19 🚸 Spring 2025

She went back to the terrain map, dragging this way and that, trying to think like an artillery commander even though she had never met an artillery commander. They would be out in the open, but not far from a treeline. They would want to cross at bridges and there were not many bridges. There were the ruins of an old town that had been evacuated in '86. It didn't have a name on Google Maps so she switched to Yandex, dug up some old Soviet topo maps.

"No fucking way," she said, and she placed her centroid.

She uploaded her analysis to the Project and said, "@ChuvaKurka, you're never going to guess where the rockets are coming from."

"Try me," he said.

"Bilohorivka."

"I swear to God ... " he said, and then started looking at her maps.

"What do you think?"

"This is really good work," @ChuvaKurka said.

"What now?" she said. "What does this tell us?"

"It tells us that somewhere in that probability field is a BM-50 Smerch, or probably a bunch of BM-50 Smerches, and that they're shooting cluster rockets at civilians."

"Right," she said. "But what can we do with that?"

"Watch," he said. He came back a few minutes later with a link to something that looked like satellite imagery, but the colors were all weird, neon greens and purples. You could see long dark shadows where there were forests, and the angles of the farm roads. Pripyat bloomed in an alien cobalt smear, the reactor hall bright as a star.

"What am I looking at?" she said.

"We live in an age," @ChuvaKurka said, "when you, @spaceystacey, a 24-year old civilian who works in the insurance industry, have free access to the entire dataset of Sentinel-1A, a space-based C- band synthetic aperture radar with a spatial resolution of 5m, orbiting the Earth at about 28,000 kilometers per hour."