threat.

**344 EXT. PRISON - MOSCOW - NIGHT**

**344**

A squat, red building with a castle-like tower. Thunder rumbles in the distance. A storm is coming.

TITLE:

**BUTYRSKAYA PRISON, MOSCOW**

345 INT. HOLDING CELL HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

345

THE BLOND MAN walks down the dimly lit, narrow hallway. The ugly paint can't disguise the brutish, 19th century walls.

All around us, the sounds of caged men. Junkies. Drunks. Lunatics. Enemies of the state. And occasionally, the scream of someone in pain.

Legasov follows the Blond Man to:

KHOMYUK'S JAIL CELL. She's sitting on the floor, back against the wall. And she is still, absurdly, in her radiation-protective outfit.

She looks up at Legasov. A bit of relief. But mostly, numb. The Blond Man unlocks the barred door and slides it open.

BLOND MAN

I'll come back when the paperwork is complete.

Legasov nods, and steps into the cell. The Blond Man closes the door, locks it, and exits. Legasov stands there.

LEGASOV

Are you all right?

KHOMYUK

They didn't hurt me.

(beat)

They let a pregnant woman into a room with a-- it doesn't matter. They were stupid. I was stupid.

The misery of it all washes over her.

KHOMYUK

Dyatlov won't talk to me. Toptunov and Akimov, yes, but...

(can still see him)

Akimov. Valery, his face is gone...

LEGASOV

You want to stop.

KHOMYUK

(stares at him)

Is that a choice I even have?

He slowly sits down next to her on the floor. She takes a long look at him. He's not well. And now she feels guilty.

LEGASOV

Do you think the fuel will actually melt through the concrete pad?

A strange non-sequitur.

KHOMYUK

What?

LEGASOV

It's a matter of probability, of course. So... odds?

She doesn't understand this shift in tone, but--

KHOMYUK

I don't know. A forty percent chance?

LEGASOV

I've said fifty. Either way, the numbers mean the same thing. "Maybe." Maybe the core will melt down to the groundwater. Maybe the miners I've told to dig under the reactor will save millions of lives. Or maybe I'm killing them for nothing.

And now, shame. A confession.

LEGASOV

I don't want to do this anymore. I want to stop.

(beat)

But I can't. So tomorrow, I will wake up and make more decisions that will kill more people, because there is no alternative. And no, I don't think you have a choice any more than I do. I think, despite the lies, the stupidity--

(the jail)

--even this... you are compelled. The problem has been assigned, and you will stop at nothing to find the answer. That is who you are.

And she knows he's right.

KHOMYUK

A lunatic, then.

LEGASOV

A scientist.

THE CELL DOOR - opens. The Blond Man stands waiting.

**346 INT. BOOKING DESK - MOMENTS LATER**

**346**

Legasov waits while Khomyuk signs papers to receive her personal items. She hands the form across a desk to a prison attendant, who heads into a back room with the form, leaving them alone for a moment.

There's something gnawing at her. Until she can't ignore it any longer... and she turns to Legasov.

KHOMYUK

Did you know they were running a safety test?

Legasov sighs. Yes. He heard. It's madness.

KHOMYUK

There's something else. Akimov says he shut the reactor down, and Toptunov confirms it. They pressed AZ-5.

LEGASOV

Apparently not soon enough.

KHOMYUK

No. They say Akimov pressed AZ-5, and then the reactor exploded.

He stiffens. A jolt of fear in his stomach. She doesn't see.

KHOMYUK

If it had been just one of them, I would have written it off as faulty memory or even delusion... but they both agreed. They were adamant.

She turns to him. Legasov seems lost in thought.

KHOMYUK

Comrade?

He snaps out of it. Turns to her.

LEGASOV

Do you think it's possible?

KHOMYUK

No. I think it makes no sense. I think it's what I would say if I wanted to cover my own mistakes.

LEGASOV

But?

KHOMYUK

I believed them.

