

INNOCENT IN A MADHOUSE

By
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Based on life of Maria Juric Zagorka

Episode 1
"THE ESCAPE"

(Reading version)

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Zagreb, Croatia

EXT. STREET IN FRONT OF A MONASTERY SCHOOL / ZAGREB - DAY

Zagreb in Croatia, 1889. In front of the MONASTERY OF THE SISTERS OF CHARITY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL, on the steps, stand female STUDENTS (aged 12-17) in school uniforms. MARIA JURIC (16) is among those who are tiptoeing to get a better view of the spectacle.

From the building of the MUSIC INSTITUTE on the opposite side of the street, a huge flag of the AUSTRO-HUNGARIAN MONARCHY is lowered from the windows. A dozen POLICEMEN are patrolling the street, crowded with people.

The street is crowded with people. Fashionably dressed LADIES and GENTLEMEN are waiting for the protocol to allow them to enter the Institute, while commoners gathered behind them, clapping and cheering for MILKA TRNINA (26), world-famous opera singer, who greets them with waves and blowing kisses as she enters the Institute.

LADY 1
Milka, welcome home!

LADY 2
Milka, we love you!

The students scream like groupies when Milka turns around and blows them a kiss. The ABBESS and TEACHER NUNS standing on the side roll their eyes but do not react.

Maria has spotted something in the crowd that grabs her attention.

STUDENT 1
She looked at me! The best Tosca in the world waved at ME, did you see it?!

But, the student realises that Maria is gone.

Maria pushes through the crowd, fixated on the MAN WITH A NEWSPAPER - on his folded newspapers in the pocket of his coat.

While Milka greets the excited citizens and enters the Institute, KHUEN-HEDERVARY (40) and KHUEN'S WIFE (30) get out of a carriage in front of the entrance. They are accompanied by two pairs of BAN'S PERSONAL GUARDS in red livery. The Guard makes announcement, loudly:

GUARD
Count Karoly Kuen-Hedervary Belasy de Hederva, the viceroy of the Kingdom of Croatia! And his wife, Duchess Teleki de Szek.

Khuen greets the gathering, who applaud sporadically.

Maria manages to push through to the Man with Newspaper and looks at it closely: it's OBZOR, the title is clearly visible, as well as the year we are in 1890. She smiles cunningly and move closer to the Man.

Suddenly, out of nowhere, a large PIG runs down the street at an astonishing speed, straight towards the viceroy. Surprised, Khuen stumbles and almost falls. The guards, with quick reflexes, save him from embarrassment of falling down, but laughter can still be heard from the crowd.

A YOUNG MAN (18) in shabby clothes runs after the pig.

YOUNG MAN

Andjoo! Andjo, come back!

It is only now that Maria realizes that she has found herself in the front row next to the street.

Two POLICE OFFICERS grab the young man, who points at a pig that has escaped into the building of the Institute.

YOUNG MAN (CONT'D)

Let me catch her! She ran away from me
on the cattle market!

(calling after the pig)

Andjelica!

Hedervary's face frowns at the word.

Maria looks at him, stern and cold, and his gaze lingers on her. His brow furrows slightly - he recognizes her.

Hedervary enters the building and, as he passes, nods briefly at the Police Officer.

The Police Officer strikes the young man on the head with the butt of his gun as hard as he can. The crowd falls silent silent, and a few ladies scream. The schoolgirls cover their mouths with their hands so as not to scream.

Maria is shocked as she watches the two police officers hastily drag the young man, with a bloody head and half-unconscious, to the police carriage parked nearby.

CITIZEN 1

Did he really name his pig after the
viceroy's mother?

CITIZEN 2

Yeah, shameful!

MAN WITH NEWSPAPERS

What is, the fact they beat up the innocent man or that we kept silent about it?

The Man with a Newspaper turns and walks away at a brisk pace, leaving the citizens murmure in disapproval.

Maria watches him go, with a muted smile of admiration.

INT. MONASTERY SCHOOL / DORMITORY - NIGHT

Through the open doors of the dormitory, on which stands a TEACHER-NUN, enough light seeps in to reveal a row of closely spaced beds on which the students sleep. Except, of course, they are not sleeping.

As soon as the Nun closes the door, a candle is lit in the darkness of the room, then another and a third. The candles come together and reach the bed where Maria has already spread out the stolen newspaper: OBZOR.

Several students crowd around Maria, who reads from it.

MARIA

So, it's true, he did kick him!

The caricature in the paper shows a man with a Croatian red and white chequerboard on his cap kicking the butt of a mustached man with a fancy hat that resembles HEDERVARY.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I bet he'll finally leave the country!

IVANCICA

God forbid! He's so handsome!

The students giggle at chubby IVANCICA (15), but Maria is irritated for not being taken seriously about the politics.

IVANCICA (CONT'D)

(confidentially)

I felt a sort of tickling when I saw him today..

(she points down, full of shame)

There..you know.

While the students process this unholy information, Maria squints in her particular way when she is defiant.

MARIA
 (worried)
 Burning sensation?

Ivancica nods, as she enters the panic-room in her head.

MARIA (CONT'D)
 (compassionately)
 Yeah, you'll burn in hell for that.

With lightening speed of rushing hormones of an adolescent, Ivancica burst to tears. She is followed by revealing gestures of frightened students who try to protect their inner thighs.

MARIA (CONT'D)
 But, all of us will be with you too.

Relieved to be joined in the same sin, girls burst into laughter that bond them stronger than any religion. Among them, Maria is sincerely happy.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MONASTERY SCHOOL / HALLWAY - DAY

An ABBESS (40) walks with a military gait, toward the group of female STUDENTS in school uniforms, gathered in front of a board on the wall. They are laughing while looking at something on it, but when they notice the Abbess, they quickly disperse.

NUN-TEACHER GORDANA (V.O.)
 Napoleon carefully studied strategy
 before every battle.

The Abbess looks at the "MONASTERY NEWSPAPER" with a large CARICATURE attached to the board, the one from Obzor.

NUN-TEACHER GORDANA (V.O.)
 He said that the battle was won in the
 eyes of the generals before any
 soldier fired a shot.

The Abbess tears off the caricature from the wall.

INT. MONASTERY SCHOOL / CLASSROOM - DAY

Maria sits in the classroom with her fellow STUDENTS (16-18) and listens NUN-TEACHER GORDANA (30) teaches.

NUN-TEACHER GORDANA

It means that we can overcome the
greatest difficulties if we believe in
it beforehand.

The Abbess enters the classroom, and all heads turn towards her.
She shows the drawing to the class but looks at Maria.

ABBESS

This is a crime against the state!

The female students are silent and scared.

ABBESS (CONT'D)

I allowed you to create the wall
newspaper on the condition that you
wouldn't write about politics!

Maria exhales as if a boring fly landed on her nose.

ABBESS (CONT'D)

But no! You continue to write lies!

MARIA

It's not a lie. Obzor has confirmed,
Croatian congressman kicked
Hedervary's ass in the middle of the
parliament!

ABBESS

If the Viceroy said it didn't happen,
it didn't!

MARIA

He can't order reality around!

ABBESS

He can! He is the Viceroy and he can
even close this school if he wants!

Maria sees fear in Sister Gordana's face and begins to realize
that she may have been wrong after all.

ABBESS (CONT'D)

(pointing at students)

Then these girls would be left without
an education!

MARIA

I didn't know...

ABBESS

Yes, you did! Just like you know that many of them come from families that can't even afford bread, let alone a dowry!

Maria finally realizes the seriousness of the situation.

MARIA

(to the students)
I won't write another word!

ABBESS

(coldly)
Won't you? Tell that to your mother.

Maria is confused.

ABBESS (CONT'D)

I called for her already.

The Abbess quickly leaves the classroom. Maria's eyes betray a pure horror.

EXT. MONASTERY SCHOOL / COURTYARD - DAY

Maria humbly folds her hands in front of her mother.

MARIA

Please, let me stay! I won't write a word, I swear!

JOSIPA JURIC (45) is a beautiful woman with knives in her eyes when she is angry. She gives her daughter a cold look and grabs her hand, roughly pulling her towards the waiting carriage.

There are Nun-Teachers and a group of students present, sincerely sad that Maria is leaving.

THE ABBESS

(to the students)
You must obey your parents because they have a life experience you don't have!

The Abbess is just strict, not enjoying Maria's suffering.

MARIA

Mom, please don't do this!

Josipa pushes Maria towards the carriage. Sister Gordana follows them, carrying Maria's bag.

NUN-TEACHER GORDANA

(to Josipa)

For God's sake, you can't take her
from school a month before graduation!

JOSIPA JURIC

I can! It's my legal right to do
whatever I want with her while she's a
minor!

NUN-TEACHER GORDANA

But she'll never be able to continue
education in Switzerland!

Some students burst into tears, while others sob quietly.

MARIA

The baron is willing to pay the
scholarship for me to attend the licey
in Zurich!

JOSIPA JURIC

(cuts her off)

I'm sick of your phantasies!

MARIA

But I want only to be a teacher!!

NUN-TEACHER GORDANA

(desperately)

Ms. Juric, please! Maria is the best
student we have ever had. If she has a
slightest chance to go to Swiss, every
school in Zagreb will be happy to
employ her, and you'll be happy for
her not needing to depend on anyone!

Josipa hesitates for a moment, but, Gordana's last words
infuriate her even more. She pulls Maria towards the carriage.

ABBESS

Sister Gordana! The mother knows what
is best for her daughter!

JOSIPA JURIC

Oh, I do! I'm going to marry her off!
I've already found her a husband!

Maria screams and resists strongly as she is forced into the
carriage. Sister Gordana catches up to Maria.

NUN-TEACHER GORDANA

(to Josipa)

Let me give her a blessing!

Josipa backs off enough for Sister Gordana to hug Maria.

NUN-TEACHER GORDANA (CONT'D)

(whispering)

God has given you the talent to be His
Word for those who do not understand
and the strength to be His angel of
justice!

(says out loud)

God bless you!

Sister Gordana kisses Maria's forehead and Maria feels it as a kiss from angel Gabriel himself. She stops resisting. She looks at Sister Gordana's eyes, memorizing them.

Josipa roughly pushes Maria into the carriage, even though she is no longer resisting. The carriage door closes.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH - DAY

Maria, in a wedding dress, and ANDRES MATRAY (31), a man of a classic beauty, have just left the church, having been married. As soon as they exit, he steps aside to greet some guests. Also present are Josipa and Maria's father, IVAN JURIC (50), a charming man with refined seductive manners.

Maria feels sad and dull. A heavenly beautiful girl, DRAGICA (11), hugs Maria firmly, and Maria kisses her. A peasant woman with a wide smile approaches her, MARTA(50), holding a basket of food. (*Strukli is regional pasta stuffed with cheese.*)

MARTA

My sunshine, my dawn! Look what I've
made for you: a cherry cake, and
strukle, but of turnip, I'm out of
cheese.

MARIA

How come?

MARTA

They took my cow for the taxes.
(laughing heartily)
But I managed to hide the calf!

MARIA

I'll tell Daddy to give you some
money.

MARTA

You'll certainly not! I'm not your
nanny anymore..

(pointing on Dragica)

Dragica'll leave for school soon..

MARIA

(on her parents)

Please, protect her from those two..

Marta nods in understanding. Maria hugs Marta - she loves this woman immensely. Her eyes widen in surprise when she sees something behind Marta.

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH / RAUCH'S CARRIAGE - DAY

From the fancy carriage that has just arrived, comes the GEZA RAUCH (40), a full-bodied member of his noble family, and BARONESS MOTHER (70). Surprised to see him, Ivan shakes hands with Geza, while Josipa greets them with a short curtsy.

GEZA

Ivan, my man! Don't be surprised, not
every day a chief manager of my
estates marries his daughter.

