

CHERNOBYL

Episode 5 - "Vichnaya Pamyat"

Written by

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**501 EXT. PRIPYAT - DAY****501**

The iconic "PRIPYAT 1970" sign on the outskirts of town. Crisp and white. Colorful flowers planted at its base.

MUSIC: score, recalling memories of glory, or perhaps a dream of a glory that never was.

**502 EXT. PRIPYAT - VARIOUS - DAY****502**

Even a planned Soviet city can look beautiful on a day like this. Alive. Someone's dream of home...

SITNIKOV (who went to the roof) takes a stroll with his wife. They hold hands. Their DAUGHTER, 4, toddles along in front of them with their DOG.

OLD WOMEN sit together on a bench, gossiping and arguing as they do each day.

YUVCHENKO (who held the reactor door open) - pulls his 2-year old SON along in a little WAGON.

CITIZENS swim slowly across the community pool.

LYUDMILLA is in a shop with OKSANA. She looks out through the shop window to the street, where she sees VASILY standing with MIKHAIL, who holds his baby.

Mikhail offers to let Vasily hold the baby, and he does.

Lyudmilla watches her husband cradling the infant. Vasily turns and sees her watching. He smiles at her. Pure love. And she smiles back. Her husband. Her life. *One day it will be their baby. One day.*

A figure passes behind Vasily in the background.

CLOSE ON - SHOES walking with purpose. We pull back to reveal - ANATOLY DYATLOV.

Lunch sack in his hand. Cigarette in his mouth. Walking as he does every single day. *Walking to work.* Ahead of him, up and off in the distance... the CHERNOBYL POWER PLANT.

**CUT TO TITLES**

**END TITLES, CUT TO:**

503 INT. BRYUKHANOV'S OFFICE - DAY

503

TITLE:

APRIL 25, 1986

2:00 PM

FOMIN sits patiently across from Bryukhanov's desk. DYATLOV sits in the other guest seat. Glances at Fomin. Casually disdainful of him. Silence.

Then, finally:

FOMIN

I hear they might promote Bryukhanov. This little problem we have with the safety test? If it's completed successfully... yes, I think a promotion is very likely. Who knows, maybe Moscow.

Dyatlov's eyes narrow.

FOMIN

Naturally they'll put me in charge once he's gone. And then I'll need someone to take *my* old job. I *could* pick Sitnikov...

It takes a moment for Dyatlov to swallow his pride. Then:

DYATLOV

I would like to be considered.

FOMIN

I'll keep that in mind.

The door opens, and BRYUKHANOV enters. Fomin rises, but Bryukhanov gives him an annoyed wave to sit the fuck down. Then he starts opening desk drawers. Looking for something.

FOMIN

Viktor Petrovich, preparations for the test have gone smoothly. Comrade Dyatlov has been working per my instructions, and Reactor 4 output has been reduced to 1600 megawatts. With your approval, we're ready to continue lowering power to--

BRYUKHANOV

We have to wait.

Fomin and Dyatlov weren't expecting that. Not good.

FOMIN

Is there-- ?

BRYUKHANOV

You're going to ask me if there's a problem, Nikolai? You can't read a fucking face?

He's found a pack of cigarettes. Lights one. Tosses the lighter down on his desk.

BRYUKHANOV

Three years I've been trying to finish this test. Three years!

(beat)

I just got a call from the grid controller in Kiev. He says we can't lower power any further. Not for another ten hours.

DYATLOV

A grid controller? Where does he get off telling us--

BRYUKHANOV

It's not the *grid controller's* decision, Dyatlov-- it's the end of the month. All the productivity quotas? Everyone's working overtime, the factories need power, someone's pushing down from above. Not that we'll ever know who.

(smokes, then)

So do we have to scrap it or what?

FOMIN

No. I don't think so. If we need to wait ten hours, we wait.

BRYUKHANOV

Running at half power? We're not going to have stability issues?

FOMIN

No, I should think--

BRYUKHANOV

I'm not asking you.

Fomin musters a smile to cover his bile. As you wish, sir.

DYATLOV

It's safe. We'll maintain at 1600.  
I'll go home, get some sleep, and  
come back tonight. We'll proceed  
then. I'll personally supervise the  
test. And it will be completed.

Bryukhanov considers that. Then a grunt of satisfaction.

BRYUKHANOV

Well I'm not waiting around. Call me  
when it's done.

He gets up and walks out. Dyatlov follows. But Fomin  
lingers behind. Waits until they're gone. Then runs his  
fingers covetously along the edge of Bryukhanov's desk. The  
desk of a powerful man. *A man in charge...*

SOUND: a loud ELECTRONIC BUZZER/BELL

**504 EXT. CITY - MORNING**

**504**

A rambling, squat complex of white buildings dotted with  
barred windows. We hear the BUZZER BELL again. The sound of  
an institution on a rigid time schedule.

TITLE

**LUKYANIVSKA PRISON, KIEV  
MARCH, 1987**

**505 INT. LUKYANIVSKA PRISON CELL - SAME**

**505**

We PAN slowly across the dismal cell to find: FOMIN,  
dressed in the uniform of a Soviet prisoner, sitting on his  
cot. Crying. He barely looks like the same man.

Fomin removes his glasses with trembling hands to wipe his  
eyes, but the tears don't stop. They never stop. He stares  
at the glasses in his hand. *Yes. Today.*

**506 INT. LUKYANIVSKA PRISON HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER**

**506**

The cell block door opens, and three SOLDIERS enter and  
proceed down the hallway. The PRISON WARDEN stays behind.  
We remain with him as he calls out names.

WARDEN

Bryukhanov.

A soldier stops at the first door. Unlocks it and slides open. BRYUKHANOV, prison uniform, steps out. As the soldier escorts him toward the cell block door...

WARDEN

Dyatlov.

A soldier opens a second door. DYATLOV steps out. He's attempted to regrow his mustache, but it's barely there. His posture is stooped. His skin is papery.

WARDEN

Fomin.

Down the hall, the third soldier opens a door. Then takes a step back. Frozen.

WARDEN

Fomin!

The soldier turns, then starts RUNNING back toward us.

**507 INT. FOMIN'S CELL - CONTINUOUS**

**507**

We're ON THE FLOOR - looking across the room at the open door through a CRACKED LENS. Fomin's SHATTERED GLASSES.

Shards are missing. BLOOD begins to SEEP FORWARD along the floor. It pools around the glasses, then continues ahead. More. And more.

An ALARM sounds.

**508 EXT. MOSCOW STREET - AFTERNOON**

**508**

A QUEUE of people waiting to purchase tobacco from a KIOSK. It's Legasov turn. He buys a pack of cigarettes, walks a few steps, takes out a cigarette, then almost runs into:

A MAN IN A SUIT (KGB DRIVER). The man doesn't need to say a word. It's obvious what he is. He nods for Legasov to follow. Legasov dutifully does. No choice.

**509 EXT. ALLEYWAY AROUND THE CORNER - CONTINUOUS**

**509**

A BLACK ZIL LIMO is parked on the street. The KGB Driver opens the rear door, lets Legasov in, then CLOSES the door.

510 INT. SEDAN - MOMENTS LATER

510

CLOSE ON LEGASOV - sitting in the back seat, eyes forward.

CHARKOV (O.S.)

How do you feel?

Legasov turns. Reveal: CHARKOV, the head of the KGB, sitting next to him in the back.

CHARKOV

You went to the doctor yesterday.  
How is your health?

LEGASOV

You don't know?

Charkov smiles. Very good. He opens his briefcase and removes a NEWSPAPER. Hands it to Legasov. It's in German.

Below the fold on the front page, a PHOTOGRAPH of Legasov, from the IAEA conference. And a caption in German.

CHARKOV

From Vienna. Do you read German?

(no?)

It says, "At last, a Soviet scientist who tells the truth." Obviously I resent the insinuation, but I think it's fair to say you made an excellent impression at the conference. It turns out you're quite good at this.

Legasov stares at the photo. Guilt rising inside him.

LEGASOV

At what? Lying?

CHARKOV

Statecraft, Legasov. Statecraft.

Charkov takes the newspaper back from Legasov. Puts it back in his briefcase.

CHARKOV

The West is now satisfied that Chernobyl was solely the result of operator error. Which it essentially was. We have you to thank for that. And we intend to.

He hands Legasov another piece of paper. A list.

LEGASOV  
 (reads)  
 "Hero of the Soviet Union."

CHARKOV  
 Our highest honor. They haven't even  
 given it to me.

LEGASOV  
 "Promotion to Director of the  
 Kurchatov Institute."

Charkov gives that thin smile of his. He knows that's the  
 one Legasov wants.

LEGASOV  
 I'm humbled.

CHARKOV  
 I don't think there's anything  
 humble about you, Valery  
 Alexeyevich.

Charkov takes the paper back.

CHARKOV  
 And these rewards are not yours yet.  
 First, your testimony at the trial.

LEGASOV  
 Comrade Charkov, I understand my  
 duty to the State-- but you gave us  
 assurances. You said the reactors  
 would be made safe. It's been  
 months. There have been no changes  
 made, no changes even *discussed*...

CHARKOV  
 (again)  
 First, the trial. Once it's over, we  
 will have our villains, we will have  
 our hero... we will have our truth.  
 (uninterested)  
 After that, we can deal with the  
 reactors.

Charkov dismisses him with a wave of the hand. Nothing left  
 to say. Legasov opens the door to exit, and:

CHARKOV  
 Oh, I should mention-- the trial is  
 going to be somewhat delayed.

LEGASOV  
Why?

CHARKOV  
Talk to Shcherbina.

LEGASOV  
(confused)  
Shcherbina's in Kiev. I haven't  
heard from him in--

CHARKOV  
He returned to Moscow an hour ago.

Charkov gives Legasov that smile again.

CHARKOV  
Or so I've been told.

The KGB DRIVER opens the door fully to let Legasov out.  
Legasov EXITS and watches as the ZIL drives away.

