

# **White Feather**

## **Maria Wolska**

**Développé by Pascal Bensoussan and Eric Le Nabour**

**A series of 13-episode x 52-minutes films depicting the adventures and extraordinary destiny of a Polish woman, Maria Wolska, a rebellious character who, during the first half of the 20th century, will fight injustice and struggle for freedoms in Poland, France, Russia and Canada until the end of her life.**

**Maria will successively participate in Poland alongside her father in an active resistance against the tsarist regime, discover the anarchist and revolutionary movements in France, then back in Poland, she will be arrested and deported to a katorga in Siberia.**

**She managed to escape to Canada by crossing the Behring Strait in the middle of winter: Maria, now as White Feather, gathered by a Yukon Indian tribe, was able to save her clan, which was the object of humiliation on the part of Canadians and the Mounted Police, marry her leader, Black Eagle with whom she will have three children.**

**Returning to Poland with his last son, Gray Wolf, who is to be interned in an indigenous boarding school and to see his seriously ill father, they will undergo the Nazi invasion and engage in Polish resistance. At the Soviet liberation, they are arrested and manage to escape from communist Poland to find and meet their Indian family where Maria devotes herself passionately to the defense of the Indigenous Peoples by campaigning for the liberation and independence of the Indians before being beaten to death by Canadian thugs in the service of the Mounted Police.**

# **Maria Wolska**

## **White feather**

**A series of 13 episodes x 52 minutes developed by  
Pascal Bensoussan & Eric Le Nabour**

**Poland, France, Russia: 1908 - 1916.** A daughter of a landowner, a fierce supporter of Poland's independence, Maria, an adolescent, already displays a rebellious and voluntary character. Involved at an early age in the fight against the tsarist yoke and suspected by Wladimir, a young Russian officer fallen in love under her spell, she must flee her country for France.

Sent to take refuge in Paris, she falls head over heels in love with Nicolas, a young student with an exacerbated revolutionary romanticism who introduces her to revolutionary doctrines, makes her meet Lenin and his mistress, Inès Armand, before returning to Poland to fight, within of an anarchist movement, against Russian oppression.

Arrested by Wladimir, who became an agent of the Okhrana, they were separated and deported to Siberia. After a long journey, Maria arrives, exhausted and hungry in a katorga, near the Arctic Circle. She finds Nicolas with whom she regains hope and will make plans to escape. Responsible for teaching Russian to the Chukchi to try to settle them, she will learn their language, their habits and above all the survival techniques of these nomadic peoples. But everything changes, the day before the departure: Nicolas is killed by a group of drunken prisoners trying to rape her. Collapsed but decided, Maria managed to escape in the middle of winter through the Behring Strait and to reach Canada.

**Canada: 1916 - 1938.** Half-unconscious in a hut along the Yukon River in the far north of Canada, she is rescued by the leader of a hunting clan Hän, Black Eagle, who brings her back to his camp. Thanks to his protection and the complicity of other women, Maria, as White Feather, is gradually adopted by the clan. For her, a new tormented life begins in a small Indian community where she founds her own family by marrying Black Eagle which she will have three children.

White Feather will, on several occasions, intervene and help Black Eagle to protect the tribe from all forms of humiliation and repression on the part of the Canadian Government supported by the Mounted Police. They have to fight fiercely to try to keep their land and their freedoms and always run away to escape "Red Viper", Chief of the Mounties and Daniel Sullivan's damned soul, the prospector who is willing to pay debts of the Black Eagle clan to own Maria.

Maria, or rather "White Feather" now, has not forgotten her homeland. Living away from "civilization", hunted down by the North West Mounted Police with her family, when she finally learns that Poland has become free again and that her father is about to die, she decides to return in Europe with her last son, Gray Wolf, to save him from being enclosed in an Indian Residencial School.

**Poland: 1938 - 1958.** Wishing to regain her roots, Maria returns to the family domain. But Gray Wolf, completely traumatized by the crossing of the Atlantic and this new life so different from his usual world, refuses to adapt and falls into depression.

Rejected by her family, Maria decides to return to Canada but Poland is caught in the turmoil of World War II. Quickly arrested by the Germans who mistook him for a Soviet spy, Gray Wolf managed to escape the convoy and engage with a small band of partisans led by Jacek Kromski in the fight against German Nazis. He then finds the forest, the nature and an outlet for the hatred that he dedicates to the white civilization through the Nazis. Wild and lonely, only concerned about his survival, Gray Wolf, nicknamed "Tatar" by his "green" companions, will lead a ruthless fight against the Germans, not hesitating to use his knife or a bow.

In the eyes of Maria who joined them, the "Greens" of the AK, loyal to the London exile government, suffer from amateurism and are more concerned about their survival than the armed struggle. She finds their operations haphazard, improvised and likely to put civilian populations in danger. She soon wins the trust of Jacek with whom she will experience a tumultuous "love of war" and quickly impose herself as his right arm. Despite ideological dissensions and rivalries exacerbated by Anatol Rozanski, an uncompromising misogynist Communist, Maria will coordinate the resistance movements of the region, get in touch with London Headquarters by developing an original system of code and provide information on the installation of a base for mounting and testing a secret weapon. At the head of her group of partisans, she will succeed in recovering from the Germans parts of a V2 engine and send them to London for analysis.

Her group will participate in the Warsaw insurrection where Jacek is brutally murdered by the SS. On the other side of the Vistula, she tries to get the intervention of the Red Army and faces Wladimir who confirms to her that he has orders not to intervene and let the Germans ... The victory of 1945 will not bring her the hoped happiness. Imprisoned with Gray Wolf by the Soviets, they must undergo, like many of their comrades in the Armia Krajowa, the interrogations and tortures by Anatol Rozanski before they can regain their freedom.

**Canada 1958 - 1960.** Disappointed, back from everything, Maria managed to be hired with Gray Wolf on the sailing staff of the new Compagnie National Maritime and to flee during the stopover of Montreal to try to regain his place within of his Indian family.

But over there, everything has changed. Served, the Hän - her tribe - wage a last fight for the honor of their people and for the children, the first victims of the assimilation policy by the Canadian government. It is here that Maria will also wage her ultimate fight, that of a woman who has never resigned herself to injustice and oppression.

A woman who, more than the revolution, more than the adventure yet, will have put in her tumultuous life, the love of life and men above all. With her daughter, Moonbeam, they campaign for the liberation and independence of

Native Peoples: during a demonstration against the sterilization of children in residential schools and against the various sexual abuse that they must undergo, Canadian "thugs", under the watchful eye of the Mounties, burst into the car and scatter the demonstration with truncheons. Injured in the head, Maria and Moonbeam are embarked by a vehicle of the Royal Police and found later in a deserted street. Transported to the hospital, Maria will not survive.

While all her family is gathered at her bedside, a Polish diplomat accompanied by the Mounties burst into the room to expel Gray Wolf out of Canada. He is accused of being a communist agitator who has been sent to Canada to foment riots among the Indigenous Peoples ...!

OOO

OO

O

# **Maria Wolska - White Feather**

## **Characters**

### **Maria Wolska (White Feather)**

Maria, heroine and central character around whom the whole structure of the story is organized, is fifteen years old at the beginning of the series. For Maria, the paternal model is primordial: youngest daughter of Jan Wolski, a landlord engaged in the fight against Russian oppression, she acts with imitation to win the love of her father and plays his weakness towards her to get what she desires but also to compensate for her conflictual relations with her mother, Augusta, and her three sisters with whom she struggles to understand. In reality, she defines herself as much by opposing the feminine elements of her family as by associating herself with her father, of whom she is the favorite.

She is a young teenager, with long blond hair, blue eyes and a pale complexion. Rebellious, reckless, brave, nonconformist (episode 1), she is somewhat carefree. During the first episodes, in Poland and Paris, her notion of freedom is very abstract, very intellectual, perfectly idealistic. Her stay in France, where she discovers love and the school of the revolution, structures her rebellion intellectually but makes her rigid and ready at all ends. Her deportation to Siberia and her struggle to survive will put into perspective her status as a heroine and a fighter.

Maturity makes her a pretty woman, proud, provocative, but eager to seduce as much by her beauty as by her sense of humor or her intelligence (episode 2). She has a strong personality. She knows how to refuse to Vladimir (episode 1) or to live a romantic passion with Nicolas (episodes 2 to 4). In Canada, her encounter with Black Eagle and his clan signifies her maturity (episode 5) and changes her from idealism to more concrete realities. She will have three children and will experience an almost normal family life, without it ever affecting her passionate and stubborn nature. She does not hesitate, in fact, to leave her family to return to her country (episode 8) where her certainties will be undermined because of the horrors of war and where she will experience a tumultuous love affair with Jacek Kromski with the war raging behind them.

Her main character trait is her strong will, which does not go without certain excesses that can sometimes harm her. Indeed, her obstinate and stubborn behavior can cause her to make dangerous choices or behave in a suicidal manner. Courageous, but impulsive, she is capable of making decisions that are as daring as they are imprudent. She is as faithful to her convictions as she is to her love, she does not compromise and never yields,

even when tortured. Her Slavic heritage means she jumps easily from laughter to tears, but she knows how to keep true to her goal, whatever happens.

She is a complex and explosive mixture of passion and tenderness, uncompromising and yet generous. For example, she has a disinterested but devoted affection to Tadeusz Kruczek, the old Jewish scholar whom she met in the Siberian katorga (episode 4). She also establishes friendly relations with the Abbott family, which pushes her into a world radically different from her own (episode 5).

In the end, Maria's tenacity does not make her a monolithic woman, quite the contrary. Her resources never seem to be exhausted. At the end (episode 13), as she leads the last battle of an exceptionally rich life, she is still trying to strengthen the bonds between her family, so that once she is gone, they will be stronger for the challenges that await them. One can also see, in this last gesture, the ultimate message from Maria. Just as her life can be regarded as a metaphor for the cornerstone on which she would like to see a new humanity built.

### **The Maria Family**

**Jan Wolski**, the father, is a complex individual. He is both a nobleman and an industrialist, attached to traditions but also looking towards the future. He is affectionate, a good husband and a good father, but he is also a secretive man, with two faces: a businessman by day and a revolutionary activist at night. His life and ideals contradict him, condemning him to a delicate balance that leads Maria to suspect that he is hiding difficult issues (episode 1)

**Augusta**, the mother, is more transparent. Unaware of her husband's clandestine activities, she reigns over the estate of Zaklikow and wants to control her "little world" with unflinching rigor. Maria's spontaneous nature exasperates her, her daughter does not comply with her "imposed framework". So, she is constantly on Maria's back, jealous of Jan's undivided affection.

**The three sisters** (Danuta, Anna, Ewelina) are obviously wiser than Maria and they are the product of a maternal education. They dismiss Maria as having no future and take every opportunity to make her feel unworthy. Between the four sisters, or rather between the two clans (Maria and Jan on one side, Augusta and her daughters on the other), the quarrels are incessant. Hence the indifferent attitude of Maria's sisters (episode 8) and the shift to them being suddenly interested (episode 11).

### **Nicholas Pelerin**

Nicholas is a young Frenchman whose enthusiasm is combined with an exacerbated revolutionary romanticism. In love with Maria, he will become the great passion of her youth.

He is the image of a seducer : feverish, eager, generous and a smooth talker. He is above all an idealist, an anarchist who defines himself as a sworn enemy of the tsarist regime.

He wants to change the world and is only interested in his own revolutionary activities. For Maria, he is a "replica" of what Jan Wolski was like when he was younger.