While Maria and Matray approach to them, Geza looks at Maria pleasantly surprised. Maria greets them with a short curtsy.

MARIA

Kiss the hands, Baroness!

(then to Baron)

Your excellency baron Geza Rauch.

Looking at Maria, Geza greedily measures her.

GEZA

Our petite girl is leaving just as she
has grown up.

IVAN JURIC

Let me introduce my son in law..

Geza ignores Matray completely, focused on Maria. He approaches her and pats her gently on her cheek.

GEZA

I know, that Matray guy.

Matray would suck up any contempt from high society and greets the baron with a respectful nod.

To save Maria from Geza's lustful hands, Baroness quickly hand her son a FOLDER.

GEZA (CONT'D)
 (passes it to Maria)
 Ah, yes. Here's the present to mach
 your charm.

Maria takes a good look at the folder - there is a logo, the COAT OF ARMS OF THE COUNTS OF RAUCH, on it. She opens it and gasps at the sum of money written on the bank cheque.

MARIA
 I don't know what to say..

BARONESS MOTHER
 (retorts sharply)
 That you're sorry for not going to the
 lyceum in Zurich, but getting married
 instead.

Josipa hides her embarrassment poorly. Ivan is sad almost as Maria is.

BARONESS MOTHER (CONT'D)
 Or you've found another way to
 circumvent the law that forbids
 married women to work?

MARIA
 (devastated)
 I haven't..

BARONESS MOTHER
 Well, you made your choice then.

MARIA
 No, I didn't! I just got caught!

Josipa opens her mouth to say something, but the Baroness turns her back, sending a clear message to everyone to leave. Alone with Maria, Baroness takes off a brooch with a large gemstone from her dress.

BARONESS MOTHER
 You'll play with the cards you'll
 holding now the best you can.

The Baroness places the brooch on Maria's palm.

BARONESS MOTHER (CONT'D)
 Just try to make choices according to
 your nature, it will be less painful
 when you make mistakes.

She closes Maria's hand over the brooch.

BARONESS MOTHER (CONT'D)
Let that be a reminder of the stuff
you're made of.

MARIA
Thank you...
(her voice breaks)

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. IN FRONT OF THE CHURCH / MATRAY'S COACH - DAY

Late afternoon. Maria is fighting tears while she looks at Marta and Ivan who struggle to say goodbye to her before she leaves.

Josipa pulls her daughter aside, annoyed with her.

JOSIPA JURIC
Lighten up, already! You stupid girl
who thinks she's special! You're not!
(hissing at her)
A woman is safe only in a marriage or
in a convent, and I just saved your
life!

Maria looks down at the floor. Josipa softens. She hugs Maria, offering comfort, and tears finally stream down Maria's face.

JOSIPA JURIC (CONT'D)
You're entering the best part of your
life. With your husband, you'll
discover pleasures that will make you
you'll sing all day long.

Maria stops crying, curious.

JOSIPA JURIC (CONT'D)
You'll find out soon enough.

Maria feels comforted a little, but, more than that, she is grateful for this rare moment of closeness with her mother. She hugs Josipa wholeheartedly.

MARIA
Mummy!

Josipa gently kisses her on the cheek, she is moved too.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD NEAR SZOMBATHELY / HUNGARY - DAY

Sun is falling down while Maria looks out the carriage window and sees that they are approaching a town. They pass by a sign that reads SZOMBATHELY, with the Hungarian flag.

She looks at Matray, but his face is expressionless.

Nevertheless, Maria is hoping that she's entering the brightly lit town as some kind of a bright future.

INT. MATRAY'S HOUSE / MARIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

The room is dimly lit and we see only details. Maria, in a negligee, and Matray, with a muscular bare torso, stand facing each other. Matray unbuttons her bodice, and it falls off. She remains naked, shyly smiling.

Matray feels her breast and Maria shivers with an excitement.

Maria is laying on the bed, Matray is on top of her. He looks into her face and - pulls a bed cover over her head.

We see only what Maria sees through the fabric of the cover, which is almost nothing, but we hear everything. First her painful scream, then his moaning, which quickly grows until he releases a sigh of relief.

Maria remains under the cover and listens as he leaves the room without saying a word.

Through the cover, Maria watches silhouette of the flames from the chandelier's candles above her.

THE TITLE SEQUENCE

Quick flashes of POSTCARDS OF OLD ZAGREB with various wording of "GREETINGS FROM ZAGREB" and the years 1895 to 1910. Postcards are brought to life by animation but freeze again as they fall onto a wooden table with an antique typewriter. Among them, it's a postcard with the title of the series: "INNOCENT IN A MADHOUSE".

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. CITY SQUARE - DAY/ EXT. CROATIAN NATIONAL THEATRE - DAY

The square scenes begin with an animation of an old postcard of the "CROATIAN NATIONAL THEATER, 1895." That becomes live action scene showing of a crowd gathered in front of the building in celebration of its grand opening. EMPEROR FRANZ JOSEPH is waving from the balcony to the crowd of NOBLES who cheer him on.

We are listening to Maria's voice which is excitedly describing the events, when in fact, she is writing.

MARIA (V.O.)

At the same time that Emperor Franz Joseph I of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was ceremoniously opening the new building of the Croatian National Theater..

The postcard, "AGRAM SQUARE", dissolves into a live scene of a group of students, gathered around the MONUMENT OF BAN JELACIC, holding the Hungarian flag on their swords. One of them sets fire to the flag, followed by cheering of others.

MARIA (V.O.)

... students were protesting against the imposition of the Hungarian language in public institutions in Croatia, shouting - Abzug Magyari! Out with Hungarians!

Students carry the burning flag, and citizens join them.

Suddenly, police on horseback rush towards them.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. MATRAY'S HOUSE / MARIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

MARIA's (21) face is filled with the passion of writing, but looks thin and drained. The voice of a CZECH MAID (25) gradually reaches Maria. *They speak Czech, and the maid occasionally corrects Maria as she teaches her the language.*

CZECH MAID

Mrs. Matray! Mrs. Matray!

Maria blinks and realizes where she is -in the same room as on her first wedding night. The room is sparse, with a desk that squeaks under Maria's quick writing and chaos of books and papers. There is also a surprisingly well-preserved folder with the RAUCH COAT OF ARMS.

When she sees a plate of food, Maria exclaims with joy, despite the scarcity of food on it.

MARIA

Eliszka Prochizkova, you scarced me again!

CZECH MAID
 (correcting her)
 It's SCARED me! I knocked and called
 three times, but you were lost in
 heaven! Your husband sends dinner...

Maria eagerly devours the food, as if she had never eaten
 before.

MARIA
 (with mouth full)
 When are the guests arriving?

CZECH MAID
 They are already here. Your husband's
 boss and his daughter, sorry, wife.

Both of them laugh.

MARIA
 Matray wants a promotion and knows how
 to impregnate people..

CZECH MAID
 (correcting her)
 To IMPRESS! Look up to your husband:
 you could have gotten a whole piece of
 meat if you had come down for dinner.

Maria uses her finger to clean the plate.

MARIA
 I wasn't invited!

The maid sees a stylish dress spread out on the bed - it's
 Maria's wedding dress, a little bit redesigned.

CZECH MAID
 Invite yourself or stay hungry.
 (lifting the dress)
 What a beauty!

The Czech Maid presses the dress to her body, looking herself in
 the window's reflection.

CZECH MAID (CONT'D)
 You did a great job on the dress!

The Czech Maid leaves the dress on a hanger.

CZECH MAID (CONT'D)

You have golden hands and brains, and yet, you haven't managed to wrap a man around your finger in five years of marriage.

Maria turns back to her writing, picking up a pen.

MARIA

He's a man, not a booby.

CZECH MAID

(leaving)

Puppy, we say puppy, for God sake.

While the Czech Maid closes the door on a way out, Maria pauses. She looks at the stylish dress.

INT. MATRAY'S HOUSE / SALON - NIGHT

Dinner is in progress in the salon. ZOLTAN Balazs (50) and his wife CSILLA (25), Andras MATRAY (35), now with patches of gray hair and MATRAY'S MOTHER (70). *They speak Hungarian.*

ZOLTAN

Andras will go places, madame, for sure, he just needs to be patient a little bit longer.

MATRAY'S MOTHER

My son is the first to come to work and the last to leave. In a state-owned company, this is a rarity that should be rewarded, isn't it, Mr. Balazs?

ZOLTAN

Yes, unfortunately.

(with confidence)

Call me Zoltan, I already feel at home here.

MATRAY'S MOTHER

You are almost like a father to Andras, indeed.

CSILLA

(to Matray's Mother)

Which would mean that you are his wife and not me! Oh, how morbid!

Csilla bursts out laughing. Zoltan gives her a stern look. Matray saves the situation and raises his glass.

MATRAY
To Greater Hungary!

INT. MATRAY'S HOUSE / HALLWAY - NIGHT

Maria is all dressed up, wearing a redesigned dress, and is approaching the salon.

GUESTS
To Greater Hungary!!

She stops at the door, horrified with what she's just heard. The Maid approaches her, carrying the food.

INT. MATRAY'S HOUSE / SALON - NIGHT

Zoltan is teasing Matray a bit.

ZOLTAN
By the way, Andras, why are you hiding your wife? I'd like to meet her.

Matray and his mother exchange a look.

ZOLTAN (CONT'D)
Isn't her father the steward of Baron Rauch de Nyek's estate, a commoner who..

CSILLA
Then she grew up among barons, so she's practically a noble!

ZOLTAN
(angrily)
Now I forgot what I wanted to say.

CSILLA
You wanted to say that it doesn't matter to us if she is ugly, or crippled.. Or lame.
(to Matray)
Is she deaf?

MATRAY
(calculating excuses)
Maria learned Hungarian as a child, but she has forgotten it.

INT. MATRAY'S HOUSE / HALLWAY - NIGHT

At the door, in a voiceless pantomime, Maria refuses to enter the salon, while the Maid is persuading her to enter. Maria doesn't want to join those monsters, and the Maid firmly pushes her towards the living room.

INT. MATRAY'S HOUSE / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Maria enters, mumbling a greeting in bad Hungarian.

MARIA

Evening.

Matray is shocked by Maria's arrival.

ZOLTAN

Oh, here she is! Maria, finally!

Maria politely smiles at everyone.

MATRAY

Mr. Zoltan Balazs and his wife
Csilla.

Maria nods to greet the guests and sits down. Throughout, she has impeccable manners. As soon as the Czech Maid puts a plate of food in front of her, her gaze is fixed on the plate.

Zoltan speaks kindly to Maria, speaking slowly as if she were a simpleton.

ZOLTAN

Now I see why your husband kept you
hidden. You are a real lady, Maria.

Maria smiles politely at him. Matray watches her every move.

ZOLTAN (CONT'D)

So, you grew up on the estate of
Hedervary's best man?

Maria nods with a smile, taking bites as delicately as possible but hungrily. She doesn't respond, though.

ZOLTAN (CONT'D)

I hear that Khuen often visits as he
likes to ride... Have you ever met him
there?.. Your viceroy?

Maria responds with just a nod and a smile. Zoltan is confused, not knowing what else to say or ask.

CSILLA

Leave her alone, can't you see she's shy?

(to Matray)

You saved her when you took her out of Croatia. Look at what's been happening there these days.

ZOLTAN

What did those students achieve by burning our flag? They got jail time and a ban on studying. They only hurt themselves.

Matray nervously awaits Maria's reaction, but she is focused on the food and he slowly relaxes.

MATRAY'S MOTHER

And they embarrassed their viceroy in front of the emperor, outrageous!

ZOLTAN

It's well known that Khuen rules Croatia with an iron fist, but he didn't deserve THIS! He even had a theater built, and the Croats couldn't agree for years on WHERE to build it.

CSILLA

(interrupts him)

Why's that?