**511 INT. LIVING ROOM - SHCHERBINA'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON**

**511**

SHCHERBINA stands by the window, looking out. His hair is a  
touch thinner. A subtle aging to his skin.

LEGASOV (O.S.)  
When?

Shcherbina turns to LEGASOV - who sits in a chair. Ashen.

SHCHERBINA  
Early this morning. He broke his  
glasses and used the shards--  
(his wrist)  
They got to him in time. He's in the  
hospital, under observation.

LEGASOV  
Guilty conscience?

SHCHERBINA  
Or he was making a statement.

SHCHERBINA'S DAUGHTER, 30, enters the room with a tea  
service. Her son, 4, runs in and HUGS Shcherbina on the  
leg. Shcherbina lights up. Lifts the boy with some effort.

SHCHERBINA  
Did you bring grandpapa tea? Is that  
what you did? You brought him tea?

He kisses his grandson on the forehead, then puts him back down. Again, an effort. It was easy a year ago.

His daughter takes her son by the hand and exits. Shcherbina's smile fades. Then:

SHCHERBINA

There's something else. The trial won't be in Kiev. They've changed the venue.

LEGASOV

Here, then?

SHCHERBINA

No. Chernobyl. To be clear, not the power plant. The town.

LEGASOV

The *evacuated* town thirty kilometers away from the reactor?

SHCHERBINA

Twenty, actually.

LEGASOV

For god's sake, why?

SHCHERBINA

I presume they want to demonstrate that the exclusion zone is now safe enough to hold a trial.

LEGASOV

Well it isn't.

SHCHERBINA

You don't look good.

LEGASOV

I'm not sleeping.

SHCHERBINA

Is that all?

Legasov doesn't answer. He just removes his glasses, weary. Turns them around in his hand. Thinking about Fomin again. Mystified by the man's actions.

LEGASOV

His glasses...

CUT TO:

## 512 INT. KHOMYUK'S LABORATORY - DAY

512

EXTREME CLOSE ON: the letters **A3-5** (AZ-5 in Cyrillic).

Khomyuk stares at the Volkov article. Exhausted from torturing herself. Wishing she'd never read it. Wishing she didn't know.

Enough. She has work to do. She pushes the Volkov article aside. Picks up a stack of requisition forms. Paperwork. Endless paperwork. Scans the first form, then initials.

Next form. Initials. Next form...

She's lost focus again. This time, it's a FILE BOX that has drawn her attention.

She hesitates, then crosses to the box, and lifts the lid.

Inside, NOTEBOOKS. About a dozen. She takes one out. Opens it. Pages and pages... all filled with her handwriting.

She runs her fingers over the neat Cyrillic penmanship.

MEMORY (O.S.)

*My name is Leonid Fedorovich  
Toptunov. I am the Senior Reactor  
Control Chief...*

The voices are raspy. Strained. Turn a page...

MEMORY (O.S.)

*Vasily Ivanovich Ignatenko. 6th  
Paramilitary Fire/Rescue Unit...*

Turn a page... the weakened voices begin to blend...

MEMORY (O.S.)

*Svetlana Zinchenko, physician...  
Anatoly Andreyevich Sitnikov, deputy  
chief engineer...  
Aleksander Genadyevich Kudryavtsev,  
trainee...*

She closes her eyes. She was with them all. Listened to them all. Knew them all.

MEMORY (O.S.)

*Electrical engineer...  
Turbine operator...  
Security guard...*

She opens her eyes. Looks down at the page.

MEMORY (O.S.)  
*My name is Aleksander Fyodorovich  
 Akimov, Unit 4 Shift Leader.*

She looks up from the notebook. An idea. And now more than an idea. A decision.

She snaps the book shut, and:

CUT TO:

**513 INT. LEGASOV'S APARTMENT - KITCHEN - DAY**

**513**

Legasov stares at: TECHNICAL SCHEMATICS spread out on his table like a visual representation of a CONTROL PANEL.

He smokes. Studies them silently. The table clock *tick tick ticks*. The cat pads softly over stacks of BOOKS.

Legasov notices: two strands of HAIR on the schematics. Long. Like they fell from the root.

He reaches up to his head and runs his fingers through his hair. A few more STRANDS pull away without effort.

He studies the hair in his hand, shakes it off and wipes the schematics clean. This isn't the first time.

**KNOCK KNOCK KNOCK**

Legasov snaps out of it. Startled. Heads to the door.

**514 INT. LEGASOV'S STUDY - MOMENTS LATER**

**514**

Khomyuk sits across from Legasov, the file box on her lap. Neither of them sure who's supposed to talk first. Then:

LEGASOV  
 Did you take a train?

Oh for god's--

KHOMYUK  
 Yes, I took a train, now let's talk about Vienna.  
 (as he reacts)  
 I haven't come to scold you. I know how the world works. I'm a realist, no matter what Shcherbina thinks.

LEGASOV  
Then why are you here?

KHOMYUK  
Because I'm brutally stubborn. Which  
you were hoping for.

Right. So. As if to convince her...

LEGASOV  
Charkov is saying they're going to  
fix the reactors after the trial.

KHOMYUK  
Do you believe him?

A pause. No. Of course not. But Khomyuk leans in.

KHOMYUK  
The State will never willingly fix  
the reactors, because acknowledging  
the problem means admitting they  
lied. They will have to be forced.

*Forced?* What is she on about?

KHOMYUK  
At the trial, you're going to tell  
the truth. You're going to convince  
a jury.

Legasov stares at her as if she's lost her mind.

LEGASOV  
It's a *show* trial. The "jury" has  
already been given their verdict...

KHOMYUK  
I'm not talking about them. The  
Central Committee has invited  
members of the scientific community  
to observe the trial. Our  
colleagues. From Kurchatov, from  
Sredmash, from Minenergo...

And now Legasov sees where she's going.

KHOMYUK  
They will be sitting in the crowd,  
listening to every word you say. A  
jury only we know is there.

(MORE)

KHOMYUK (cont'd)

And when your testimony arrives at the moment of the explosion... that is when our jury will finally hear the truth.

LEGASOV

And do what with it?

KHOMYUK

Insist on reforms. Not just to the RBMK, but the entire industry.

LEGASOV

No, no, no... no.

KHOMYUK

They need us to function. If we refuse to work unless--

LEGASOV

Do you know what happened to Volkov? The man who wrote the report you found? They just removed him from his position at the Institute. Sacked for the crime of knowing. And you think these scientists, handpicked to witness a *show trial*, will somehow be stirred to action? By me? Because of some heroic stand I take in defiance of the State?

KHOMYUK

Yes.

LEGASOV

*Why?*

KHOMYUK

Because you're Legasov. And you mean something. I'd like to think if I spoke out, it would be enough.

(beat)

But as I said, I know how the world works.

LEGASOV

They will shoot me, Khomyuk.

Khomyuk lifts the lid off the box. Pulls out her notebooks, and begins stacking them in a PILE on Legasov's table.

KHOMYUK

You told me to find out what happened. I talked to dozens of people. Every word they said, I wrote down. All in these books.

The stack is about twelve books high. She pulls out two more notebooks, and places them next to the larger stack.

KHOMYUK

(the two books)

These are the ones who are still alive.

(the twelve books)

These are the ones who are dead. They died rescuing each other. Putting out fires. Tending to the wounded. They didn't hesitate. They didn't waver. They simply did what had to be done.

LEGASOV

So have I. I went willingly to an open reactor. I've also given my life. Is that not enough?

KHOMYUK

I'm sorry. But it is not.

RISING SOUND: a distant, whistling wind

**515 EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY**

**515**

CLOSE ON: a RUSTING CAR.

We SLOWLY RISE to reveal: more cars. And buses. Trucks. Fire engines. Bulldozers. Helicopters. Acres and acres of DEAD, CONTAMINATED VEHICLES, stacked in rows. A CEMETERY.

A BARBED WIRE FENCE dotted with garish red and orange RADIATION SIGNS surrounds the vehicle graveyard. We move to FIND: a convoy of cars moving down a distant ROAD in the background.

TITLE

**CHERNOBYL EXCLUSION ZONE  
JULY, 1987**

**516 INT. CAR - COUNTRYSIDE - AS THEY DRIVE**

**516**

A limousine. Khomyuk, Legasov and Shcherbina sit in a row in the back. Somber. Straight ahead. On their way.

**517 OMITTED**

**517**

518 OMITTED

518

519 EXT. MILITARY CHECKPOINT - AS THEY DRIVE

519

CLOSE ON: the GAS MASK face of a CHECKPOINT SOLDIER. In the dark lenses of the goggles, a DOUBLE REFLECTION of the approaching line of CARS.

The GAS MASK SOLDIER waves them through.

As they proceed, we RISE UP TO SEE the caravan enter: THE ABANDONED CITY OF CHERNOBYL. Rural. Small, squat buildings ensconced among the trees.

The convoy proceeds to the LARGEST BUILDING. The Hall of Culture. And looming behind the city in the distant B.G, the nuclear power plant.

520 INT. TRIAL ROOM - DAY

520

CLOSE ON: ANDREI STEPASHIN, 50, the STATE PROSECUTOR, suit and tie, reading rapidly and monotonically from a typed speech.

STEPASHIN

The Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. has determined that justice be carried out on behalf of the People in accordance with the general goal of our Party as determined by its 20th, 21st and 22d Congresses, which is a Leninist goal. It was, is and will be the only immutable goal in the Soviet state.

THE TRIAL ROOM - a small, repurposed auditorium setting. Against the NORTH WALL of the room, a RED DAIS on the low stage. Three middle-aged men in suits. Ceremonial chairs. The man in the center is JUDGE MILAN KADNIKOV, 55. Behind them, an orange-yellow curtain.

Against the WEST WALL, a pale blue curtain. In front of it, a DEFENDANT BOX. Bryukhanov, Dyatlov and Fomin sit in the box. Suit jackets. Two RED ARMY SOLDIERS stand guard on either side.

