

## Six of Us Left Behind with Mom

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My life since childhood has been full of sadness and misfortune. I was in second grade when everything happened, and since then I have witnessed the people's suffering and sorrow and have myself had to endure it, together with my family.

We lived in a village called Pogonnoe when the accident happened. Our family was very large.

I remember that April morning. It was a sunny and warm day. The grownups hurried to work and children ran to school. It was clear and bright outside with everything green and birds singing everywhere. New leaves were already appearing on trees. The sun shone brighter with the coming of spring.

That day I went to school but soon I found it unbearable to keep sitting at my desk. The other children also felt their heads spinning and intense pain in their eyes. Everyone felt heavy and drowsy. We could not understand what had happened but it was definitely out of the ordinary.

Nobody could ever suspect what a fearful thing had happened not only to us but also to our whole village. Evacuation started after a few days. It was a horrible scene that even now makes my heart ache. Children cried and it was difficult to move the elderly who had deep emotional wounds as they faced leaving their homes and village behind and going somewhere they did not know.

We were told to take only what was necessary for a few days. Some people did and some did not. Some just stood there not knowing what to do since we never had such an experience. People felt only confusion and despair. And what amounts of tears were shed!

We were taken to Gomel where we were examined for radioactivity and told that our clothes and shoes were highly contaminated. They were all taken from us to be incinerated. Then we were put into hospital for examination. After the examination, my mother, my older brother who was in the fourth grade, my younger brother who was then eleven months old, and I were sent to the sanatorium of the Minsk truck factory. We did not know where my other older siblings had been sent and my mother worried very much about them. Thanks to a kind doctor, we soon found out that they were at the labor holiday camp in Shumilino, Viteb district. My father went to work as a metal-worker in Petkovich village in the suburb of Minsk and lived in a dormitory there. When my older brother and sister wrote how difficult it was for them without their parents and that they were living under unsanitary conditions, my father went to see and brought them home with him.



However, with only one bed for the three of them, they were not able to live in the dormitory for long. Father found a flat and soon he called us all to live together as the sanatorium where we were staying was going to be closed down for repairs. Still we longed to go back home to Pogonnoe. But then we were told that our village was fenced off with barbed wire and nobody lived there any longer. The people of the village had all been relocated to many different places.

A few days later we moved again to Dzerzhinsk city. The flat had two rooms and was shared by two families, our family of nine and another family of four. We continued to go to school. Life was hard. Autumn came but there was no heating in our flat and we had to sleep on the floor without any blankets.

Nobody understood our situation, our sadness and pain. People approached us cautiously and adults as well as children looked at us as strangers.

In March 1987, we were offered a house in Petkovich village in Dzerzhinsk district. We were very pleased and happy to move to this beautiful big house and go to the Petkovich village school. Our joy did not last long as we children began to fall ill one by one, and soon we fell behind with our studies. We were all sent to a radiology medical clinic for examination. Since then we have been going for an examination every year. One day my father received bad results from a blood examination. Three months later he died. That was in June 1988.

Misfortunes and grief followed, one after another. In the same year my grandmother and aunt both died. It was an awful shock to us. Six of us were left with Mother. She, all by herself, had to bring us up. After all those sorrows, my mother too became subject to illness. Nevertheless, she tried to overcome all the grief and hardship, and wrapped us with love and affection. And we tried to understand her to ease her sufferings and tears.

Years have passed, and our life has changed a little. The pain and sorrow that filled our hearts has gradually abated.



“Grief of Chernobyl”, Isasiya Yana, 14 yr, Gomel region, Belarus, provided by Chernobyl Children’s Fund

We still live in the village of Petkovich. My sisters and my oldest brother have married. My next oldest brother serves in army, I am studying in vocational school, and my younger brother, Volodya, is in the third grade. Most of our fellow villagers now live in the Zhlobin district, and one of my brothers also now works there. I longed to visit him and meet people from our home village and so my mother and I visited Kirov village in the Zhlobin district. There I met a former classmate of mine. We used to be good friends, playing and studying together. After eight years, however, we did not recognize each other because we had grown and changed. It was as if we were meeting for the first time and I was both happy and upset. I was happy because I could meet my former classmates and a good friend, while I was annoyed and hurt because I had not seen them for so many years and could not go to school together because of the damned Chernobyl. I really did not want to leave them. But on the way home, I thought of my mother who is burdened with much sorrow and hardship, of many people's lives that were ruined and devastated by Chernobyl, and especially of innocent children who suffered and are still suffering without knowing what has taken away their happiness and health.

No matter how many years may pass, this tragedy will still leave indelible damage in our society, in the destiny of a great many people and in the memory of the whole world.

Remember, remember, everyone,  
So long as we use atomic energy,  
we cannot protect peace and harmony.  
Let us clean the earth from this stain  
and let nothing remain from nuclear drunkenness.

(Translated into English by HASEGAWA Kaoru)

<This manuscript was published in "Snowman was melted by our tears: Chernobyl for children" (1995) edited by Chernobyl Kyushu (<http://www.cher9.to/>) >