But Nicholas is gradually gaining depth and maturity. For him, the Revolution has become the center of his life. So, he switches imperceptibly from theory to practice, dragging Maria into a spiral of violence that will lead them both to the Katorga (episodes 3 and 4).

His death is a terrible blow to Maria and it coincides with her escape to Canada and the beginning of a second extra-European life.

### **Black Eagle**

**Black Eagle** is an American Indian in the most mythological sense : he is a tribal leader : loyal, courageous, respectful of his commitments, and in love with his freedom. He lives to be at one with nature. His playground - from the Yukon to Alaska - is also the land of his ancestors. He is in love with the image of Maria : pure and disinterested. He admires her as much as he likes or desires her. She become the woman he has chosen before his love of nature and in the presence of his people. He has the strongest feeling of respect for her. That is why, while deeply saddened by her choice, he lets her go to Poland (episode 8) and merely hopes for her return.

On Maria's return, twenty years have passed and alas (episode 13) the man has changed. Black Eagle had to abandon his forests, his lakes, his mountains, and his arid and snowy lands. He is no more than a caricature of the man she had known. He is a worn but still a proud man who is content to survive the invasion of modernity, but we suspect that the hope of seeing his wife one day was not completely foreign to his last hopes of a strong resistance. Maria, at the end of his life, nevertheless manages to restore some of his lost dignity. Black Eagle rediscovers himself and will resume the fight with his children.

### **Grey Wolf**

Maria's younger son, Gray Wolf is the other central character in the story. Like his father, he is a young American Indian, respectful of his family and the traditions of his people. He lives deep in nature until he is thirteen, fishing and hunting for himself. He has always been free to come and go and ignores everything related to "civilization".

His departure for Poland in the company of Maria (episode 8) is for him a real uprooting. His confinement in a college is torture. Not only does he not understand what is happening to him, but he refuses to adapt. At this stage in history, his main trait, inherited in part from his mother - resistance to oppression - emerges painfully. Maria fails to convince him to relax his

behavior and must promise to bring him back to Canada in order to coax him out of his silence.

Any return to Canada becomes impossible because of the war, so Gray Wolf finds a way out by engaging with the Polish resistance. Then he finds the forest, nature, and an outlet for the hatred he has against the civilization of whites, caused by the Nazis. In this respect, he is less concerned "ideologically" than his mother. It is the instinct of survival which, in him, takes precedence. Moreover, in the "Greens", a group of supporters he joins, he is nicknamed "the Tatar" and remains a loner (episode 9).

Because of his very peculiar character, tensions sometimes arise between Maria and her son. Not only in her attempts to adapt to Polish life, but also when Maria throws herself into the arms of Jacek Kromski (episode 10). Gray Wolf reproaches his mother for having abandoned her "real family" in Canada. Nevertheless he and Maria come together to defend the American Indians' cause at all costs (episode 13).

### **Black Bear and Moonbeam**

Maria and Black Eagle's other two children play a secondary role. They appear only in episodes 6, 7, 10 and 13.

**Black Bear** is the eldest son. Like Gray Wolf, he is a young American Indian born into old traditions, a "runner of the woods". But, he is raised in accordance with the local culture, in the same way as the other children of the clan, without any special privilege other than his status as "first son". He is, obviously, indulged less than Gray Wolf and less pampered by Maria. The departure of his mother for Poland creates a sense of radical abandonment that makes him more detached from the family than Gray Wolf and Ray of the Moon will ever be. Hence, this passivity, which can be seen in the last episode. Black Bear, like his father, becomes embittered and disillusioned, but for more personal reasons.

**Moonbeam**, plays a real role only in the final episode. Unlike her father and elder brother, she is cheerful, stubborn and motivated. Her commitment to abused American Indian children is "pure and determined", but we can also guess that she conceals a wound identical to that of Black Bear : she was also separated too soon from her mother, a lack of maternal love that Maria will try to compensate for in the later years of her Canadian existence.

### **Jacek Kromski**

A military man, Jacek is a born fighter, a man who believes in his country, in his future and lives with hatred for the Nazi invaders. He is a leader of men, and courageous but he cannot stand his own authority being questioned. This can be seen when he comes up against Gray Wolf's free spirit (episodes 9 and 10) when he criticizes his careless initiatives. The momentary departure of Gray Wolf is therefore not displeasing to him, since it allows him to regain control of the group.



The arrival of Maria however changes the situation. Being suspicious at first, he finally acknowledges her wrongs towards Gray Wolf and accepts Maria before falling in love with her.

This feeling, unlike Nicolas' passion or the strong and stable love of Black Eagle, is a "love made in war", solid but certainly closely linked to events that, more than anything else, unite this couple thrown together by circumstance.

The death of Jacek, when trying to save a woman from Nazi gunfire (episode 11), illustrates the main virtue which encompasses his personality : the meaning of the word sacrifice. While for Maria, the death of Jacek certainly represents a heartbreak, it is less painful, emotionally, than Nicholas' death.

### **Figures of "the friends", Figures of "the enemies"**

Among the secondary characters, we can distinguish friendly figures such as:

**Stefan Wilewski** : one of the students that she encounters in her young activist days, whose life Maria also saves. Stefan gives her his eternal gratitude for this act, but she will eventually have to shoot him to spare him a cruel fate (episode 3)

**Inès Armand**. She is, in a way, Maria's mentor. She is an experienced woman who guides Maria on the steep paths of revolutionary politics. She is also a friend and confidante. Maria vows her respect and affection to Ines (episodes 2 and 3)

**Tadeusz Kruczek**. An old Jewish scholar, who was deported to the Russian katorga, is her friend from the dark days. He plays the role of a substitute father or grandfather. Their friendship is symbiotic. Maria has absolute confidence in him. It is also Tadeusz who brings her into contact with the first population of the far north - the Tchouktches - that she will soon meet (episode 4)

**Jeanne Abbott**. From a «hired-help» relationship initially, Maria and Jeanne Abbott gradually slip into a friendship. It is thanks to Jeanne's confidence that Maria will understand the whites' vision of the American Indians (episode 5)

### **Among the enemy figures, four are particularly distinguished :**

**Vladimir**. A tsarist officer who falls in love with Maria (episode 1) and believes her promises. Having become an agent of the Okhrana, his hostility is then exercised against her. As she refuses to give herself to him in payment for her freedom (episode 3) he sends her to be deported. Even though many years have passed, he still treats her with contempt during the war, when they should be allies (episode 11)

**Daniel Sullivan.** The Canadian businessman who wants to own Maria and offers, in return, to pay off the debts of the Black Eagle clan. He will go so far as to threaten her, which will make Jeremy Abbott indignant (episode 5). He will also blackmail Jeanne Abbott to extract information on Maria and satisfy his revenge (episode 6)

**Roderick Jarvis.** "Red Viper" embodies the "talker", he has a hunter's desire to capture his prey. Jarvis does not ask questions, he is in the service of the government and obeys orders. His goal is to stop Black Eagle and Maria by all means necessary (episodes 6 and 7). It will require interventions against his men, to ensure that Maria can board the "Batory" at Halifax quay (episode 8)

**Anatol Rozanski.** Jacek's companion, is committed to the side of the "Greens", he symbolizes the uncompromising communist. The enemy of women in general, he hates Maria for her intelligence and ideological knowledge (episode 10). Opposed to her presence among the partisans, one guesses that he waits for the slightest occasion to harm her or to get rid of her. The opportunity is offered when Maria, imprisoned by the Russians, finds herself at the hand of an expert torturer from the Red Army (episode 12). Anatol, as head torturer, has his chance to exact his revenge.

000  
00  
0

# White Feather

Maria Wolska

written by Pascal Bensoussan and Eric Le Nabour

## 1° THE BEZDANY RAID (Poland: Lublin, Zaklikow Domain, 1908 to 1910)



Lublin, Poland, 1908. The city, crushed under the tsarist boot, is in the grip of a terrible violence. Students and workers, supporters of Poland's independence, are protesting against the repressive policies imposed on the country since the aborted 1905 Russian revolution.

From her room at the Nazareth Sisters College, Maria Wolska, a young girl with long blonde hair and blue eyes, watches the riots. She is only fifteen years old, but she already shares the anger that sets the street on fire. Suddenly, an ultimate charge of the Cossack cavalry carry the barricade up alongside the convent. It's carnage. The Cossacks swing their swords at students and attack without discrimination.



The street is red with blood, dozens of corpses are strewn across the ground.



Maria runs down the steps to reach the refectory, the wounded rioters will soon rush here, as the Sisters have given them shelter. But she has no time to offer help to the nuns. The Cossacks burst into the room and seize the survivors, ready to push them into the courtyard of the convent and shoot them. Courageously, Maria manages to save three students by hiding them in the cellar.

In the heat of the moment, one of the students, Stefan, gratefully asks her:



Stefan: *Why are you doing this?*

Maria: *For Poland!*

Then, after touching his cheek with her fingertips:

Maria: *And a little for you too...*

Stefan steals a kiss. Maria blushes, with pleasure.

In a few minutes, Maria has become the heroine of the college.

Not for her father, though. Jan Wolski, a nobleman who owns a flourishing textile factory, and fears retaliation by the authorities.

Jan: *I have learned what you did, Maria, you could have been killed. When will you understand that it is not enough to have the character to...*

Maria: *Would you have preferred that I let them die with my arms crossed?*

Jan decides to remove Maria from the school. She will return to live on the family estate of Zaklikow where she spent her childhood with her three sisters, their English governess and their French tutor. Due to her rebellious nature, Maria takes this precautionary measure as punishment. Especially since she does not get along with her mother, Augusta, nor with her three sisters who reproach her for her independence and her strong character.

As his favorite daughter and confidante, Jan seeks to calm her volcanic temperament. But it is in vain. Maria will do as she wishes. During a horse ride with her father, she confides her hopes and disgust at the occupation of her country. Jan listens attentively, when their conversation is abruptly interrupted by the arrival of a strange horseman dressed in black, Jan's face suddenly becomes serious. The two men retreat to talk quietly. Then, the rider leaves as mysteriously as he came, without so much as a glance towards the girl. Maria is intrigued. Would Jan hide anything from her?



Returning to Zaklikow, irritated by this incident, Maria again projects her anger towards her mother and her older sister, Danuta, who has no other worries than the ball that will be given soon for her birthday. Maria withdraws from her family life. At the ball, however, she meets a young attractive Russian officer, Vladimir. The latter, drunk, courts her, without giving her hope of anything more: he must soon return to St. Petersburg. Alcohol helps him to relax and he ends up confiding in her that he is part of the escort that will accompany the train which will bring the taxes that were collected in Poland back to Russia. Maria decides to keep this secret for herself.

A few days later, the man in black who Jan met in the forest, comes back to Zaklikow under the name of Jaroslaw Galinski. Jan looks worried and leaves a short while later with him. Suspecting serious trouble, Maria follows them to a hunting lodge where she surprises a clandestine meeting with members of a Polish Socialist Party called "Bojowki". They belong to the extreme wing of the party. They are the ones who are leading the military action against the Russian occupying forces.

Thus, an upset Maria, discovers the duality of her father : he is a nobleman and a peaceful businessman during the day, but in the shadow, he is an obstinate and resolute partisan of the Polish independence. The next day, proud of her father whom she thought of as was only worried about his textile factory, Maria decides to pass on the information collected from Vladimir. Jan's first reaction is blind rage, but then he ventures tenderly towards his daughter. Worried about her recklessness, Jan asks her to return to her studies and tries to dampen her enthusiasm.



