



Sentient – Russia
Pilot summary by Amanda Asquith

Teaser:

The residents of the bustling Russian capital city of Moscow join the rest of the world one night as it watches a spectacular meteor shower and the resulting light show. But the next day, not everyone who witnessed the event is alive to see the sun rise. And there is something strange about some of those who survive. Anna, Alex and Sergey are alive. They saw the meteor shower. Somehow they survived. But why? How did they escape the strange symptoms and behaviour that is afflicting the survivors? Are they the only ones who seem immune?

The day after the meteors sees their three lives collide in a way they never expected and throws them into a brand new world of fear, loss, chaos and survival. And the leaders of what remains of the military forces have no strategy to deal with the not-quite human being in front of them...

Act 1

Anna is an attractive, green-eyed, 20-something brunette, who wakes up in a friend's flat in Moscow where they had been partying the night before. She searches the apartment but finds no trace of her friends. Confused, Anna steps outside on the balcony for a cigarette and is given an eerie perspective of the town – it appears deserted. The air is still and the world is almost silent. No birds, no people, no traffic. She tries the television, internet and phone but everything is dead. She decides to go home and that's when the nightmare begins. When the lift doors open, one of her missing friends, Max, lies dead on the lift floor.

Meanwhile Alex, an athletic 25 year old man with dark hair and grey eyes, is driving on the road to his Moscow flat after enjoying the night out with friends, outside of Moscow.

He answers a call from his friend Vlad, who is raving on about the sky. He finally gets a chance to see the red mist over Moscow and pulls over to get a better look. He heads off again only to crash the car when swerving to avoid a truck. The car is wrecked and he discovers he has been unconscious for several hours. His phone indicates numerous missed calls and messages from Vlad but when he tries to call, there is no service. There are no cars around – strange for a major road. With no alternative, he walks the rest of the way home. As he approaches his apartment building, he sees a man laying on a bench, dried blood around his mouth, nose and eyes. He tries to call for an ambulance but the air is as dead as the man on the bench. Alex runs to his flat, terror striking at his core.

Meanwhile, Sergey is working late at his car mechanics workshop. Wrapping up, he calls his wife, Nastya, who tells him about the strange red sky. He heads to the car and takes a moment to look at the activity in the sky. He starts the journey home and as he drives, realises the red mist is coming towards him. He pulls over, not sure what is happening. He is enveloped by the mist and then it passes, leaving him feeling ill and shaking, his heart pounding. He takes a deep breath and is overcome with feelings of panic. A sudden, intense headache causes Sergey to collapse unconscious to the ground.

Act 2

Alex reaches his apartment building and takes the stairs to his floor when screams in the staircase above him stop him in his tracks. He runs up the stairs, almost colliding with Anna, who is running down the stairs. She tells him about Max in the lift and Alex continues up the stairs to investigate. He finds Max's body, bearing the same symptoms of the man on the bench. He returns to Anna and takes her to his flat. Alex and Anna try to use the internet to find out what is happening but can make no connection. They decide to leave the building and check out the local emergency clinic. They pack some essentials and their phones, hoping connection will be restored.

Sergey arrives at his apartment building, looking around at the deserted streets. He tries phoning Nastya, his girlfriend but there is no service and no response to the doorbell. He enters their flat, calling out to Nastya. All seems normal but no one is home. He finds a note explaining they had gone to the park to watch the sky activity. He looks at the time of the last call and looks at the clock, suddenly realising 12 hours have passed.

As Alex and Anna start down the stairs, they hear footsteps below them. They stop and hear a man's voice cry out a woman's name. It is Sergey. As Alex runs to help him, Anna remains in the flat. She hears the cry of a child and tracks it to the flat next door. She opens the door.

The sound of footsteps causes Sergey to look to the door as Alex enters, introducing himself, explaining what he and Anna had found. Sergey decides to travel to the clinic with them and Alex leaves to collect Anna. Meanwhile, Sergey takes his gun and ammunition and hides it in his clothing.

Anna enters the flat next door and finds a four year old child in a cot, alone. She hesitates, then picks up the child, who aggressively grabs at her.

She returns the child to the cot while she writes a note to the parents. She hears Alex calling her, collects the child and meets Alex on the staircase. He's startled by the child as Anna explains. Sergey is nervous at the appearance of the child but urges them to leave. Alex returns to the neighbours' flat to collect his phone that Anna had left behind. He notices the baby in the family photo is not the child that they have found.

Anna waits with the child for Sergey and Alex at the car outside. After discussing whether the child should come with them, they decide they can at least get him to the clinic and get help. While en route to the clinic, the child tries to take Anna's phone and when she looks closely at him, she is stunned by the strange colour of his eyes.

Act 3

Sergey notices people in a park as they travel so he pulls over to investigate. They wander into the park then see the back of a man and follow him. The child is behaving strangely but the others don't notice. They follow the man to the lake where several bodies are floating and more people are walking into the lake, their eyes glazed and empty. The strange man they have followed spots the child who responds to him. Anna tries to protect the child but he touches her face. She screams and drops the child in shock. The strange man picks him up and heads to the lake as Sergey aims his gun at them. Alex goes to Anna's aid. They watch helplessly as the man carries the child into the water where they drown. The other three leave quickly, Alex still musing as to the failure of their electronic devices, Anna in shock over what just happened. Alex takes a last look at the floating bodies of the man and child in the lake.

