

Laika

A radio play for the eye and ear

By Heidi Stephenson

Yuri Gagarin: "*Am I the first human in space, or the last dog?*"

Based on the true story of Laika, the Russian cosmo-dog; the first living being to orbit Earth and die in space, on November 3rd, 1957.

In the hope of stopping *all* current, planned and future atrocities against our fellow sentient beings:

<https://forcechange.com/148630/save-monkeys-from-inhumane-death-on-mars/>

<https://www.crueltyfreeinternational.org/russia-training-monkeys-cruel-mission-mars-0>

"In the hopes of reaching the moon men fail to see the flowers that blossom at their feet." (Dr. Albert Schweitzer, *Reverence for Life*, winner of the Nobel Prize, 1952.)

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OPENING MUSIC: Dmitri Khvorostovsky as a young boy singing 'Rodina Slyshit,' ('The Motherland Hears, the Motherland Knows.') His father accompanies him on piano.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZZRMKiGKSdk>

SCENE 1

Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan, November 3rd, 1957.

SFX The explosive, deafening thunder of rocket engines firing, getting louder and louder, building for lift-off. The stage one separates, and blasts off into the early morning skies.

A man crashes and stumbles through undergrowth into a woodland, howling with a grief that knows no bounds. These feelings have been suppressed for a long, long time.

In the near distance a military band starts to play the Soviet national anthem to a line-up of dignitaries.

SCENE 2

KHRUSHCHEV's crackly Moscow speech to the Soviet people, in response to the launch of Sputnik 2.

KHRUSHCHEV: All Soviet people are grateful that the design bureaux of the scientific research institutes and all the people working in their establishments are dedicating their new rocket launch to the 21st Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

A roar of applause.

SFX of a radio being re-tuned, with the greatest of difficulty, but eventually...the illegal sound of an American radio news broadcast. A woman interviewee from the Humane Society is in the middle of voicing her concern.

AMERICAN WOMAN: We can only pray in this time of aloneness and suffering for Laika, for *Curly*, that's her real name, that God will be merciful and speed the end. This voiceless cry of mercy as this satellite spans the earth, should be long remembered as a symbol of the torture the animal world must go through. And I don't

mean to be facetious at all, but this needs to be remembered, there's a female up there, circling Mother Earth."

MARIA ALEKSANDROVNA GERTZ sitting in her bare home in Moscow turns her radio off, too upset to listen any longer.

MARIA: Kudryavka. That was her name: "Little Curly," to the Americans. Because of her tail. It was expectant and curious like a piglet's - until early yesterday morning. (PAUSE) It was Korolev, the Chief Designer who insisted on "Laika" for the Capitalist press, so that they could actually pronounce it. But they've found out the truth already.

She laughs bitterly, in a lot of pain.

They think she's still alive and well up there though. (SILENCE) Oh Kudryavka. Please forgive me.

She cries, trying very hard to suppress it.

To Gazenko she was Limonchik. His Little Lemon. But only when he thought he was out of earshot and no-one was listening! Yazdovsky called her Zuschka, Little Bug because of the way she would nudge you for a bit of affection.

Korolev was being ironic. Laika, Little Howler, Little Barker, the most silent, unassuming dog you could ever hope to meet. "Let her piss on them," he told Yazdovsky. "Let her shit on their complacency."

Kudryavka was quiet and charming. She had a phlegmatic disposition." She was affectionate and sweet. Accepting, very dependable. Often shy. She preferred stability to uncertainty and change.

But as a starving stray, dragged from these Moscow streets, she was also eager to please. That's how it is for strays. For those who have known the terror of abandonment.

Despite the strict edict from Korolev not to "get attached," not to "care too much" we all loved her.

Which makes what we did so much more of a betrayal.

Kudryavka, Laika, the first living being to be shot into space. Sent on a suicidal, one-way mission!

The Americans don't even know that she's dead, that we lost all life-support contact yesterday afternoon, after 7 hours. That the system went dead. That the temperature control failed. That she boiled alive!

She chokes up.

"It's only a dog, Maria Aleksandrovna!" Yes, Oleg Gazenko, apparently so! A disposable creature, after all. Just a mongrel. A necessary sacrifice for Science and Man's hubris.

In her three short years, she'd known nothing but misery at human hands. A sweet-natured dog who should have had a good home.

If I had known what they were up to I would never have agreed to help them! I would have defied all their rotten orders and taken my chances with the KGB! Got all those poor cosmo-dogs out of there. But what's the use of this now? I simply wasn't brave enough. There's the terrible truth of it! And it is mine to live with now.

"You have to get used to forgetting, Maria Aleksandrovna. Otherwise a scientist's life is all remorse."

Thank you, Oleg Georgievich Gzenko. And how do you imagine I can ever do that? I wasn't trained, like you, to cut off my feelings. To deny the voice of my heart. The screaming of my conscience. We saw them suffer! You and I.

SCENE 3

A time lapse. We go back a month to October 4th.

SFX: the eery signal from Sputnik 1, the world's first artificial satellite to orbit Earth: "Peep, peep...peep...peep...peep" (3 different notes, in a repeating pattern of 4), like a baby robot-chick in a state of extreme distress.

An American radio news broadcast with an excitable Ed Herlihy.

ED HERLIHY:

Today, October 4th, 1957, the space-age begins. A new moon is in the sky. A 23 inch metal sphere, placed in orbit by a Russian rocket. Here's how we think one of the greatest scientific feats of our age was accomplished: a three-stage rocket. Number one, the booster, in the class of an inter-continental ballistic missile. Its weight estimated at 50 tonnes. The smaller, second stage took over at 5000 miles an hour, and carried on to the highest point reached. 500 miles up the artificial moon is boosted to a speed counterbalancing the pull of gravity and released.

You are hearing the actual signals transmitted by the earth-circling satellite!

And we do again, "Peep, peep...peep...peep...peep."

SCENE 4

The White House, Oval Room. Mayhem. Officials tear around, preparing for an emergency press conference.

Secretary of State, JOHN DULLES is with President EISENHOWER (also Supreme Commander of NATO).

DULLES: Main street Americans have begun to quake with fear, Mr President! We have to be seen to take decisive action. The same rocket could be used to send an atom bomb to Washington, Sir.

EISENHOWER: Don't patronise me, Dulles!

DULLES: I'm sorry, Sir, I/

EISENHOWER: And remember the motto of the United States, would you? "In God We Trust."

DULLES: But Sir/

EISENHOWER: /It's a stunt, John! It's a beach-ball for pity's sake! Khrushchev wants to put the wind up us and his little ploy has clearly worked on you! We have our own military capability.