THE REST OF THE ROOM - auditorium seats. Civilians, Soviet officials, military. Near Stepashin, an EXPERT WITNESS TABLE. Legasov, Khomyuk and Shcherbina.

As Stepashin DRONES, we're CLOSE ON LEGASOV. The air is STIFLING. Hard to breathe. The HOT LIGHTS and mosquito-like electric HUM of bulky Soviet press video cameras.

Legasov wipes sweat from his brow. A single, useless FAN in the corner of the room goes *ting ting ting ting ting...*

STEPASHIN

The path of Leninist principles shall be consistently and undeviatingly followed as it expresses the vital interests of the Soviet People, its hopes and aspirations as we guide the life of the Party and State. This session of court is now open, Comrade Judge Milan Kadnikov presiding. Indictments--

As Stepashin recites the charges, Khomyuk leans in to whisper to Legasov. He puts a hand up. Yes. He sees them.

Legasov glances over his shoulder, and we see: SIX PEOPLE, four men, two women, seated together in the audience. Men and women he knows. Scientists. *The invisible jury...*

STEPASHIN

Viktor Bryukhanov, Anatoly Dyatlov and Nikolai Fomin are accused of violating Article 220 Section 2 of the Criminal Code of the Soviet Union resulting in a nuclear disaster on April 26, 1986. The State calls witnesses Comrade Khomyuk of the Byelorussian Nuclear Institute, Comrade Legasov of the Kurchatov Institute of Atomic Energy, and--  
(show of deference)  
--Comrade Boris Evdokimovich Shcherbina, Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers and head of the Bureau for Fuel and Energy.

Stepashin sits down. There's a pause. Shcherbina leans forward to look at Stepashin. *Am I on?*

Stepashin gives him a gentle nod, like a director responsible for cueing his actors. *Yes. You're on.*

521 INT. TRIAL ROOM - LATER

521

CLOSE ON: A MODEL of REACTOR BUILDING #4, as it existed before the explosion, is slowly WHEELED IN on a cart.

SHCHERBINA (O.S.)

It began with-- of all things-- a safety test.

Shcherbina stands before the tribunal. Legasov and Khomyuk sit at the table behind him.

SHCHERBINA

But why was there a need for a safety test at all?

THE DEFENDANTS - listen silently. Fomin seems lost. In a fog. Dyatlov remains stern. Bryukhanov hangs his head slightly. He knows what's coming.

SHCHERBINA

Reactor #4 was not new when this accident occurred. In fact, the reactor went into operation on December 20th, 1983. Eleven days later, on the last day of year, Plant Director Viktor Bryukhanov signed this document--

He hands the document to the judges.

SHCHERBINA

--certifying that construction of the reactor had been completed. As a result of finishing this work before the end of the year, Comrade Bryukhanov was awarded Hero of Socialist Labour.

Shcherbina turns his gaze on the defendants.

SHCHERBINA

Comrade Fomin was awarded for Valorous Labour. Comrade Dyatlov was given an Order of the Red Banner.

(beat)

But the work was not finished. And that certificate... was a lie. In order to sign that document, all safety tests had to have been successfully completed. And yet, one remained.

As he talks, he points out various parts of the model.

SHCHERBINA

A nuclear reactor generates heat in the core-- here. A series of pumps *here* send a constant flow of cooling water through the core. The core's heat turns the water to steam, the steam spins a turbine *here*, and the result is electricity.

(beat)

But what if a power plant has no power? What if the power feeding the plant *itself* is disrupted? A blackout, equipment failure... an attack by a foreign enemy?

Shcherbina points to the pumps.

SHCHERBINA

If there is no power, the pumps cannot move water through the core. Without water, the core overheats, and the fuel melts down. In short-- a nuclear disaster. The solution? Three diesel fuel backup generators *here*. So. Problem solved?

(beat)

No. Bryukhanov knew the problem was not solved at all. The backup generators took approximately one minute to reach the speed required to power the pumps and prevent a meltdown. By that point, it would be too late. And so-- we arrive at the safety test.

Khomyuk leans back. Surprised. Impressed with his command.

SHCHERBINA

The theory was this: if the facility lost power, the turbine-- which had been spinning-- would take some time to slow down and stop. What if you could take the electricity it was still generating, and transfer it to the pumps? What if the dying turbine could keep the pumps working long enough to bridge the sixty-second gap until the generators came on?

He looks up at the judges. Suddenly insecure.

SHCHERBINA

Please, if you have any questions...

JUDGE KADNIKOV

No. Continue.

Shcherbina nods. Good. Proud of himself.

SHCHERBINA

To test this theory, the reactor is placed in a reduced power mode-- 700 megawatts-- to simulate a blackout condition. Then-- the turbines are shut off, and as they slowly spin down, their electrical output is measured to see if it is sufficient to power the pumps. The science is strong-- but a test is only as good as the men carrying it out. The first time they tried, they failed. The second time they tried, they failed. The third time they tried, they failed.

(beat)

The fourth time they tried-- was on April 26th, 1986.

The room is silent. Shcherbina knows he's done well. He enjoys the moment-- then crosses back to the table.

STEPASHIN (O.S.)

Comrade Khomyuk.

522 INT. TRIAL ROOM - LATER

522

New soldiers enter to relieve the guards by the defendants.

KHOMYUK (O.S.)

To understand what happened that night, we have to look back ten hours earlier.

KHOMYUK - stands in the center of the room, delivering her testimony. She glances at: THE SIX SCIENTISTS. *The "jury."* She wishes she could say the truth to them herself, right here and now... but has to be Legasov. So she continues...

KHOMYUK

April 25th. The day the test was meant to take place.

(MORE)

KHOMYUK (cont'd)

By two in the afternoon, the reactor has been lowered by half from its normal output of 3200 megawatts to 1600 megawatts, and is now ready to be reduced to the final level for the test. 700 megawatts. But before they can proceed, there is a phone call.

(beat)

Power grid officials in Kiev say they cannot afford a further reduction in electricity until after midnight. They're asking for a ten hour delay. This was the first critical moment-- the first link in the chain of disaster. Competent management would have insisted on canceling the test. These three men allowed it to proceed.

(beat)

Why was this ten hour delay so dangerous? It created two problems. One is scientific in nature. The other... is very human. That's the one we'll consider first.

(beat)

At midnight--

DISSOLVE TO:

**523 EXT. CHERNOBYL POWER PLANT - NIGHT**

**523**

The glaring HEADLIGHTS of a BUS. It slows to a stop.

KHOMYUK (V.O.)

--there is a shift change.

The air brakes hiss. A line of men exit the bus, passing a line of men waiting to get on.

TOPTUNOV steps out. He heads toward: THE POWER PLANT - peaceful in the background.

**524 INT. POWER PLANT - LOCKER ROOM**

**524**

QUICK CUTS - men remove their clothing. Pictures of wives and children on the inside of the locker doors.

We know their faces. Yuvchenko. Perevozchenko. Brazhnik. Gorbanchenko. Stolyarchuk. Toptunov. And now... a man whose name we've heard, but not yet seen.

PEREVOZCHENKO  
Khodemchuk...!

KHODEMCHUK, slender, 35, leans out from behind his locker.

PEREVOZCHENKO  
I brought a picture of the  
motorcycle.

KHODEMCHUK  
I already told you no.

PEREVOZCHENKO  
You said you wanted to buy...

KHODEMCHUK  
I was drunk.

PEREVOZCHENKO  
So, you'll be drunk again-- and then  
you'll have a motorcycle!

The men laugh.

**525 OMITTED**

**525**

**526 INT. CLEAN ROOM - MOMENTS LATER**

**526**

White uniforms-- pants, jackets, boots, hats,  
underclothes-- are stacked on tables.

Nude men filter in from the locker room and grab uniforms.  
Others (Perevozchenko, Toptunov, Brazhnik, Yuvchenko) are  
already in the process of getting dressed.

The room is remarkably sterile, except for the fact that  
most of the men are SMOKING.

As he suits up, Perevozchenko sees Khodemchuk enter.

PEREVOZCHENKO  
Khodemchuk...

KHODEMCHUK  
Forget it. Find another fool.

Perevozchenko sighs. Then turns to:

PEREVOZCHENKO  
Toptunov--

BRAZHNIK

Toptunov? Look at him. He's too young to drive. He's got more hair on his face than on his balls.

The men laugh. Yuvchenko points at Toptunov's mustache.

YUVCHENKO

Hair? Is *that* what's on his lip?

More laughter. Toptunov shakes his head. Come on guys...

As Toptunov puts on his boots, Proskuryakov (the trainee), already in uniform, pops his head into the room.

PROSKURYAKOV

Leonid Fedorovich... Akimov says to come to the control room as soon as you're ready.

TOPTUNOV

He's already here?

PROSKURYAKOV

He came in a little early. Something about a test.

A test? What test?

**527 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - MOMENTS LATER**

**527**

Toptunov enters with the trainee. Akimov is at the main control panel, staring at an open BINDER. Flipping pages.

Stolyarchuk and Kirschenbaum are at their panels. The other trainee, Kudryavtsev, stands in the back, watching.

TOPTUNOV

Sasha?

Akimov turns, and Toptunov sees the worry on his face. Akimov waves him over. Keeps his voice low.

AKIMOV

You know the test they were supposed to run?

No, he doesn't. Then he glances at: THE OUTPUT DISPLAY - a large box with RED LED DIGITS. It reads **1600**. *Why so low?*

AKIMOV

The turbine rundown. The one they tried last year? They couldn't do it on the day shift so... they've given it to us.

TOPTUNOV

To us? We don't even know what it--

Akimov puts a hand up. Sshhh. People are always listening.

TOPTUNOV

(voice low)

We don't know what it is.

AKIMOV

It's fine. We take it down to 700, hold it there, and the rest is Stolyarchuk and Kirschenbaum. But--  
(beat)

Dyatlov is going to be supervising.

Now Toptunov knows why Akimov is worried. And with cause.

TOPTUNOV

I have to do something I've never done before with *Dyatlov* over my shoulder?