ZOLTAN

Because they're stupid! So Hedervary put an end to the wrangling and ordered the location and..

Zoltan is heavily annoyed by Csilla's interruptions.

ZOLTAN (CONT'D)

The point is, those Croatian rednecks should be kissing his feet..

CSILLA

(interrupts him)

Then why did they burn the flag?

ZOLTAN

(losing his temper)

Because they're stupid like you!

Csilla is hurt. Her chin begins to tremble.

ZOLTAN (CONT'D)
Csilla, I didn't mean it like that.

Zoltan gently squeezes Csilla's hand as an apology. Csilla falls silent.

Maria finishes eating, breathes a sigh of relief with a smile due to a full stomach, then wipes her mouth. Everyone looks at her, remembering she is there. She calmly speaks in perfect Hungarian.

MARIA
Hedervary didn't "secure" anything, he was persuaded to build the theater by the Croatian Minister, Izidor Krsnjavi. If it wasn't for him, Zagreb wouldn't have gymnasium, or museums or the music hall, and Croats would still be rednecks indeed.

All but Matraya, who feared this, are in a state of shock.

MARIA (CONT'D)
Hedervary supported the building of the theatre only to be able to demonstrate to the emperor he tamed Croatia and to have a place where he and his lackeys can applaud themselves.

MATRAY
(warning her)
Maria!

MARIA
But he went too far. When Franz Joseph arrived in Zagreb, Khuen sanded the path with the gravel from the Donau and publicly declared that the tzar is walking on Hungarian land now. That's what students couldn't forgive him for.

Consternation at the dinner table. Matray is furious.

Maria gets up from the table.

MARIA (CONT'D)
It was his own fault...
(to Csilla, smiling)
He's stupid.
(politely to all)
It was my pleasure. Have a good night.

Maria is leaving the room.

Zoltan angrily throws the napkin onto the table and gives a look to Matray who is embarrassed.

Csilla, however, really likes Maria.

INT. MATRAY'S HOUSE / MARIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Maria takes off her dress, Matray enters without knocking. They both speak Hungarian.

MATRAY

How ungrateful you are, it's a criminal offense!

MARIA

Me ungrateful...?

MATRAY

For years, I have tolerated your writing for opposition newspapers and you know that I am devoted to my king.

MARIA

You tolerate it because you take all the money.

MATRAY

So what? ALL your money belongs to me anyway.

Maria's eye automatically falls on the Rauch's folder as she remembers he had taken her wedding present too, obviously.

MARIA

But I've earned it and I am your wife, not your slave!

MATRAY

If you were a slave, I would have whipped you for this scene tonight! But I won't because you are mentally unstable.

MARIA

(fearfully)
Andria?

MATRAY

Andres! My name is Andres! You are dangerous with your militant fantasies. Mentally unstable and dangerous! You are going to the hospital tomorrow.

MARIA

(seriously afraid)
Andres, don't joke about it.

MATRAY

I have sent a telegram. They are coming for you in the morning.

Matray turns and quickly leaves the room.

Maria is terrified. She has a panic attack, gasping for air, reaching for support but finding none, and falls to her knees.

The Czech Maid enters and sees Maria hyperventilating. She rushes to her aid.

CZECH MAID

Milady!

MARIA

I'm fine.

Maria defiantly squints at the concerned Maid.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I need a favour!

INT. MATRAY'S HOUSE / MARIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Maria is dressed in the Maid's clothes. She's putting her fashionable dress into a bag.

CZECH MAID

They will look for you at home first.

MARIA

That's why I'm going somewhere they won't find me.

Maria takes off her necklace and puts it in a jewelry box, which is already full of jewelry, including a baroness's brooch.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I'd rather be dead than go to the nutcase.

CZECH MAID

It's the nuthouse. You are the
nutcase..

The maid's tears fall down her face. Maria only now realizes that the maid is trembling with fear. Maria approaches her and hugs her tightly. They stand while embracing each other.

MARIA

Tell them that I stole from you.

CZECH MAID

(eyeing her outfit)
Then you'll have to do it properly.
Otherwise, you'll freeze.

EXT. MATRAY'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Maria quietly exits, carefully closes the front door. She quickly disappears down the dark street, carrying a small bag.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT/EXT. TRAIN - DAY

Maria looks out the train window, which slowly rattles as they pass through the idilic hills of Zagorje. She rides in a compartment with peasants, servants, and workers. There are also chickens and rabbits in wicker cages taken to the food market. Everyone is sleepy, even the chickens.

Maria is too excited to fall in sleep. She is scared but also happy that she is finally free.

EXT. ZAGREB MAIN STATION - DAY

Passengers exit the train and blend into the crowd on the platform: mostly peasants, workers, and a few citizens whose servants carry their luggage.

Maria gets off the train, clutching her bag, and heads towards the exit of the station. She flinches when she hears the TRAIN CONDUCTOR'S (50) whistle; her nerves are obviously too tense. He's yelling the phrase in Hungarian.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR

Edj pert! Edj pert!

Maria passes through the crowd, witnessing a strange scene.

A PEASANT, PEASANT'S WIFE, and TWO CHILDREN, loaded with baskets, get off the train. The peasant stops because he hears a WORKER shouting.

WORKER

That one doesn't go to Krapina!

PEASANT

Then where!?

But the worker disappeared into the crowd.

PEASANT (CONT'D)

(to Train Conductor)

Mister, where is this train going?

The conductor doesn't respond, he doesn't understand Croatian, but he knows that he doesn't need to.

TRAIN CONDUCTOR

Edj pert! Edj pert!

A few people surrounded him, confused.

FEMALE PEASANT

Where is it going, if not to Krapina?

WORKER 1

Where is this Edj pert, in Hungary?

No one can answer. The Train Conductor blows the whistle three times, and the train starts moving. People protest, and there is a commotion. The peasant runs after the train unsuccessfully; there are too many people.

PEASANT

It took off with my wife and kids!!

Peasant grabs the Train Conductor by his collar.

PEASANT (CONT'D)

Where did they go? Where is "edjpert"?

FEMALE WORKER

(to Train Conductor)

Speak so we can understand you!

Several other people give support to the Peasant. The Train Conductor panics and gives a long blow to his whistle.

PEASANT

(to Train Conductor)

Give me back my wife! Where have my children went!? Speak!!

TWO POLICEMEN pounce on the crowd, pushing them away. With a butt of his riffle a POLICEMAN hits the peasant who was shaking the conductor in the kidneys. The peasant falls to the ground. Women scream. The frightened crowd moves away.

Maria, shaken by the event, makes her way towards the exit. She passes by a newsstand COLPORTEUR, who sells newspapers - OBZOR.

COLPORTEUR

Obzor! Buy Obzor! A fight broke out in
the parliament! Buy Obzor! Obzoor!

Maria hands Colporteur a coin and takes a newspaper. She looks at the front page with the headline:

OBZOR. ZAGREB, 03. 10. 1895.

THE OPPOSITION DEMANDS GREATER FREEDOM OF THE PRESS.

Maria continues towards the station exit and hungrily begins to read the newspaper as she walks, imagining what she's reading.

INT. OLD ASSEMBLY HALL / ZAGREB - DAY

A heated debate is in process: on the right side are sitting ruling Magyarons, in noble attire, such as GEZA Rauch (45) and Jovan ZIVKOVIC (80). Aleksandar EGERSDORFER (46) is standing, waving a newspaper.

EGERSDORFER

Must I, as the leader of the ruling
party, read these lies against the
state every single day?! This rubbish
that Obzor spreads!

Strong approval is heard from the ruling party.

EGERSDORFER (CONT'D)

It says here that our illustrious
viceroy Hedervary rules the land with -
carrot and stick?!

Laughter is heard from the opposition on the left. Tadija SMICIKLAS (60) is surrounded by Josip FRANK (48) and other historical figures. They wear emblems of Croatian chessboard on their suits.

In the middle of the hall, on an elevated chair, sits Khuen HEDERVARY (47) and coldly observes the debate.

EGERSDORFER (CONT'D)

If that was the truth, he would have long ago banned newspapers that constantly incite hatred towards this government and the institution of viceroy itself!

SMICIKLAS rises and also waves Obzor.

SMICIKLAS

This is the article published in Budapest Tagblatt and Magyar Hirlap, the most reputable and highest-circulation newspapers in Hungary!

(ironically)

True - a curse on the opposition, but these are still YOUR newspapers, gentlemen Magyarons. Obzor only translated that article into Croatian and published it in its "Echoes from Hungary" section!

(punch-line)

How far has your intelligence gone, Doctor Egersdorfer, that you see conspiracy in your own newspapers?

The opposition reacts with loud laughter and stamping of feet.

EGERSDORFER

And how far has your intelligence gone, Doctor Smiciklas, to support the articles of an anonymous author!

FRANK

How is he anonymous if he is called Jurica Zagorski?

This provokes waves of laughter from the opposition part.

EXT. CITY CENTRE STREET / ZAGREB - DAY

Their laughter overlaps with Maria's laughter while she, in a maid's outfit, reads Obzor while walking. She is unaware of the bewildered looks of passers-by and continues to walk and read.

INT. OLD ASSEMBLY HALL / ZAGREB - DAY

A bit later. Egersdorfer's authority is once again shaken.

EGERSDORFER

You know that it's a pseudonym!

FRANK

A pseudonym is de jure!

GEZA RAUCH

If the writer was an honorable man, he
would not hide behind a false name!

(at Frank, smiling)

Maybe it's your pen name, Frank?

Josip FRANK stands up angrily, ready for a fist-fight.

FRANK

Are you saying I have no honor?!

Opposition goes crazy, stomping and yelling at Magyarons who yel
back at them.

That stomping fades into horses trotting on the street.

EXT. CITY CENTRE STREET / ZAGREB - DAN

Lost in her reading, Maria wandered to the middle of the road.
COACHMAN (60) on the carriage shouts at her.

COACHMAN

Watch out girl?!

(then)

Since when do maids read papers!?

Maria bounces back, while the carrige drives away.

She looks around the street to see where she is: ladies in
pairs, gentlemen, servants, washerwomen, peasants, boys playing
hoop and girls playing with dolls.

She becomes aware of contemptuous looks of LADIES and GENTEMEN
passing by her. Then, she notices a POLICEMAN (30) who,
suspicious, starts walking towards her, with his eyes fixed upon
her.

Maria panics and turns around the first corner. She finds
herself close to the entrance of the Botanical Garden.

EXT. BOTANICAL GARDEN - DAY

Dusk. Safe from people - only a few couples walk around, Maria
falls asleep on a bench. The GARDEN KEEPER (60) wakes her up,
ratling with keys on the ring - it's time for him to close the
Botanical Garden.

EXT. CITY CENTRE STREET / ZAGREB - DAY/DUSK

Twilight is slowly falling over Zagreb's central street. Maria walks with her head down, not wanting to be noticed by passers-by, who are now exclusively men.

The coachman's prolonged "HO-OAH!" announces arrival of a carriage, and its white acetylene lights illuminates the road. Maria sticks to the building, but its no help: the GAS STREET LAMP LIGHTER (50) is lighting a lamp nearby, spreading yellow light throughout the street.

Maria realizes that she will be noticed and quickly turns into the first building entrance she comes across.

EXT. BUILDING IN CENTRE OF ZAGREB - NIGHT

Maria enters the dark staircase, relieved. In the dim light from the entrance door of the nearest apartment, she quickly takes off her clothes. And changes into the dress from her bag. Barking of the dog, followed by voices, from the apartment force her to speed up.

EXT. CITY CENTRE STREET - NIGHT

Maria crosses the street with a dug-up canal. Under her cloak, we can see she's wearing her fashionable dress. And her dirty shoes. She heads towards the JAGERHORN HOTEL.