DULLES: B-29s can't outmanoeuvre missiles, Sir. The Russians are getting ahead of us. We face a hostile ideology. Global in scope. Atheistic in character. Ruthless in purpose. And insidious in method!/

EISENHOWER: /Dog Shit, Dulles! Dog shit!

SCENE 5

Khrushchev hosts a lavish, Kremlin reception for his leading rocket industry scientists.

KHRUSHCHEV: Thank you, comrades. It has been a fine day indeed for Marxist-Leninism! A victory over degenerate Capitalism! Let us raise our glasses! To the Motherland!

The clinking and slamming of vodka glasses.

ALL: The Motherland!

SCENE 6

A private room in the Kremlin later. Khrushchev and KOROLEV, the Soviet Union's secret 'Chief Designer' have left the reception to have a high level one to one.

KHRUSHCHEV: You've done it once, Sergei Pavlovich. You can do it again!

KOROLEV: But in time for the 21st Congress celebrations, First Secretary? That gives us less than a month. The second satellite is a lot more sophisticated than the first. It is, of course, already under construction. We're working round the clock, night and day. But it won't be ready until December at the earliest.

KHRUSHCHEV: Then build a new one that's less complicated! I want a space spectacular, Comrade Korolev! To maximise this global fanfare! To stun the Americans with our Soviet prowess! I want something remarkable to celebrate our first 40 years of Communism! And by November 7th. Is that understood?

KOROLEV: Perfectly, First Secretary. I'll call our top scientists together tonight.

KHRUSHCHEV: Make it work! You are our Chief Designer. And remember, charges against you have only just been dropped. You have a reputation to rehabilitate. The Gulag was no place for a man of your talents. A stupid mistake on Stalin's part.

KOROLEV: I am sure we can do it, First Secretary. But we must, of course, avoid a launch disaster. To rush such a holiday gift would.../

KHRUSHCHEV: /I want this one to be different! To exceed all expectations! The world will be watching!

KOROLEV: We'll orbit a dog! We'll send the first living being into space! Beyond the Karman line! It will prove that a human could ultimately survive zero-gravity too. Then we'll attempt manned space flight. After that we'll go to the moon!

KHRUSHCHEV: Now I recognise you again!

SCENE 7

January, 1957. The streets of Moscow, early morning. An icy wind rips through, shaking guttering. We hear a small dog (Laika/Kudryavka) scavenging in a bin, pulling at everything she can to see if there's something she can eat. There's a desperation. She hasn't eaten in days. Miraculously, she finds something. We hear another famished dog approach, larger, male, growling to get at it too, just as desperate. He attacks her. She yelps in pain and runs off.

A van screeches up. Two men get out.

DOG CATCHER 1: Come here you scrawny lump of shit!

The man catches him, bludgeoning him repeatedly. The dog howls out in agony, absolutely terrified. He tries to fight back, but there's no chance as the second man joins in. They beat him to death, almost pleasurably.

DOG-CATCHER 1: Throw him in the river. Filthy stray.

DOG-CATCHER 2: It's frozen over.

DOG-CATCHER 1: Well break the ice then! You've got a pick axe in your hand, haven't you?

DOG-CATCHER 2: There's another one over there, cowering in the bushes. I'll get it.

DOG-CATCHER 1: Wait. That one looks pretty and it's small and skinny. We'll sell it to the scientists. Just what they're after. But make sure it's a female. They only want females. Otherwise drown it. I haven't got the strength to kill any more today. My arms are done for. That's the tenth one already.

DOG-CATCHER 2: Here doggie-doggie! Come to Papa. Come over to Papa now.

Laika whimpers petrified.

SCENE 8

OKB-1, The Soviet Union's Rocket Design Bureau. Korolev convenes a secret meeting with his most senior space scientists.

KOROLEV: I propose that we orbit a living being, one with a highly developed sentiency, close to man's - in fact, his best friend, a dog.

KELDYSCH: A world first! It's an excellent idea, Chief Designer. I applaud your ambition. And some animals have already been trained for upper atmospheric flights. Yazdovsky and Gzenko at the Institute of Aviation Medicine, have been preparing them for nearly a year now. A pool of 58 cosmo-dogs.

KOROLEV: Indeed, Professor Keldysch. Stray female specimens picked off the streets of Moscow. They've lofted 12 on sub-orbital flights already.

It's a perfect opportunity to show the Americans what we're made of. And for Yazdovsky, Gzenko and their teams, a chance to test the effects of zero-gravity, G-forces, high acceleration and radiation in real conditions. My only concern is the unreasonable deadline.

CHERTOK: Four weeks is four weeks, Chief Designer! I'm prepared to forget night and day and take a gambler's chance. Earth's destiny is in our hands!

KOROLEV: Your enthusiasm is infectious, Dr Chertok. So, what about the design? We agree that the spacecraft remains attached to the rocket.

CHERTOK: To enable the Tral telemetry system to transmit its data back to us.

KOROLEV: We need to solve the battery issue. Find a way to save as much energy as possible.

CHERTOK: What if we only had periodic access. Maybe every 30 minutes, instead of continuous?

I've already come up with a theory that could work. I could convert three Pobeda alarm clocks into a timer with a 15-minute work cycle, for every 90 minute orbit.

KOROLEV: A clever idea, Dr Chertok. But the orbital period is 88 minutes, not 90.

CHERTOK: There's a slight eastward drift after each one, Chief Designer.

KELDYSCH: Our only danger, of course, is that the Americans will try and intercept.

KOROLEV: Let them have the data, if they must! This will be our victory, not theirs.

KELDYSCH: The Japanese will have tuned in anyway.

KOROLEV: Exactly. Their ground monitoring equipment covers half the U.S.S.R!

We'll do without an altitude control system too - and we'll borrow the rudimentary thermal control system from Sputnik.

KELDYSCH: We need to keep the cabin at a steady 15 degrees, Chief Designer. Otherwise, from what I understand from Gazenko, we risk ebullism for the dog. Liquids boil much more quickly at high.../

KOROLEV: Our sole objective is to prove we can loft the biological payload, Professor. Which brings us to life-support aspects. You have spoken to Dr Alekseev?

KELDYSCH: He's been developing pressurized dog cabins for the sub-orbital launches. He'll re-purpose available hardware and lose as much weight as he can. Given the urgency he just needs to add an automatic feeding mechanism for the dog, to sustain her during her mission. This is going to last a lot longer than a ballistic flight. Possibly days, if we're successful.

KOROLEV: Tell him to design a feeder for a single meal only. That will save weight.