The news of an attack on a train near Bezdany by Josef Pilsudski's "Bojowki" makes Maria understand how much her father bravely took part in the revolutionary process. Gravely wounded, he is brought back to Zaklikow by his comrades. Officially, Jan was injured in an accident on a machine at the factory. But Maria is not fooled and her admiration for her father doubles, with his refusal to play the hero and desire to keep her away from danger.

Maria is proud to have played a role in the operation that brought a real fortune to the "Bojowki", however, she becomes afraid when Vladimir asks to see her again. The young officer is savvy enough to make the link between his confidences and the attack on the convoy. Only Maria's young age makes him doubt that she was able to appreciate the importance of the information he entrusted to her. To talk to his superiors would, moreover, put himself in danger. Would they not accuse him of high treason?

Vladimir does not hide his feelings for the young girl, but also cannot help questioning her. When he discovers the mysterious "accident" that befell Jan Wolski, his suspicions only become stronger.

To counteract the curiosity of the young Russian and protect her father, Maria flirts with him and multiplies her promises of love. Promises she already knows that she cannot keep ...

Vladimir: *You have not told anyone what I told you about the convoy?*

Maria: *What convoy?*

Vladimir: *Don't be stupid!*

Maria: *But that's what women are, no, charming idiots?*

Maria is softer with him and tries to make Vladimir forget his suspicions.

Maria: *Girls have their secrets too, you know?*

Vladimir lets himself be moved:



Vladimir: *And what are yours?*

Maria (kissing him): *Do you really want to know?*

Feverish, Maria suddenly falls into the world of adults. The next day, Jan tells her that, for her safety, she will have to leave Poland.

Jan, an invalid, and Maria leave Zaklikow and their family in the direction of France, whose language she speaks almost fluently; in Paris, she will be entrusted to an old friend of Jan's, the painter Alfred Swieykowski.



July 1910 - Whilst in Krakow where they will take their train to France, Maria and Jan attend a concert given by Yan Paderewski in front of a jubilant crowd and he delivers a passionate speech which will become the gospel of the National Resurrection. A new future is opening up for Maria who is brutally being taken away from her own country.

## 2° THE BOHEME AND THE SCHOOL OF THE REVOLUTION (Paris, 1910 to 1912)

Paris, August 1910. Maria discovers a city that has been drowned by the great flood of that year. This vision of the "city of light" is particularly depressing for the young woman, anxious about an uncertain future and nostalgic for her native Poland. Fortunately for her, her foster family - the Swieykowskis - are naturally bohemian and carefree. Soon, Maria frequents Montparnasse and its picturesque fauna: Impressionist painters, aspiring writers, toxic journalists, prostitutes, mobsters, drug dealers...

In a few months, she becomes the icon of this little world where artists are more or less talented than each other and who, in the euphoria of alcohol, love, quarrel, punch, tear themselves apart, reconcile and perpetually recreate the world. She is pretty, proud, she has character, a sense of humor and she is provocative. In short, Maria is Slavish right to the tips of her nails. She knows how to play with her charm. Men surround her and worship her. Maria laughs and lets herself be courted, happy to find a little of this carelessness that has been lost in Poland.



From these "bistro sets", however, two more original figures emerge: the painter Amedeo Modigliani and his friend, Inès Armand. From the start, Maria is fascinated by Inès, her beauty, her intelligence, her determination, her plea for "free love and the right to be passionate". At 35, Inès has already had several lives. She has successively loved two brothers - Alexandre and Volodia Armand - rich heirs to a fortune in the textile industry built by one of Napoleon's officer and established in Moscow in 1812. She has five children.



She participated in the 1905 revolution in Russia, supported the Bolsheviks, was arrested twice by the Tsar's police before finally being banished north of Arkhangelsk, near the Arctic Circle. In the wake of Volodia's death, Inès Armand moved to Brussels to complete her law degree and now resides in Paris to write her thesis.

The two women become inseparable. Encouraged by Ines, Maria, for her part, begins studying natural sciences at the university. But one night she attends a piano recital given by Inès in her apartment at Parc Montsouris and meets a young French student, Nicolas Pèlerin.

It's love at first sight! Maria and Nicolas become lovers and live an intense and passionate life in Nicolas's small apartment, nestled under the roofs of Paris.

Under the young Frenchman's influence, Maria deserts the pursuit of science to learn law, economics and philosophy. Nicolas is a resolute opponent of the tsarist regime and meets with all kinds of anarchists : Bolsheviks, Russians, Polish, and Finnish, who share his cause. Maria discovers political activism through them, the warmth of shared convictions, the desire to sweep away the old order to create a new world. Her life is turned upside down. She feels that she is becoming a woman and a responsible adult.

From now on, she shares Nicolas's ideals blindly. Every week, she goes to Longjumeau to attend the political economics classes given by Ines to clandestine agents of the Bolshevik movement. There, she meets those who will initiate the 1917 Russian revolution : Zinoviev, Kamenev, and especially Lenin with whom Ines is the translator.



Maria is fascinated by Lenin who, she believes, is in love with Ines. She entrusts this information to Ines.



*Ines: Lenin lives only for the Revolution. In fact, he IS the revolution.*

*Maria: He loves you, I know it, I can read it in his eyes.*

*Ines (ironic): That's normal... At your age, love is more important than revolution.*

*Maria: So maybe I'm not made for revolution... Unless it's the revolution that's made for me.*

Maria throws herself headlong into political action. At night, she participates in clandestine meetings, drafts leaflets and feverishly helps to prepare revolutionary speeches.

One night while Nicolas is having a meeting at a café on La Glacière street, Maria spots police officers. Nicolas, who knows his group is supervised, then triggers a fight to escape them and finds refuge with Modigliani. Maria, who has burned the papers and taken paperwork from Nicolas's home, is arrested by security two days later. The building was under surveillance.

She is taken to the headquarters of the First Mobile Brigade and questioned by Commissioner Lepelletier.

Lepelletier: *What were you doing in the apartment?*

Maria: *I told you, I was burning old papers.*

Lepelletier: *Papers that supported the revolutionary projects of the Bolsheviks!...*

Maria: *Which proves that I do not have any interest in that cause... since I burned them!*

Lepelletier (disarmed): *Do you always have an answer for everything?...*

Maria: *That's exactly what Napoleon said to Maria Walewska!*

Charmed by her humorous demeanor and devastating blue eyes, Lepelletier releases her.

Some time later, Maria and Nicolas - both now on the run - meet again at Lenin's house. But, the police remains on their tail. As difficult as it is to make a decision, there is no time to hesitate : they must leave. Lenin decides to get closer to the Russian border by settling in Krakow, Maria and Nicolas decide to accompany him. This time, Maria returns to her homeland with a specific goal : to fight against the Russian occupiers. By her side, is Nicolas, with a love that lights up her life.

### **3° THE REVOLUTIONARY AVENGERS (Poland: Lodz, Krakow, 1912 to 1914)**



Back in Poland, Maria and Nicolas settle in Lodz, the industrial center and, in this year 1912, the epicenter of labor unrest. One morning, Maria accidentally meets Stefan Wilewski, one of the students she once rescued from the Lublin shooting (episode 1). The reunion is warm, they share common convictions and Maria immediately presents him to Nicolas.

Stefan admits to belonging to a terrorist group, "The Revolutionary Avengers" and offers to integrate them into his organization. Maria is assigned to the intelligence service and weapons supply team, while Nicolas enlists in a commando of "five avengers" and participates in attacks against the symbols of the tsarist regime (police, administration, official figures of the regime ...) as well as robberies. Maria's life has tipped into "active terrorism". Abandoning the intelligence work, she participates in more and more dangerous acts and shows a courage that is admired by her comrades.

When attacking a factory, however, things go wrong. Soldiers and police burst in and open fire. There is a stampede. The foreman is killed instantly, but Maria and Nicolas have time to empty the contents of the factory warehouse before fleeing, protected by Stefan. Alas, Stefan is seriously wounded in the attack. Maria, like Nicholas, knows that the Okhrana - the Russian secret police - will torture him to make him talk. There is only one solution : they must sacrifice Stefan. Nicolas hesitates.

Nicolas (shaking and lowering his weapon): *I cannot...*



Stefan: *I beg you, Nicolas, hurry...*

Maria (tears in her eyes, taking Nicolas' gun and aiming at Stefan): *Stefan, forgive me... In memory of Lublin...*

And in front of a stunned Nicolas, the young woman shoots Stefan.

Maria is shattered and Nicolas dazed. Fortunately, the factory workers, sharing their revolutionary convictions, help them to escape. One of them, even seizes their leaflets and spreads them across the factory, as well as a letter written by Maria to explain the motivations for the robbery.

Maria sends a copy of the letter to "Kurier Lodzki". The Polish press is now not only aware of their actions, but also of their objectives : to develop by all means, necessary an armed struggle against Russian oppression.

The vice-like grip around the group tightens. The police are getting closer to some members of the group. To escape this increasingly close scrutiny and ensure they don't compromise their companions, Maria and Nicholas decide to leave Lodz for Krakow.



In Krakow, Ines Armand, who has spent six months in the Okhrana jail in Moscow, welcomes them with open arms. Sent to St. Petersburg by Lenin in order to transmit his political instructions to the "Pravda", she was arrested by the police on her arrival and was saved only by the intervention of her husband, Alexandre Armand, the Duma deputy.

Ines seems unhappy. She tells Maria that Lenin is moving away from her. He wants to take his wife, Nadia Krupskaya, to Switzerland. Nadia is sick and must be operated on, and Lenin now refuses this sultry "marriage of three" to devote himself to his legitimate wife.

Maria: *Finally... I was right, love is greater than the revolution, isn't it?*

Inès (nodding): *We, as woman, we have a sensivity that makes us weak, where men do not...*

Maria (who has taken offense): *Unless it is our sensivity that is our strenght, otherwise we would be butchers and warriors!*

Faithful to her friendship with Ines, Maria sympathizes with her distress, and strives to restore her hope but, at the same time, forgets the threats that await her. Because in the shadows, a man is busy tracking her. A report has just been placed in front of Vladimir, her "half-hearted lover" from Zaklikow, who is now an agent of the Okhrana. Maria and Nicolas, considered dangerous enemies of the regime of Nicholas II, must be found at all costs.



Vladimir did not forget Maria, but her unexpected escape and the presence of Nicholas by her side today increases his resentment towards her. Fiercely loyal to his duty, he immediately puts a plan in place.

Some time later, as they leave the Corpus Christi Basilica, where they have just discussed their marriage with Father Ambrozy, Maria and Nicolas are arrested. Questioned and tortured, Nicolas is immediately sent to a Siberian Katorga (hard labour camp). Maria's pleas to release him, achieve nothing.

Playing on their "youthful love," Vladimir strives to convince Maria to yield to his advances. Let her give up the rebellion, let her marry him, and she will be free.

Maria, on the other hand, tries to seduce him and appease his bitterness. She is even ready to give herself to him if he promises that he will do everything in his power to free Nicolas. But Vladimir is immovable.

Vladimir: *You do not seem to understand what is waiting for you, Maria... Forget Nicolas! A great career awaits me... so marry me and you will be free, freer than you have ever been.*

Maria: *I prefer prison to your version of freedom.*

Vladimir: *Why do you insist on being so stubborn? ... Do you prefer to die in a labor camp ?*

Maria does not answer. Vladimir has foam on his lips :

Vladimir: *You will never see him again, Maria, do you ever hear me? I am your only chance.*

Exasperated by her resistance, he demands to be "paid" on the spot, without the assurance of any recompense, and he tries to violate her. Maria struggles and manages to escape when a senior officer bursts into Vladimir's office. Humiliated, Vladimir announces that her fate will be far less enviable than that of Nicolas: she will be deported to Crimea.