INT. JAGERHORN HOTEL /BAR / FOYER - NIGHT

In the empty foyer, Ferdinand BUDICKI (21) and Slavoljub PENKALA (25) sit and smoke cigars. Obligatory pictures of Franz Joseph and Hedervary hang on the wall, but there is also a picture of Nikola Tesla.

The hotel owner, LOJZEK (45), brings drinks to the gentlemen.

LOJZEK

The last drinks before closing,
gentlemen. Two Pelinkovac made by our
Pokorny who conquered Europe with his
brandy, as a true patriot!

BUDICKI

Thank you, Lojzek!
(at Pankala)
Pankala is even bigger one - he's
changed his name into Croatian!

LOJZEK

Drinks are on the house, I say!
 (confidentially)
 Have you seen how they dug up the
 street? What does the city need a
 sewer system for? We are used to
 swimming in crap, anyway!

BUDICKI and PENKALA laugh.

PENKALA

(ironically)
 For the sake of progress, Lojzek.

LOJZEK

If our government cared about
 progress, it wouldn't have driven
 Tesla to America. Instead of building
 hydropower plant for cheap electricity
 it's importing expensive kerosene for
 oil lamps. What are they're thinking!?

PENKALA

Hungarians want us to live in the
 dark.

BUDICKI

But, if our own politicians weren't
 such corrupted bunch of ignorants,
 the whole country would have
 electricity now, not just Sibenik!

Maria disrupts the heated discussion by entering. She smiles
 shyly at Lojzek who hurries over to her, obligingly.

LOJZEK

Welcome to the place where the first
 light bulb in the country was lit up!
 For a minute, at least..

Lojzek looks behind Maria to see who is following her.

MARIA

'Evening. Do you have a vacant
 room?...

Lojzek realizes she's alone and immediately withdraws backward
 to the counter.

LOJZEK

Oh no, there is no room for women
 without an escort here!

MARIA

I'm not, I mean, I came to the city to visit my sick aunt, but she's been already taken to the hospital so I have found myself with no place to stay..

Lojzek stands behind the counter like it is a defence wall.

LOJZEK

Sorry, I can't. We are a reputable..

MARIA

I will pay! I don't have money - of course - but I have jewelry...

(Women were not allowed to carry money). Maria ignores Lojzek and starts to search for jewelry in her bag...

LOJZEK

There are two lodgings down in the street..

(noticing her shoes)

Even a brothel.

Maria takes out "Rauch's folder" from her bag and places it on the counter for Lojzek to notice it, then a powder box...

LOJZEK (CONT'D)

Please, leave! Police'll fine me if they find you here!

Lojzek slams his fist on the table, then on the folder. Then he sees the COAT OF ARMS which he recognises.

LOJZEK (CONT'D)

How did you get this...?

MARIA

(innocently)

Oh, my godmother gave it to me...

Lojzek transforms into a bug faster than Gregor Samsa.

LOJZEK

You'll not be paying! No need for it!

Lojzek returns the folder to Maria, in a servile manner.

LOJZEK'S WIFE (V.O.)

Who won't pay!?

Half a deer with huge antlers, standing on two sturdy legs in rubber boots, passes behind Lojzek. It is being carried by broad-shouldered woman, LOJZEK'S WIFE (30).

LOJZEK
(confidentially)
She will, be schtumm! She's Countess
De Rauch! Go back to the kitchen,
you'll nail someone with those
antlers!

LOJZEK'S WIFE
You know who, if she doesn't pay!

Penkala and Budicki pass by Maria, bowing to her.

BUDICKI
Can I be of help to a lady?

Maria smiles with a blush and Budicki winks charmingly.

LOJZEK
Budicki, you're out of her league!
Bitte schon, Penkala, carry him away,
thanks!

Penkala and Budicki leave the hotel, laughingly.

Lojzek picks up Maria's bag and takes a room key. She follows him to the room.

INT. JAGERHORN HOTEL / THE CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Lojzek unlocks the door of Maria's room.

MARIA
Can I count on your discretion..?

LOJZEK
You're not here, Your Grace.

Lojzek hands Maria the key and bows.

LOJZEK (CONT'D)
Good night, milady, and sleep well.

While bowing, however shortly, he notices her worn-out shoes, but Maria doesn't notice it.

MARIA
Thank you, I will, all night long!

INT. JAGERHORN HOTEL / MARIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Maria is writing in her room. When she fills one sheet, she puts it on "Rauch's folder" and starts another one. She sits in her underwear with holes and patches.

INT. JAGERHORN HOTEL / MARIA'S ROOM - DAY

The first light of day breaks through the window as well as THE TICKING of the city clock.

Maria stretches vigorously. She opens the window, takes a deep breath of fresh air and pauses enchanted by the sight:

Dawn over the Old Town with red roofs and cathedral towers. A small Central European town awakes with the first song of birds and roosters.

Maria jumps cheerfully to get dressed. Sheets of paper she wrote all night stay on the table. The title is - EGY PERTZ!

EXT. CITY STREET IN FRONT OF OBZOR - DAY

Maria hurries down the street. She can easily be mistaken for a servant, judging by the outfit, but more than that, because her face radiates anxiety.

She waits for the HORSE TRAM to pass by with the coachman..

looking at the sign on the building across the street: it's OBZOR. Reluctantly, she's heading towards the building.

INT. OBZOR / CORRIDOR - DAY

Maria walks down the hallway leading to the newsroom as she's walking toward the altar in the sanctuary. She can hear lively conversation from inside it. GJURO GALEC (25), fox-like man, suddenly appears at the entrance.

GALEC

You should have come at dawn, before everyone else!

Galec pulls Maria toward the door of the basement on the left side, from which the muffled sound of printing presses can be heard. In the anteroom at the entrance to the basement, there are buckets.

Galec gives Maria a lewd smile and pats her thigh.

GALEC (CONT'D)
I won't tell anyone if you won't.

He hands her a bucket with dirty rags.

GALEC (CONT'D)
The brooms are downstairs. Empty the
ashtrays after all of us leave.

Galec enters the newsroom. Maria follows him carrying the bucket.

INT. OBZOR / NEWSROOM - DAY

Maria stands at the entrance to the smoky newsroom, in the corner, to watch the "show" performed by two journalists, unnoticed. JOSIP PASARIC (35) leans on his desk with a plaque that says EDITOR-IN-CHIEF. Besides them, there are DEZMAN, GALEC, PECNJAK, who are sitting on the tables.

In the opposite corner of the room from Maria, stands SIME MAZZURA (55), impressive in his height and upright posture. He watches what is happening with a cold and unshakeably serious gaze. Behind him is an office with glass doors, obviously his. VILIM DOROTKA (30) stands with his back turned to the "audience". JOVAN HRANILOVIC (45) is already in his role and waves "Obzor", a newspaper.

HRANILOVIC
Obzor should be banned!

Dorotka turns to the journalists - he has greased his black mustache. The journalists burst out laughing.

DOROTKA
We know why you want to ban it,
Egersdorfer - because half of Zagreb
thinks the way Obzor writes!

The journalists approve with laughter.

DOROTKA (CONT'D)
You have your own newspapers, so write
whatever you want. People say they are
good...for toilet paper!

A burst of laughter is interrupted by MILIVOJ DEZMAN (22).

DEMAN
You're lying, no way that Smiciklas
would say that!

DOROTKA

He did!
 (to Hranilovic)
 Jovo, did he say it?

Hranilovic nods affirmatively and continues.

HRANILOVIC

That's how a university rector and a distinguished historian talks! It's also the level of arguments of your party, the level of coachmen, cordwainers and your Jurica Zagorski!

DOROTKA

Your level is even lower: you create false problems to hide behind the real ones, and think we will not notice.

The journalists laugh and protest at the same time.

DOROTKA (CONT'D)

So, we demand that money be issued from the treasury for the construction of roads! You've built railways to be able to transport wood from Croatian forests, but you won't let us build roads because you want us to remain buried in the Middle Ages.

(raises his fist)

He who puts out his hand to stop the wheel of history will have his fingers crushed!

The journalists go crazy applauding. Mazzura has seen enough. He speaks with a strong Dalmatian accent.

MAZZURA

Enough of that theater, men, back to work!

PASARIC

And liven up a bit with those articles!

Mazzura walks to his office and the journalists disperse to their desks.

GALEC

Censors will cut them heavy anyway.

PASARIC

But the passion will be felt in what remains!

(MORE)

PASARIC (CONT'D)
 Especially in your case, Galec, 'cause
 you write like a cod, dry and boring!

Maria suddenly becomes indecisive, steps back and takes a deep breath. The rhythmic typing of the journalists calms her down a bit, and she heads toward Pasaric, unconsciously holding onto bucket as a crutch.

Maria realizes she's holding a bucket and sets it down. No one turns around, everyone is diligently typing.

Maria approaches Pasaric, who is reading some text that Dezman, a mini version of a stuffy Mazzura, handed him. Maria doesn't want to attract attention and speaks in a low voice.

MARIA
 Mr. Pasaric?

PASARIC
 Yes?

MARIA
 I'm Maria Juric.

Maria smiles, but Pasaric doesn't recognize her name.

MARIA (CONT'D)
 I came to ask for..
 (gets confused)
 to offer myself for a job.

Pasaric looks behind her, sees the bucket and inspects it.

PASARIC
 You already got it.

MARIA
 I mean, to write for you. As a
 journalist.

PASARIC
 Ma'am, I don't know where you got this
 silly idea, but if you're not a
 cleaner, I'm asking you to leave.

MARIA
 No, actually, I'm writing.
 (significantly)
 As Jurica Zagorski.

Pasaric is surprised for a moment.. then his face darkened.

PASARIC

Get out right now before I call the
police!

The typewriters stop clacking.

MARIA

I can prove it to you..

PASARIC

(yelling at her)
Get out before I lose my temper!

DOROTKA

(whispers to Galec)
Whose is this one? Galec, yours?

GALEC

No, my girls are beautiful.

Maria hears this and the drop of humiliation on top of a shock brought by rejection is too much. She turns around and runs towards the exit. Fear, anger, and hurt mix on her face.

Pasaric watches Maria run out of the newsroom and lights the cigarette, but holding it upside down.

INT. OBZOR / NEWSROOM - DAY - CONTINUED

The cigarette butt cached fire and the smell is terrible, which makes him more angry then before.

PASARIC

Even girls are mocking us now!

HRANILOVIC

Khuen's people are mocking us.

Everyone looks at him puzzled, except for Pasaric who nods affirmatively.

HRANILOVIC (CONT'D)

They've sent a message: tell us who
Jurica Zagorski is, or we'll make your
life miserable in every way possible.

PECNJAK

But we have no clue who is behind this
name..

(he just realises)

Oh. They think we know.

GALEC

So what, the opposition is grateful we are translating his articles - they will protect us..

PASARIC

They don't know that we are clueless either.

(decisively)

We have to find out who this Zagorski is before they employ police to look for him!

DEZMAN

So far, we know that the translations of his articles have been sent from the post office in Sombotel.

GALEC

And you are saying this now, after a year of publishing his texts?

PASARIC

We didn't care who he was! His articles were brilliant and worked for our cause. Only after his "carrot and whip" made waves in the parliament..

Journalists are not satisfied with the answer, mumbling.

DEZMAN

Guys! I called the editor of Budapest Tagblatt and he told me that he has been sending a fee to Zagorski to a certain Andras Matray in Sombotel.

The journalists squirm and murmur.

DEZMAN (CONT'D)

Matray is some low-ranked official at the railways, and he's a Hungarian nationalist.

Everyone is distressed at first, but then..

HRANILOVIC

It's a perfect cover for Zagorski.

Everyone nodded.

PECNJAK

To which address we send him the money
for translations?

The journalists automatically look towards Mazzura's office.

PASARIC

Mazzura doesn't pay him, that's for
sure.

GALEC

Really? Cheap Dalmatian bastard!