KELDYSCH: I could, but.../

KOROLEV: Our only motivation here is to prove the possibility of eating in zero-gravity, Professor, not to provide a deluxe menu.

Complicit laughter from Chertok.

KELDYSCH: But what if the rocket orbits for several days, Chief Designer. The animal will need to eat. She will need some form of hydration.

We do need to maximise our chances of getting physiological data.../

KOROLEV: The experimental animal will not be coming back. This is a one-way mission.

KELDYSCH: She will be a sacrificial passenger?

KOROLEV: Yes.

KELDYSCH: We have never before sent a living being on a flight without a retrievable system in place, Chief Designer.

Korolev explodes. His reaction is quite shocking.

KOROLEV: Who is in charge here? You or I?

A heavy, uncomfortable silence.

KELDYSCH: I apologise, Chief Designer.

KOROLEV: We don't have time for any sentimental, bourgeois nonsense! It's a dog! Nothing but a dog! Would you rather I sent a man? Focus your attentions on the rocket testing! On what you've been assigned to do! (BEAT) Less than

four weeks to launch, Comrades! The countdown has started. The clock is ticking. Sputnik II must ship to Baikonur by the 19th of October for final testing. I will call First Secretary Khrushchev now to update him on our plans.

SCENE 9

And we're back with Maria in her Moscow apartment.

MARIA: If I had known what I was getting myself into...

Gazenko and his scientists had already blasted 12 dogs into the skies - 90, 200, 480 kilometres up, just to try out different landing systems. Quite a few of those poor dogs died, when a rocket exploded or parachutes failed to open and they plummeted headlong into the sea. Some had tried to run away, of course: Bolik, Zib, Smelaya - but they were always caught, thrown back into the concrete vivarium again until the next round of "procedures." It was an endless chain of cruel experiments.

SCENE 10.

INT. INSTITUTE OF AVIATION MED.

The Institute of Aviation Medicine. DR YAZDOVSKY briefs the key members of the space medicine team: DR OLEG GAZENKO and DR DR VASILY PARIN.

YAZDOVSKY: Parin, I'm putting you in charge of selecting the three dogs. We need one for testing instrumentation and life-support and two as payload; a primary flight candidate and a backup. Gazenko, you will oversee their intensive training. We have very little time. We fly to Baikonur for pre-launch tests with the chosen dog and her reserve on October 25th.

GAZENKO: Eighteen days? But Yazdovsky, we need to wean them off their food,

off water! Get them used to eating the gel capsules, to isolation, confinement, temperature extremes, to having their movements severely restricted! These things take time.../

YAZDOVSKY: No one said this was going to be easy, Gzenko.

GENIN: The rocket will need to be as light as possible too. Which has implications for the payload. You'll have to starve them Oleg Georgievich. Pick only the smallest, skinniest ones. What's the minimum cabin size we can get away with?

YAZDOVSKY: 80 cm x 64.

GAZENKO: That's a lot smaller than I thought it would be. The dog won't even be able to turn around.

Nothing from Yazdovsky.

GENIN: We need to create a proper life-support system at least. Sufficient oxygen generation. Carbon dioxide filters. Reliable temperature control.

YAZDOVSKY: Enough for a few hours only, Genin. This is a one-way mission. The specimen animal will not be coming back.

GAZENKO: What?

YAZDOVSKY: We simply don't have the time to develop a retrievable system, Gzenko.

A stunned silence.

YAZDOVSKY: There is no point in being emotional about this! The physiological data we retrieve will be invaluable. We need to establish conclusively that zero-gravity poses no danger to life. An important conclusion. I have warned

you not to get attached! They are biological specimens, not pets.

GENIN: Whoever is chosen will become the most famous canine in history.

YAZDOVSKY: That is one way of looking at it, Genin. Needless to say this mission is Code Red. You will not discuss it with anyone. Not with your wives and not with your junior staff. Is that quite clear? Everything will be conducted on a need to know basis only.

GAZENKO: We have to accustom the dogs to weightlessness, G-forces, high levels of noise. I can't see that this is possible in the short time allocated.

YAZDOVSKY: Make it happen! Call in all the help you need. We have our deadline. From First Secretary Khrushchev and his Chief Designer no less!

SCENE 11

It's late night, the Moscow streets are empty. We hear a Bitter autumn wind whipping through. Gazenko and Parin finally emerge from their day's work at the Institute.

PARIN: Get some rest tonight, Oleg Georgievich. It's been an exhausting day.

GAZENKO: Kudryavka, Albina and Mushka. They looked so vulnerable when you chose them. It was as if they somehow knew. Did you see how Mushka started to tremble?

PARIN: Dogs are smart. They pick things up. If it hadn't been them.../

GAZENKO: /You did what was asked of you, Vasily Vasilievich.

PARIN: I must say, I preferred it when we experimented on ourselves. There was far less to deal with.

GAZENKO: We need to get over the mental barrier, that's all. Bring our hearts in line with our heads. It's vital for what lies ahead.

PARIN: Otherwise a scientist's life/

GAZENKO: /is nothing but remorse.

SCENE 12

The Institute of Aviation Medicine the next morning. The three dogs are huddled together in a small vivarium. SFX of them licking each other. Gazenko and Parin arrive to start their work.

GAZENKO: Good morning girls! Did you sleep well?

He opens the cage to greet them. We hear their delight in the bit of affection. They whimper with excitement.

GAZENKO: Kudryavka, Albina, little Mushka. Our brave canine comrades. Look at you, climbing over each other to be touched. Like puppies. Did you see their mutual grooming?

PARIN: They have bonded very quickly. Comfort I imagine. The vivarium is hardly a cosy place to sleep. Cold concrete floor.../

GAZENKO: /No, but they have to get used to discomfort. Life on the streets can hardly have been better. Let's try them on the capsules this morning and start reducing their water intake. No breakfast today I'm afraid, girls.

PARIN: I'll get the technician to set the centrifuge up again for later as well. Mushka vomited badly yesterday. I need to check her head. There was a nasty abrasion. She lost consciousness for four minutes. Her blood pressure went up by 65 torr.

GAZENKO: That's not a good sign at all.

PARIN: No. Shall we begin confining them?
Get them into smaller cages?

GAZENKO: We'll have to. We must separate
them soon too, though I hate to do
it. Get them used to isolation.
This will be a solo mission, after
all. And we need to get to grips
with their individual
personalities. This is going to
demand a lot more than a simple
knowledge of physiology. We need to
find out how each of them
reacts...to different conditions,
situations, challenges. What
they're averse to, how much they
can cope with, what stabilizes them
again, how their moods change. What
they're like *in extremis*.