AKIMOV

Don't worry. We'll do it together. I'm looking at the instructions now.

Toptunov glances down at the manual. Nods. All right, so far, so good. He understands. Then he turns a page. There is a NUMBERED LIST of instructions. There are black LINES drawn through several of the items.

TOPTUNOV

Are we supposed to do those or not?

Impossible to say. Akimov picks up a PHONE. Dials. Then:

AKIMOV

Yes, this is Akimov in 4. We have the manual for the rundown test, you did this before on--

(listens)

Well in the program there are instructions of what to do, and then a lot of things are crossed out. What should I-- ?

(MORE)

AKIMOV (cont'd)  
(listens)  
Are you sure? Right. Thank you.

He hangs up. Turns to Toptunov.

AKIMOV  
He says to follow the crossed out  
instructions.

TOPTUNOV  
Then why were they crossed out?

The door flings open. DYATLOV strides in. Dressed in the  
same white uniform. No warning, no greeting. All business.

DYATLOV  
We've been cleared to run the test.  
(checks the power)  
1600. Good. Now-- is it too much to  
ask that you all know what you're  
doing?

TOPTUNOV  
Well-- we...

AKIMOV  
(cuts off Toptunov)  
Yes. Absolutely.

DYATLOV  
Stolyarchuk?

STOLYARCHUK  
Yes.

DYATLOV  
Kirschenbaum?

KIRSCHENBAUM  
I haven't reviewed-- we only just  
found out we--

Dyatlov grabs a BINDER from the desk in the center of the  
room, and flings it at Kirschenbaum.

DYATLOV  
There. Review it. Or just do what I  
tell you. I think even you, as  
stupid as you are, can manage that.

Dyatlov deliberately lights a cigarette. Checks his watch.

DYATLOV

Well? Let's go.

ON KIRSCHENBAUM - flipping through the binder. He's muttering to Stolyarchuk.

KIRSCHENBAUM

I'm supposed to switch the turbine off while the reactor's *still running*? That's not a good--

But he's just loud enough for Dyatlov to hear.

DYATLOV

SHUT THE FUCK UP and do your job.

Kirschenbaum puts his hand up. Sorry... sorry...

DYATLOV

Toptunov. Reduce power to 700.

ON TOPTUNOV and AKIMOV, side by side over the controls.

TOPTUNOV

(a bare whisper)

I've never done this with the power so low.

AKIMOV

(whispers back)

It's okay. I'm with you.

ON THE PANEL - Toptunov's finger begins pushing down on buttons. One after another.

TOPTUNOV

Reducing power to 700...

KHOMYUK (V.O.)

I want you to think of Yuri Gagarin.

528 INT. TRIAL ROOM - DAY

528

Khomyuk addresses the room.

KHOMYUK

I want you to imagine he had been told nothing of his mission into space until the moment he was on the launch pad.

(MORE)

KHOMYUK (cont'd)  
I want you to imagine all he had was  
a list of instructions he'd never  
seen before, with some of them  
crossed out.

The room is silent.

KHOMYUK  
That is exactly what was happening  
in the control room of Reactor 4.

She walks toward the defendants.

KHOMYUK  
The night shift had not been trained  
to perform the experiment. They  
hadn't even been warned it was  
happening. Leonid Toptunov-- the  
operator responsible for controlling  
and stabilizing the reactor that  
night-- was all of 25-years old. And  
his total experience on the job?

(beat)

Four months.

(beat)

This was the human problem created  
by the delay. But inside the reactor  
core-- in the space between atoms  
themselves-- something far more  
dangerous was forming. A poison.

(beat)

The time is 28 past midnight.

She crosses back to table and takes her seat next to  
Legasov. Her part is over. It's up to him now.

Legasov takes a breath. Sweaty palms. *tick tick tick* of the  
fan. In the back, someone coughs.

STEPASHIN  
(glaring)  
Comrade Legasov.

He nods. Yes. It's time. He rises, and:

**529 INT. TRIAL ROOM - DAY - MOMENTS LATER**

**529**

CLOSE ON - the WOBBLING WHEEL of a small metal pushcart.

A SOLDIER guides the cart into place in front of a large  
white MAGNET BOARD on an easel, which another soldier  
adjusts into place.

A LINE runs down the middle of the board, dividing it in two. On the cart: PLACARDS, some BLUE, some RED. They each have something written on them in Cyrillic.

It's all rather functional.

The guards step away, and Legasov takes his place by the cart and easel. Looks out at the room. The lights. The camera whine. Someone snuffles. His throat is closing.

He takes a breath. Focuses. And again, he sees them, sitting in their row, listening attentively: THE SIX SCIENTISTS.

LEGASOV

I am pleased to see some of my colleagues are here-- from the Kurchatov Institute and Minenergo.

Khomyuk straightens up. He's acknowledged them. He's thinking about them. There's a chance...

LEGASOV

But you don't need to be a nuclear scientist to understand what happened at Chernobyl. You only need to know this: there are essentially two things that happen inside a nuclear reactor.

He holds up a RED placard, and a BLUE placard.

LEGASOV

The "reactivity"-- which generates the power-- goes up, or it goes down. That's it. And all the operators do is maintain the balance.

He fixes the RED placard - "Nuclear Fission" (**R1**) to the top of the RIGHT COLUMN of the board. The words on the placard are in Cyrillic. Doesn't matter.

All that matters is the BRIGHT RED COLOR.

LEGASOV

Uranium fuel. As uranium atoms split apart and collide, reactivity goes up. But if you don't balance the reactivity, it never stops rising.

Next, Legasov puts the BLUE PLACARD - "Control Rods" (**B1**), in the LEFT COLUMN. Balancing it out. Blue/cool, red/hot.

LEGASOV

Boron control rods. They reduce reactivity, like brakes on a car.

He places another BLUE PLACARD - "Water" (B2) on the left.

LEGASOV

But there's a third factor to consider. Water. Cool water takes heat out of the system. But as it does, it turns to steam, or what we call a void.

He places two RED PLACARDS - "Positive Void Coefficient" (R2) and another "Nuclear Fission" (R3) - on the right side.

LEGASOV

In an RBMK reactor of the type used at Chernobyl, there is something called a "positive void coefficient." What does that mean? It means the more steam, the higher the reactivity, which means more heat, which means more steam-- it would appear we have a vicious cycle on our hands. And we would, if not for this.

Legasov picks up a BLUE PLACARD - "Negative Temperature Coefficient" (B3) and places it on the left column.

LEGASOV

Negative temperature coefficient. When nuclear fuel gets hotter, it gets less reactive. So--

He stares at the board. Even after all this time, he still can't help but marvel at the science. He moves his hands between the columns of RED and BLUE...

LEGASOV

--fuel increases reactivity. Control rods and water reduce it. Steam increases it, and the rise in temperature reduces it. This is the invisible dance that powers entire cities without smoke or flame. And it is beautiful...

He turns back to the room.

LEGASOV  
When things are *normal*.

Legasov lifts up a BLUE PLACARD. "Xenon Poisoning" (B4).

LEGASOV  
As uranium splits apart to release energy, it breaks down into a new element. Xenon. Xenon reduces reactivity. This is the poison Comrade Khomyuk mentioned. When the core is running at full power, it burns the xenon away before it can cause a problem. But because of the delay, Chernobyl Reactor 4 was held at half power for ten hours. The xenon did not burn away. It built up, poisoning the core.

He places "Xenon Poisoning" (B4) on the board.

LEGASOV  
We're starting to lose balance.

The BLUE column is longer than the RED. The words don't matter. The colors tell the tale.

LEGASOV  
At 28 past midnight, *the reactor is now primed to slow down*. And yet, in less than an hour, it will explode.  
(beat)  
If you can't understand how a stalled reactor could lead to an explosion, I do not blame you. After all, you don't work in the control room of a nuclear power plant.

He turns to the defendants.

LEGASOV  
But as it turned out, the men who *did...* did not understand it either.

530 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - NIGHT

530

THE LED DISPLAY: 1600. And then... it begins lowering.  
1590. 1570. 1510...

Akimov and Toptunov stare up from the panel-- still shoulder to shoulder, hands on buttons.

THE DISPLAY - 1450... 1395...

AKIMOV  
Easy now. Slow it down.

Toptunov nods. Wipes sweat from his head. Makes an adjustment.

AKIMOV  
Good. Like that.

In the B.G. - Dyatlov PACES. Shaking his head.

DYATLOV  
You should have been finished by now.

AKIMOV  
We're following protocol for reduction rate.

DYATLOV  
You're procrastinating. There are ten other men in this plant who would have done it already.

Toptunov glances at Akimov, but Akimov doesn't look back. Just keeps his eyes on the panel.

AKIMOV  
(to Toptunov)  
Keep working. You're doing fine.

Dyatlov takes a cigarette from his pack. Tosses the pack on to the table. Annoyed.

DYATLOV  
Kirschenbaum. Come get me when these old women are ready.

KIRSCHENBAUM  
Yes, Comrade Dyatlov.

Dyatlov EXITS. Slams the door behind him.

**531 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE CONTROL ROOM 4 - CONTINUOUS**

**531**

Dyatlov steps into the corridor. Lights his cigarette. Checks his watch. Then looks through the window by the landing, which faces out toward:

THE LIGHTS OF PRIPYAT - just a few on at this late hour.

**532 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - MINUTES LATER****532**

Kirschenbaum and Stolyarchuk wait quietly. Stolyarchuk checks a meter... makes an adjustment to his panel.

Toptunov and Akimov continue to work their panel.

THE DISPLAY: 775... 765... 755...

AKIMOV

Okay. Very slow now. Let's coast down to 700.

THE DISPLAY: 745... 725... 715...

AKIMOV

Whoa whoa whoa... slow!

TOPTUNOV

(confused)

I didn't move any rods there...

THE DISPLAY: 700... 680... 640... 590...

Akimov looks at the display. Utterly bewildered.

AKIMOV

What is this?

Toptunov puts his hands up.

TOPTUNOV

I'm not even touching it.

