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## Some People Say

by Richard Rewell

Some people say that in Russian the letters P, R and I and in that order, when used for a name of someone or some place, lay a curse upon that someone or place. Some people say that this is simply rubbish. You make up your own minds please.

Allow me to tell you that in 986 Oleg Pripor, note the position of the letters p, r and i, a Russian warlord lost his life and his army in a terrible defeat to Sven Long Spear's Vikings as they plundered what is today Moscow. In 1917 during the First World War the Russian army was slaughtered by the Imperial German Army in the swampy wastelands of the Pripiat Marshes and tens of thousands of Russian lads died precipitating the Russian revolution which went on to claim at least five million lives.

Eighty odd years later Russia suffered the worlds worst nuclear accident at the Chernobyl power station causing disaster and death to thousands at the neighbouring city of Pripiat. Note those letters again.

Oblivious to the curse I have mentioned Ivan Dimitri Alexandre Pridoski drove his battered carbon belching Seat into his allotted parking space at the Institute of Environmental Research, a crumbling former hotel left over from the days of the Czars. It was the 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2007.

Ivan, an overweight forty something, in a creased suit bustled into his office. He was the administration director and his job were to tick boxes, establish budgets, order laboratory equipment, maintain a flow of numerous reports to the Central Committee of Environmental Research, oversee attendance registers and lab project target dates. No exposure to anything mildly dangerous for Ivan.

Ludmila Pridanev was Ivan's assistant, a hardworking, earnest young woman, who one day he thought as he watched her approaching him, might take over his job.

"Mister Director, please I have a query."

"Yes Ludmilla. But be quick I must prepare a report on the faulty air conditioning in lab 616."

"Oh, that's a coincidence I was working on the attendance records and it identified that lab 616 has been working at only one third capacity. For two weeks." Said Ludmilla with a gentle cough.

"What?" said Ivan.

"Yes, one third. Only ten people out of thirty working. The rest are off sick."

"Shit." Said Ivan as he stood with Ludmilla in the corridor, opened his laptop and checked the target completion date for lab 616."God Ludmilla, Lab 616 will never complete their project on time. The Central Committee will go mad and I will get a huge bollocking. What are they meant to be doing?"

"They are working with the World Health Authority. Hoping to find something that dissolves unwanted plastic. And I have the doctor's report for each of those off sick."

"Give those to me." said Ivan ungraciously "now go back to your desk and fiddle the figures to show we are working at hundred percent capacity" before giving a gentle cough.

"But Mister Director that is ..."

"Don't argue girl. Go."

Ivan shredded the doctor's reports about the illness that had swept through Lab 616, but it made little difference. The absent laboratory personnel were already dying or dead. Within a month there would be millions of Russians dead and the plague would begin its journey across the globe reaching Eastbourne in...well you know when.