HRANILOVIC

(he's concluding)

So, he's been sending them for free -
who could he be? A Hungarian
journalist who speaks Croatian..

GALEC

Why not our journalist who speaks..

DEZMAN

Because not one Croatian journalist
speaks Hungarian!

The buzzing of brain cells can almost be heard.

PASARIC

Still, he knows the situation in
Zagreb perfectly, both in Parliament
and on the street.

(decisively)

Hranilovic and Pecnjak!

Hranilovic and Pecnjak jump to attention.

PASARIC (CONT'D)

Go through the clubs and let it be
known that Pasaric wants to talk to
Zagorski.

(emphasizes))

Tell everybody that I guarantee him
anonymity with my honor.

(to Hranilovic)

Jovo, you go to Privrednik, they have
hundreds of journalists circulating..

GALEC

Yeah, Serbs have spies everywhere,
they know things about us that we
don't even know.

HRANILOVIC

Don't talk nonsense, Galec, we've been living here for centuries, work and mind our own business, which I recommend to you as well.

GALEC

You work behind our backs, yeah. Maybe you told one of those Khuen's ass-kissers that we are hiding identity of Zagorski in the first place!

Hranilovic and Galec jump to their feet and face each other, shouting fiercely like roosters.

HRANILOVIC

You're calling me a spy?

They pounce on each other as they are cockfighting.

HRANILOVIC (CONT'D)

You and your nationalists who scare women and children in Serbian villages with some spooky tales about Greater Serbia...

GALEC

That spooky tale is described in Garasanin's programme in detail!

Hranilovic is taken aback and lowers his tone.

HRANILOVIC

That's just nonsense. You should be smarter than those who fall for it.

GALEC

You're a good man, Jovo, but naive.

PASARIC

Galec and Dorotka! You visit cigar clubs, cafes, wherever gentlemen gather...

DOROTKA

And brothels?

PECNJAK

But not those you prefere, but those where women are clean.

Dorotka shows him "the finger" and everyone laughs, eager to remove the discomfort from the previous quarrel.

Pasarin looks at an article in Obzor and thinks aloud.

PASARIN

He doesn't seem like the type for
brothels to me. More like a
professor... He could be a lawyer...
maybe even a doctor. Dezman, maybe he
is one of yours?

DEZMAN

My esteemed colleagues are attracted
to the power, where big money is, but
I'll check out those who are in the
opposition.

Pasarin watches them leaving the editorial office in a hurry.

PASARIN

Did you hear that? That's Khuen's
doing! To make us fight each other
while he robs us in the dark!

INT. JAGERHORN HOTEL / MARIA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Maria stands in front of the mirror, looking calm and taking off
her hat and unclasps it from her hair. The clasp gets stuck and
she tries to take it out, but it won't budge. Maria pulls the
clasp with force until she starts pulling it frantically,
tearing her hair out. In despair and anger, all disheveled, she
takes the "Egy perc" text papers and tears them in half. She
almost tears them again, but the door trembles from pounding.

SINISA (V.O.)

Open up, police!

Maria remains motionless, looking at the door as it opens.
Lojzek opens it with a spare key. Two policemen barge into the
room, one of them is SINISA (20), handsome and completely by the
book. He looks at the warrant in his hand, then at Maria, and
nods to the other POLICEMAN (30).

SINISA

Maria Matray, we are arresting you in
the name of the Emperor!

MARIA

Why, for God's sake?

Behind the angry Lojzek is his scowling wife. The POLICEMAN
approaches Maria and binds her hands behind her back. She is more
surprised than frightened.

LOJZEK
Countess, my foot! You deceived me!

MARIA
I didn't say I was a countess!

LOJZEK
But you left me believing that you
were, that's the same thing!

This hits Maria hard because Lojzek is right.

MARIA
I'm sorry, please forgive me.
(to Sinisa)
What have I done?

LOJZEK'S WIFE
Righteous women don't run away from
their husbands.

Maria can't grab her things because the zealous Sinisa roughly pulls her out of the room.

MARIA
Where are you taking me?

SINISA
Your husband has issued a warrant for
you and ordered us to take you to the
mental hospital.

It takes a few seconds until it dawns on her, then she screams with all her might.

MARIA
No! Nooooo! Let me go! Please!!!

The policemen pick up Maria and carry her out as she struggles. Lojzek, frightened, huddles up next to his wife.

His wife suddenly feels pity for Maria, like she's questioning the righteousness of the whole situation.

EXT./INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / CORRIDOR. DAY.

Two orderlies bring bound Maria into the hospital.

The scenes are terrible, as we expect in a mental hospital of that time: patients are scantily dressed, some drool, some neatly stack their feces on the wall with their hands.

OLD PSYCHIATRIST (V.O.)
 Maria Juric, middle name Mariana, born
 on March 2, eight hundred...

A patient with a chamber pot on his head like a helmet charges
 at the bars through the window.

A woman sings a beautiful folk song, but the noise creates bad
 reactions from the others so the nuns try to stuff a cloth in
 her mouth.

OLD PSYCHIATRIST (V.O.)
 ...eighty-three, daughter of Ivan
 Juric from Golubovec, the Steward of
 Rauch's estate, blah blah blah..

They bring Maria, broken and dull, before the OLD PSYCHIATRIST
 (80) who reads from Maria's medical record.

OLD PSYCHIATRIST
 . . she was hospitalized a couple of
 years ago due to a nervous breakdown.
 (something horrifies him)
 I don't want to deal with her.

The Old Psychiatrist closes Maria's file and hands it to the
 NURSE- NUN, beside him.

OLD PSYCHIATRIST (CONT'D)
 Give her to the young doctor. Let him
 practice on her.

The Nurse-nun nods.

OLD PSYCHIATRIST (CONT'D)
 But first, take her to therapy.

He waves his hand and Maria is taken down the hallway like a
 log.

SERIES OF SHOTS - DAY/NIGHT (MUTED)

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / DR. GUTSCHY'S OFFICE - DAY

In the corner of the room decorated as a living room, with
 armchairs, a carpet, and a coffee table, DR. GUTSCHY (45) pours
 himself tea and inhales its aroma. He dances to his working desk
 with the cup. But as soon as he sits at the desk with the
 obligatory brain model, he becomes serious. He takes the first
 file from a pile of medical files on the desk.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Maria trembles in a bathtub as a nun throws ice cubes into the water. Her lips are already blue.

INT. CIGAR CLUB. DAY

In a smoke-filled club for gentlemen and their top hats, Dorotka and Hranilovic talk to a GENTLEMAN (70) who shakes his head denying that he knows anyone who could be Zagorski.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / DR. GUTSCHY'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Gutschy closes and puts away a file, then takes a new one from the pile. He reads it with surprise and interest, raising an eyebrow.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Maria is given a rubber piece to bite on as they prepare to pass electricity through the wires connected to her head.

EXT. UNIVERSITY IN ZAGREB. DAY

On the stairs of the university, Dorotka and Hranilovic show a page of Obzor to a PROFESSOR (75) who nods, yes, he knows about Zagorski, he reads his articles, but doesn't know who he is.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL - DAY

Electricity is released through Maria's body, causing her to shake. The electricity stops. The nun adjusts the dial to a higher voltage and releases the electricity again. Maria's torso jumps from the table.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / DR. GUTSCHY'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Gutschy flips through a file, then closes it. He drinks a tea and picks up the same file again, opening it.

EXT. CABARET "IMPERIAL" - NIGHT

Dorotka and Hranilovic exit the cabaret, exhausted and drunk. Dorotka throws Obzor in the garbage.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / PARK - DAY

It's morning in the beautiful park, where bird chirps occasionally mix with human screams from the hospital building.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / MARIA'S ROOM - DAY

Dr. Gutschy observes Maria sitting on the bed in a hospital gown. Maria is groggy.

DR. GUTSCHY

Maria, baths and electrical shocks didn't help you the first time you were here. With your permission, I would like to try a new method.

Maria has an empty stare.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)

I interned with Dr. Freud in Vienna. His method was very successful with women - sometimes, the healing occurs within two years.

Maria doesn't react. Gutschy looks at Maria's chart.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)

I see that three years ago, you experienced some difficult events.

Under the weight of the memories, Maria closes her eyes.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)

(reads)

Your husband issued a warrant for you as a mentally ill woman, but he didn't say why you ran away from home.

Maria doesn't show any signs of understanding.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)

The problem with traumas is that they come back in the form of various unpleasant symptoms, even though you've already forgotten about them. It's necessary for you to realize what really hurt you in that event.

Maria doesn't react.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)
Now, you need to get good sleep.

Dr. Gutschy gives Maria a sleeping pill on his palm. She doesn't take it with her hand but with her mouth, like an obedient puppy. Then she rolls over on her side and closes her eyes. Dr. Gutschy watches for a moment and then leaves the room.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / MARIA'S ROOM - DAY

Maria sits on the bed, slightly dazed, while Dr. Gutschy sits across from her.

DR. GUTSCHY
We're just going to talk. Do you agree?

Maria gives him an empty stare and he continues.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)
Has your husband ever hit you?

Maria barely shakes her head no.

Dr. Gutschy writes something on her chart.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)
Did he cheat on you with another woman?

Maria rolls her eyes: he is so predictable and boring.

Dr. Gutschy slams the chart shut.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)
I'm not going to put words in your mouth. You'll talk to me voluntarily or not at all.

Dr. Gutschy lets a long moment of her decision-making pass.

MARIA
He's right, I'm mentally damaged.

DR. GUTSCHY
What does that mean?

MARIA

That I'm weak and weaklings need to
perish according to the law of
evolution.

(then)

I am Nobody.

Dr. Gutschy writes something down. He writes constantly, every
time she says something interesting. But he's also talking to
her.

DR. GUTSCHY

You've been reading Darwin...hmm.

(then)

Have you had a lover while married?

MARIA

Oh yes, several.

Maria looks at him provocatively. She starts to unbutton her
dress, pretending to be a seductress, but she does it awkwardly,
so she looks like some grotesque Marilyn Monroe.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I'm hot.

Dr. Gutschy doesn't react.

Maria pretends to cool herself off with the edge of her dress,
lifting it up so that he can see she's not wearing any
underwear.

DR. GUTSCHY

You're hot in the middle of winter?

MARIA

Cold baths and electricity stimulate
circulation. Try it sometime.

Maria persistently cools herself off, becoming more and more
insecure and nervous. Dr. Gutschy gets up and approaches her.

Maria makes a victorious-disappointed grimace: "I knew it."

Dr. Gutschy pulls a blanket from the bed and wraps Maria in it.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(sadly)

You see, I'm not even a woman.

DR. GUTSCHY

You are. But I don't want to abuse my
position.

Dr. Gutschy returns to his chair. A light comes on in Maria's eyes.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / DR. GUTSCHY'S OFFICE - DAY

A few days later. Maria, still a bit groggy but much clearer, sits opposite Dr. Gutschy, at the desk. Behind Maria is a corner of the room that looks like a living room.

Dr. Gutschy hands Maria a cup of tea. As she takes the cup, her hands shake. She notices that he's not drinking.

DR. GUTSCHY
Cannabis plant tea. Very healing
for the psyche.

MARIA
What did I do to deserve this?

DR. GUTSCHY
You don't have to deserve act of
kindness.

MARIA
Then take away my sleeping pills.

Dr. Gutschy writes something in his notebook.

DR. GUTSCHY
Sleep is crucial for recovery.

MARIA
But nightmares are not. I dreamt of my
husband last night and I couldn't wake
up.

Maria loudly sips her tea.

DR. GUTSCHY
Why are you slurping? You're not a
peasant.

MARIA
Why do you always write? You're not a
writer.

Dr. Gutschy is taken aback.

MARIA (CONT'D)
You said we would TALK. And you're
questioning me like a policeman.