PARIN: Space travel is no joy ride. That's
for sure.

GAZENKO: We need to find a way somehow of
getting inside their minds. What we
learn from their reactions will be
vital for future human missions.

Parin imitates Yazdovsky beautifully.

PARIN: "But Dr Gazenko, they're only
primitive beings with instinctive
responses. Minds?! You are
projecting your own experience
again. Anthropomorphising."

GAZENKO: Be careful he doesn't hear you!

PARIN: It sounds a little crazy perhaps,
but, you know, I think we could do
with the help of an animal
psychologist, Oleg Georgievich.
Given the ridiculous time pressure,
and how much we need to train them.

GAZENKO: An animal psychologist! That is
genius, Dr Parin! And I know just
the place where we can find one!

PARIN: You do?

GAZENKO: Yes! Durov's corner!

PARIN: The circus?

GAZENKO: How do you imagine they train their animals to do all those complicated tricks?

PARIN: With whips, punishment and deprivation. How else?

GAZENKO: No, not the Durov's! Vladimir forbade the use of sticks and canes. He had a revolutionary technique. He used reward instead. He developed an ingenious reward system!

PARIN: But how can we possibly reward these dogs? We can hardly take them for walks in the park and play Catch the Ball!

GAZENKO: I'm not sure yet, Vasily Vasilievich, but we'll enlist their help. Let's go to the circus tonight.

SCENE 13. INT. DUROV'S CORNER, THE BIG TOP

Durov's Corner, The Big Top. A packed audience, including Gazenko and Parin, gasps, mesmerised as a tunnel of hoops is lit with flaming torches, each one flaring. The circus dogs prepare to jump through them. With them is Durov animal trainer, MARIA ALEKSANDROVNA GERTZ.

MARIA: And now Dezik, Snezhinka and Malyshka will follow Krasavka, Lisa and Tsyganka through this tunnel of twenty flaming hoops! Go girls!

The music starts up, 'Katjusha.' A roar of amazement from the crowd and loud applause as they actually do it.

MARIA: Well done, you brave and clever dogs! Here's a piece of baked sausage for each of you, as a thank you. Let's give them another big round of applause.

She claps and the audience enthusiastically follows suit. The Durov RINGMASTER comes back on.

RINGMASTER: Let's hear it again for Maria Aleksandrovna and her flame-hurdling, dancing dogs!

More raucous applause, whistles etc.

PARIN: Remarkable. They showed absolutely no fear of the fire.

GAZENKO: That's because they trust her completely. Let's go and meet this Maria Aleksandrovna back-stage, shall we?

SCENE 14

And we're back with Maria in her Moscow apartment.

MARIA: "Cruelty humiliates. Only kindness can be wonderful." That's what great-uncle Vladimir taught us.

As children, we were shown how to treat other animals with respect. How to recognize each one's integrity, and honour that. We acknowledged ourselves as animals too, of course. Human chimpanzees, after all. And we knew that it was only verbal language that separated us. The little matter of a different voice-box, tongue and lips, with less flexibility and movement in theirs, that wouldn't let them formulate the same range of sounds as we could.

It didn't mean there wasn't a thinking being behind those lively eyes!

It was hardly a matter of intelligence. I've known dogs who were quicker to learn than some adults! Picking up on new sounds and signals, reading the slightest nuances of body movement, interpreting signs. Intentions even. You see that in the circus. They could tune into moods too.

We loved those clever, little beings. And they gave of themselves willingly because we saw them for who they were - conscious, sentient, sapient individuals. With unique personalities of their own. As aware as the rest of us.

We weren't like other circuses. Oh no! Our animals were family, not slaves. It was a peaceable kingdom at Durov's Corner. Foxes eating beside cockerills, bears next to goats.

I remember the night Gazenko and Parin came over to our Big Top only too well. It was the night my destiny changed forever.

She laughs, ironically.

MARIA:

There was hardly a choice in the matter. You don't say "no" when two top Soviet scientists, from an Institute that's backed by the military, tell you that you've been chosen to work on a secret project. That it's an honour and will further the Great Soviet cause. That it involves helping dogs too.

We'd only just come out of Stalin's reign of terror. Thousands had 'disappeared.' And whatever he might have wanted the West to believe, Khrushchev was no *Ded Moroz*, no Father Christmas either.

And I was the descendant of Nadezha Durova, for pity's sake! The woman who'd disguised herself as a man to fight with the Russian cavalry in the Napoleonic wars. Who'd won the highest honours and been celebrated by Pushkin. Patriotism was in my blood! Before the revolution we'd had our own coat of arms. Our motto was "Serving the Motherland." I was trapped by a rotten stroke of fate.

The next day I was asked to report to the Institute of Aviation Medicine. To Oleg Gazenko and his team of space doctors who specialised in something called "the physiology of extreme state."

I had absolutely no idea what I was letting myself in for.

SCENE 15

The next day at the Institute of Aviation Medicine. Maria is introduced to her new work.

GAZENKO: All I can tell you is that it's for a special flight. One that will break international records. You are not to discuss your work here with anyone, naturally. It is classified. There are high level security implications. Right, on to the animals. You'll get to meet them in just a moment. The flight dogs have to get used to close confinement, to standing still for long periods of time. Initially this causes them to stop urinating and defecating. It makes them a bit restless.

MARIA: Does their condition deteriorate physically?

GAZENKO: Over a period of time, yes.

MARIA: They become listless, depressed even. Their coats lose their lustre.

GAZENKO: Yes.

MARIA: That's a sign of serious psychic trauma, Dr Gzenko, if I may say so. A response to extreme stress.../

GAZENKO: /The preparation is, how shall I put it, difficult. I can't disguise that fact. We have to train them to eat a special high-nutrition gel too, in capsule form. They have to get used to doing without normal food rations, and without water.

A moment's stunned silence from Maria.

MARIA: That's a tough call. Especially for animals who have already known the realities of starvation.

GAZENKO: I agree with you, but necessity forces some unhappy compromises.

Laxatives don't seem to improve their condition either. Our researchers have found that only prolonged periods of training actually prove effective.

MARIA: Are there cases of submissive wetting too? Of repetitive pacing? Self-mutilation even?

GAZENKO: In the most sensitive animals, yes. But those tend to fail the selection process early on. It's also why we choose to use strays.

MARIA: Because they are already hardened to surviving terrible conditions.

GAZENKO: If you like, yes. The extreme cold of a Russian winter, food scarcity, lack of physical contact, boredom. We choose dogs specifically because we feel they're better suited to endure long periods of inactivity, unlike monkeys or apes, for example. And females because their temperament tends to be easier.