The three drive to the clinic, still processing what they have just witnessed and the events of the previous day. They arrive to an empty and silent clinic. They argue about what to do next when Anna decides to enter the clinic, leaving Alex and Sergey to dispute their options. They finally agree to inspect the clinic with Anna and follow her in, unaware they are being watched.

Anna wanders through the clinic, seemingly familiar with her surroundings despite the low light. She stops for a cigarette and looks at her phone which shows the network is operating. She desperately cycles through her contacts, calling everyone but no one answers. She almost throws the phone in despair but stops and begins to walk down the corridor. She hears the sound of scratching but sees no one. She notices the room at the end of the corridor is open and heads toward it, scared but determined to investigate.

Meanwhile Alex and Sergey wait for Anna, their mutual frustration with the situation spilling over into conflict. While arguing, they notice a fine dust covering everything and a notebook which has notes describing the condition of patients – all with symptoms similar to those they have already seen. They make the connection between the storm and the events and investigate the clinic's first floor a bit more. They find bodies laid out on the corridor floor and realise the clinic had no answer for the people affected and had just laid the bodies out. What remains of their bodies are also covered in the dust. As they begin to piece together what is happening, Anna's scream pierces the still air. Alex and Sergey rush to the second floor where Anna runs straight to them, shaking in fear, breathlessly blurting out what she has seen.

Both Alex and Sergey move hesitantly towards the operation room, not sure of what they're about to see as Anna steps behind them, still shaking.

Sergey enters the room first and is confronted by a human body on the operating table, torso open, the flesh and bones decimated by what looks like some sort of flesh-eating bacteria. He calls Alex in but Anna stays outside. They notice the dead bodies of the doctors nearby. Anna is desperate to leave and they head to the exit. Alex takes a detour to another room with a pool, and finds a body in it – similar to what they encountered at the park. He grabs some medical supplies and masks and meets Anna and Sergey outside the clinic.

Alex remembers a large storm was predicted and they decide they should return to their apartments. They drive away, only to run out of petrol and so begin the long walk back to the building. The storm begins to stir up and they duck in to a nearby cafe for shelter, hoping to find food. The pink clouds release the rain, causing the streets to run red. Sergey finds some chocolate, chips, water and soft drink while Anna tries to get Alex to talk about what he found at the clinic. But Anna is the only one who wants to talk. Both men are quiet, trying to grasp their circumstances and what has happened. They are helpless.

Act 4

On the highway to Moscow, Colonel Titov waits for an oncoming convoy of military vehicles – not his own. He had also suffered the effects of the red mist 12 hours earlier – waking up in the his military compound with burning buildings and vehicles – and human bodies. Two survivors from his unit stand with him as the convoy arrives. A man wearing a gas mask exits the lead vehicle and approaches Titov. After a tense moment, they establish they are of the same army, the man is Major Sikorskiy, and they maybe the only ones left. After swapping stories and information, Sikorksiy reveals they have two civilians with them – a woman and her granddaughter. The woman tells Titov what they experienced – including seeing people seemingly drunk or drugged walking into a lake.

Then Sikorskiy reveals another person – a soldier they found in a pond, face down but not dead. The man is guarded by a soldier and the car door opens to a man restrained by ropes, his eyes yellow and a strange expression on his face which suggests something inhuman is now residing in this body.

Act 5

Alex, Anna And Sergey arrive back at the apartments, still wearing their masks. The storm has passed but the ground and the puddles have an unnatural pink hue. Alex goes straight in the doors and Anna and Sergey run after him. Alex has run to the elevator but he is walking away from it by the time the other two arrive. Anna wants to look but Alex tries to stop her. She ignores his advice and pushes past him to see Max's disintegrating body. This is not normal decomposition.

Alex suggests that he and Sergey get some things and they meet at Anna's place – formerly Max's flat. Immediately Sergey argues but he eventually agrees and they all end up in Max's flat, staring at each other. Anna tries to get them talking again.

Sergey finds some whiskey and they all begin to break down, coming to terms with their loss and their situation. Anna is crying but refuses comfort, Alex drinks his whiskey and heads to bed and Sergey sits silently in his chair.

Around midnight, Alex wakes and wanders through the lounge room, past the other two still sleeping, and into the corridor heading to the roof exit door. He suddenly realises Anna is behind him. He opens the roof door and climbs through, followed by Anna. They look across the city, realising that they maybe the only ones alive in the city. Alex asks Anna about what she saw in the child when she released him in the park. Anna can only explain it as stars but not the usual ones. The child seemed to have some sort of glow like the skies above them now.

Anna hands Alex the mobile phone in her pocket, telling him that the network seems active again. Neither Anna or Sergey could contact anyone but she offers him the chance to try his family. He begins to dial numbers. A woman named Alice answers the call.