DR. GUTSCHY

It helps me remember better. But I'll try to take notes as little as possible.

Maria nods and politely takes a sip of this tasteful tea.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / DR. GUTSCHY'S OFFICE - DAY

Dr. Gutschy pours tea from the teapot for Maria, who is more focused now, but still tense, and himself. They are now sitting in the "living room" corner of the office that suggests comfort of a home. Maria is focused but tense.

MARIA

This is how my dad and I drank tea in the cafe.

DR. GUTSCHY

Oh? He took you to the caffee bar?

MARIA

He often took me with him to Zagreb. We would go first to the menagerie to see the seal that extinguished matches with its breath!

Dr. Gutschy now sees Maria smile for the first time, specifically, the happy little girl in her.

MARIA (CONT'D)

But I liked the cafe the most. He treated me like a real lady.

Dr. Gutschy smiles gently, drinks tea, and listens attentively.

Maria starts to relax slowly.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Sometimes Aunt Greta would be with us. Of all Dad's friends, Greta was my favorite.

DR. GUTSCHY

Did Mom know about her?

Maria smiles for a moment.

MARIA

Dad forbade me to mention his friends to Mom because she wouldn't understand and would get angry with him.

DR. GUTSCHY
You didn't answer my question.

Maria momentarily becomes an embarrassed little girl.

MARIA
It just slipped out of me.
(with self-disgust)
Stupid me.

DR. GUTSCHY
How did your mother reacted?

MARIA
She asked me to swear on my sister
Danica that Dad hadn't slept with
Greta.
(quietly)
And I did.

DR. GUTSCHY
You lied?

MARIA
So Mom wouldn't cry so much.
(with a sigh)
But she didn't believe me anyway.

DR. GUTSCHY
What did she say to you?

MARIA
Nothing. She tied me to a tree in the
woods. The next morning, Marta the
nanny found me.

Dr. Gutschy nearly chokes on his tea.

MARIA (CONT'D)
She was right to punish me - I lied.

DR. GUTSCHY
Did your father have the right to ask
you to lie for him?

MARIA
Dad loved me. And Marta. They could
ask me for anything.

DR. GUTSCHY
Did Marta ever ask you to lie for her?

Maria shakes her head in denial. Tears well up in her eyes.

MARIA

Dad never said a word against Mom, but she would talk to me for hours about how he was wicked and cruel, and I had to listen. I hated him.

DR. GUTSCHY

But you also loved him.

MARIA

When I was with her, I hated him, and when I was with him.
(it catches in her throat)

DR. GUTSCHY

A child finds it difficult to accept that parents can be selfish and cruel, so they take the blame for their behavior. But the child is never to blame.

(then)

From a psychiatric point of view, a child is not even responsible for murder.

Maria, struggling with tears, is surprised by this.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)

You lied because you wanted to protect your mother from suffering and your father from her anger.

MARIA

I don't want to make excuses for my weaknesses!

DR. GUTSCHY

But you make excuses for their weaknesses.

Maria looks at him in amazement, then her guard breaks down and tears flow. Dr. Gutschy sets aside his tea to give Maria a tissue from his pocket, even though there is a pile of them on the table.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / PARK - DAY

Maria is wearing hospital clothes and wrapped in her cloak. Dr. Gutschy walks with her through the park, whose beauty is not marred even by the patients walking around like zombies.

MARIA

When will you let me go from here?

DR. GUTSCHY

When I'm convinced that you won't have another nervous breakdown.

Maria is somewhat taken aback.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)

Your file only lists events that led up to it, but I'm interested in what happened inside you.

Maria nods with a sigh - it's hard to explain.

MARIA

I was overcome by the feeling that I was rotten and wicked because I was only consuming food that someone worthier should be eating..

(quietly)

I don't know why.

DR. GUTSCHY

You have much stricter standards for yourself than for others. That's why people can easily convince you that you are the way they see you.

Maria leans against the railing, looking at her face in the water.

MARIA

How will I know that I see myself correctly, and not others?

DR. GUTSCHY

Check the facts - objectively.

MARIA

What about the fact that I'm ugly?

DR. GUTSCHY

You may think that, but I don't.

Maria smiles. They continue walking.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)

Why does your husband want to declare you insane?

MARIA

So he can collect monthly rent on my name, which he would lose if he divorced me, as well as twenty thousand forint dowry..

DR. GUTSCHY
(allegedly impressed)
I wish I were worth twenty thousand
forints to someone!

MARIA
I wouldn't be.

DR. GUTSCHY
(provoking her)
I studied for ten years, and I make
less money than that. Why should
you be worth more than me?

MARIA
That money is the price they set for
me, but I'm worth much more!

DR. GUTSCHY
And that's an objective fact.

Maria looks for signs that he's poking her, but he's serious.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)
I'll give you some homework.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / MARIA'S ROOM - DAY

Maria takes her clothes off in front of the mirror. Before she takes off her panties, she stops. She changes her mind and starts to take off the top first. Then again, she takes off her panties first, but closes her eyes. She takes off her negligee, but still squinting, puts her panties back on.

MARIA
Open your eyes, you don't have a
hunch on your back!

She squeezes her eyes even harder. She begins to shake and tear off her negligee with force. In the face of possible breakdown, her subconscious would rather break the reflection of her nudity. She pushes the mirror to the ground, and it shatters with a crash.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / MARIA'S ROOM - DAY -- LATER

Maria sits broken on her bed. Dr. Gutschy gazes thoughtfully at the fragments of the mirror.

DR. GUTSCHY
What happened?

MARIA

(rapid-fire)

It seemed to me that a man was watching me through the keyhole. And that he was coming into the room, approaching me from behind, hugging me, and blindfolding me...I didn't dare open my eyes anymore.

DR. GUTSCHY

Why?

MARIA

Because I knew it was you.

DR. GUTSCHY

(carefully)

Who? Your father?

MARIA

No. You.

DR. GUTSCHY

That's OK. It just means you're a healthy woman.

MARIA

But I don't like you at all!

Dr. Gutschy, with an expressionless face, bends down and begins to collect the glass shards.

MARIA (CONT'D)

(submissive)

I'm sorry. I lied...to see how you would react. You see, I'm wicked.

DR. GUTSCHY

You're not. You're just testing me, to see if I'll hurt you when I get angry.

Dr. Gutschy continues to pick up the glass. Maria leans down and silently picks up the shards with him.

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / PARK - DAY

Maria has taken Dr. Gutschy's arm, and they walk under the umbrella he carries. The sky resembles a concrete dome, but the rain isn't heavy, just drizzling.

DR. GUTSCHY

You have trouble assessing what's your responsibility and what's someone else's. Even when something obviously is not yours.

Dr. Gutschy glances at Maria, with some intention.

MARIA

In the end, everything is our responsibility, even if we get struck by lightning. We shouldn't have gone out in the rain.

DR. GUTSCHY

But there are natural laws we can't do anything about.

(carefully)

As a woman, you know what I mean.

Maria just nods and falls silent.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)

It's easier for us humans to think that we caused some tragic event rather than accept it. It comforts us to feel that we have control over events, but we usually don't.

Maria stops. She looks Dr. Gutschy in the eye.

MARIA

I had a greater influence on my tragic event than you think.

Dr. Gutschy is seriously concerned about how the conversation might end, but he successfully hides it.

Neither birds nor people can be heard, only the gentle patter of rain. Maria looks out at the lake where wild goose with its young hides in the bushes on its bank.

MARIA (CONT'D)

From the moment they placed him on my chest, all blue and wooden... wrinkled like an old doll...

DR. GUTSCHY

Wasn't he stillborn?

MARIA

(nods)

They thought he might come to life if he heard my heartbeat. So he lay on me... it seemed like hours.

Maria is unusually calm, determined to face herself.

MARIA (CONT'D)

When I got home, I thought Matray would be the husband, I'd seen glimpses of tenderness, caring...

(takes a deep breath)

I thought he is just a man burdened with too responsibilities, growing up without a father.. But, I've just imagined kindness in him.. There was only a hatred.

DR. GUTSCHY

For you?.. Why?

MARIA

The doctor told him I was too thin and that's why I'd given birth to a stillborn son.

DR. GUTSCHY

Why didn't you eat during the pregnancy?

MARIA

I wasn't hungry. Since I came to that house, he measured the thickness of my bread slice with a ruler. So, I've got used to small portions of food.

Dr. Gutschy knows he must be empathetic but firm to her.

DR. GUTSCHY

You knew you had to eat, for baby too.

MARIA

(nods she knew)

But I didn't want to.

Dr. Gutschy tries to understand without interfering.

MARIA (CONT'D)

My son couldn't hear my heartbeat because it wasn't beating for him.

(coldly)

(MORE)

MARIA (CONT'D)

He came into this world, and I didn't want him to live. I didn't want him at all.

Dr. Gutschy feels deeply sorry for her, but is on a mission.

MARIA (CONT'D)

I told you I was weak and wicked, you didn't believe me.

DR. GUTSCHY

Why didn't you want your baby?

MARIA

I'm telling you I'm a monster! Because I'm the twisted spawn of Satan!

Maria becomes consumed by self-destructive rage and begins to scratch herself.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Millions of women have children with husbands who hate them, even beat them! Only I won't! I'm wicked!

Dr. Gutschy holds her hands firmly to stop her from scratching.

DR. GUTSCHY

Why?!

MARIA

(screams in anger)

It's not natural for a woman not to want a child!

Dr. Gutschy breathes a sigh of relief, as he is finally on the right track.

DR. GUTSCHY

Not true. Many women who've been raped don't want to have children conceived that way.

Maria is surprised and calms down for a moment.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)

Also, many women don't want to have children with their husbands, but they do what is expected of them.

(he takes her hands into his)

Perhaps you would want to have a child with someone else.

Maria stares at him intently.

DR. GUTSCHY (CONT'D)

And if you don't want to be a mother at all, so what? I don't want to be a father, but I don't feel guilty about it.

(softly)

If I've learned anything in this profession, it's that we're pressured by social norms, and some of them work against us, they are even inhumane.

(even more gently)

You, Maria, are not to blame for being sold to a man who starves you.

Maria's face begins to contort in a voiceless scream. Dr. Gutschy just takes her hand to prevent her from falling.

Then she lets out a scream. That scream tears through the air like thunder and, as if she can really control nature, the clouds part in a thin gap.

Dr. Gutschy lets Maria scream at the sky, giving her the security that he is with her and waiting for her to calm down.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / PROFESSOR'S OFFICE - DAY

It's morning. Maria, in hospital clothes, stands with Dr. Gutschy in front of the Old Psychiatrist who is examining documents.

OLD PSYCHIATRIST

You wrote - "her brain is sane."

(suspiciously)

You've made this conclusion after only a month of therapy?

DR. GUTSCHY

I followed your instructions for an individual approach to the patient - more baths, less electricity.

Maria has to bite her lip not to laugh.

OLD PSYCHIATRIST

(remains suspicious)

How do you know it's not just a long lucida intervalla?

DR. GUTSCHY
 I don't. But, I think she's young and
 she should return to her marital
 duties as soon as possible.

The old psychiatrist nods in agreement. He addresses Maria, but
 doesn't look at her, instead he flips through her chart.

OLD PSYCHIATRIST
 (trick question)
 And you, do you intend to continue
 writing for newspapers?

MARIA
 I have to. My husband doesn't earn
 enough.

Dr. Gutschy clenches his lips in distress.

OLD PSYCHIATRIST
 (slyly)
 WHAT will you write about?

MARIA
 About "strukli".
 (a beat)
 For the section on regional recipes.

The old psychiatrist looks at her, not convinced at all, but he
 signs the release form. Dr. Gutschy is relieved.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / DR. GUTSCHY'S OFFICE / CORRIDOR - DAY

Maria is now in the dress she had arrived in. She has finished
 her tea, it's time to go. Dr Gutschy is escorting her out of the
 room. She has nothing but the release form in her hands.