MARIA: You find them more compliant.

GAZENKO: Yes. And they fight less. Aggression doesn't help in these situations, as you can imagine. The flight suits are also designed with a special device to collect urine and faeces - and this only works with females. Needless to say, a great deal of work has to be done to adapt the dogs to their new conditions.

MARIA: And at the moment you use coercion?

GAZENKO: We have had very little choice in the matter, Maria Aleksandrovna. That is why you are here now. And to help us shed light on their internal experience.

MARIA: At least you recognise that they have one.

GAZENKO: Oh, undoubtedly. (PAUSE) We don't know anything about these dogs'

pasts, so it's very important we get close to them and maintain a relationship.

SCENE 16

Maria and Oleg Gazenko come into the centrifuge lab, where Dr Parin is subjecting Kudryavka, Albina and Mushka to some extreme tests. The noise of the spinning centrifuge, overlaid with the simulated sounds of a rocket engine launching, is deafening. Over this:

GAZENKO: Dr Parin is testing their responses to high levels of sound and acceleration.

MARIA: That must be killing their ears! Dogs have an acute sense of hearing, Dr Gazenko. Far more developed than ours. But where are they? I can't actually see them.

GAZENKO: Inside the centrifuge, strapped down while they spin for a few cycles. Twenty minutes at most.

PARIN: They're due to finish in 45 seconds time.

MARIA: I don't understand.

GAZENKO: The centrifuge simulates the high acceleration and G-forces a dog would feel upon rocket launch. The noise levels, of kerosene exploding at take off.

MARIA: A rocket launch? For a missile?

GAZENKO: No. For a vertical rocket flight into the upper atmosphere. And in the future, for a launch into orbit.

MARIA: You plan to send a dog into orbit?

PARIN: Not yet, you understand. But eventually. It's just an experiment for now.

GAZENKO: Entirely hypothetical, of course.

MARIA: But you still consider it necessary to conduct these tests?

GAZENKO: It's what our Institute was set up for, Maria Aleksandrovna. To try out possibilities. Man must explore, after all.

PARIN: It is only human to be carried away by an idea!

The centrifuge begins to slow - just like a washing machine finishing its spin cycle.

PARIN: O.K. They're finished. Let's get them out of there.

GAZENKO: Now please, don't be shocked by what you're about to see. The dogs will inevitably be somewhat ...concussed and disoriented. They won't be able to get up or walk initially. They will be experiencing vertigo. They will have vomited. And they may be unconscious.

Stunned silence from Maria.

PARIN: There could be some minor head and facial injuries too, but I assure you, the centrifuge is padded. We protect them as much as we possibly can. Out you come now, girls.

And we hear him pulling three lifeless bodies onto a steel table. One of the dogs is whimpering, clearly in a lot of pain.

GAZENKO: Don't make a fuss now, Mushka.

MARIA: Oh my God...How many animals have actually died in your experiments?

PARIN: Inevitably we always lose a few. It is regrettable, of course, but we do try to keep casualties to an absolute minimum.

GAZENKO: It's important not to become too attached. These are scientific specimens, after all.

PARIN: We don't have the same relationship to them as we do to our family pets.

MARIA: Yes, I can see that.

GAZENKO: And remember that all this is being done for the ultimate benefit of mankind.

MARIA: I'm sorry...I don't think I can help you after all.

Her voice is full of emotion, deeply shaken.

GAZENKO: Nonsense. You are in shock. You will be fine. Now take some deep breaths. You just have to get your head around it. That's all. We've all had to.

MARIA: No!

PARIN: These dogs need you, Maria Aleksandrovna.

MARIA: I really don't think I can./

PARIN: /You are doing this for them./

GAZENKO: /And for the good of the greater Soviet cause. Please don't forget that. This is a very great honour!

SCENE 17

Maria's apartment. A crackly recording of Prokofiev's 'Dance of the Knights' from Romeo and Juliet plays on record-player.

MARIA: The banned Prokofiev. That night I went home and drank half a bottle of vodka. I played him with the windows wide open and waited for someone to come and arrest me. I lifted up the floor-boards and got out my forbidden copy of Dostoyevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*. I left the book open at the page where it says: "Man, do not pride yourself on your superiority to animals: they are without sin, and you, with your greatness, defile the earth by your appearance on it...Love all God's creation..." I flouted our state-dictated atheism and made my own

childish protest. But no one came and the next day, sober and terrified of personal consequences, I was back at the laboratory.

SCENE 18

Gazenko, Parin, Maria and the dogs are in a laboratory with a large floating tank at the centre of it. We can hear the water, which is being pumped with ice particles.

GAZENKO: Good, you're here, Maria.

MARIA: Where are the dogs? I couldn't find them in the vivarium. I wanted to take them out for a quick walk before we start.

GAZENKO: We don't have time for walks. They're here. Dr Parin is about to model, recreate as closely as he can, the condition of zero-gravity, or weightlessness, which we know exists beyond the Earth's gravitational field.

PARIN: We can do this most effectively by immersing the cosmonauts - in this case the dogs - into cold water for long periods of time in a reclining, anti-orthostatic position.

Maria can't quite believe what she's hearing.

MARIA: They are strapped down in there?!

GAZENKO: Yes.

MARIA: But how will you stop them from drowning? From freezing? You're pumping ice into the water!

PARIN: Each specimen animal is wearing a specially designed, plexi-glass helmet, into which a small amount of oxygen is being pumped.

GAZENKO: This will also help us to determine the effects of low oxygen levels on breathing and on blood circulation. Important conclusions.

PARIN: Each dog will spend up to an hour at a time in the immersion tank today.

MARIA: An hour?!/

PARIN: /Your job is to monitor the effect on their mood after each session.

GAZENKO: We need to understand not only the physiological impact of potential weightlessness, but it's psychological, and if you like, emotional effects too.

MARIA: But this is so cruel!

Suddenly one of the dogs begins to have a full-blown panic attack. She's thrashing the water with her paws, desperately trying to get out; a life and death struggle.

MARIA: Oh my God, Mushka! We have to get her out of there! Now!

PARIN: No. Not until the experiment is complete. She has another forty-five minutes left yet.

MARIA: She's in very real danger of having a heart-attack!

GAZENKO: She does seem to be having some sort of fit, Vasily Vasilievich.

PARIN: Mushka always struggles. She's too wilful for her own good.

MARIA: She thinks she's dying!

PARIN: Kudryavka will be the first one out. If you could start with her, please. Then Albina. Mushka will be last.