THE DISPLAY: 570... 550... 540...

**533 INT. CORRIDOR OUTSIDE CONTROL ROOM 4 - CONTINUOUS****533**

As Dyatlov finishes his cigarette, Akimov emerges from the control room. Dyatlov turns to him and can immediately see from Akimov's face that something's gone wrong. Again.

All he wanted was one fucking moment of quiet, and now...?

**534 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - CONTINUOUS****534**

Dyatlov storms in, followed by Akimov. And the first thing Dyatlov sees is:

THE DISPLAY: 520... 515... 510...

AKIMOV

We did everything right. I think maybe the core is poisoned...

DYATLOV

If you thought the core was poisoned then you DIDN'T do everything right, because you're CHOKING MY REACTOR! Get it back up!

Akimov knows there's no sense in debating. Just:

AKIMOV

If we switch off LAC, it's possible we could get more control...

DYATLOV

Do it. Go!

Akimov rushes back to Toptunov.

AKIMOV

Disable local automatic control, go to global...

Toptunov hesitates, nervous--

AKIMOV

Leonid.

Right. Okay. Toptunov turns a series of switches. Presses some buttons.

TOPTUNOV

LAC disabled. Global control activated.

Everyone raises their head to:

THE DISPLAY: 500... 440... 260... 220...

Toptunov backs away from the panel in disbelief.

DYATLOV

What did you do?

TOPTUNOV

I did what you said! I switched--

DYATLOV

LOOK AT IT!

THE DISPLAY: 110... 75... 55...

AKIMOV  
I don't understand....

THE DISPLAY: 35... 32... 30... and then holds.

DYATLOV  
You fucking amateurs. You stalled  
the reactor. HOW THE FUCK DID YOU  
GET THIS JOB?

Toptunov puts his head in his hands. He looks like he's  
about to cry. Akimov turns back to Dyatlov.

AKIMOV  
Comrade--

DYATLOV  
You're going to tell me you did  
everything right again, you  
incompetent asshole?

Akimov slumps. It's over.

AKIMOV  
I apologize for this unsatisfactory  
result.

"Unsatisfactory result?" The phrase only serves to disgust  
Dyatlov even further.

Akimov turns back to the panel.

DYATLOV  
What are you doing?

Akimov look at Dyatlov. Isn't it obvious?

AKIMOV  
We have to shut it all the way down.

Dyatlov is staring intently at him, but he's now strangely  
calm, which is somehow worse.

DYATLOV  
No.

AKIMOV  
(what?)  
But... we're in a xenon pit. We have  
to shut down, wait 24 hours--

DYATLOV  
No. We're doing the test tonight.  
Raise the power to 700.

AKIMOV  
We can't increase power from  
here. The rules...!

DYATLOV  
Don't talk to me about  
rules.

AKIMOV  
If we fall from 80% of  
power, we can't increase--

DYATLOV  
No, no-- we fell from 50% of  
power.

AKIMOV  
From fifty percent is worse!

DYATLOV  
The rules don't say 50.  
There is no rule.

AKIMOV  
Comrade Dyatlov, I apologize, but  
what you're saying makes no sense.

DYATLOV  
Raise the power.

Akimov looks down. Nerves rising. Dyatlov has gone too far.

AKIMOV  
No.

Dyatlov can't believe it. He almost admires Akimov's gall.

AKIMOV  
I won't do it. It isn't safe.

Toptunov straightens next to Akimov. Backing him up.

Dyatlov walks slowly toward them. Calm. Nodding, as if  
considering their words. The other men watch in fear.

DYATLOV  
Safety first. Always. I've been  
saying that for 25 years. That's how  
long I've done this job. 25 years.  
Is that longer than you, Akimov?

AKIMOV  
Yes.

DYATLOV  
Is it much longer?

AKIMOV  
Yes.

Dyatlov turns to Toptunov.

DYATLOV

And you? With your mother's tit  
barely out of your mouth?

Dyatlov shifts his granite gaze between them as he speaks.

DYATLOV

If I say it's safe, it's safe. If  
the two of you disagree... you don't  
have to work here. And you won't.  
But not just here. You won't work at  
Kursk. Or Ignalina. Or Leningrad, or  
Novo-Voronezh. You won't work  
anywhere ever again. I'll see to it.  
I think you know-- I will see to it.

(beat)

Raise the power.

The room is silent. The display still reads **30**. No one says  
a word. Then... Akimov picks up a LOG BOOK from the panel.  
Hands it to Dyatlov.

AKIMOV

I would like you to record your  
command into the--

Dyatlov SLAPS it from Akimov's hand. It falls to the floor.

DYATLOV

Raise the power.

Dyatlov returns to his desk in the center of the room.

Akimov takes a long, slow breath, then turns to Toptunov.  
They've lost. What other choice remains?

AKIMOV

Together, then.

Toptunov nods. All right. Together. They move their hands  
toward the controls, and:

DYATLOV (O.S.)

I wasn't even there.

535 INT. TRIAL ROOM - DAY

535

CLOSE ON: Dyatlov. Hair thinner, moustache weaker... but in  
his eyes, the same burning anger.

Legasov looks back from his board. Did he hear that right?

LEGASOV

What?

DYATLOV

I wasn't in the room when they raised the power.

LEGASOV

If you weren't in the room, then where were you?

Stepashin rises. Annoyed. At Legasov.

STEPASHIN

Comrade Legasov, you are a witness, not a prosecutor. I will ask the questions here.

Legasov backs off. Chastened. Of course. This is a show. Play your role and no other.

Stepashin turns to Dyatlov.

STEPASHIN

If you weren't in the room, then where were you?

Dyatlov shifts his eyes away from his interrogator. Shrugs.

DYATLOV

The toilet.

STEPASHIN

The toilet. Comrade Khomyuk interviewed everyone who was in the control room that night. They all told the same story.

Stepashin picks up a packet of typed transcripts. Flips through the pages, then reads:

STEPASHIN

"I knew what Dyatlov ordered was wrong, but if I didn't do what he said, I would be fired." Leonid Toptunov, one day before he died. No, Comrade Dyatlov, you were in the room. You ordered them to raise the power. This is a fact.

Scherbina suddenly starts COUGHING. He gets up, and moves swiftly to the back of the room. Can't make it stop.

And as if that reminded Stepashin they've been at this for hours-- he checks his watch, then nods to the Judge. *Fine. Call a recess.* It's clear who's really in charge here.

JUDGE KADNIKOV  
Court is now in recess. Thirty minutes.

Kadnikov RISES, everyone else rises in turn, and we cut to:

**536 EXT. CITY OF CHERNOBYL - PARK - LATER**

**536**

An inept imitation statue of MICKEY MOUSE smiles grotesquely through peeling paint.

The small park is just dust and dead grass now. A rusty swing set. A jungle gym.

ON LEGASOV - across the street. Behind him in the near distance, a small gathering of trialgoers on recess are clustered. Smoking.

He sees ahead of him... the back of a man sitting on a bench, alone, in the park. Another cough.

SHCHERBINA - sits on the bench, staring out at the late afternoon sun. Legasov takes a seat next to him.

SHCHERBINA  
Do you know anything about this town? Chernobyl?

LEGASOV  
Not really. No.

SHCHERBINA  
It was mostly Jews and Poles. The Jews were killed in pogroms, Stalin forced out the Poles, then the Nazis came and murdered whoever was left.  
(looks around)  
But after the war, people came here to live anyway. They knew the ground beneath their feet was soaked in blood, but they didn't care. Dead Jews, dead Poles, but not them. No one ever thinks it will happen to them. But here we are.

Shcherbina shows Legasov his handkerchief. It's mottled with blood.

LEGASOV

How much time?

SHCHERBINA

Maybe a year. They're calling it a "long illness." That doesn't seem very long to me. I know-- you told me. I believed you. At first. But-- time passed, and I didn't think it would happen to me.

(beat)

I wasted it. I wasted it all. For nothing.

LEGASOV

For *nothing*?

Shcherbina puts his hand up. Don't.

SHCHERBINA

Do you remember the morning I first called you? Do you remember how unconcerned I was? I don't believe much that comes out of the Kremlin, but when they told me they were putting me in charge of the cleanup, and they said it wasn't serious, I believed them. Do you know why?

Legasov doesn't want to answer. But:

LEGASOV

Because they put you in charge.

Shcherbina nods. Of course Legasov knows. Everyone knows.

SHCHERBINA

I am an inconsequential man, Valera. That's all I've ever been. I hoped one day that I would matter. But I didn't.

(turns to Legasov)

I just stood next to people who did.

Legasov stares back in disbelief.

LEGASOV

There are other scientists like me. Any one of them could have done what I did. But you--

(MORE)

LEGASOV (cont'd)

(beat)

Everything we asked for, everything we needed. Men. Material. *Lunar rovers?* Who else could have done these things? They heard me, but they listened to you. Of all the ministers and all the deputies-- the entire congregation of obedient fools-- they mistakenly sent us the one good man.

(beat)

For god's sake, Boris-- you were the one who mattered the most.

Shcherbina is overwhelmed. And here and now, in a forgotten park, in a dead city... absolution.

He looks back through tears at the land. The sky. His country. The air fills his lungs.

SHCHERBINA

It is beautiful...

537 INT. TRIAL ROOM - LATER

537

The crowd filters back in, including Legasov and Shcherbina. They return to the expert witness table, where Khomyuk is waiting.

Khomyuk sees the change on Legasov's face. *Something has moved in him.* She sees him look back once again to make sure that The Six are still there in the audience.

Then EVERYONE RISES as the JUDGES return and take their seats. Kadnikov nods to Stepashin, who turns to Legasov.

STEPASHIN

Comrade Legasov.

Legasov walks back to the whiteboard. There's purpose in his step now. His voice is stronger.

LEGASOV

The time is 38 past midnight. The reactor is nearly shut down, but the operators of Reactor 4 are locked on a path that leads directly to disaster. There is no way to turn back. They do not yet know it, but the die is cast.