#### **4° DEPORTATION AND EVASION (Siberia, Chukchi, 1914 to 1916)**



Nevertheless, Maria will not take the train to Crimea. At the last moment, she succeeds in escaping and boarding another convoy which is transporting coffins! Throwing away the body of a Russian soldier killed by the Polish partisans, she takes her place inside one of the coffins.

Unfortunately, a few days later, she is discovered by a Cossack escorting the convoy. This time, Maria will not be able to use her charm. Judged again, she is sentenced to forced labor for life in a Siberian camp. After a long journey, Maria arrives, exhausted and hungry, in a Katorga located near the Arctic Circle. Dressed in uniform, her head shaved, she is saddled, like the other

women - who are a minority in the camp - with menial tasks.

Every day, she must clean the barracks, clear the snow, serve in the canteen, do the dishes. A situation that allows her, despite everything, to circulate freely inside the camp.

To her surprise, many of the detainees are political prisoners of Polish origin. They work in the nearby fisheries and shipyards or manage the reindeer breeding. They are, for the most part, scientists. In a few weeks, Maria manages to become indispensable and, as in Paris or Lodz, she becomes a "mascot" for these men, for whom one of the only ways to resist the hell of the Katorga is to continue to believe in the value of their own knowledge.



One of them, Tadeusz Kruczek, an old Krakow Jew, once a professor of philology at the famous Jagiellonian University, is fond of her. Kruczek takes advantage of his work outside the camp to get in touch with the Chukchi people to study their language and manners, he speaks of them with warmth and affection. Kruczek considers Maria a little like his daughter, Helena, whom he lost in a clash against the Russians three years ago.

Between them, a strong affection is formed. Tadeusz tells her all about Helena and Maria talks to him about Nicolas and how she does not know if he is alive or dead.

Tadeusz: *She was like you, you know... Helena looked fragile on the outside, but she could bend and nothing could break her.*



Maria: *I wish you were right, but I miss Nicolas. I do not know if he is still alive... and there is nothing worse.*

When the old man gets sick, Maria, despite a gruelling job, finds a way to help him, she steals medicine from the infirmary and tries to treat him. Tadeusz, however, has no illusions. There is only one man, a shaman named Yuri, who might save him, but no one will allow him to enter the camp.

On a stormy night, however, Maria manages to escape to the village where Yuri lives. But, quickly overcome by the cold, she collapses. Brought back to the camp by the Chukchi, she arrives just in time to take Tadeusz into her arms.

Tadeusz: *Continue to fight Maria ! They may have defeated me, but you... you must live !*

Maria (hugging him): *We are Poles, sometimes beaten never defeated, and no one will defeat us now !*

Tadeusz is dead and Maria is distraught. She thinks about ending it all, when a friend of Tadeusz tells her that a Frenchman has just been admitted to the camp. Wounded in the abdomen during a fight with "common rights", he suffers in pain on a bed. Perhaps she could, since she speaks perfect French, bring him some comfort. Maria agrees to go and help the injured man.

But, approaching the man lying on his bed, she thinks she will faint. It is Nicolas ! An emaciated Nicolas, his face blue with frost, the wound in his abdomen still open and his

chest is torn by coughing fits. But, Nicolas is alive! Maria melts onto him, tears streaming down her face and covers his wounded body with the heat of her own.



Not far from there, a man watches them in silence: Anatoli Boldine, the head of the Katorga. Maria uses the last of her strength to heal Nicolas. Thanks to the remedies of Yuri, the shaman, which she obtains from a prisoner, Nicolas recovers quickly.

While Maria returns to work in the canteen, Nicolas is assigned to work in a fishery. But, now together, they can support each other and make plans for their escape. An opportunity presents

itself. Boldine, touched by the devotion of Maria, offers her a more respectable job, in the camp's infirmary.

Boldine: *You're better than most of the prisoners here... What do you say?*

Maria, then, tries her luck.

Maria: *I would rather teach... It was my dream, a long time ago?*

Boldine: *Teaching... But what and to who?*

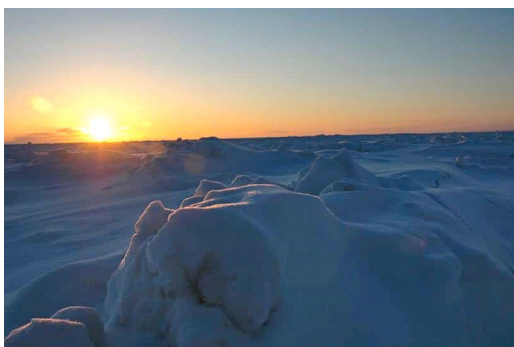
Maria : *To the Chukchi... I could teach them Russian. This could help them to fit in...*

Boldine: *They are nomads, they have no desire to assimilate or settle down.*

Maria: *Let me try ....*

Boldine finally agrees. Maria hopes to get in touch with Yuri and to allow her to be closer to Nicolas. The shaman immediately takes Maria under his wing. Affected by the death of his friend Tadeusz, he feels indebted to her. So he teaches Maria everything she wants to know about their life, their language, their manners, but especially the survival techniques of his people. Very quickly, Yuri understands what Maria has in mind. One day, he takes

her to contemplate the immense frozen extent. In front of them, the Bering Strait and, beyond, Alaska, Canada, and freedom!



Yuri: *You will not make it, over there, winter means death...*

Maria: *Even with the help of spirits?*

Yuri does not answer, but offers to help her with other members of the Chukchi community, to prepare for their escape.



The day before their chosen departure date, however, everything changes. A group of drunken prisoners attack Maria with the intention of raping her.

Nicolas flies to her aid, killing two of her attackers but, injured by several stab wounds, he succumbs to the damage. Maria has just enough time to escape the raging mob and alert a Polish priest, and she asks him to come and administer the last sacraments to Nicolas. Nicolas dies in her arms.

In the morning, the corpses are placed in the mass grave, located outside of the camp. In accordance with the established ritual, a soldier thrusts a stake into Nicolas' skull to check that he is dead, Maria watching this collapses in tears, on her knees, under the moved gaze of Anatoli Boldine. Her love, this time, is dead and her hopes of escape have been annihilated. That night, curled up on her bed, Maria sinks into despair, when Nicolas comes

to visit her in a dream and encourages her to pursue her plans for freedom.



In the icy dawn that rises on the Katonga, Maria, with a rage in her stomach, knows now what needs to be done ; broken but still determined, she puts her plan into action. To avoid being pursued by her jailers, she simulates suicide : she digs a hole in the ice and leaves a suicide note in her cabin. And, during the night, she flees on a dog sled...

## 5° BLACK EAGLE (Canada: Yukon, 1916 to 1930)

Armed with an ivory-tipped spear, Maria walks alone in the taiga. She eats only berries, insects, grass and larvae which she finds between the roots of thorny plants. Half-unconscious, Maria opens her eyes ; above her is the face of a man : a hard face with long hair and black eyes. Terrorized, she suddenly realizes that she has fallen asleep, exhausted, in a hut buried by the snow. The man is a Hän hunter of the First Nations Athapaskan people, and he has discovered her by chance. He lives with his clan on a territory that stretches along the Yukon River to Alaska. A world of vast, dark forests, arid lands, where game is scarce and winters are terrible. It is one of the most inhospitable regions on the planet.



Drained, Maria is brought by her savior, Black Eagle, to the Hän camp. Well-cared for and protected, she slowly recovers, but finds that she has entered a new world which she knows nothing of. Some members of the tribe are hostile to her presence and make her feel excluded with their remarks and bullying. However, thanks to the protection of Black Eagle and the complicity of the local women, Maria is gradually adopted by the clan. Nicknamed "White Feather" because of her fair complexion and blond hair, she redoubles her efforts to assimilate the manners, customs and lifestyle of the Hän. A way of life that is as tough as the climate.



She gets used to periodically suffering from cold and hunger, learning their language, preparing skins and tanning them, mastering the techniques of embroidery, sewing, fishing and even the manufacture of jewelry. The gold... this yellow metal that the American Indians find regularly in the river beds and which is so sought after by the white people.

Maria's efforts, her behavior, her good mood and her critical manner are quickly appreciated by the women of the tribe, who chuckle when she disregards the customs of the men. So, one day, Maria decides to shake up the "codes" again by entering the sweat lodge with her friend, Night Butterfly. It is a hut reserved for men in which, under the pretext of a religious ceremony and supervised by the shaman, they take steam baths by watering the red stones around a big fire and smoke a pipe.

Night Butterfly is scared: *We should not be doing this... it's bad!*

Maria: *Why should you be afraid, Hawkeye's wife?... What's good for them is good for us. Do you believe that the great Spirit does not want to see us purify ourselves too?*

Night Butterfly ends up following her. At the entrance, the Shaman tries to push them away.



The Shaman: *What are you doing here? Go!... You will offend the spirits, go away!*

But, Maria turns her eyes to the sky and mumbles a prayer in Polish, which unsettles the Shaman. Both of them then force their way into the lodge and perform the rite alongside the men who do not say a word. The women then go out rolling in the snow laughing out loud. From then onwards, a women's lodge will be available away from the camp.

The Black Eagle tribe lives primarily from the fur trade with the Europeans, which is controlled by the Hudson's Bay Company. The latter, in the fall, provides them with ammunition and enough food for the men of the clan to reach distant hunting grounds and set their traps. In the spring, they must repay their debts in furs. After that, if there is still some credit, the clan can make some purchases. Black Eagle, like other American Indians, lives off this trade. Alas, game is becoming increasingly rare throughout the territory and he can no longer bring back enough fur to pay his debts. Especially since the prospectors, the Klondike gold rush, compete with them and do not hesitate to use a more powerful weapon than the traps set by the American Indians : they use poison!

Maria observes Black Eagle and sympathizes with the pain he feels that he cannot feed his people as richly as he wants. One evening, when the men of the clan come together to talk about it, Maria, full of audacity, asks for the floor. Against the opinion of several members of the tribe who decide to withdraw, she then raises the problem of the shortage of beavers and advises Black Eagle to stop hunting them, just long enough that they can successfully reproduce.



Maria: *They may be the last beavers in the entire region. If you kill them, there will be no more beavers.*

An Indian: *We must kill them, we need to feed our families!*

Maria: *These few are not enough to feed your families. Let them reproduce and you will see that they will soon be as numerous in the forest as the stars in the sky. Then, your children will have enough to eat.*

They respond to her proposal with sneers. Black Eagle refuses to answer and Maria, unhappy, retires from the meeting.

A short time later, Black Eagle goes to Fort McPherson, a small town at the connection of the Preel and Mackenzie River, to meet with Jeremy Abbott, the man responsible for the Hudson's Bay Company's trading post. Maria accompanies him and serves as interpreter. Black Eagle explains the precariousness of his situation and tries to negotiate payment terms. But, Abbott is uncompromising. Beside him, a businessman, Daniel Sullivan, does not say anything while he devours Maria with his eyes.



Black Eagle leaves shot down and almost desperate. In a bar frequented by prospectors, Maria and Black Eagle are caught by Sullivan. He has made a fortune in the gold business and has a proposal to make to them. He asks Maria to accompany him to the bar to discuss it, but asks Black Eagle, unwanted, to wait outside. Maria reassures the American Indian: it will only be a matter of minutes. Black Eagle accepts but is humiliated.