MARIA: Your methods are brutal!

GAZENKO: That's enough, Maria Aleksandrovna!

This afternoon we also need to begin restriction training. Has Dr Alekseev finished remodelling the animals' flight suits yet?

He explains to her:

GAZENKO: We need to maintain a hygienically safe environment, but at the same time make sure not to injure or chafe the animal's sensitive skin, of course.

She refuses to respond to his hypocrisy.

PARIN: They are not exactly Coco Chanel!/
Only Gazenko laughs at Parin's little joke.

PARIN: ...but he has finished them. Not too constrictive, but they'll enable the dogs to be securely strapped down nevertheless.

GAZENKO: Very good. Let's isolate Kudryavka. Maria Aleksandrovna, if you want to take her into the main laboratory. To the quiet area at the back.

And Kudryavka's almost lifeless body is pulled out of the water.

GAZENKO: That's one of the reasons we train them, Maria. So that they'll cope better.

Nothing from Maria.

SCENE 19

The main laboratory's quiet area.

MARIA: Oh Kudryavka, Kudryavka, I'm so sorry, my sweetheart.

Maria is in tears, kissing, stroking and rubbing Kudryavka's motionless body.

MARIA: Please wake up, my love. Wake up for Maria, hey. I'm here for you. I'll do everything I can to protect you. To protect all of you. You can trust me, my darling. You can trust me.

Laika comes to, whimpering, vomiting water, convulsing with cold and fear.

Not locked up in that cold vivarium, waiting for the next round of tortures.

It all happened so quickly.

SCENE 22

SFX of Maria sliding open the metal grating of the vivarium, back at the lab.. The dogs jump up, and yowl with excitement to see her.

MARIA: Good morning, girls. How are you all? My little Kudryavka, sweet Albina, precious Mushka, with the little white star on your nose.

She fusses and cuddles them. They nuzzle her and give out yelps and barks of appreciation.

MARIA: Now listen, I have to explain something to you, my sweethearts. I want you to understand that what is about to happen to you today, although it won't be very nice, will only last for a short time. And it's not being done to punish any of you! I want you to understand that.

She is interrupted by Yazdovsky coming in.

YAZDOVSKY: You are talking to them, Maria Aleksandrovna. How charming.

He's amused.

MARIA: But, of course.

YAZDOVSKY: Well is that not a little pointless? I suppose they are reassured by the tone of your voice at least.

MARIA: Please don't think for a moment that animals don't understand every word we say, Dr Yazdovsky.

YAZDOVSKY: Is that so? I suppose they must gain some sort of sensory impression. A notion of something being either good for them, or bad. Threatening or benign.

MARIA: You underestimate them, Sir. It is far more complex than that. For a start, dogs, like all mammals with a cerebral cortex, think in images. Perhaps you would like to observe for a moment?

YAZDOVSKY: I was actually looking for Dr Gzenko, but alright, why not? I can take a minute.

A silence as Maria 'tunes in' to the dogs. Yazdovsky starts to laugh.

YAZDOVSKY: What on earth are you doing Maria Aleksandrovna?

MARIA: Thought transmitting, Dr Yazdovsky. I'm sending the dogs a mental picture and they are receiving it from me. Mind to mind.

YAZDOVSKY: But that's scientifically impossible!

MARIA: No, it is not. I am using our old, pre-verbal, right-brained consciousness, that's all. Slowing my beta brain-waves down to a more relaxed and receptive alpha.

YAZDOVSKY: That is completely absurd woman!

MARIA: Some truths simply cannot be demonstrated, Dr Yazdovsky. A hundred years from now we'll probably all revert back to telepathy again. It's far more reliable than language.

YAZDOVSKY: Well, honestly! Alright. What are they showing you then? What conclusions have you managed to reach?

MARIA: That they are frightened. That they would like to leave this place and come home with me. That they have a terrible prescience that something bad is about to happen. That it hurts them not to be heard, or properly seen or understood.

YAZDOVSKY: All of that, hey?

MARIA: And they are wondering what they have done that was so wrong, to deserve all of this. Why you want them to suffer. Why you are all so indifferent to their pain. They are trying to work out how they can get back into your good books again, to avoid further punishment.

He laughs it all off, somewhat embarrassed.

YAZDOVSKY: So, you disapprove of our methods?

MARIA: You asked me what they were thinking.

YAZDOVSKY: It is not personal! These are vital scientific experiments! In the interests of humanity! Of the greater good!

MARIA: Oh, but to them it *is* personal, Dr Yazdovsky. As it would be to either you or I, if this were to happen to us, if we were to be used in this way.

YAZDOVSKY: What a ridiculous comparison! They are dogs! Just dogs! Try not to care so much, Maria Aleksandrovna. And watch that you don't project your woman's emotions onto them! The biological specimens are needed for flight training now.

SCENE 23

Gazenko and Maria are in an office, sitting across a desk. A de-briefing session. We hear Gazenko taking notes.

GAZENKO: So, given what you have been able to ascertain, and without knowing any of the dogs' past histories, what can you tell me about each of their personalities, Maria Aleksandrovna?

Something suddenly makes her suspicious.

MARIA: For what purpose, Dr Gazenko?

GAZENKO: From your observations of their behaviour and your communications with them. So that we can learn something of the principles we'll need to use later in the selection and training of cosmonauts, for example.

MARIA: You mean how well each of them has adapted to the stress of their surroundings and to your tough experiments?

GAZENKO: Yes. Yes. And how quickly they regained stability, how tolerant each of them was *in extremis*, how aggressive. Their differences in terms of certain reactions; their character traits, if you like.

A pause.

MARIA: Well, Mushka always resists the most, but then she does get very anxious. It takes her a while to trust that the test has not just been designed to hurt her.

And she doesn't like the protein capsules either. She has often chosen to go without food altogether, rather than eat them, in fact. I think it's the delivery system. The way the gels are released. Like an ammunition belt shooting out bullets. It unnerves her.

They all suffer terribly for not being allowed to drink water too. I'm worried about how constipated they're getting, Dr Gazenko. About the real danger of gallstones.

GAZENKO: The gel capsules give them everything they need. We designed them specifically. What about Albina?

MARIA: Albina is very quick to learn. She's a good dog. Her reactions are razor-sharp. But she gets restless. She can't bear being made to stand

still for so long. She hates being tied to that test stand.

GAZENKO: It's a vital part of the training.

MARIA: But their muscles cramp so quickly. It's agonizing for them. The fascist Japanese used it as a form of torture.

GAZENKO: Please, get back to your point. Albina.