Legasov picks up a BLUE PLACARD. A second "Xenon Poisoning" (B5) card. He adds it to the board.

LEGASOV

At 30 megawatts, xenon is still being created, but none of it is burning away. The reactor is drowning in poison. To make matters worse--

--he REMOVES the bottom two red placards, "Positive Void Coefficient" (R2) and "Nuclear Fission" (R3).

LEGASOV

--the reactor isn't hot enough to produce sufficient steam.

THE BOARD: One red placard, five large blue ones.

LEGASOV

The only way to safely raise power from this state is to do it very, very slowly over the course of 24 hours. But Dyatlov wants it done now. Akimov and Toptunov have only one course of action. *They begin pulling control rods out.* Dozens at a time. Halfway out, three quarters of the way out, and the power still does not budge. So they begin to pull them all the way out.

(beat)

There were 211 control rods in Reactor 4. Akimov and Toptunov completely withdrew 205.

Legasov REMOVES the first blue placard - "Control Rods" (B1).

LEGASOV

Remember... control rods are the brakes of this car. Of 211 rods, only six now remain in the reactor. As for the fuel--

Legasov REMOVES another blue placard - "Negative Temperature Coefficient" (B3).

LEGASOV

--it's gone cold, so the negative temperature coefficient is no longer weighing down the reactivity.

(MORE)

LEGASOV (cont'd)

(beat)

And even still-- the xenon poisoning is so strong, the best they can do is raise the power to 200 megawatts.

Turns back to the room once more.

LEGASOV

The control rods are out. The emergency system is disconnected. The reactor is now a grenade without a pin, and the only thing keeping it in check is water... and xenon. It is 1 in the morning. The test is minutes away.

538 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - NIGHT

538

AKIMOV - punches buttons. Flips some switches. Constantly moving his eyes back and forth between the console and the LED POWER OUTPUT display, which holds at **200**.

He slumps. Turns back to Dyatlov, who sits at the desk in the center of the room, casually smoking.

AKIMOV

I'm sorry, but this is all we can get. 200 megawatts. We've pulled almost everything out.

Dyatlov exhales slowly. Thinks. Then:

DYATLOV

Well, if that's what we have, that's what we have.

AKIMOV

But the test requires 700--

DYATLOV

(ignores Akimov)

Stolyarchuk, let's get ready. Switch on pump four.

AKIMOV

Wait a second--

DYATLOV

Stolyarchuk!

Stolyarchuk hesitates.

AKIMOV

We barely have any steam as it is.  
The turbine is going too slow for  
the test to deliver valid--

DYATLOV

It's enough.

AKIMOV

--and if we add *more* water, there  
will be even *less* steam--

DYATLOV

I SAID IT'S ENOUGH. I know what I'm  
doing. Stolyarchuk.

Stolyarchuk relents, and hits switches while Kirschenbaum  
watches-- utterly confused by this course of action.

STOLYARCHUK

Main Pump 4 is connected. We should  
warn Khodemchuk... the pipes are  
going to be jumping.

DYATLOV

Never mind him. Kirschenbaum--

But he's cut off by: AN ALARM - bleating from the panel.  
Dyatlov puts his hands up. *What now?*

STOLYARCHUK

The steam in the separator drum is  
too low-- five atmospheres...

DYATLOV

All right, let's all help him. Get  
it up as best you can.

Stolyarchuk mutters to himself.

STOLYARCHUK

We should stop.

DYATLOV

(yells)

And turn that fucking thing off!

Akimov moves to another panel. Flips some override  
switches. The alarm CEASES. Dyatlov checks the display.  
Still **200**. Now he looks at the clock. 1:07.

DYATLOV

You have fifteen minutes.

Akimov, Toptunov, Kirschenbaum and Stolyarchuk work on the panels, trying to get the steam back in balance.

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
Fifteen minutes.

**539 INT. TRIAL ROOM - NOW**

**539**

Legasov stands by the board.

LEGASOV  
They might as well have had fifteen days. The problem they were facing was not solvable. The power was too low. The water was too high. The test was already ruined. The results would have been useless. But Dyatlov didn't care. All he wanted to do was report a completed test.  
(beat)  
1:22. Less than two minutes remain.

**540 INT. REACTOR #4 FACILITY - VARIOUS - 1:22 AM**

**540**

--OFFICE - YUVCHENKO sits at his desk flipping through a technical manual.

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
Yuvchenko, mechanical engineer, is in his office.

--REACTOR HALL OBSERVATION ROOM - PEREVOZCHENKO looks out over the HUGE REACTOR LID, 15m in diameter. The lid is made up of 2,000 cubes of individual steel-capped channels.

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
Perevozchenko, reactor section foreman, is in the refueling hall, high above the 1,000 ton steel reactor cover.

--ROOM 604 - SHASHENOK is inspecting equipment. Taking notes on his clipboard.

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
Shashenok, automatic systems adjuster, is in room 604.

--THE PUMP ROOM - where VIKTOR (Degtaryenko) stands by a rats' nest of pipes and gauges. They're SHUDDERING.

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
Degtaryenko...

Viktor looks across the room at:

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
...and Khodemchuk, circulation  
operators, are in the pump room.

Khodemchuk gives Viktor a baffled look. *What is this?*

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
None of them have been told about  
the test. None of them know what is  
about to happen.

541 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - 1:22:30

541

Toptunov stands by a large DOT-MATRIX PRINTER as it slowly  
ejects a sheet of data.

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
1:22 and 30 seconds. Toptunov sees a  
report from the reactor's SKALA  
computer system. Based on the  
absence of sufficient control rods,  
the computer is recommending the  
reactor be shut down.

Toptunov hands the printout to Akimov, who reads it, frets,  
then hands it to Dyatlov. Dyatlov doesn't take it. Just  
looks at it. Barely.

DYATLOV  
Of course it's saying that. It  
doesn't know we're running a test.  
(oddly cheerful)  
All right boys. Another few minutes,  
and it will all be over.  
Kirschenbaum, when you're ready?

Kirschenbaum turns back to his panel. Deep breath. Akimov  
and Toptunov walk back to their panels. Toptunov looks over  
at Akimov. Akimov doesn't look back. Just:

AKIMOV  
We did everything right.

Kirschenbaum reaches for a switch. Then:

KIRSCHENBAUM  
Oscillograph on. Closing Number 8  
throttle valve.

STOLYARCHUK  
Generator rotor beginning rundown.

**542 INT. TRIAL ROOM - NOW**

**542**

Legasov is staring at the room. It's dead quiet.

LEGASOV  
1:23 and four seconds. With every  
decision, they have pulled this  
reactor back like a slingshot...  
further than anyone has ever pulled.  
(beat)  
The test begins. The pumps are shut  
down.  
(opens his fist)  
And they let go.

Legasov moves to the board. On the right, the single red  
"Nuclear Fission" card (R1). On the left, blue "Water" (B2)  
and "Xenon Poisoning" (B4, B5). He removes the "Water" (B2)  
placard.

LEGASOV  
The pumps stop moving water through  
the reactor. The uranium fuel is now  
unchecked by fresh coolant.  
Unchecked by control rods. The  
balance immediately swings in the  
opposite direction. In less than a  
second, reactivity increases.

**543 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - 1:23:05**

**543**

The operators watch their panels. None of them notice the  
power output display. 205... 210... 220...

**544 INT. TRIAL ROOM - NOW**

**544**

LEGASOV  
Inside the core, the remaining water  
is quickly converting to steam. A  
void is being created. There is no  
fresh water to replace it.

As he speaks, he adds multiple RED PLACARDS to the right column. "Positive Void Coefficient" (R2), "Nuclear Fission" (R3), "Positive Void Coefficient" (R4), "Nuclear Fission" (R5).

LEGASOV

Steam increases reactivity increases  
heat increases steam increases  
reactivity. The fuel is too cold to  
counter the vicious cycle. The  
remaining xenon decays away.

Legasov removes both blue "Xenon Poisoning" placards (B4, B5). There are NONE on the left side now. And five RED ones on the right.

LEGASOV

The power is rising. And nothing  
left to stop it. 1:23 and 35  
seconds...

545 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - 1:23:35

545

Akimov and Toptunov watch the panel. Then Toptunov notices: LIGHTS blinking on, one after another in quick succession on the large CIRCULAR FUEL CHANNEL display.

Oh god. He looks up at the power output display.

320... 360... 400...

TOPTUNOV

We have a power surge! Sasha!

Everyone turns at once to look at the power output.

440... 500...

DYATLOV

(in shock)

What did you-- ?

546 INT. TRIAL ROOM - NOW

546

CLOSE ON LEGASOV.

LEGASOV

1:23 and 40 seconds. The power is  
surging. The men in Control Room 4  
have only one option left.

(MORE)

LEGASOV (cont'd)

In every control room of every nuclear reactor in the world, there is a button with one single purpose-- to "scram" or instantly shut down the reaction. In Soviet reactors, that button is called "AZ-5". You press AZ-5, all of the control rods insert at once, and the reaction is stopped dead.

(beat)

But.

He stops. Glances over at Khomyuk, who knows that the moment is almost upon them. Then the SIX SCIENTISTS.

And Khomyuk realizes-- *he's going to do it. He's finally going to tell the truth.* But before he can say a word:

DYATLOV

What are you waiting for Legasov?  
Tell your lies.

A hushed gasp from the room. Legasov turns in disbelief to the defendant BOX, where Dyatlov glares back at him.

JUDGE KADNIKOV

Comrade Dyatlov, you will not be warned again.

DYATLOV

Or what?

BRYUKHANOV

(shut up!)  
For god's sake, Dyatlov--

DYATLOV

Legasov's already given it away. He said before there was no way to avoid what was coming. He knows something.

(points to Khomyuk)

She knows something.

JUDGE KADNIKOV

Strike that from the record.

Dyatlov rises, jabbing his finger toward a stunned Legasov.

DYATLOV

I know what you are, Valery Alexeyevich. You're a liar. You're a liar and a coward.