Inside, however, Sullivan soon reveals his true intentions. A rich man, he intends to start drilling for oil soon, as the region is bountiful. He proposes that Maria settle the debts of the clan, but demands a recompense in return. Maria understands very quickly what it is that he wants. Disgusted, she gets up and, unable to endure Sullivan's ruder and ruder language, she slaps him publicly. Sullivan, humiliated, takes out a whip.

*Now that you have tasted the American Indian, you can not do without it, huh... you dirty bitch! I'm going to teach you a lesson, me...*

But he has scarcely raised his arm when a violent blow throws him to the foot of the bar. It is Black Eagle and Maria rushes into his arms. The police brutally arrest Black Eagle whilst he is leaving the city. Sullivan, quite seriously hurt, is a powerful man. His word is respected and witnesses saw the American Indian hit him. Black Eagle is trapped in prison and subject to a serious punishment.

Maria, heart broken, immediately pleads his case with Jeremy Abbott. He is a tough businessman, but he is also an honest man and a strict Protestant. He offers to intervene and pay the deposit that will release Black Eagle. In exchange, in view of her extensive knowledge, she will remain for a year in Fort McPherson as a tutor to his son, Timothy.



Maria is crushed that she must separate from Black Eagle who returns to his clan as she prepares to take on her new role as a teacher. The goodbyes are heartbreaking. Black Eagle understands that Maria has sacrificed herself so that the clan can retain its natural leader and remain united. Watching the scene from afar, Daniel Sullivan sneers, convinced that the young Polish woman will not resist the "temptations of civilization", the comfort of the Abbott's home and she will eventually forget "her savage". While winter forces Black Eagle and his tribe to keep moving to survive, Maria coaches Timothy, charms Jeanne Abbott and seems to shake the sacrosanct "principles" that Jeanne's husband, has installed in her, the virtuous leader of the company of the Hudson Bay. But, Maria can only think of Black Eagle and those who now, constitute her new family.

Maria thus learns how much the whites despise Black Eagle and his ilk and how the whites intend to get their hands on the indigenous territories, rich in oil and minerals, through bad treaties which have already been signed. In exchange, she tries to make Jeanne understand what the Hän really are, their courage, their nobility, their love of nature, their innocence. She tells them about their daily life, evoking images of their hunting grounds, their difficulties in bringing back enough game to survive during the long subarctic winter.



*Jeanne: But they are savages, Maria. Do not tell me that in the country you come from...*

*Maria interrupts: In the country I come from, men also behave like savages. They kill, rape, send people to labor camps... I have never seen a Hän kill anything but an animal for food, any more than I have seen them hit their wife or child!*

During these long winter evenings, Maria, nostalgic for her country, remembers the happy days of her childhood in Zaklikow, the love of her father who must believe she dead, her country from where she is banished forever ...

Jeanne then proposes that she writes a letter to her family in Poland, taking advantage of the annual arrival of the Company's steamboat after the Mackenzie thaw. It travels along the river to all of the trading posts to bring back the fur stocks recovered during the winter.



It may be long, but Jeanne trusts one of her close friends who works at the company's headquarters to send the letter to Poland. The reply can follow the same path and Jeanne is happy to send it on to Maria, wherever she may find her.



In the spring, when the time comes for separation, Maria has forged an almost friendly relationship with the Abbott family. Jeremy takes it very badly when Daniel Sullivan arrives for an impromptu visit. The latter comes to ask him to hold Maria at Fort McPherson by any means possible, including by force, and to transfer Black Eagle's debt to him in order to convince Maria to marry him. Abbott, enraged, chases him from his house and threatens to reveal some of his actions. Sullivan does not insist.

But when Maria finally leaves the city, the prospector seeks one last time to hold her back. With no result.

Sullivan: *You'll regret it. One day, this whole country will be mine, full of people like me!*

Maria: *Who tells you that this country will accept being yours?*

Leaving without turning, Maria meets an officer of the Mounted Police, followed by two of his men and an ecclesiastic. The officer, all dressed in red, greets her by taking off his hat while the priest looks down at her. Guided to her clan by a Dene trapper, Maria soon finds the Hān camp site. Relieved, Black Eagle greets her in the presence of the whole tribe, now united behind them. The American Indian, happy and grateful, then takes her into his arms and kisses her passionately. The next day, in front of her tepee, Maria finds a bear's skin spread out on the floor. The message is clear : Black Eagle desires to share his home and his life, with her.

Maria agrees: *On one condition*

Black Eagle: *What is that?*

Maria: *You and your men will leave the beavers in peace for a year so that they can reproduce quietly.*

Black Eagle (sighing): *It's a long time, one year...*

Maria (smiling): *And a life together is also a long time...*



The following spring, White Feather gives birth to her first son, Black Bear, the appearance of thirty beavers around the camp seem to be the happiest of omens.

## **6° RED VIPER (Canada: Yukon, Dawson City, Rockies, 1930 to 1935)**

Several winters have passed. Around Maria and Black Eagle, their two sons - Black Bear, Gray Wolf - and their little daughter, Ray of Moon, live happy and free on the territory of the Hān. A territory increasingly threatened, despite everything. The whites' desire to



control the northern territories continues to assert itself.

One sign of this stranglehold: the arrival of a Royal Canadian Mounted Police brigade led by Inspector Roderick Jarvis at the Fur Company's trading post in Dawson City. A man so greedy and inflexible that he is quickly called «Red Viper» by the natives.

One evening while the Council of Elders from several clans are gathered near Dawson, Jarvis arrives with the intention of being a spoilsport. To the greetings addressed to him by the Inspector on behalf of "*His Majesty the King, the powerful Father of the Whites*", Black Eagle answers : "*Tell him that Black Eagle breathes the air of the free forest and that is why he is doing well*".

As the men are smoking around the fire, Jarvis pulls out a whisky bottle and, passing around a tin cup, offers a welcome to all the members of the Council. Black Eagle refuses to drink from it and forbids his clan from partaking. But several other American Indians taking the goblet to their lips, ask for more. Jarvis laughs at them and tells them he will open more bottles to celebrate the end of the Council. Those who drank quickly lose their dignity and become aggressive and warlike which disrupts the meeting.



Jarvis is invited to the meal that accompanies the Council. On the side-lines, with the women, Maria is watching him closely. She knows they met at his departure from Fort McPherson and he did not forget the beautiful blonde woman who left the city with a simple bag on her shoulder.

Jarvis does not lose sight of his goals. Taking advantage of the festive atmosphere, he waits for the end of the meal and, at the moment when the American Indians least expect it, he brandishes a sheet of paper exposing its contents. Maria, called to the rescue, advances among the Elders to translate.

Jarvis eyes Maria scornfully: *We already met, I think. Madame...*

*White Feather*, Maria answers.

Jarvis smiles: *White feather...! I knew you were not an ordinary woman.*

The treaty that Black Eagle is asked to sign states that the tribe will abandon its hunting grounds to settle in a reserve further south where "*they will be regrouped to give up their traditional way of life and adopt the habits of civilized life*". Children over seven years old - which is the case with Black Bear and Gray Wolf - will be sent to Saint Paul American Indian Residential School in Dawson to facilitate their assimilation.



Maria, who won Jeanne Abbott's confidences whilst staying with he, knows what that means. The aim of the authorities is, more or less, to completely assimilate the indigenous populations, to impose strict political control with their councils, to forbid hunting in order to make them dependent, and especially to put an end to their spiritual practices and impose the "White People's religion" on them. The priest, who accompanies Jarvis, is also engaged in a sermon to convince them to submit to the "*law of Christ, the only son of God*".

The Indians are stunned. While many fear the power of "*Whites who are so many like the stars in the sky*» but they want to preserve their way of life and "*continue to hunt, fish and trap as long as the sun rises and the great river flows*».

And no one is unaware of the cases of abus and ill treatment committed by the gold diggers about twenty years ago. What did they bring them besides alcohol, smallpox and syphilis ? What did they do but steal and destroy their property ? Taking advantage of the general indecision, Maria asks Black Eagle to bring forward an American Indian who has escaped from a Reserve. He describes the real-life conditions encouraged by "Red Viper": kept like animals, no longer able to hunt or carry their weapons, forbidden to practice their rites or to organize their ceremonies. With the Council becoming more and more hostile, Jarvis tries to discredit Maria by accusing the elders of being "*children who let themselves be ruled by a woman*". But Black Eagle intervenes with the Elders and asks them to continue listening to her.

To Jarvis' great displeasure, White Feather explains to the Council that in return for the treaty, a few dollars and a little hunting and fishing gear, they will be stripped of their ancestral lands with all the rights, title and privileges that are attached to it, including all mineral or oil wealth.

She also speaks of the often-dramatic living conditions of children in residential schools, traumatized by the lack of contact with their families, the ban of speaking their mother tongue, malnutrition, smallpox and tuberculosis epidemics, as well as the brutality of their teachers.



In the Council, anger rises. Jarvis rebels and threatens her.

Jarvis (to Maria): *What did you tell them?*

Maria: *That you would take their lands and deprive them of all their rights.*

Jarvis (stunned): *And what else?*

Maria: *That you will turn their children into slaves who will not even be able to speak the language of their fathers anymore?*



Jarvis is beside himself with anger.

Jarvis: *You betrayed me...*

Maria: *I only translated what you said, but in the only language that counts: that of truth.*

Jarvis: *Then add this .. Tell them that if they do not submit voluntarily, they will have to submit by force!*

Maria: *Tell them yourself if you have the courage.*

Jarvis, exhausted, seems about to hit Maria. Black Eagle intervenes brutally:

Black Eagle: *That's enough! Go now! You have already stolen our lands, our liberty, what do you still want? To steal the souls of our children? The language of Red Viper is full of hatred and lies.*

Jarvis (in a low voice and running out of arguments): *In any case, you will end up starving and then you will be forced to submit!* (then, turning to Maria) *And you too... (in a despising voice) White Feather...*

Black Eagle then thrusts himself in front of Jarvis.

Black Eagle: *Be cursed, you whites! (Then, taking out his knife and scratching his wrist) I, Black Eagle, head of the free tribe of Hän, declare, with my land, a pact of blood until my death. May the Great Spirit and the Elders bear witness to this!*

Furious, Jarvis and his men leave the camp.

A few days later, at Fort McPherson, Jarvis meets Sullivan. Both share the same hatred of the American Indians. But when Jarvis tells him of his intention to seize the Black Eagle clan to make an example of them, so they can control the other tribes more easily, Sullivan advises him to wait.

Moreover, the American Indians must have already spread out across their land and the territory is vast. In reality, Sullivan has an idea. He knows that Jeanne Abbott has a "guilty" relationship with a prospector, he will blackmail and extract the information that Maria has entrusted in her to locate the Black Eagle clan.

Sullivan goes even further.

Sullivan: *I can help you, Jarvis. I am rich and I have some connections with the government. I will give you the means to realise your ambitions. On one condition... When you're done with these pesky Indians, bring me the woman...*

Jarvis: *White Feather?*

Sullivan: *I prefer Maria Wolska!*





As Maria and the tribe flee to the Rocky Mountains, the relentless plot has begun. One misfortune never arrives alone, and the winter is particularly harsh that year. Game is lacking and famine takes over the tribe. However much they need to refuel, it is impossible to go down to the valley where the Royal Canadian Mounted Police patrol, whose main task is to harass the tribes to get them to the Reserves.