MARIA: I really think it would benefit her, all of them, in fact, to have some proper exercise, some fresh air. What they're going through, their environment, it's not natural, Dr Gazenko. All their needs are denied. They need to feel the grass under their feet again, the sunshine on their backs. They need to be able to smell things. They are all experiencing a high level of sensory deprivation and it's depressing them. Deeply. Their spirits are declining with every day. They need to play. To socialise. Psychologically, it's so important.

GAZENKO: I'm afraid that's simply not possible. We have to maintain strict, clinical conditions. The time-scale is very tight. What about Kudryavka?

MARIA: My dear Kudryavka. She's so tolerant, so well-behaved. Everything you throw at her, she seems to take it and come back again for more. She is so trusting. So happy to please. It's extraordinary really, after everything she's been through.

GAZENKO: Do you consider her the most stoic, of the three?

MARIA: Yes, if you want to put it like that. She's a brave soul. She has a big Russian heart.

GAZENKO: And the most docile, would you say?

MARIA: She's completely even-tempered.

GAZENKO: She's certainly very photogenic.
She's got healthy, Russian looks.
Thank you, Maria. That will be all.

SCENE 24

And we're back in Maria's apartment, recalling.

MARIA: I signed her death warrant! (PAUSE)

Every time I look in the mirror
there is less and less to love.
(PAUSE)

That afternoon, Yazdovsky chose
Kudryavka. He was helped in his
selection by my glowing report! I
should have refused to cooperate. I
should have shown some courage. I
should have trusted my intuition.

She sighs heavily, sadly.

MARIA: Wracked with guilt, Yazdovsky took
Kudryavka home with him. To play
with his kids. An afternoon in the
garden, in exchange for her young
life. He said he wanted to do
something nice for her because she
had so little time left to live.

Just ten days, as it turned out.

How that must have confused her!
Albina was nominated as her backup
and Mushka as test-dog; for
instrumentation...and life-support.

A moment's painful silence. The irony all too clear to her.

MARIA: They went to great lengths to make
her an oxygen generator and devices
to avoid oxygen poisoning, to
absorb carbon-dioxide. She had to
stay alive long enough to give them
their precious data!

And from now on Kudryavka became
'Laika.' So that the American Press
might more easily get their tongues
round her name. Something catchy to

be easily - and forever -
remembered.

Laika: little barker, little
howler.

Although those heartless monsters
are already trying to turn her into
a joke: dubbing her 'Muttnik'!
They're saying "Muttnik" will soon
be "kaputnik"!

Have they any, any idea?!

*She's in so much pain she can barely speak. With great effort
she gathers herself.*

It was only on the military runway
that I was finally told the truth.
Gazenko pulled me to one side as
they were loading on the dogs.

He told me in order to distract me.

He became very cold: "What I'm
about to tell you is a State
Secret. Disclosure of any
confidential information pertaining
to this mission will be regarded as
a treasonable offence. Is that
understood?"

I was shocked by his gravity and
formality, as if we didn't even
know each other.

SCENE 25

The military runway. SFX plane propellers, high winds etc.

GAZENKO: We loan the dogs to an external
rocket design bureau. Kudryavka,
"Laika" will be the first
experimental animal, the first
living being to fly in space. She
is making her one-way mission in
four days time on board Sputnik II.

MARIA: Sputnik II?! But you said...

GAZENKO: They built it in less than a month.
A feat of pure technological
genius.

MARIA: She will die?

GAZENKO: Her sacrifice will pave the way for human space flight.

MARIA: Oh my God...

GAZENKO: It is not for you to judge your superiors, Maria Aleksandrovna. It's what she was born to do. She is making history! Her mission celebrates our first 40 years of Communism. A world first! It will stun the Americans and prove our supremacy. Kudryavka is giving us all a great gift.

SCENE 26

Maria's apartment, recalling. She relives a conversation that will be imprinted on her mind forever now.

MARIA: "We all want to fly higher, further, faster. The Americans as much as us! Haven't you ever dreamt of going to the moon, of exploring other planets, Maria Aleksandrovna?"

No, Oleg Georgievich. I like the Earth. Everything I want is down here. I don't need to search the Galaxy.

"Only after these tests with animals, will permission be given for a manned flight! Don't you see that? We do not know with great certainty how zero-gravity will affect human cosmonauts and how much time they can remain in that state. We have to do this first! If a dog can survive orbit, then so can a man! It's our passport to the whole universe!"

And it was our Kudryavka's passport to a man-made Hell.

But she was not so disposable in the end, was she, Oleg Georgievich? I saw how you suffered afterwards. How you ran into the woods to avoid

the line-up of Party dignitaries;
your face streaming, your heart
ready to explode. I heard you
wailing out your grief!

"The work is emotionally
exhausting, Maria. You must learn
to cut off your feelings. It is the
only way of coping."

Like a machine. But I am not a
machine. I am a feeling being. And
you are not a machine, Oleg
Georgievich.

That devil, Descartes has bewitched
you all! You try telling yourselves
she was nothing but a 'biological
specimen,' a lesser being, a set of
conditioned reflexes, but we know
that was never true, hey Oleg? The
root of 'Animal' is 'anima' after
all; the Latin for 'soul'.

How long will it take you to come
clean? To admit that you shouldn't
have done it. That you have not
learnt enough from the mission to
justify the death of Kudryavka.

Vulnerable lives, that were never
yours to abuse in the first place!
And what have you learnt, Oleg
Georgievich? What have you really
learnt?

She laughs sadly; a broken woman.

MARIA: This has just whetted your
appetite! Now you want to start a
primate program!

She breaks down, inconsolable.

SCENE 27

*We cut back to a few days before the launch. Yazdovsky
and Gazenko conduct surgery on 'Laika' and Albina at the
Baikonur cosmodrome.*

YAZDOVSKY: These small sensors, implanted
under the skin, will monitor
respiratory frequency. I will also

divert a piece of each dog's carotid artery into these devices, to record and transmit pulse and blood pressure data.

GAZENKO: They won't have time to recover before we have to harness the payload in the dog cabin, Dr Yazdovsky.

YAZDOVSKY: That's immaterial now. As long as the flight dog, "Laika," survives the first orbit, we'll have accomplished our task. If you could wash both dogs down in alcohol solution before they're put in their sanitation suits. And swab some iodine on the sensor points. It will help to pick up telemetry.

GAZENKO: Yes, Dr Yazdovsky.

YAZDOVSKY: I am assigning you and Maria Aleksandrovna to watch over them both. Laika will be lofted onto her rocket, an hour after midnight on November 3rd. Launch is set for 5.30am. There are some technical difficulties apparently - and with the telemetry system of all things!