DR. GUTSCHY
 Why you don't write stories, why you
 have to write about politics.

MARIA
 Politics is also about making up
 stories. Most of them are dangerous
 narratives that govern our lives as we
 are puppets in a freak show. Well, I
 want to fight them with truth!

DR. GUTSCHY
 But you have to be aware of the
 limitations of our society. First
 of all, you need to make peace with
 your husband.

She is overly optimistic, waving with a letter as a trophy.

MARIA

My mom will support me when she reads
your letter. And dad will talk to
Matray, like he should have done a
long time ago.

They reach the door. Dr. Gutschy is not convinced she fully
understands what is at stake.

DR. GUTSCHY

Maria. If you end up in the
hospital again, you'll never get
out.

Maria is taken aback, but she hears him. She fidgets with the
letter in her hands. He takes her hands to calm her down.

MARIA

(joking but sorrow)
I'll stop by for a tea, sometimes.

Dr. Gutschy doesn't want his emotions to get the better of him,
so he gently pushes her away.

DR. GUTSCHY

Your mother has come for you. Hurry
up, don't keep her waiting.

Maria is surprised. Then she clicks with joy.

MARIA

Mom?!!

EXT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / FRONT COURTYARD - DAY

Overjoyed, Maria exits the hospital, but, outside - Marta is
waiting for her. Maria feels a pain in her stomach, and bends.

Marta waves to her. Maria tries to hide her disappointment. By
the time she gets to Marta, she manages it mostly. But Marta is
perceptive. She hugs Maria tightly.

MARTA

You've lost weight! We'll fatten you
up like a piggy!

Maria smiles, her eyes full of tears. Marta understands
everything, but doesn't allow Maria to have an emotional
breakdown.

MARTA (CONT'D)

Look, I've put some cheese here..

Marta gives Maria her bag with her things.

MARIA

My bag?!

MARTA

Some bearded woman at Jagerhorn gave
it to me.

Maria pulls out "Rauch's file" from the bag. She opens it in disbelief and sees torn pieces of paper - the joy on Maria's face is overwhelming. And, she's determined.

MARIA(CONT'D)

We need to go to the post office
before it closes!

Maria runs toward the carriage. Confused Marta hurries after her into the carriage.

INT. MENTAL HOSPITAL / DR. GUTSCHY'S OFFICE / EXT. MENTAL
HOSPITAL / FRONT COURTYARD - DAY

Dr. Gutschy watches through the window as the carriage drives away, his face showing no emotions. He drinks his tea and puts the cup down on a saucer. But, the cup starts to clinks loudly as he watches the carriage.

INT. MAIN POST OFFICE / ZAGREB - DAY

Maria and Marta wait in line at the post office. As Maria puts torn pieces of paper into an envelope, we see the title: EGY PERCZ.

MARIA

When I tell my mom why I ran away from
him, she'll forgive me.

MARTA

She knows everything.

MARIA

(like she didn't hear)
...she knows how terrible it is to
live in an unhappy marriage.

MARTA

Don't go home yet. Wait until Josipa
calms down.

Maria stubbornly doesn't understand. She looks at her questioningly, frowning.

MARIA

Where am I supposed to go then? To Matray?

MARTA

(with difficulty)
She forbade you to come home.

MARIA

Who? My mom? Forbade me?
(a beat)
Dad? What did he say?

MARTA

He slapped her. Then he fell silent.

MARIA

As always.

Maria hands the envelope to the POSTAL WORKER at the counter. The address on the envelope reads BUDAPEST TAGBLATT, BUDAPEST.

Maria turns to Marta with a realisation.

MARIA (CONT'D)

She wants to force me to go back to Matray. But I'm not. Not ever.

Marta nods as she leads Maria out of the post office.

MARTA

You just need time to think it over.

EXT. MARTA'S RELATIVE'S APARTMENT / BUILDING - DAY

Maria and Marta approach the entrance to a building. Marta is trying to cheer her up, again.

MARTA

There's a young actress living with my cousin. You won't be alone.

Maria hesitates to enter the building. She is desperate.

MARTA (CONT'D)

She came back from Vienna, divorced from a famous architect.

Marta's heart is breaking while she hugs Maria who sinks into that embrace. Marta quietly sings a beautiful lullaby.

MARTA (CONT'D)
 "I think of you when the dawn breaks"

The song is carried over to the next scenes.

INT. MARTA'S RELATIVE'S APARTMENT - DAY (MUTE)

In a modest working-class apartment, Marta says goodbye to her COUSIN (45) while Maria stands sadly with her bag.

MARTA (V.O.)
 "I think of you when the day
 awakens"

JUMP CUT TO:

Maria hands a beautiful necklace to Marta's COUSIN for a rent.

MARTA (V.O.)
 "I think of you when every being
 quietly prepares to sleep."

JUMP CUT TO:

Marta and Maria hug at the door, and Marta leaves.

MARTA (V.O.)
 "I love you, my gold, you are my whole
 happiness in this world..."

JUMP CUT TO:

Martina's Cousin leads Maria to the door of Irma's room.

INT. MARTA'S RELATIVE'S APARTMENT / IRMA'S ROOM - DAY

Maria enters the room and sees IRMA POLAK (23) standing next to an open window, blowing cigarette smoke out. Irma looks Maria up and down curiously. Then smiles broadly.

IRMA
 Welcome! I am Irma. Irma Polak. The
 future star of Croatian theater.

Irma's warmth makes Maria feel better, like a balm on an open wound that pulls her out of her stupor. Irma points to the neatly made bed. *Irma often uses many German words.*

IRMA (CONT'D)
 This is your bed!

Maria places her bag on the bed.

MARIA

I am Maria.

IRMA

She doesn't let me smoke inside, like,
it bothers her. It bothers me too, so
what.

Irma puts out her cigarette on the windowsill.

IRMA (CONT'D)

We don't have much time, rehearsal is
in half an hour.

Maria doesn't understand what Irma is talking about.

IRMA (CONT'D)

At the theater. Meine freund is
directing, actually he's not a friend,
but he will be soon, verstehst du?
(she laughs obscenely) And I want to
act in his next play, so I'm going to
seduce him. And you're coming with me.

MARIA

To the rehearsal?

IRMA

Hmm, as I see...
(pointing to Maria's bag)
you don't have any extra kleiden.

Irma opens her closet full of dresses.

IRMA (CONT'D)

But I do!

From the gallery of dresses and hats, Irma chooses one and
throws it to Maria, who catches it.

IRMA (CONT'D)

You won't sit here alone in the
dark!

(she grins)

Take off your rags! Hurry up!

Maria is confused while holding the dress in front of this
hurricane of a woman, and starts undressing because you don't
contradict a hurricane.

EXT. NATIONAL THEATRE / ENTRANCE - NIGHT.

Maria and Irma run into the theater through the backstage entrance for actors. Both are fashionably, but moderately, dressed.

INT. NATIONAL THEATRE / HALLWAY - NIGHT

Maria and Irma walk down a dark hallway toward the theater. Irma takes off her coat along the way, as opposed to Maria who pulls the collar up to her chin. Irma gets it, laughs.

IRMA

You're such a sex-bomb in this
dress... Consider it meine Geschenk!

Maria is startled.

IRMA (CONT'D)

And it's only polite to open a present
upon receiving it!

Irma laughs and helps her to take off the coat while walking toward theatre, revealing Maria's plunging décolleté.

INT. NATIONAL THEATRE / THEATRE - NIGHT

They enter the dark audience area. On stage, three ACTORS and director JOSIP BACH (28) are rehearsing.

Maria is fascinated by this magical space. Irma smiles when she sees the expression on her face and grabs her hand.

Irma leads Maria and shows her to be quiet. They sit in the seats for an audience.

They sit behind SLAVKO VODVARKA (25), who turns around and smiles at Irma in greeting. Irma playfully sticks out her tongue at him. Slavko scrutinizes Maria with a seductive gaze. Maria doesn't notice him at all, she only sees the stage. Slavko asks Irma with his eyes "who is that" and she replies, threatening him with her finger. He smiles and turns toward the stage.

Irma points at the director sitting in the first row.

IRMA

Isn't he cute?

Maria doesn't hear her. She watches the rehearsal with big, childlike eyes.

INT. NATIONAL THEATRE / BACKSTAGE BAR - NIGHT

The cafe is smoky and full of loud actresses and actors. As soon as she enters with Maria, Irma is in her natural element and affects.

IRMA

Hey, gang, this is my roommate, Maria!

The actors collectively greet Maria.

ACTORS

Hi Maria! Hiiiiiii!

Maria smiles at them. Irma sits among the actors and chatters with one of them. Maria doesn't know what to do with herself or her coat.

SLAVKO

I suggest a trade in goods.

Slavko hands Maria a glass of alcohol and takes her coat with his other hand.

MARIA

Thank you, but I don't drink.

Slavko throws the coat on the backrest, stares fixedly at Maria and sticks to her side. Maria moves away slightly, feeling uncomfortable. Slavko clinks his glass with hers.

SLAVKO

Slavko Amadej Vodvarka, at your service.

Irma hears this and turns to Slavko.

IRMA

Save your charm!

(to Maria))

Slavko wrote this comedy, he writes satire for the famous magazine Thorn.

Maria nods, indicating that she knows about the Thorn.

SLAVKO

So, did you like it tonight?

MARIA

(politely)

It was nice.

SLAVKO

Just "nice"? Hm. How nice of you.

MARIA
 You're talented at mocking human
 weaknesses.

SLAVKO
 (roguishly)
 Humani nihil a me alienum puto..

Maria looks at this bug who puts her on some kind of test by speaking Latin with restrained contempt and yawns.

IRMA
 And nothing about women is even
 less alien to you! Leave her be!
 (to Maria, seeing Bach)
 Here he comes!

Behind Maria comes JOSIP BACH (23).

BACH
 (to the actors)
 You were great! Ex- cel- lent!
 Freudenreich, you're still overacting
 a bit, but it'll be good.
 (sees Maria))
 Maria?

MARIA
 Josip Bach!

Bach warmly hugs Maria. Then he steps back and looks at her.

BACH
 You're a grown woman!

SLAVKO
 And such a smoking one!

And he drinks up. Maria rolls her eyes "what a annoying jerk".

MARIA
 You told me I had to grow up fast so
 we could work on the show together!

Both of them laugh at it as a nice memory. Irma is not jealous but she doesn't want to be in the background when Bach is around.

IRMA
 We watched the play! You set it up
 brilliantly!

Bach doesn't pay attention to Irma, he hugs Maria in a friendly way and addresses everyone.

BACH

Maria acted in the drama group I led
in school of the Merciful Sisters.

Everyone is surprised, especially Slavko.

SLAVKO

(to Maria, lasciviously)
Oh! I hope you kept your uniform.

MARIA

(to Slavko, retorts)
I did, and the whip for penance!

Slavko smiles, he finds her very intriguing.

BACH

Maria wrote one-act plays too.

Slavko looks at Maria with different eyes and interest.

BACH (CONT'D)

(to Slavko)
Don't worry, you're not competitors.
She likes patriotic melodramas.

Bach's tone doesn't sit well with Maria, so she checks.

MARIA

Were they bad?

BACH

Not at all! For a teenage girl.
Still, it was just pathetic scribbling
on paper.

Maria's smile freezes. Slavko notices it.

BACH (CONT'D)

(to everyone)
I remember she signed one of them with
- Zagorka.

Bach doesn't aim to offend, but he feels threatened by her talent. The actors laugh only out of courtesy to their director. However, Maria's face stiffens, and Slavko sympathizes with her.

SLAVKO

If you were a better teacher, she
would have written better. She
obviously had talent.

Bach looks at Slavko in surprise, who looks at him back, challengingly.