The soldiers grab Dyatlov's arms to pull him away, but:

JUDGE KADNIKOV  
We've heard enough for today. The  
defendants will be remanded to  
custody. Court will--

Legasov finds his voice.

LEGASOV  
I haven't finished.

Stepashin turns his dark gaze on Legasov. How dare he?

LEGASOV  
I have more evidence to give.

Shcherbina leans forward. Impossible for us to tell what  
he's thinking...

STEPASHIN  
It is not necessary. Your testimony  
is concluded.  
(to Kadnikov)  
Your honor.

Legasov deflates. Turns back to Khomyuk. He tried. He tried  
to do the right thing.

JUDGE KADNIKOV  
Court is now adjourned. We will  
resume tomorrow with--

Shcherbina rises. That wonderful, terrible look in his  
eyes. The last stand of the stubborn, impossible Ukrainian.

SHCHERBINA  
The trial continues.

Judge Kadnikov begins to sweat. This is different. He looks  
at Stepashin, who falters.

JUDGE KADNIKOV  
Comrade Shcherbina--

SHCHERBINA  
Let him finish.

Stepashin is outranked. He glances at the CAMERAS. The dead  
faces of the "press." The audience. KGB scattered among  
them, no doubt. *The show must go on.* He gestures to  
Legasov. Very well. *It's your funeral.*

Shcherbina nods to Legasov. He knows what Legasov has decided to do. *If we go down, we go down together.* Legasov nods back. Gratitude.

Now he looks out into the audience. There are the SIX SCIENTISTS. Listening intently. Almost as if they, too, know the choice he is about to make.

LEGASOV

Dyatlov broke every rule we have, and pushed a reactor to the brink of destruction. He did these things believing there was a fail-safe. AZ-5. A simple button to shut it all down.

(beat)

But in the circumstance he created-- there wasn't. The shut-down system had a fatal flaw.

Dyatlov listens in stunned horror. What did they not tell him? What did he not know?

LEGASOV

At 1:23 and 40 seconds, Akimov engages AZ-5.

547 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - 1:23:40

547

Akimov flips the cover off the AZ-5 switch and PRESSES IT.

548 INT. TRIAL ROOM - NOW

548

LEGASOV

The fully-withdrawn control rods begin moving back into the reactor. These rods are made of boron, which reduces reactivity. But not their tips. The tips are made of graphite, which accelerates reactivity.

JUDGE KADNIKOV

(disbelief)

Why?

LEGASOV

Why? For the same reason our reactors do not have containment buildings around them like those in the West.

(MORE)

LEGASOV (cont'd)

The same reason we don't use properly enriched fuel in our cores. The same reason we are the only nation that builds water-cooled graphite moderated reactors with a positive void coefficient.

(beat)

It's cheaper.

Legasov turns back to the room. And to his jury.

LEGASOV

The first part of the rods that enter the core are the graphite tips. And when they do, the reaction in the core, which had been rising-- now skyrockets. Every last molecule of liquid water instantly converts to steam, which expands and ruptures a series of fuel rod channels.

(beat)

The control rods in those channels can move no further. The tips are fixed in position, endlessly accelerating the reaction.

He lets it sink in.

LEGASOV

Chernobyl reactor 4 is now a nuclear bomb.

(beat)

1:23 and 42 seconds.

**549 INT. REACTOR HALL - 1:23:42**

**549**

Perevozchenko is in the observation room, making notes on a clipboard. He hears a terrible CLUNKING and HISSING.

He looks out through the window, and his jaw drops.

LEGASOV (V.O.)

Perevozchenko looks down on the enormous steel lid of the reactor, and sees the impossible.

THE LID - DOZENS of individual STEEL SQUARES are JOSTLING UP AND DOWN like popcorn... now more of them. And MORE.

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
The fuel channel caps, which each weigh 350 kilograms, are jumping up and down.

Perevozchenko DROPS his clipboard in horror, and RUNS out of the room onto the catwalk... racing for the stairs...

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
The pressure required to do this is unimaginable. He runs to warn the control room.

Perevozchenko half runs, half falls down the catwalks stairs, scrambles back to his feet, and keeps running.

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
But there's nothing he can do to stop what is coming. 1:23:44.

**550 INT. PUMP ROOM - 1:23:44**

**550**

KHODEMCHUK backs away from the pumps. They are ROCKING in place... valves begin to POP OFF like BULLETS...

**551 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - 1:23:44**

**551**

Akimov's hand is still on the AZ-5 button. But the LED DISPLAY is climbing. **700... 1000... 1800...**

ON THE PANEL - hundreds of indicators and meters LIGHT UP at once.

LEGASOV (V.O.)  
The steam blows more fuel channels apart. We do not know how high the power went. We only know the final reading. Reactor #4, designed to operate at 3200 megawatts--

Akimov and Toptunov look up at THE LED DISPLAY as it jumps... from **1800** to-- **4800 ... 9280... 12700... 24720...**

**552 INT. TRIAL ROOM - NOW**

**552**

LEGASOV  
--went beyond 33,000.  
(beat)  
The pressure inside Reactor #4 can no longer be held back.  
(MORE)

LEGASOV (cont'd)

At long last-- we have arrived.  
1:23:45. Explosion.

**553 INT. REACTOR HALL - 1:23:45 553**

**EXPLOSION** - a thunderous BLAST of SUPERHEATED VAPOR erupts from the core. The massive STEEL REACTOR LID is BLOWN UP and TO THE SIDE... like the open lid of a tin can.

The shockwave PUNCHES THROUGH THE CEILING, sending concrete and glass into the night...

**554 INT. JUST OUTSIDE THE REACTOR HALL - CONTINUOUS 554**

Perevozchenko is THROWN to the ground. He turns back, and... horror.

**555 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - CONTINUOUS 555**

A deep THUD echoes through the room. Everyone ducks a bit... looking around... what the fuck was *that*?

**556 INT. TRIAL ROOM - NOW 556**

CLOSE ON LEGASOV - retelling the story as if he lived through it. In his mind... he has.

LEGASOV

In the instant the lid is thrown off the reactor, oxygen rushes in. It combines with hydrogen and superheated graphite.

**557 INT. REACTOR HALL - 1:23:47 557**

A rush of air, and a terrible crackling as the gases inside the core ignite, and:

**558 INT. TRIAL ROOM - NOW 558**

LEGASOV

The chain of disaster-- is complete.

**559 EXT. REACTOR #4 BUILDING - CONTINUOUS 559**

**CATAclysm**

--as the true power of the atom is finally released. In an instant, the building becomes a VOLCANO. Nuclear forces explode up and out, and turn NIGHT INTO DAY.

A PLUME of DEBRIS is sent ROCKETING 1,000 METERS INTO THE AIR, as if shot from the center of the earth itself.

**560 EXT. REACTOR BUILDING - CONTINUOUS**

**560**

A HAILSTORM of BURNING GRAPHITE comes raining down from the plume... and as the last bits of deadly debris clatter back to the surrounding roof and ground...

...a thin BLUE LIGHT materializes in the air, shining straight up and down between the open reactor and the sky, piercing through the choking black smoke.

The BLUE LIGHT widens... a color we were never meant to know... a glowing column connecting the earth and heavens. A trillion atoms set free. Death, the destroyer of worlds.

**561 INT. CONTROL ROOM - REACTOR #4 - 1:24 AM**

**561**

No sound except distant hissing noises. All we see is SWIRLING WHITE DUST, illuminated by emergency BACKUP LIGHTS. And now we make out:

The operators. Cowering. All except for Dyatlov.

CLOSE ON DYATLOV - SLOW MOTION - the white dust swirls eerily around his face. He's bewildered. Shell-shocked.

We hear a voice echoing as if from far away:

VOICE (O.S.)  
*Comrade Dyatlov? Comrade Dyatlov?*

DISSOLVE TO:

**562 INT. TRIAL ROOM - NOW**

**562**

DYATLOV, NOW - thinner and terribly older... but the expression is the same. Shell-shocked.

LEGASOV  
No one in the room that night knew the shut-down button could act as a detonator. They didn't know it-- because it was kept from them.

The six scientists listen in shock. A rare thing in the air, the sound of truth...

JUDGE KADNIKOV

Comrade Legasov-- you are contradicting--  
(searches documents)  
You are contradicting your own testimony in Vienna--

LEGASOV

My testimony in Vienna was a lie. I lied. To the world.

ON KHOMYUK - a mixture of disbelief and gratitude. At last, *someone has spoken the truth.*

LEGASOV

I am not the only one who kept this secret. There are many. We were following orders. From the KGB, from the Central Committee. And right now, there are 16 reactors in the Soviet Union with this same fatal flaw. Three of them are still running less than 20 kilometers away... at Chernobyl.

Kadnikov is frightened by Legasov's words. But he too has his orders. He too is at risk. And this is not the narrative over which he was meant to preside.

JUDGE KADNIKOV

Professor Legasov, if you mean to suggest the Soviet State is somehow responsible for what happened, then I must warn you-- you are treading on dangerous ground.

LEGASOV

I've already trod on dangerous ground. We're on dangerous ground right now. Because of our secrets and our lies. They are practically what defines us. When the truth offends, we lie and lie until we cannot even remember it's there. But it is still there. Every lie we tell incurs a debt to the truth.

(beat)

Sooner or later, the debt is paid.

Legasov turns back to the six scientists. His colleagues. His peers. His secret jury. His hope.

LEGASOV  
That is how an RBMK reactor core  
explodes.  
(beat)  
Lies.

And one by one, the scientists look down or avert their eyes. Ashamed. Or frightened. Or in denial. It doesn't matter which.

Legasov can tell from their faces. So can Khomyuk. It didn't work. It wasn't enough. They've failed.

It's over.

**563 INT. HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER**

**563**

Legasov walks down the hallway that leads away from the trial room. One of the ARMED SOLDIERS-- who had been guarding the defendants-- now walks behind Legasov. Guarding *him*.

They arrive at a DOOR. The soldier says nothing. Just gestures to the door.