To save the clan from famine, Maria and Black Eagle decide, as a last resort, to join a small isolated outpost located on the other side of the snow-capped mountain and held by a lone half-breed, Caleb who regularly stocks up at Jeremy Abbot's store in Fort McPherson. Caleb is appreciated by the American Indians who trust him because he never tries to scam them when they come to exchange their furs, he is nicknamed "Medicine Man" and is especially known for his healing skills.



There, they hope, in exchange for some furs and a little gold, to obtain provisions. To achieve this, they have to cross a pass in perilous conditions, escape avalanches and hordes of wolves lurking nearby.

Having reached the goal, despite these hardships, Maria and Black Eagle have little time to linger. On their trail, led by Sullivan's directions, Jarvis and his patrol have stopped at the same outpost to spend the night.



Fortunately, as an enemy of the Royal Mounted Police, Caleb hides the exhausted couple in his attic. Early in the morning, they must flee again. In exchange for some nuggets and gold jewels, Caleb agrees to provide them with two sleds and dogs to carry the food. Incidentally, Maria also picks up a few sticks of dynamite, cords and detonators.

Jarvis is on their tail and a crazy pursuit starts. After foiling several checkpoints, Maria and Black Eagle finally arrive at the camp; the tribe is saved, but for how long?

## 7° THE PERSUIT (Canada: Yukon, Rockies, Porcépine, 1935 to 1937)

Maria and Black Eagle have temporarily succeeded, but with an exhausting effort, they find themselves stuck in an impossible situation. It is the end. Maria already imagines her children and the whole tribe slowly dying of famine. One way out is to settle in a remote valley upstream of the Porcupine River, in Gwitch'in territory, in order to ensure they are out of reach of the Royal Mounted Police. But to reach that valley, they must first walk a long way across the mountain, avoiding vertiginous precipices and across a snowy pass. For Maria who is suffering violent pains in her lower abdomen, the trip looks harder than expected.

Not wanting to slow the single-file march, she suffers in silence, trudging along the narrow path that leads them to the pass. Black Eagle, worried, helps her through the difficult



passages, aware that the state of "White Feather" is worsening hour by hour. When one of the sentinels comes to announce that a patrol, commanded by Red Viper, is arriving through the forest to prevent them access to the pass, Maria finds the energy from somewhere.

To escape from Jarvis and his men, there

is only one solution : climbing the rock walls, placing dynamite under large blocks of rocks and exploding them at the precise moment that the patrol enter the canyon.

With courage and conviction, Maria achieves her goal. Moments later, a tremendous explosion shakes the mountain. Below, the rock collapses with a crash, prohibiting access for Red Viper's men. Another explosion shakes the tribe : they are joyful! But Maria, exhausted, falls back down the rock.



With a head injury and bleeding profusely, she is immediately laid on a stretcher and carried by four men so as not to slow the progress of the clan. Maria is conscious, but Black Eagle, anxious, decides to establish a camp before having reached the valley they so hoped to reach.

Night has fallen. Lying near a fire, Maria moans, she is cared for by a woman from the tribe. When suddenly, seeing blood gushing from between her legs, she finally understands: Maria is losing the baby she was waiting for. Maria cries in silence. She was only at the beginning of a new pregnancy - unexpected and unwanted - and was about to announce it to Black Eagle. The latter, powerless and upset, can only accept the news, but he is enraged deep down.



Black Eagle: *All this is because of Red Viper, the Great Spirit tears his tongue!... He will pay for that.*

Maria tries to soothe him.

Maria: *We are alive, our children are alive... Is not that what matters most?*

Black Eagle: *He could have lived...*

Maria invites him to look up at the sky.

Maria: *One day you told me that our dead never really are dead and that they continue to live among the stars. Look how beautiful the sky is tonight... Perhaps it is because another star has just been born, one very small, but so bright... This one for example.*



She points to one of them.

Black Eagle (still angry): *One more star or less does not change anything for men like Red Viper. What they want is to turn them off!*

Life, however, resumes. On the fishy river Porcupine, their existence appears almost idyllic. The hunt for caribou and muskrats gives them food and furs, furs that Black Eagle can sell to Caleb or the company's representative who has settled in the village of Old Crow, the only village within a hundred miles, lost by the side of the river.

Would life finally become more lenient? Not really. There is already talk in Old Crow about setting up a Mounted Police station but Maria and Black Eagle want to believe in their lucky stars.

But, their life flips again when Gray Wolf, their youngest son, discovers the body of a bloody white man in the snowy forest. The man was attacked by a bear. Seriously wounded, he is brought back to the camp where he remains between life and death for several days. While her two sons, Black Bear and Gray Wolf, leave with their dogs to search for the "Medicine Man", one night Maria hears the man speaking with wounded delirium in Polish. Son of an immigrant, Marek Cieslik, finally opened his eyes and regains consciousness, despite his fever. Maria is happy to speak her native language and to talk about her country.

Maria (troubled): *And what about Poland?*

Marek: *Poland... what do you mean?*

Maria: *The Russians, what did they do with Poland?*

Marek (feverish): *They did not do anything with it... We defeated them!*



Maria is relieved. Poland fully regained its independence from the Treaty of Versailles on June 28, 1919 and we are now in... 1937.

Eighteen years have passed. Aghast, Maria lets her memories overwhelm her. She thinks of all her sufferings, of Nicolas, of Tadeusz's death.

Maria: *Free... So they did not die for nothing.*

She is upset when her boys, accompanied by Caleb, enter the hut. Caleb quickly prepares and applies an ointment to Marek's obviously infected wounds and makes him drink a concoction of willow bark to calm his fever. As the wounded trapper begins to sleep, Caleb searches his belongings and hands Maria a letter from Jeanne Abbott from his last visit to Fort McPherson last fall.

Petrified, Maria recognizes her father's handwriting... Feverishly opening the letter that is more than two years old, she burst into tears reading it. Her father declares the joy of knowing that she is alive and begs her to return to Poland before he dies. The idea of returning to her own country suddenly takes over her.

For several days, she withdraws from the activities of the camp; taciturn, she attacks the other members of the clan, even her own children.

Worried about her mood swings, Black Eagle questions her. And after several evasions, Maria ends up cracking. She announces her decision to return to her own country. She will also take with her, her youngest son, Gray Wolf, who is only 13 years old, lest he be arrested by the Royal Police and sent, like so many others, to a boarding school for young American Indians. Black Eagle tries to dissuade her, in vain.



Black Eagle: *Your land is here, your family are here... What are you going to look for there?*

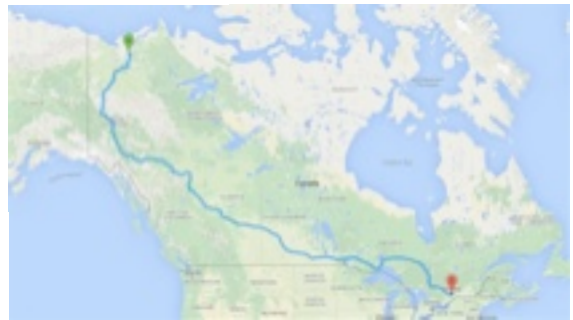
Maria (pensive): *My roots maybe...*

Black eagle is sad.

Maria: *Understand me, you gave me a family, a land and all the happiness that a man can give to a woman... But, if you had to leave your forests, your meadows, your family and all those things that you love so much, would not you want to find them again one day?*

Black Eagle (shot down): *I always knew that part of your heart had stayed in this country you told me about... Watch over our son!*

Maria promises that she will and the American Indian succumbs. He accepts her decision painfully and decides to accompany them, with the help of an old Cree guide, to Ottawa. Winter is already here, but in summer, the rivers and lakes are virtually impassable, while during this season, on their frozen surface, sleds can run at high speed. The trip remains painful and dangerous. The ice, under their feet or under the weight of the dog sled teams, can break at any moment.



After a few days of desolate loneliness, Maria and Black Eagle sense that another team is following the same track as them. Soon this apprehension turns into certainty. Red Viper has found them! A desperate race then commences between the two crews. Taking every risks, Maria and Black Eagle gain distance from Jarvis, but he refuses to give up. Until a fatal accident occurs! Jarvis and his two assistants see the ice suddenly collapse under their sled. Listening only to their conscience, Maria and Black Eagle come back to save them from drowning. Jarvis and his men are safe. In a sorry state, but alive.



*It does not matter, Jarvis murmurs in a last effort, you will not escape me...*

Disgusted by his attitude, Black Eagle arms his rifle to shoot him, but Maria stops him. They will leave them two rifles, some ammunition and some food. It's up to them to survive the winter. In any case, without a sled, they will not be able to catch them again. Dazed, but with hatred in his heart, Jarvis then sees Maria, Black Eagle and Gray Wolf walking away on the ice with their guide.

## **8 ° THE RETURN (Canada: Ottawa, Halifax - Poland: Gdynia, Warsaw, Zaklikow, Lublin, 1938 to 1939)**

Maria arrives in Ottawa. The time to separate has arrived. Black Eagle hugs her, and his son, and makes her swear to return to their family. Maria promises, with tears in her eyes, unable to know deep down whether she will be able to keep this promise.

Regarded as an unemancipated American Indian woman, she has little choice but to bribe a Royal Police officer and an immigration officer with gold to obtain false papers that will allow her to leave the country. Equipped with two tickets for the Transatlantic, she sails from Halifax with her son on the "Batory", the new liner of the Gdynia America Line.

From the bridge, she sees Jarvis and his men on the pier. But as Jarvis steps forward to the ship and yells at a ship's officer, the two attendants prevent him from getting his attention. Jarvis' authority stops on this pier, which also separates them from Black Eagle and their American Indian life.



The trip, alas, is a nightmare for Gray Wolf. The teenager, at fourteen years old, discovers life at sea painfully. The ship itself terrorizes him. Where are the forests, the trees, the lakes? What are these beds where you have to lie down to sleep, those washbasins where you have to wash? Maria tries to reassure him and tells him about her house in Poland, and her family, she assures him that soon they will be happy...

But, nothing helps. Gray Wolf is scared and searches every corner of the ship for somewhere he can feel safe. His ordeal is not over.

Arriving in Gdynia, they take the train to Warsaw where their embroidered leather clothes cause general hilarity. Gray Wolf feels humiliated and destroyed. Maria must restrain Gray Wolf from hitting a man who makes fun of his moccasins.



In Zaklikow, the family reunions does not happen the way Maria had hoped. Her sisters, thought she was dead and do not seem happy about her return. Soon, their reproaches rains down on Maria. Where was she when their father died? Why did n't she send any more news? Jan Wolski died of grief still thinking about her. He even murmured her name several times before giving up his last breath. Maria is nothing but ungrateful.



And who is this child of a different race that she drags with her, this semi-savage with copper-colored skin who barely speaks and looks at everything in stupor... her son... is he mentally retarded? Her three sisters suddenly seem like foreigners to her. So much so, that she does not for a moment think to ask them for help, let alone to claim her share of the paternal inheritance.

*Maria: I was thinking of finding a family, but I realize that these "savages" as you call them are closer to me than you are. Our father was right: I share no traits with you.*

Rejected by them and deeply hurt, Maria prefers to settle in Lublin in a small hotel and look for work. In her spare time - she finds a job in a retirement home - she takes her son across the city to find her old friends. Behind her, Gray Wolf follows haggard, more and more disoriented by this new life.

In desperation, Maria decides to enroll him in a religious school. But this decision is catastrophic. Illiterate, and without a word of Polish, Gray Wolf is fiercely controlled by the nuns and constantly bullied by the other boys. Above all, the adolescent refuses to bow to the religious rites. The idea of having to kneel in a church, enclosed between sinister walls, far from the beauty of nature, is unbearable. What is this God on the cross of which we have never spoken and who seems, through his maids, so severe, so unloving?



