

The Cosmonaut

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Outer space stills of faraway galaxies, stars, supernovas, implosions and dark material. Unknown amazing pictures, colour softened.

Title Credits IN with space-sounds-alike music.

A distant voice broadcasts a communication, like small pieces from a diary that has been sent out into deep space with no expectations of getting any reply at all.

The communications are mixed up with interference and silences.

STAN

"29th July 1976. It's been more than seven months since I float inside the Kolibri in an unknown quadrant. Navigation maps are useless. Lab-mice have been moving restlessly all night and have died at dawn. Plants are whispering words I cannot understand. I don't know where it is taking me."

"Since it landed on the surface of the Moon, the Kolibri Module has established a strange and autonomous behaviour".

"August 4th. The Moon's surface is just a dead landscape, covered with an ash-like dust. It didn't impress me as I believed it would."

"Andrei will love to know I left his badge".

"I have dark dreams almost every day."

"It's cold in Space. It's always cold out there."

"August 16th. I think I saw a shooting star today, but it might have been another one of my visions".

"One might think there's not much to see in space, but if you carefully observe it hour after hour..."

"Darkness hides endless notes"

"Which are the probabilities of finding Alexey Ledovskiy's corpse in this vastness?"

"How long will it take them to forget my face, my name?"

"September 1st. A spaceship is no home."

TITLE fades in from black.

THE COSMONAUT

"September 4th. Pushkin once said that the sacred sound of bells is made to announce a big disgrace or a solemn celebration... Yesterday night I heard bells ringing in the immensity of space"

Bells ringing. Image fades out to black while bells keep ringing. Links with following scene.

SIGN: 7 months earlier.

FIELD. EXT. DUSK.

2

We are in the countryside facing some wooded land. There is a small cottage with a little fence and a garden. It's a cold grey day although the sunset sun shines over everything.

Some people sit around the rests of a smoky barbecue. They drink some kind of alcohol and chat about random subjects. It's a friends gathering. Blank sheets are hanging on a string and wave with the breeze.

Some feet away, a man in his mid 40s, tall and heavily built, with strong facial features, talks to a nice lady around the same age, with a pale complexion and long silky hair. We cannot listen to the conversation. Her eyes look sad the whole time. He says something while caressing her. He kisses her softly on the lips and she smiles making an effort but convinced and agreeing. They both join the group that toasts to the cook.

The man, Andrei, asks one of the guests to join him. It's Stan, younger, thinner and with sharper facial features.

Both men reach one side of the cottage. Andrei searches for something among the firewood while Stan stares at the sky. Andrei looks at him and silence emerges.

3.

ANDREI

You should be happy.

STAN

I am.

Andrei smiles and both embrace tenderly, keeping the same position for some long-lasting seconds. Stan stares into the distance almost at camera axis, where the rest of the group gathers.

(Close up of Yulia, the woman who was introduced at the beginning, staring almost at camera axis too, both looks are linked.)

CHAIKA SPACE COMPLEX (HALL). INT. DAY.

3

Stan leans on a column of the empty hall in the Chaika Space Station. Distant steps can be heard in the silence. Stan looks at a small teaspoon while playing with it between his fingers.

LIVING ROOM IN ANDREI'S HOUSE. INT. DAY

4

Stan sits on the sofa at Andrei and Yulia's home. They seem to be alone and silence is amplified with every noise. He looks forward, holding a cup. She enters with a coffee tray. When leaving the tray down, a small teaspoon falls down. Both try to catch it at the same time. They look at each other silently. He lets the spoon go and she offers it to him and blushes. He looks at his cup, which has another teaspoon inside. Then, while looking at her, he takes the spoon. She leaves looking down towards the floor. Both stare blankly.

FADE TO BLACK

LIFT. INT. DAY.

5

Stan takes the lift with a flickering green light. He stops to look at it. He gets out of the lift.

LIVING ROOM IN ANDREI'S HOUSE. INT. DAY.

6

Andrei and Yulia are reading in the living room when the bell rings. Andrei stands up to open the door. It's Stan. Both kiss on the cheek and Stan is invited to come inside.

ANDREI

We'll be leaving in a while.

Stan greets Yulia restrained and then both stand still, without looking at each other, surrounded by a dead silence.

Andrei comes back, putting his coat on and ignoring what's going on.