Legasov opens it, and walks into:

**564 INT. FACILITY KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS**

**564**

A large facility kitchen designed to supply catering for the building. Or it once was. Now it's mostly empty, save for a few scattered folding chairs.

Legasov takes a step into the room, then stops. Looks down. There's a small DRAIN set in the floor. *So. This is where he dies.* In an abandoned kitchen of an abandoned city in an abandoned land. He closes his eyes.

BOOM.

The echoey thud of the DOOR behind him. The soldier has left. Legasov is alone. He finds his breath, and we DISSOLVE to:

**565 OMITTED**

**565**

566 INT. FACILITY KITCHEN - LATER

566

The door opens. CHARKOV enters. He closes the door behind him, and takes a seat across from Legasov.

He reaches into his coat pocket. Removes a piece of paper. Unfolds it. Puts on his glasses to read.

CHARKOV

Valery Alexeyevich Legasov. Son of Alexei Legasov, Head of Ideological Compliance, Central Committee.

(looks up)

You know what your father did there?

LEGASOV

Yes.

CHARKOV

(continues reading)

As a student, you had a leadership position in Komsomol. Communist Youth. Correct?

LEGASOV

You already know--

CHARKOV

Answer the question.

LEGASOV

Yes.

CHARKOV

At the Kurchatov Institute, you were the Communist Party secretary. In that position, you limited the promotion of Jewish scientists.

A long pause.

LEGASOV

Yes.

CHARKOV

To curry favor with Kremlin officials?

Yes.

This is how they break you. With the sins of your father. With your own.

Charkov sighs. Puts the paper away.

CHARKOV

You're one of us, Legasov. You've always been one of us. I can do anything I want with you, anything, but what I want the most is for you to know that I know. You're not brave. You're not heroic.

(beat)

You're just a dying man who forgot himself.

Legasov looks down. No.

LEGASOV

I know who I am, and I know what I've done. In a just world, I would be shot for my lies.

(beat)

But not for this. Not for the truth.

CHARKOV

Scientists... and your idiot obsession with reasons.

(leans in)

When the bullet hits your skull, what will it matter *why*?

A grim moment. Then-- Charkov smiles. Leans back.

CHARKOV

No one's getting shot, Legasov. The whole world saw you in Vienna. It would be embarrassing to kill you now. And for what? Your testimony today will not be accepted by the State. It will not be disseminated in the press. It never happened.

(beat)

No, you will live-- however long you have. But not as a scientist. Not anymore. You'll keep your title and your office, but no duties, no authority, no friends. No one will talk to you. No one will listen to you. Other men-- lesser men-- will receive credit for the things you have done. Your legacy is now their legacy. You'll live long enough to see that.

Erased. He's being erased. Before he can speak--

CHARKOV

What role did Shcherbina play in this?

LEGASOV

None. He didn't know what I was going to say.

CHARKOV

What role did Khomyuk play in this?

LEGASOV

None. She didn't know either.

Charkov stares into Legasov's eyes. He sees no waver, no blink, no false bravado. He wasn't expecting that.

CHARKOV

After all you've said and done today, it would be-- curious-- if you chose this moment to lie.

LEGASOV

(unflinching)

I would think a man of your experience would know a lie when he hears one.

A long pause, as Charkov passes silent judgment. Then... he nods. Very well. He believes. But:

CHARKOV

You will not meet or communicate with either one of them ever again. You will not communicate with anyone about Chernobyl ever again. You will remain so immaterial to the world around you that when you finally do die, it will be exceedingly hard to tell that you ever lived at all.

LEGASOV

And if I refuse?

Charkov's eyes deaden. The face of a murderer. Then, as if by the flip of a switch, an amiable shrug.

CHARKOV

Why worry about something that isn't going to happen?

And Valery Legasov, as dead as a living man can be, can't help but smile at that.

LEGASOV

"Why worry about something that isn't going to happen." That's perfect.

(beat)

They should put that on our money.

567 EXT. CITY OF CHERNOBYL - STREET - BEFORE SUNSET

567

The front door of the building opens. KGB men emerge. They walk in unison, surrounding LEGASOV as they escort him.

Up ahead, a KGB agent waits by a CAR for Legasov. Legasov turns back... and there they are, across the street.

Khomyuk and Shcherbina. Khomyuk fights back tears. She knows what he did. She knows why. She knows what it means.

Legasov knows he can't say a word. All he has is his face, his eyes, his heart. He absolves her as best he can.

And now, Shcherbina. His brother. His friend. His rock. Shcherbina raises a hand in goodbye. They don't need words. It happened. They *mattered*. And now it's over.

Legasov raises his hand back, then gets into the car. We RISE UP - as the car pulls away...

SOUND: the HISS of an audio tape, and then:

LEGASOV (VO ON TAPE)

To be a scientist is to be naive. We are so focused on our search for truth, we fail to consider how few actually want us to find it. But it is always there, whether we can see it or not, whether we choose to or not. The truth doesn't care about our needs or wants. It doesn't care about our governments, our ideologies, our religions. It will lie in wait, for all time.

We RISE UP HIGHER - as the car disappears down the road.

LEGASOV (VO ON TAPE)

And this, at last, is the gift of Chernobyl. Where I once would fear the cost of truth, now I only ask:

CUT TO BLACK:

568 OVER BLACK

568

LEGASOV (VO ON TAPE)  
What is the cost of lies?

569 INT./EXT. THE REAL PRIPYAT - TODAY

569

MUSIC: Vichnaya Pamyat (Eternal Memory)

*Photos of Valery Legasov...*

**Valery Legasov took his own life at the age of 51  
on April 26, 1988, exactly two years  
after the explosion at Chernobyl.**

**The audio tapes of Legasov's memoirs were circulated  
among the Soviet scientific community.**

**His suicide made it impossible for them to be ignored.**

**In the aftermath of his death, Soviet officials finally  
acknowledged the design flaws of the RBMK nuclear reactors.**

**Those reactors were immediately retrofitted  
to prevent an accident like Chernobyl from happening again.**

*Photographs of various scientists who participated in the  
battle to clean up Chernobyl...*

**Legasov was aided by dozens of scientists  
who worked tirelessly alongside him at Chernobyl.**

**Some spoke out against the official account of events  
and were subject to denunciation, arrest and imprisonment.**

**The character of Ulana Khomyuk was created  
to represent them all and to honor  
their dedication and service to truth and humanity.**

*Photographs of Shcherbina...*

**Boris Shcherbina died on August 22, 1990...  
four years and four months after he was sent to Chernobyl.**

*Images from the actual trial...*

**For their roles in the Chernobyl disaster,  
Viktor Bryukhanov, Anatoly Dyatlov and Nikolai Fomin  
were sentenced to ten years hard labor.**

**After his release, Nikolai Fomin returned to work...  
at a nuclear power plant in Kalinin, Russia.**

*The final photo taken of Dyatlov, hunched over, thin, bald.*

**Anatoly Dyatlov died from radiation-related illness in 1995.**

**He was 64.**

*A photo of the real Khodemchuk standing with his young son.*

**Valery Khodemchuk's body was never recovered.**

**He is permanently entombed under Reactor 4.**

*EXISTING FOOTAGE: handheld video of someone in a protective suit moving through the dark, dilapidated hallways...*

**The firefighters' clothing still remains  
in the basement of Pripyat Hospital.**

*VIDEO: a dosimeter is held near one of the firefighter's actual boots. The beeping turns into one long, loud alarm.*

**It is dangerously radioactive to this day.**

*Abandoned rooms in Pripyat...*

**Following the death of her husband and daughter,  
Lyudmilla Ignatenko suffered multiple strokes.  
Doctors told her she would never be able to bear a child.**

**They were wrong.  
She lives with her son in Kiev.**

*The actual railway bridge...*

**Of the people who watched from the railway bridge,  
it has been reported that none survived.**

**It is now known as "The Bridge of Death."**

*Photos of the miners...*

**400 miners worked around the clock for one month  
to prevent a total nuclear meltdown.**

**It is estimated that at least 100 of them  
died before the age of 40.**

*Photos of the interior of damaged reactor building 4...*

**It has been widely reported that the three divers  
who drained the bubbler tanks  
died as a result of their heroic actions.**

**In fact, all three survived after hospitalization.  
Two are still alive today.**

*Photos of liquidators...*

**Over 600,000 people were conscripted to serve  
in the Exclusion Zone.**

**Despite widespread accounts of sickness and death  
as a result of radiation, the Soviet government kept no  
official records of their fate.**

*High above the desolate countryside. Disintegrating boats  
rust in piles on the shores of the Pripyat River.*

**The contaminated region of Ukraine and Belarus,  
known as the Exclusion Zone,  
ultimately encompassed 2,600 square kilometers.**

*Pripyat from above*

**Approximately 300,000 people were displaced  
from their homes. They were told this was temporary.**

**It is still forbidden to return.**

*Footage of Gorbachev presiding over a Labor Day parade...*

**Mikhail Gorbachev presided over the Soviet Union  
until its dissolution in 1991.**

**In 2006, he wrote, "The nuclear meltdown at Chernobyl...  
was perhaps the true cause of the collapse  
of the Soviet Union."**

*We move around the power plant as it exists now. The  
reactor building is entirely encased in a metal half-dome.*

**In 2017, work was completed on the New Safe Confinement at  
Chernobyl at a cost of nearly two billion dollars.**

**It is designed to last 100 years.**

*EXISTING FOOTAGE: Doctors examine children. Some are  
clearly sick.*

**Following the explosion, there was a dramatic spike  
in cancer rates across Ukraine and Belarus.**

**The highest increase was among children.**

*PRIPYAT - we move slowly toward: A MONUMENT. Two large,  
stone hands reaching up and cupping the reactor building.*

We will never know the actual human cost of Chernobyl.

Most estimates range from 4,000 to 93,000 deaths.

The official Soviet death toll, unchanged since 1987...

...is 31.

FADE TO BLACK:

In memory of all who suffered and sacrificed.

END OF SERIES