Gray Wolf becomes aggressive, fights without reason with the first person who dares to stand up to him. He is sure of his strength, he attacks any opponent and ends up terrorizing the other schoolboys. One day he climbs onto the roof of the school and begins to pray in the language of the Hän. Below him, in the courtyard, half in irony, half fascinated, the other boys imitate it. This is too much. To punish him, the nuns deprived him of breakfast, and finally locked him in a shed without light, with only dry bread and water.

But, nothing can break Gray Wolf... On the contrary, having decided not to eat, nor speak a language other than his own, he defies the nuns. At the end of the week, they summon Maria who must suffer a sermon from the Mother Superior.

*Mother Superior: This child was raised by pagans, and a pagan he will stay! We will never make a good Christian of him and you, what have you done to ensure he knows Jesus Christ?... And then that ridiculous name, Gray Wolf. Are we animals?*

Maria: *I'm afraid, Mother, that we're not talking about the same thing. I believed that our religion taught love and generosity. Here, I hear nothing but chastising and punishments. Where Gray Wolf comes from, we talk about beauty, kindness towards nature, fraternity between men. You are dry, Mother; as dry as a dead branch. Jesus wanted to shower men with his charity... With people like you, it's our religion that will soon die of thirst!*

Mother Superior is stunned. Maria takes Gray Wolf by the hand and leaves the school to the applause of the schoolboys, admiring the resistance of the young Indian. For the first time in a long time, Gray Wolf smiles and even bids farewell to his comrades. Maria, this time, understands. Back in Lublin, she is still trying to convince him one last time to make an effort and adapt to his new life. But faced with silence from her son, she finally gives up and promises that they will soon return to Canada where Black Bear, Ray of Moon and Black Eagle are waiting for them. With what is left of the gold, she buys their return tickets. We are in August 1939 and the war will soon set Europe to fire. On the wharf at the Warsaw train station, Gray Wolf finally smiles and murmurs to Maria : "*Dziekuje mama...*"

## 9° THE TATAR (Poland: Malbork, Lublin, Maquis, 1939 to 1941)

Maria and her son take the train to Gdynia on the evening of August 31, 1939. At dawn, Maria is awakened by an explosion. Suddenly, the train stops in a field near Malbork, bombarded by a pack of Stukas. All the passengers flee. They take refuge in a nearby city, Maria hears a statement on the radio: the German army has attacked Poland. The Second World War has just begun...



For Maria, there is no question of fleeing. She immediately returns to Lublin where she engages with some former members of her activist group in acts of resistance. Gray Wolf has fallen back into obstinate silence. He had hoped so much to return to Canada!... Desperate, Maria tries to wake up his warlike instinct by explaining to him the stakes of the war that has just broken out. She tells him about Marx, Lenin, Nazism... But nothing works. Gray Wolf is absent, remove from this tragic reality that she tries to make him see.

The Germans are now in Lublin. A few days after their arrival, Gray Wolf is arrested and thrown into a cell. Questioned and tortured, his resistance to suffering infuriates the Germans, but his explanations do not convince them. The false passport while he only knows how to stammer in Polish, and his physique with so little Aryan features, make him immediately suspicious. Convinced that he is a Soviet spy, the Nazis finally decide to send him to a new quarantine camp under construction in Auschwitz.



Gray Wolf, huddled with other Polish prisoners in a cattle wagon, gradually understands, through their conversations, that he will be transferred to a camp surrounded by barbed wire, penned in the manner of an American Indian «animal» who has been pursued by «Red Viper». This realisation jolts him like an electric shock. He suddenly seems to come out of his dream and, recovering all his warlike zeal, manages to escape the bandwagon and disappear into the thick Polish forest.



Here he is at least back in his element : the virgin, at one with the wild nature. After finding refuge with a forester, he joins a group of partisans who live, like stalked animals. From various origins, nicknamed the "Greens" and commanded by Lieutenant Jacek Kromski, they decided to remain faithful to the Polish government who are in exile in London and fight the invader. For them, the one they do not know, neither his name nor his origins, will now be "the Tatar». While Maria is actively looking for him in Lublin, Gray Wolf, remembering what his mother told him about the Nazis, decides to fight alongside the "Greens". It does not take long to confirm the validity of his opinions in view of the burned farms and the population that has been massacred by the Germans. Wild again, only concerned with his survival, Gray Wolf gives them a ruthless fight, often on his own, not hesitating to use only his knife or an Indian fashioned bow.



His almost infallible instinct for detecting the presence of the enemy and the "silent death" he inflicts upon them soon earn him the admiration of the group. But, his independence is strongly disliked by Jacek Kromski, who feels that his authority is being questioned. One day, Gray Wolf always unpredictable, fails to support a Kromsky-built operation, and a conflict erupts between them. The two men come to blows. Too proud to apologize, Gray Wolf decides to disappear.



The group watches him go, their hearts ached. Jacek is the only man to turn away from him. As he plunges alone into the forest, Gray Wolf soon realizes he is not alone. After two or three days of wandering, he must face the facts: a German patrol, in charge of tracking down the partisans, is on his tracks. Night falls, wolves begin to scream, and the voices come closer... Gray Wolf, with fear in his stomach, runs straight ahead.



## 10° HOPE (Poland: Lublin, Maquis, Blizna, 1942 to 1944)

In Lublin, Maria welcomes Miroslaw, one of her comrades in arms. Still without any news of her son, she finally decides uncover and interrogate the German authorities who have been looking for her since her group was identified. Miroslaw tries to dissuade her. But Maria persists. He is about to give up when Maria receives a letter from the German authorities containing a "death notice" for her son, who died at the Auschwitz concentration camp.



Maria is heartbroken. Miroslaw tries to comfort her, then, powerless, abandons her to her loneliness. Maria is no longer a woman in reprieve. She does not want to live or fight anymore. She thinks of committing suicide...

When, one evening, a shadow bounces off the wall of the building where she lives. Her throat tightens and her heart races... Gray Wolf throws himself into her arms. Mother and son talk all night.

Maria: *I thought you were dead at Auschwitz... I was even asked for money for your ashes. And you, did you think I was dead too?*



Gray Wolf, moved, does not answer. He tells her how he wandered in the forest for weeks, escaping the German patrols and how he regrets leaving his group of partisans. He talks about Jacek and the "Greens", and their desperate fight. Maria is persuaded. The next day she decides to leave Lublin with him. Her group, for safety, will dissolve, at least for a while.

Gray Wolf finds Jacek. The Pole apologizes for his past attitude.

Jacek: *I was wrong... I'm happy to see you again. We need men like you...*

Then turning to Maria: *Who is she?*

Gray Wolf: *My mother.*

Jacek greets Maria.

Jacek: *Welcome!*

But a voice rises up behind them, that of Anatol Rozanski, a member of the Polish Communist Party.

*I thought we agreed: no woman among us. Women whine all the time and...*

Rozanski does not finish his sentence. Maria throws herself on him and puts a knife under his throat. Rozanski does not try to escape from her grip, especially when Maria fiercely murmurs a few words in the Hän dialect that make Gray Wolf laugh out loud.

Jacek: *What is she saying?*

Gray Wolf (laughing): *She is telling him that next time she could cut him something other than his tongue...*

The men burst out laughing too. Maria is not slow to gain their confidence and little by little their trust in her grows. In her eyes, the "Greens" suffer from amateurism, more concerned about their survival than the real armed struggle. Their operations are risky, improvised and risk putting civilians in danger.

Her interventions, alas, are not to the taste of Jacek who sees that his authority is being questioned, nor that of Anatol Rozanski, who is suspicious and jealous of Maria's knowledge and rhetoric he regularly treats her as a "Deviationist" and a traitor to Marxist ideology.

Maria (turning to the forest): *Your Marxism, Rozanski, it's like these trees, so stiff and haughty that an axe can easily get rid of them.*

Rozanski: *It's people like you who will make us lose... You know the proverb... Associated with a woman, and the demon himself loses the game.*



Maria: *The demon... For a Marxist, you speak like a priest, Rozanski!*

Between the two, the clashes multiply. Experience and intuition, however, will prove that Maria is right. When she learns that about 20 women were taken to the Zaklikow mansion by a group of SS back from Stalingrad, Maria, fearing a trap, urges the group to be cautious and suggests that they send Gray Wolf as a scout.

But, Jacek's impulsiveness foils her plans. As soon as he learns that his sister is one of the girls delivered for the pleasure of the SS, he launches his guerrillas to attack the mansion.

Alas, the Germans are waiting for them, their fingers on the trigger of their weapons. The carnage is avoided narrowly only thanks to the intervention of Maria and Gray Wolf. Disorienting the Germans, they blow up their cars and their armored vehicles, thus freeing the "Greens" from the trap that the SS created for them.

In the heat of the action, Maria is injured on her shoulder. Jacek, seeing an SS officer manœuvring to finish her off, shoots him with a burst of machine gun fire. Saved from certain death, Maria throws herself into his arms. Jacek, forgetting his prejudices, kisses her passionately under the disapproving gaze of Gray Wolf.



Among the liberated women, a young girl, Dorota, happily smiles at the young American Indian and soon makes him forget his anger. An idyll begins...

The next day, Gray Wolf cannot help asking his mother for explanations.

Gray Wolf: *You have forgotten your family, you have forgotten Black Eagle!*

Maria: *I forbid you from saying that, I have not forgotten anything!*

A quarrel breaks out between mother and son.

Gray Wolf retires with Dorota who advises him to be lenient.

Especially since the link between Maria and Jacek gives a new impetus to the group of supporters. Maria becomes his main lieutenant and becomes indispensable in reorganizing the "Greens", targeting more of their actions and setting up more effective operations in coordination with other Resistance group.

She manages to set up a system of coded radio communications with the London center. It's based on the Hän language and Maria proposes to English authorities to bring her daughter, Rayon of Moon, from Canada to London as a code talker.



Christmas night 1942 offers a moment in this fierce struggle. Groups of "Greens" from all over the Polish forest meet in a clearing to celebrate the nativity. After a prayer led by Father Krzysztof, Maria reads a message from the Commander-in-Chief, the famous "Grot" supporter whose has had a price put on his head by the Germans and who urges them to step up their resistance because

victory is near: "*the Russians attack on the Volga Front, the Allied troops advance in North Africa and the landing in Europe is only a matter of months away...*"

But, the respite is short-lived. During this winter of 1942-1943, the temperature drops to forty degrees below zero. They must prioritize survival and keep their morale intact despite the alternating good and bad news: after the victory of Stalingrad, the debate takes a violent course when Rozanski starts to blame the Allies for doing so little to the west while the Soviets were fighting so bravely in the east.

Rozanski: *They are cowards. They hide behind the Channel. They are afraid to attack Hitler. They let the Russians fight on their own.*

He ridicules the war efforts of the British and especially the Americans, but Jacek reasons differently :

Jacek: *You will see, when they launch their great attack, the Americans will crush Hitler.*

When it is rumored that Polish officers have been massacred in the maze of the Katyn Forest, Maria finds it difficult to believe these accusations. Hundreds of men, perhaps thousands murdered by the Russians! A bullet behind the head... This last event triggers an internal war between Maria, Jacek and Rozanski until it is explained to them that this massacre is actually the work of the Germans.



Exasperated by the suspicions hanging over the Soviets, Anatol decided to separate and form his own armed group. For Jacek, it's a blow but Maria consoles him very quickly.