GAZENKO: We need that data.

YAZDOVSKY: Dr Shabarov and Dr Shumakov are working on it, but it could take the whole of the next three days - and we don't want anyone escaping!

GAZENKO: Three days on the launch pad, in these sub-zero temperatures?

YAZDOVSKY: Don't worry. We'll pump hot air into her cockpit via a hose. She can't die before she gets up there! And I know it's completely against protocol, but you might want to give her a good drink of water before she's chained down.

GAZENKO: A Last Supper.

YAZDOVSKY: Yes, if you like. O.K. they're coming round. Let's give them some air.

GAZENKO:

Kudryavka. There's a good girl.
Albina. Well done, our brave little
canine comrades.

SCENE 28

Maria's apartment, recalling. She relives "Laika's" terrible end.

MARIA:

The space-craft had been constructed from rough sketches. The only testing they'd been able to do was inside a vacuum chamber. A fan had been designed to activate whenever the cabin-temperature exceeded 15 degrees. But that rudimentary thermal control system was borrowed from the first satellite and it was the Achilles Heel for Kudryavka.

They are trying to pretend they have prepared a humane death for her! With a good helping of poison in one of her seven day's worth of capsules!

Kudryavka died from extreme overheating and stress after just 7 hours. Ebullism if you want the specifics. The temperature in her tiny cabin - the size of a washing machine drum - went up to 40 degrees! Because of a computer malfunction and some thermal insulation tearing loose. 40 degrees 966 miles up!

Water boils at 36 degrees, at body temperature, at an altitude of just 61,000 feet! The membrane in her mouth, her eyes, her nose must have started to bubble. Her internal organs, the blood in her veins... She boiled alive! For seven long hours! In a Cold War, where everyone's hearts have frozen!

My poor Kudryavka hurtling through the void at 5 miles per second; terrified and alone. Trapped in that airless capsule; panting

desperately for breath. Five times faster than normal because of the fear and the onset of hypoxia, oxygen deficiency.

Beginning to notice that she couldn't relieve her lung's efforts anymore. Her heart racing at 260 beats a minute! Three times the usual, even under stress. The engines roaring below her. Her cabin shaking violently as it ascended.

I cannot bear it! I cannot bear it!

For Kudryavka it really was The End Of The World.

Maria is still in a state of deep shock. She calms, beyond grief now.

Yazdovsky was concerned from the start about the heat. 120 degrees of direct sunlight to contend with. Not that it made any difference, of course. Because she was never meant to be retrievable. She was just up there to prove a point.

Gazenko fought hard to get her a window, cut in the bulkhead of her little cabin.

What was he thinking? That it would make her feel better to see where she was going? That she might at least enjoy the view? Yes, she'd be annihilated, but at least she'd catch an unprecedented glimpse of the stars along the way! He fought tooth and nail for that whimsical little porthole.

And for those last three days on the launch pad, it did make a difference actually. We were able to speak to her and she could see our faces. We pressed ourselves up against that glass. Our presence reassured her.

She trusted us.

SCENE 29

The launch pad. Maria and Gazenko are up on the platform, muffled against the intense cold. They speak with difficulty.

MARIA: Kudryavka. My little Kudryavka. How I wish I could take you home with me. I have wanted to so much, you know. All along, my darling. You are such a special, special girl. Such a brave girl.

GAZENKO: You are doing us the greatest honour, Kudryavka. You are serving your country, humanity in the highest possible way. You will be the most famous dog in history! We will never forget you. Never! We are all so deeply grateful to you.

MARIA: Look at her face. She thinks you are playing a game with her. She thinks this is just another of your scientific tests. Well, at least, that is what she is hoping.

GAZENKO: Maybe that is for the best.

MARIA: But she can sense our anxiety too. It's confusing her. It's making her nervous. She knows something is badly wrong. She wants to know where the others are. She hasn't seen Mushka in days, she's showing me. She wants to know where Albina is.

GAZENKO: Can you hypnotise her perhaps? Put her into a trance; something to sedate her.

MARIA: I am not trained to do that, Oleg Georgievich. I can only send her reassuring images. But I cannot lie to her. She is far too clever for that. She picks up my intention before I have even got there. I am comforting her in the only way I can, by sending her my love, my undying affection.

Suddenly they are interrupted by Dr Chertok. We hear him climbing onto the platform to reach them. We hear him pulling the warm air-hose out of "Laika's" cabin.

GAZENKO: What are you doing Dr Chertok?

CHERTOK: Unplugging the warm air-hose. We're getting ready to switch the life-support over to onboard systems. I'm sorry, but it's time to say your farewells.

MARIA: No! No! Please no!

GAZENKO: We cannot prevent the inevitable, Maria! It is not within our power!

In an unprecedented move, and going completely against protocol, he opens Laika's hatch for them to say a proper goodbye.

CHERTOK: Be very quick, but give her a proper farewell.

Laika squeals with excitement. For a brief moment she thinks that the test is over and she is being released. It is heart-breaking to hear.

MARIA: Oh Kudryavka, my little Kudryavka. You are everything to me! Everything!

She bursts into tears, kissing Laika's head and stroking her, until she's pulled away by Chertok.

CHERTOK: Hurry! They're about to start hoisting her up!

He kisses her nose.

Farewell Kudryavka. Good luck to you and *bon voyage*, our brave, little, canine comrade!

Gazenko is suddenly overcome with an uncontrollable grief. He breaks every code.

GAZENKO: I will pray for you, Kudryavka. I will pray for you, my darling! I will never ever forget you!

We hear the hatch being slammed down. And immediately the Crane starts its hoist to the top of the rocket with Kudryavka chained down inside her tiny cabin.

has been sacrificed, there will be merry hell to pay.

Albina has stopped eating. She has become intensely depressed. She is inconsolable. Mushka is already losing her coat through mange; a profound stress reaction. The other test dogs have lost their will to live.

And Kudryavka's coffin still circles Mother Earth.

Oh Kudryavka. Kudryavka. Please forgive me my cowardice, my treachery!

She gives full vent to her tremendous grief.

SCENE 34

An American news room, an emergency news broadcast.

ED HERLIHY:

Today at 05.30am Moscow Time, Soviet scientists launched a second satellite into space, Sputnik II, dedicated to the 40th anniversary of the October Revolution.

On board Sputnik II there is reportedly a living animal, a dog called Laika, who is sealed inside a compartment with air and everything she needs to remain alive and well...

MUSIC: 'The Motherland Hears, the Motherland Knows.'

ENDS