ANDREI

Yulia, have you seen my navigation maps?

YULIA

They're next to the module 6 documents. Inside the black folder. I can bring them later if you want.

ANDREI

It's Ok. Let's go Andrei.

Both men go out. Stan stares at the floor. The door shuts and she is left alone, silently, staring into the distance.

FADE TO BLACK

STAN'S BEDROOM. INT. NIGHT.

7

We are in a bedroom at the Space Complex. It's Stan's bedroom. The walls are made of concrete and everything has a futuristic but sober style. There's nothing but an iron bed and a small bedside table.

Stan puts his toothbrush into a sports-bag. A razor blade. A book and a black notebook. Then he thinks for a while and opens the wardrobe where there are neatly folded shirts, ties and suits, all of them similar. He looks at them.

FADE TO BLACK

LIVING ROOM IN ANDREI'S HOUSE. INT. DAY

8

A party is taking place in the living room of Andrei and Yulia's home. It's a farewell party for Stan. Everybody is wearing elegant suits and dresses. Yulia looks stunning. She seems to shine.

She joins the group sitting next to Andrei, Stan and others.

A conversation about some event of the time is taking place. They are talking about Russia. Yulia uses a violent metaphor. Stan looks at the floor and then he refutes it, restrained.

Someone plays an electronic music vinyl from the time. Andrei stands up.

ANDREI

Attention please. Lets
toast to my friend Stan,
to his trip to the stars
and to be the first
Russian to have the
privilege to step on the
moon. Poyejali!

EVERYBODY
Poyejali!

The crowd claps and laughs. Stan pulls a face uncomfortably. A shot from the inside of his jacket pocket shows how he presses the teaspoon with strength.

FADE TO BLACK

ANDREI'S BEDROOM. INT. NIGHT.

9

Andrei is sitting on the side of the bed and is finishing to button up his pyjama. Yulia comes in from the bathroom wearing a light nightdress. She shines. She sits behind Andrei on the bed and hugs him, leaning her head on his back. Andrei presses her hand. They kiss each other and she closes her eyes, letting herself go, languid.

Breath held.

FADE TO BLACK

CHAIKA SPACE COMPLEX (LOCKERS). INT. DAY.

10

Stan is getting dressed next to the lockers in one of the corridors of the space complex. He fixes some fasteners of the cosmonaut suit.

Enter Andrei.

STAN
Did they solve
the problem?

ANDREI
(smiling)
Yes

Both remain silent. Andrei tightens some hooks on Stan's suit.

ANDREI
Take this.

Extending his hand, Andrei offers a military emblem. Stan looks at it.

STAN

No way

ANDREI

Please, Stan.

STAN

No. They could start a proceeding against you.

ANDREI

Remember when we were young and talked about this moment, and how we would make up an excuse about it falling on the surface?

Both laugh moderately as they recall. They look at each other. We can observe the pain the uncompleted dream has left in Andrei's eyes. Stan's look shakes for a second.

CHAIKA SPACE COMPLEX (HANGAR). INT. DAY.

11

Several people finalize the preparations in an enormous hangar with some or other vehicle and machinery. Light comes in through the glass.

Stan and Andrei walk in. Several technicians dressed in white robes are fixing something in Stan's suit. There's movement all over the place. Far away, Yulia is comparing some data with several people. In middle of everything, she looks at Stan (ECU). He doesn't realize.

Someone pushes Andrei and Stan together to take a Polaroid picture. While they prepare, Stan takes advantage to look at Yulia who is now looking somewhere else. She's just behind them, with her back facing them. When they are asked to look at the camera and smile, Stan turns around. In this very moment, Yulia looks back at him, and then turns around and the photograph is taken. She appears with her back to them.

Someone gives Stan the photograph. The image starts to take shape and Stan has a look at it, containing himself before putting it away.

People are still working around Stan.

KOLIBRI MODULE. INT. DAY.

12

Countdown broadcasted over black. When it reaches 0, Stan's eyes open. Point of view shot from the spaceship's interior. Yulia, in between others, looks through a hatch, while rockets explode at 100.000 degrees. She says something but Stan can't hear. He can only see her lips move.

The rocket is vertically elevated. We see the horizon line descend until it disappears. Everything darkens.

Space.

Silence.