A beat, then he moves in close to her. Sotto voce, so no one can overhear.

LEGASOV

Then you should pursue it. We have to pursue every possibility, no matter how unlikely... and no matter what-- or who-- is to blame.

Understood.

The prison attendant returns with a bin holding Khomyuk's personal effects. As she gathers her items...

KHOMYUK

I'll go back to the hospital now and reinterview Akimov and Toptunov... if they're still awake.

LEGASOV

They're not.

She meets his eyes. *Dead?* Yes. They're gone. She's surprised by the depth of her own grief, and:

SOUND FADES/MUSIC RISES

**347 EXT. FINAL MONTAGE**

**347**

As the music plays, we dissolve from moment to moment, drifting back and forth like a ghost...

OUTSIDE HOSPITAL NO. 6 - Lyudmilla exits the building. Numb. Suitcase in hand. The door closes behind her, but she doesn't look back. There's nothing left to see.

ISOLATION ROOM - Vasily's bed is now empty. An orderly removes the blood-stained sheets.

MOSCOW CITY STREET - Soldiers with CLIPBOARDS walk down the street, and begin heading into apartment buildings.

ACROSS THE STREET - more soldiers, heading into more buildings. Dozens of them. Old women watch. They've seen this before. *Men will be taken now. Some won't come back.*

HOSPITAL LOADING DOCK - SEVEN GURNEYS, each holding a PLASTIC-WRAPPED BODY. Two men in FULL HAZMAT SUITS lift one of the bodies and place it into a nondescript PLYWOOD COFFIN.

MOSCOW PARKING LOT - a man at the front of a queue gets some papers stamped and handed back to him. He moves off to the left, and the next man steps up. This is PAVEL, 23, thin, pale and frightened. He shivers a bit in the cold drizzle that's begun to fall. He hands his documents to the unseen officer.

STAMP. Papers are handed back, and Pavel is ushered off.

*We will see him again.*

HOSPITAL LOADING DOCK - the Hazmat men roughly hammer a lid onto the plywood coffin, then lift it and put it down into: A LARGER, ENTIRELY METAL COFFIN. Now they lift a heavy METAL LID, and place it on top.

HOSPITAL LOADING DOCK - a Hazmat man is WELDING the metal coffin shut. A reflection of SHOWERING SPARKS in the clear plastic window covering his face.

As the sparks RISE to fill our view, the music FADES...

...and is replaced by the TOLLING OF A BELL.

**348 EXT. MITINSKOE CEMETERY - MOSCOW - LATE AFTERNOON**

**348**

A small gathering of mourners stand under a gray sky. Some are crying. Lyudmilla is not. She stares blankly ahead.

In front of the mourners, a line of soldiers.

We move through them to see: a large TRENCH has been dug in the State graveyard, about thirty feet away. There are already SIX METAL COFFINS in the trench.

A TRUCK-MOUNTED CRANE moves into view, carrying the last of the WELDED-SHUT COFFINS. It lowers it down into the trench, where two SOLDIERS wait to hold it in place.

The CRANE TRUCK pulls away, and the soldiers quickly scramble up and out of the trench. Frightened.

Lyudmilla stares straight ahead. Then, in a quiet voice, to herself... almost a whisper...

LYUDMILLA

Open wide, O earth, and receive what  
was formed from you by the hand of God.

And now, a sound you do not hear at funerals. The deep THRUM  
of a heavy motor.

Lyudmilla watches, shaken, as:

A CEMENT MIXER backs into position at the edge of the  
trench, and CONCRETE begins pouring out, FILLING THE TRENCH  
with the METAL COFFINS.

Lyudmilla's eyes fill with tears, and she trembles from the  
horror of it, but she does not look away.

CLOSE ON: a METAL COFFIN. The concrete rises around it, and  
we wait and watch over the agonizing seconds...

...until the coffin disappears under the wet gray, and:

**FADE TO BLACK**

END OF EPISODE THREE