IRMA

Bach didn't mean anything bad, nicht war? And you don't have to defend her, Slavko, she has a husband for that.

Maria is shocked by Irma's words, and Slavko is also surprised.

SLAVKO

(to Maria, sourly)
The lady is married? Cheers to that!

Slavko takes Maria's drink and drinks it all at once.

Maria feels betrayed by Irma, but Irma is already focused on Bach.

SLAVKO (CONT'D)

Married, so what? It's nothing to be ashamed of.

MARIA

I'm not, but she should be!

Maria is hurt and grabs her coat and leaves the bar. Irma doesn't even notice, obsessed with Bach.

Slavko watches Maria leave, feeling sorry that she's going.

EXT. MARTA'S RELATIVE'S APARTMENT BUILDING / ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Maria arrives outside the building where she currently lives.

IRMA

Maria! Maria, stop!

Maria turns around and sees Irma running towards her.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Why are you upset?

MARIA

I don't want people gossiping about my personal life!

IRMA

But, nobody cares! Everyone only thinks about themselves and doesn't care whether you're married or not!

(laughs and hugs Maria)
Seriously, I was just joking.

MARIA

Marriage isn't a joke. It's a cauldron
in which you are cooked alive!

IRMA

(laughs)
Like a frog? It doesn't have to be if
the woman knows how to jump out and in
it as she pleased..

Maria smiles reluctantly because Irma is tipsy and silly.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Take Slavko, for example. I mean,
litteraly, take him! Have fun!

Maria gives Irma a contemptuous look.

IRMA (CONT'D)

It's true, he's not handsome, but he's
got some moves! Women a-do-re him.
(winks meaningfully)
And for a goood reason, I hear.

MARIA

I'm not interested!

Maria enters the building, followed by Irma.

IRMA

A! Du bist eine Lesben, aren't you?
Just so you know, ich liebe Manner,
haarigen Manner..

Maria rolls her eyes and slams the door in Irma's face.

INT. MARTA'S RELATIVE'S APARTMENT / IRMA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Maria and Irma are getting ready for bed.

IRMA

You're too sensitive.

MARIA

That's what people say when they hurt
you and just don't care about it.

Irma gets tangled in her dress and falls on the bed. It's
comical, but Maria is serious.

MARIA (CONT'D)

What does that even mean, that I have
to put up with every fool at any cost?

IRMA

Verzeihung, aber Slavko isn't a fool.
 (amicably and firmly)
 You have the wrong attitude! With that
 stiff-necked attitude, life will be an
 barren agony without any enjoyment.

MARIA

I'm not interested in that kind of
 "enjoyment"!

IRMA

Then go back to the convent.

MARIA

Better there than in a brothel of the
 teather!

Irma looks at her in surprise.

MARIA (CONT'D)

Sorry...

IRMA

Anyway, you can't get divorced, you
 can only get annoyed.

MARIA

Why not? You got divorced.

They lie down in bed. Irma turns off the light.

IRMA

In Vienna, you can, but here. . .
 Did your husband beat you and break
 your ribs?

MARIA

No.

IRMA

Then you won't get a divorce. And even
 if you get it, everyone will blame
 you, not your husband. On top of that,
 you foolish girl don't want to live
 while you're young!

Maria angrily exhales, but not at Irma, at people.

IRMA (CONT'D)

Herzlich, don't be angry. I really
 like you.

Irma turns to the other side and falls asleep. Maria tries to fall asleep, but she can't. She gets up and takes out "Rauch's folder" from her bag.

INT. MARTA'S RELATIVE'S APARTMENT / IRMA'S ROOM - DAY

It's morning. Irma is snoring. Maria is dressed to go out. She takes a paper with the title ONE MOMENT (Egy Percz). Maria skims the text that is in Croatian. But, before she put it in "Rauch's folder", she defiantly squints at her signature: JURICA ZAGORSKI.

Then decisively crosses it out. She signs it with - ZAGORKA.

JUMP CUT TO:

EXT. CITY STREET / BUILDING OF OBZOR - DAY

Maria stands in front of the "Obzor" building and waits for a carriage to pass. She crosses the street determinedly.

INT. OBZOR / CORRIDOR - DAY

Maria walks down the hallway towards the editorial office, listening to the sound of typewriters from inside. She strides decisively towards the office.

INT. OBZOR / NEWSROOM - DAY

Maria walks past the desks and journalists. Everyone turns to look at her, confused. Maria approaches Pasaric's desk and puts her papers in front of him on his desk.

MARIA

I brought you the proof.

Pasaric frowns.

INT. OBZOR / NEWSROOM - DAY -- CONTINUED

Pasaric scans her text, the title ONE MOMENT (Egy Percz), then back to Maria, then back to the text.

MARIA

This is a translation of tomorrow's
Budapest Tagblatt...

PASARIC

(sneeringly)
You don't say.

MARIA

It's about how peasants get on the wrong trains because they don't know that "edj pert" means the train stays at the station for a moment.

Journalists gather around Pasaric's desk, curiously.

PASARIC

(stops her)

I know that. So. You've been translating articles published in Tagblatt and Hirlap in Croatian and sending them to us?

MARIA

Yes. Right after I sent the originals to them.

You can hear only the buzzing of brains trying to understand what she's saying.

PASARIC

How can that be?

MARIA

Well.. you can't publish articles that are critical of the government in Obzor because the censors would remove them. But I knew they couldn't touch articles that come from Hungarian newspapers, no matter how critical they are...

Pasaric nods automatically, but he's completely bewildered otherwise.

MARIA (CONT'D)

..so I came up with an idea to send you their translations by mail at the same time I send them to Tagblatt, so you can publish them as soon as possible.

(victoriously)

And it worked!

Maria points to her translation in front of Pasaric.

MARIA (CONT'D)

This one, I wanted to give you in person.

PASARIC

So..you know who Jurica Zagorski is?

This refusal to accept the obvious starts to annoy Maria.

MARIA

I AM Jurica Zagorski.
 (smiles, decisively)
 From today, I sign as Zagorka.

After the first encounter with an alien, denial is normal. Silence descended on the editorial office for several long seconds. Maria passes through the confused and angry faces of the journalists.

DEZMAN

(to Pasaric)
 Josip, she's been sent to destroy us.

Maria is confused.

DEMAN

If the word spreads that a woman is behind Zagorski - Obzor is dead.

PASARIC

For Khuen sympathisers, as well as for the opposition. For all subscribers!

The journalists murmur with a mixture of fear and anger.

Mazzura came out of his office. Several journalists saw him and immediately withdrew in fear.

Maria realizes that no one believes her. She begins to quote the article quickly and decisively, like a machine gun.

MARIA

"Our gentlemen in power compete in pleasing the Hungarians as much as possible, while the people suffer their oppression. But, gentlemen oppressors, beware! You might come to a station where the people will shout ONE MOMENT to your survival!"
 (points to the text)
 The thirtieth line.

Maria's confidence shook Pasaric. He helplessly sits down.

PASARIC

I'm gonna kill myself.

Maria puts on the most charming smile.

PASARIC (CONT'D)
I've never heard of any female
journalist in Europe..

He looks at the journalists if they have heard of such a creature, and they all dismiss this idea with disgust. But, Dezman is a scientist with a sharp mind.

DEZMAN
Why was Matray receiving the fee for
Zagorski, if you are him?

Maria realizes she's entering a trap and can't avoid it.

MARIA
He's my husband.

Maria is free-falling and grasping for air.

MARIA (CONT'D)
No editor can transfer the money to a
woman's name only to her husband's.

DEZMAN
A well-known Hungarian nationalist.

MARIA
He is, yes - but I'm not!

Maria takes a breath, aware that she can't lose her temper now.

MARIA (CONT'D)
It's been a great front for me to
write sharply as I want, and he doesn't
care as long as he gets my money.

PASARIC
Then he can come and testify that you
are Jurica Zagorski, right?

MARIA
He can't.
(correct herself)
He can, but he won't. We're not on
good terms.

"Click!" - the trap is closed.

Pasaric stands up and signals that the conversation is over.

PASARIC
I'll have to think about it. I'll let
you know.

MARIA

I can be useful as an editor for
Hungarian newspaper articles.

(earnestly)

I'll do anything, just let me work in
Obzor.

Her last words induce a picture the journalists don't like,
and they stirr in discomfort.

PASARIC

Please, leave now.

(points to the exit)

We'll let you know, either way.

MAZZURA

(roars)

No! We won't!!

Mazzura, walking tornado, is approaching.

INT. OBZOR / NEWSROOM - DAY -- CONTINUED

Mazzura pulls Maria by the collar and the arm towards the exit.
He is very tall, she is short, he almost carries her through the
editorial office. Journalists move out of his way.

MAZZURA

No woman is going to sit in Obzor
while I'm the director!

PASARIC

Shime, it's a woman!

The journalists are uncomfortable, but no one opposes the boss.
Maria collects herself from the first shock, pushes Mazzura away
and stands on her own, angry.

MARIA

Do you like to use violence against
someone weaker than you!?

The journalists are appalled - she crossed the line any of them
could ever tolerate - what's next, the right to an abortion? In
Mazzura, anger reaches boiling point.

When Maria turns to leave, he grabs her from behind under the
shoulder and lifts her up into the air...

EXT. CITY STREET / BUILDING OF OBZOR - DAY

Mazzura roughly drops, almost throws Maria onto the street in front of the entrance to Obzor.

MAZZURA

I don't know what your plan was, but
if you step through these doors again,
I'll kill you like a dog!

Maria gets up as quickly as she can. She is completely in shock.

She gathers her things from the floor and pieces of her dignity. Passers-by look at her, appalled, and avoid her.

Maria walks down the street, humiliated to the core. She angrily wipes away a tear and grits her teeth defiantly.

DISSOLVE INTO:

EXT. JURJEVSKA STREET / ZAGREB'S UPPER TOWN - NIGHT

A man in a coat hurries down the empty street, carrying a thick folder under his arm. He enters through the massive street doors, behind which we see a luxurious palace.

This is Josip Pasaric. As he enters, we read on the sign above the door "JURJEVSKA 5".

EXT./INT. STROSSMAYER PALACE / LOBBY - NIGHT

Pasaric hears footsteps approaching from inside. The door is opened by a SERVANT IN LIVERY (20). The man in the coat hands a letter to the Servant.

PASARIC

Good evening. For his eminence's eyes
only.

The servant nods. Before closing the door completely, a loud voice is heard from inside.

BISHOP

Josip! Is that you?!

INT. STROSSMAYER PALACE / LOBBY - NIGHT

The servant closes the door behind Pasaric, who looks around the foyer: an architecturally ornate, baroque foyer signaling that the owner is not at all ascetic.

Actually, a huge portrait on the wall shows a Catholic Bishop in his 40s in a luxurious red bishop's dress.

BISHOP
My dear Josip!

BISHOP JOSIP J. STROSSMAYER (90), the man in the portrait, approaches him in pajamas, slippers and with a nightcap on his head. But, he's a man who looks powerful without any signs of power on himself.

BISHOP (CONT'D)
What trouble brings you here at this hour?

The bishop warmly shakes Pasaric's hand, like an old friend.

PASARIC
A woman, Your Excellency.

The bishop brightens up like a true Slavonian who has caught a whiff of bacon.

BISHOP
Oh! Women are my favorite kind of trouble!

Pasaric smiles at the lively bishop, despite his concern. The bishop takes him under the arm and they head towards the room, while the servant starts to extinguish oil lamps in the lobby.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. JURJEVSKA STREET / ZAGREB'S UPPER TOWN - NIGHT

The foyer light is now as dim as that on the empty street. Lights are turned off in the windows of the upper town buildings. Somewhere in the distance, a coachman's shout of a warning is heard, long "HO-OAH!"

FADE TO BLACK.

END OF THE EPISODE.