Over black:

STAN

"29th, July, 1976. It's been more than seven months since I float inside the Kolibri in an unknown quadrant. Navigation maps are useless. I don't know where it is taking me."

CHAIKA SPACE COMPLEX (CHECKPOINT). INT. NIGHT.

13

SIGN: October. 1976.

Printer prints data on a continuous roll. Desperately, Andrei makes calculations, non-stop. He looks at coordinates on maps and compares them with the data coming out from the printer. It's night-time and he's in a checkpoint room in the space complex. Numerous lights are shining on a dashboard.

Some calculation has gone wrong and Andrei is driven to despair. He starts all over again. Yulia speaks to him from behind.

YULIA

Andrei Sergéevich
Vasíliev, you should go
to sleep.

ANDREI

I will when I finish
checking the six
quadrants I have left.

YULIA

Stop looking for him,
Andrei...

Silence.

YULIA

He would have never done
this for you.

Andrei looks at her out of the corner of his eye. Takes a deep breath.

ANDREI

Go home. I'll go later
on.

Yulia grabs a heap of bills and official notifications that are on the table and furiously crumples them.

YULIA

You're going to get us
all arrested.

Leaves.

FADE IN AND OUT TO BLACK

Andrei has fallen asleep over the keyboard. Suddenly, he is awakened by a beep. It's a dot on the radar. He checks a couple of things and quickly grabs the phone.

ANDREI

;Kirill! The return
device you designed. ;It
has activated!

ANDREI'S BEDROOM. INT. NIGHT.

14

Yulia has fallen asleep with the light on and papers in between her hands. The sound of the telephone wakes her up.

YULIA

Hello?

Yulia is speechless and brings her hand to her lips.

PLACE WHERE ROCKET FALLS (WOODS). EXT. DAWN

15

Several people move forward into the woods, between trees. Some are carrying small beepers sending luminous signs out. They are arranged in parallel lines, sweeping the land. Once in a while one shouts "Nothing!" and the rest answer back with the same sound, in line, as if it were an echo.

Andrei is also moving forward with a transistor through which interferences can be heard. He tries to tune in some sound. Suddenly, a faltering voice can be heard.

STAN (OFF)

Sp...d... It...an... ing...
atm...phere... It's really
h...t...

PLACE WHERE ROCKET FALLS (OPEN GROUND). EXT. DAWN

16

The group of men reach an open ground. The signs are intensified and the Kolibri Module is finally seen faraway, burnt and smoky. The parachute is burning next to a part of the dry grass.

When they get there, they all look around with uncertainty. There is no trace of Stan. They look inside the rocket and around it. The radio is still going off.

STAN (OFF)

Chaika? St...n speaking.
 Chaika? Bird on grou... The
 Kolibri Module is back.
 Change. ... I cant see
 anyth... Where are you?
 Chaika...? Change.

Andrei is driven to despair. He can't stand the accumulated tension anymore and starts to scream.

ANDREI

Stan! Stan Arsenievich!

The radio still transmits the signal.

STAN (OFF)

Chaika? ... Where are you?
 ... Change... Where are you?

Thunder is heard and it starts to rain. Andrei's breath works up. Another clap of thunder.

LIVINGROOM IN ANDREI'S HOUSE. INT. NIGHT

17

Completely wet, Andrei tries to lift the electric fuses. The house is completely dark except for a candle that Yulia is holding. She is looking anxious and distressed from a corner, covering her mouth with her hand. There is a terrible storm outside.

Andrei searches through a drawer and lights a candle. He starts to search through one of his cupboards in a rage and finally finds an old radio transistor.

Andrei installs the transistor and switches it on. He tunes a specific frequency and suddenly, in between the silence, Stan's voice can be heard, distorted and faraway.

STAN (OFF)

Chaika? I've been looking
 for you for hours. I've
 launched two flares out
 of the fou... Why is nobody
 answering? Ca...o. Chaika?

Yulia's heart shrinks and she drops the candle. She leaves the room in a hurry.

LIVINGROOM IN ANDREI'S HOUSE. INT. DAY

18

SIGN: March. 1976. 5 months later.

Yulia, wearing an apron, is washing several white dishes. A sound next door makes her turn her head around abruptly. She drops the plate and heads hastily towards the living room. She takes a dried flower from a book on the shelf and goes towards the corridor. She nervously sits down in front of the table where the radio that Andrei had brought out several months ago is laying. She holds the flower next to her breast. Buzzing and clicking sounds indicate that the communication channel has been opened. She can't help but nervously smile. Breathing is heard. Suddenly, Stan starts to speak.

STAN (OFF)

March 17th. If I still
remember, today is my
Birthday.

Yulia smiles and and holds the flower towards the radio.

STAN (OFF)

The day before yesterday,
as I was making some
calculations, I
discovered that I lost
track of the months that
have gone by since I was
launched, weeks ago. I
would be able to
calculate it with today's
date, but I've forgotten
the exact date that the
rocket was launched into
space.

Yulia smiles with watery eyes and her voice is hardly heard when she talks to the transistor.

YULIA

Fifteen months and
twenty-two days.
Cosmonaut.

A noise is heard and Yulia turns her head around. It's the main door.

STAN (OFF)

This morning I saw you in
front of me, again.

Yulia switches the radio off and hurriedly goes towards the door. Andrei is hanging his jacket and she stands still next to him.

Andrei turns around and looks at her, serious. She tries to explain with her look but seems strong and sure of herself. He looks at the flower she is holding in her hands.

ANDREI

You should have another
flower.

She opens out her hand and tries to grab his but he rejects her and goes to the bedroom.

She stands still, looking at him in middle of the living room.

FADE TO BLACK

CHAIKA SPACE COMPLEX (CHECKPOINT). INT. NIGHT.

19

Yulia is wearing headphones inside the empty checkpoint room. She carefully opens a cardboard box. There are various audio recordings numbered by hand. She introduces one in the control panel and presses a couple of buttons. The Cosmonaut's voice begins to sound in the night's silence.

STAN (OFF)

I have decided to give
them numbers to not to
forget. I'm forgetting
things more frequently.

Yulia fast-forwards the tape for some seconds.

STAN (OFF)

Paradise A only lasted a
moment. I was floating in
the middle of the ocean.
I remember the landing
module, burnt from the
entrance.
Then I saw you on that
rock, just for some
seconds. Your body was
like a mermaid's.

The tape ends and everything goes silent.

ANDREI'S BEDROOM. INT. NIGHT

20

Yulia is leaning on the bathroom doorframe wearing an almost transparent nightdress. Steam is coming out. Andrei appears wearing a towel around his waist and is drying himself with another one. His body is still muscular and his skin is smooth. He stops at the doorframe, looking at her. She touches him softly, doubting, his pectoral is still full of little drops. She looks at his body, never up to his eyes, as if she was in penitence. He holds her hand delicately, as if to move it away. They look at each other. She kisses him slowly. He lets her do it.

FADE TO BLACK

LIVING ROOM IN ANDREI'S HOUSE. INT. NIGHT

21

Yulia remains in front of the radio. A low powered reading lamp is lighting her chair and table in a circle. It is the only point of light in the entire house. The Cosmonaut's voice fills the silence. Andrei looks at her from faraway, leaning on the doorframe, without her noticing. She moves her fingers gently, as if trying to catch something that is escaping.

STAN (OFF)

I'm still searching. I still haven't found any human signs. Devastated. Abandoned... I never imagined discovering empty places before known would provoke this extreme range of sensations. I'm the planet's only inhabitant and nevertheless... I'm feeling the opposite of a god.
Why doesn't anyone come and collect me? Has everyone died?

Andrei becomes upset. He closes his eyes. He hears a groan from Yulia and moves away into the darkness.

FADE TO BLACK

FIELD (2). EXT. NIGHT

22

The cosmonaut moves forward clumsily and slowly in a vast field.

STAN (OFF)

I've already been in Paradise C on three occasions. It appears all of a sudden and I can never exit it. First there is a hummingbird, which flies around me as if asking me to follow it. But it always takes me to a river where there is a drowned gazelle under the crystal water.

The Cosmonaut stops in middle of the land's stretch. He stands still, looking at something.

STAN (OFF)

I've forgotten the name of all of the people with whom we used to work. Except Andrei's and yours.

ANDREI'S BEDROOM. INT. DAY

23

Yulia is sitting down on a chair, looking out from the bedroom window. A greyish light fills the whole room. She melancholically observes the outside. A door is slammed from the back. She swallows saliva.

LAKE. EXT. DAY

24

A variety of blurred images of Yulia underwater. The bottom can hardly be seen and the water is greenish and translucent. Some rays of light come in through from the surface. Stan is also with her. They are both naked. They swim together; they move apart, they come together. They look at each other.

BATHROOM IN ANDREI'S BEDROOM. INT. DAY.

25

Yulia gets water from the sink with her hands and wets her face with her eyes closed. She softly scrubs her cheekbones and eyelids. She lightly bites her fingertip, her eyes still closed.

STAIRS. INT. DAY.

26

The cosmonaut slowly walks up some stairs inside an old building. The silence is complete.

He reaches the eighth floor and moves towards the back, hardly any rays of light can get there.

He stops in front of a door. He carefully opens it. It is Andrei and Yulia's apartment, now empty.

LIVINGROOM IN ANDREI'S HOUSE. INT. DAY.

27

The remainders of the farewell party in his honour are still lying on the floor.
Stan moves around the house in silence, touching the surfaces with respect and nostalgia.

STAN (OFF)

I feel secure inside my
suit. It's like a bubble
that isolates me from the
exterior and that in some
kind of way, keeps a bond
between my past and
myself.

LIVINGROOM IN ANDREI'S HOUSE. INT. DAY.

28

Yulia is listening to the radio containing her breath. A constant buzzing sound can be heard. And a faraway breathing sound. The sound of chairs is heard. And a tap of water. Suddenly, music from a vinyl. It's the same as at the farewell party.

Yulia, startled, gets up. She brings her hand up to her lips.

STAN (OFF)

I remember a party, but
not the occasion. I
remember the dress you
were wearing.

LIVINGROOM IN ANDREI'S HOUSE. INT. DAY.

29

Stan looks around, standing in middle of the living room. He carefully sits down on the sofa. He moves some garlands away and lies down. He closes his eyes and tries to fall asleep.

FADE TO BLACK

DRAFT.

30

From the moment that Stan gets home, his presence in it is intensified. His communications become more and more frequent. The paradises in which he is found with Yulia are more frequent, she becomes more and more blurry, and images are deconstructed, just as thoughts are. Slowing down and becoming blurrier until they just become movements, shadows and frozen moments that move one centimetre every few seconds and are dangerously leading to nothing.

The Cosmonaut, less and less on Earth, spends most of his day, dreaming as if trying to sleep and never wake up anymore.

In the meantime, the relationship between Yulia and Andrei is becoming colder, quieter, and naked. Artifices and poses stripped away, the only things left are the memories of gestures, looks... Only an undefined and ghostly gesture dragging itself behind them as they turn a corner or cross themselves at the doorframe.

FINAL SEQ. CAR. EXT. DUSK

31

Yulia and Andrei are travelling by car at dusk, back from the space complex. They start to have a violent, cold and automatic argument. It starts to rain.

Andrei accuses her of sleeping with Stan. Silence. Yulia's gaze is fixed on the road, as if caught by lightening. She starts to breath hard, as if she can't get enough air. She touches her breast. The drops hit violently on the glass and suddenly she undoes her belt and opens the door intending to jump out. Andrei swerves.

When he opens his eyes, the car is rapidly gliding in the field until it collides with an old, bare tree. Andrei breathes with difficulty. He is confused. He looks to his side and discovers a terrible truth. Yulia lies over the seat with her head to one side, motionless.

Andrei desperately gets out of the car and holds her from the other side. He asks for help. He tries to keep the water away from his face and desperately undoes her seatbelt and takes her out of the car in his arms. He lets out a deaf groan. The moment that Yulia has a deaf spasm, Andrei discovers the Cosmonaut's tall and slim figure behind him. He raises himself next to him, with his orange suit all wet and the drops hitting his helmet. Finally, the reencounter takes place.

Both look at each other in silence. The Cosmonaut's face is of peace, which contrasts with Andrei's contorted complexion. They agitatedly breathe under the rain.

Stan slowly gets close to Andrei and picks Yulia's dead body up, gently, until he can hold her firmly. The fine dress is stuck to her bluish skin. Andrei feels the emptiness like a sting. The Cosmonaut looks at him once more, with her in his arms, and moves away.

THE END