Starting in the summer of 1943, Maria contacts London using her American Indian code to warn allies about the Blizna installation of a base for mounting and testing a new secret weapon. Her group will succeed without issues to recover pieces of V2 rockets that fell in the Vistula and send them to Warsaw for analysis in the secret laboratories of the AK. For Maria, Jacek and Gray Wolf, the wait begins. With this nagging question that keeps bothering them: what if this analysis changes the course of the war?



## 11° TIME FOR DISILLUSIONS (Poland: Warsaw, Zaklikow, 1944 to 1946)

July 1944. An RAF Dakota lands on a field near a village east of Krakow. Maria's group is responsible for securing the entire operation. In silence, the men unload trucks the spare parts and the V2 rocket engines recovered by the partisans and transfer them into the DC3.



A few minutes later, the plane rolls on the improvised runway but, to make matters worse, the aircraft gets bogged down in the marshy meadows that adjoin the landing field. The pilot pushes the engines full throttle, and the plane vibrates but does not move. The noise reverberates in the deep night.

While the crew is ready to abandon the plane and even destroy it, Maria orders the partisans to dismantle the wooden sections of an old barn and create a makeshift track by stabilizing the ground. On the third attempt, the plane finally manages to take off, taking all the hopes of the small group with it.



The war, however, lives its last hours. In this summer of 1944, the Warsaw Uprising is unleashed by the Armia Krajowa. Maria, Gray Wolf and Jacek, at the head of their group, fight in the streets of the old town, street by street, building by building, against SS units composed of pardoned criminals who ruthlessly finish off all the wounded, prisoners, caregivers and civilians that have fallen into their hands.

And that's the drama! In an attempt to rescue Dorota, who has been captured and is used as a human shield, Jacek is brutally murdered by the SS. Maria, seeing him succumb under the blows, wants to rush to help him, but her son holds her back by force. Jacek and Dorota are dead, there is no need to risk their own lives.

Collapsed, but galvanized by hatred, Maria takes the lead of the group and continues the fight against all odds. Is the Red Army not already in front of Warsaw, on the other side of the Vistula...!





Several groups of partisans, including Anatol's, have also crossed the river to put themselves under the protection of the Russians. Warned by Gray Wolf, who saw the Anatol group abandon its post, Maria decides to go to the Soviet General Staff to give them information about the German locations and to negotiate for the Red Army's help.

What a surprise for her to come face to face with Vladimir! Vladimir who never forgot Maria's scathing refusals when she was arrested in Krakow in 1914.

Vladimir: *It is a small world, is n't it Maria? I believed, however, that this war had given you another outcome.*

Maria: *It's not the world that's small, it's the men, Vladimir.*

Vladimir: *It probably depends on the man ...*

Maria: *Prove it to me!*

Vladimir: *Would you like me to grant you a favor? Times have changed. Formerly, it was me who asked you and you who refused...*

Maria: *The resistance has been wiped out, you have to help us.*

Vladimir (frosty): *I'm sorry, I have my orders.*

Maria: *Which ones? To let us be massacred?...*

Vladimir: *It's not me who gives the orders.*

Maria: *I knew you were a coward, but I didn't think you were stupid. You need us too.*

Vladimir: *And since when do we need Poles?*

Maria (calm and cold): *I used to have a friend, an old man who died in a camp in Siberia... He died in my arms, believing that he had been defeated. He was wrong. You trampled on us, humiliated, occupied our land, battered us a few times, but you never beat us, Vladimir. We will manage without you, and even against you if necessary. Farewell !*

The Russians have orders not to intervene and to give the Germans free rein to destroy the Polish resistance. Maria leaves, desperate. Warsaw, with a lack of support from the Red Army and Westerners, yields on 2 October. Maria, Loup Gris and the few survivors of the group listen to the radio and the torn voice of General Tadeus Bor-Komorowski, who delivers his farewell speech and decides to flee the city via the sewerage networks to reach the forest and continue the fight .





There they learn that the Polish National Liberation Committee (PKWN) in Lublin, supported by Moscow, is moving into Warsaw as the provisional government. Although their regiment has officially been dissolved since January 1945, Maria remains hidden with Gray Wolf in the forest until the end of the war while awaiting possible orders on the continuation of their clandestine operations. For Maria and her group, their test is over. Decorated with the Polish Cross of Value and the Home Army Cross, but distraught, she turns to the past to rebuild herself and returns with Gray Wolf to the Zaklikow Estate.

This time, her sisters greet her with enthusiasm. Would the war have made them think, would it have given them a sense of family and sibling love? Maria understands very quickly, alas, that behind these fake smiles, hides a sordid ulterior motive: as a

former fighter and deporter of 1914, she should be able to simply save the family property from collectivization !

But times have changed, and the goals of the winners too. Many of the leaders of the Polish resistance have already been arrested by the NKVD as well as members of the Clandestine Government who are sent to Moscow where, after being interrogated and tortured, they are tried in a three-day trial for *"criminal and reactionary action against the Soviet Union and against the interests of Poland"* as well as *«objective alliance with the Nazis»* and sentenced to heavy prison terms ...



When Maria hears the future Secretary General of the Polish "Unified Workers Party," Wladiyslaw Gomulka, declare on the radio that *"AK soldiers are a hostile movement that must be ruthlessly suppressed,"* she guesses that she needs to flee again with her son as soon as possible.

While one morning she prepares her luggage, two cars from the Ministry of Internal Security responsible for the repression against opponents of the pro-Stalinist regime, appear at the mansion. Their mission: to arrest Maria and Gray Wolf.



## **12° PALACE OF MIRACLES (Poland: Warsaw, Zaklikow, Gydnia, 1947 to 1957)**

Like many of their former comrades from Armia Krajowa, Maria and Gray Wolf were held in solitary confinement at the "Palace of Miracles" in Warsaw's Mokotow Prison. They are quickly taken to the interrogation room. Maria is led by two officers widely known for their sadism, and finds herself in front of... Anatol Rozanski!

Anatol, a fanatic, now serves in the Red Army. He has always hated Maria and gives in to his desire to punish her. With the complicity of his two henchmen, he questions her relentlessly. The blows are raining down on her.

Rozanski: *I knew we would meet one day... So, what do you think of my Marxism today?*

Maria: *The same as yesterday... You're just a little dog ready to bite, Rozanski, you're licking Comrade Stalin's boots, but you're still not a man. Jacek was a man. And he died because of you!*

Then, as she refuses to confess to imaginary crimes...

Maria: *A man once told me about the Moscow trials. He taught me how innocent people were forced to confess to anything before being executed in the name of communism... Your Marxism stinks of death, Rozanski. You will not get anything from me!...*

Rozanski, mad with rage, jumps out of his chair and strikes her violently with a weighted whip. Maria falls to the ground, her chair toppling over. She is bleeding profusely. But, Anatol continues to berate her, calling her "old whore". He is interrupted by the telephone ringing. Composing himself, Anatol answers in a cheerful voice :



Rozanski: *Do not wait for me to dine, darling. I will be back very late because I have an urgent job to finish.*

The blows rain down again until Maria loses consciousness. Gray Wolf is hardly faring any better. For refusing to loosen his lips, he is showered with beatings and insults, and then thrown naked into an isolation cell where he is left with stagnant ice water. The young American Indian then adopts a strategy that disconcerts his tormentors. Speaking only Han, he gives them long speeches which they do not understand, the delirium of the long nights takes its toll, he becomes violent then falls back into apathy. Soon, there is no doubt that their prisoner is "unbalanced". As the prosecution's evidence is lacking and his confessions are non-existent, Gray Wolf is finally released. He escapes both trial and deportation.

Not knowing where to go, the young American Indian returns to Zaklikow where his aunts leave him free to come and go, considering him as a somewhat "backward" savage. Passing long hours in the forest, Gray Wolf strives to find a balance in nature, despite the absence of his mother to whom all of his thoughts turn.

Because, Maria, too, continues to stand up to her tormentors. Night and day, interrogations succeed one another. She is accused of "*terrorism, sabotage, treason and criminal and reactionary conspiracy against the Soviet Union and the interests of Poland*".



But her torturers eventually get bored. In the absence of sufficient evidence and confession, she is sentenced to five years in prison. Five long years... When she returns to Zaklikow five years later, an old and worn woman approaches Gray Wolf. Yet, deep in her sad gaze, he sees a light.... He is convinced that Maria has lost none of her fighting spirit. Her time in prison has only sharpened it. The American Indian has become a man, but is nonetheless happy to find his mother.



Maria: *You see, my son, our enemies were wrong. The Hän are not those who die so easily, or even those who can be silenced!*

Gray Wolf smiles.

Gray Wolf: *What if we go back home?*

Maria smiles in turn. It will certainly not be an easy undertaking to cross the Iron Curtain. The communist government will refuse them visas and passports. But she already has an idea.



Thanks to her knowledge of foreign languages, she is hired in Gdynia to train the female staff of the new Polish Ocean Line. Very quickly, her charisma towards the employees and the skills she demonstrates to the directors, allow her to engage Gray Wolf as a stocker in the engines of one of the cargo ships which sails in the Baltic Sea.

Finally, an unexpected opportunity presents itself. The Batory has been reassigned to the Gdynia - Copenhagen - Southampton - Quebec -

Montreal line. Well appreciated by her superiors, Maria is now in charge of supervising all the cabin crew of the Transatlantic. Gray Wolf is admitted to join the crew. Luck is smiling on them again. When the Batory leaves Gdynia, Maria once again leaves her country behind her, while Gray Wolf only thinks about finding his own.

### **13° ULTIMATE FIGHT (Canada: Montréal, Yukon, 1958 to 1960)**

Canada, finally, is on the horizon. At Montreal's port, the crew is closely monitored by Secret Service agents. However, Maria and Gray Wolf manage to slip through the cracks and escape their watchful eye.

Once on the ground, they immediately contact an organization responsible for American Indian protection, the Canadian National Indian Brotherhood. It is thanks to them that they will find the tracks of the Black Eagle tribe and their family. Luckily, they still live in the hamlet of Forty Mile, north of Dawson.



Maria and Gay Wolf can hardly contain their emotion when they see the silhouettes of Black Eagle and Black Bear. Behind them is a forlorn hut in front of which the most diverse objects are piled up, giving the impression of dirt and abandonment. The reunion is not what they had hoped for. More than twenty years have passed and the forced settlements of the American Indians have changed their people into an amorphous mass that has largely lost all nobility, independence and dignity.



Living in extreme poverty, Black Eagle is still as proud and calm. The hatred of the whites has not misled him and he is still trying to be an unwavering support for his family as well as his clan. Black Bear, on the other hand, is no longer the superb young warrior he once was and, like so many others, spends most of his days slumped on an old couch listening to the radio. He has become obese, he is no longer able to go fishing or hunting in the forest to improve the living conditions for his family.



Only Ray of Moon, who has found a job in Whitehorse and returns to Forty Mile every month, is full of life and passionately dedicated to defending the indigenous people by campaigning for their release. Her obsession : boarding schools where young American Indians are locked in order to better "integrate" them with society. Inside these homes, they face suffering, humiliation, daily punishment, uprooting, and even sexual abuse. They are treated as slaves and considered inferior beings. They are

forbidden to speak their own language. Many cases of forced sterilization, ethnic cleansing, medical experiments, murders by neglect or abuse, even mass graves have even been reported. The accused on the front lines are the United Church of Canada and the Catholic Church.

Moved and rebellious, Maria and Gray Wolf decide to return with Ray of Moon to Whitehorse. Maria leaves Black Eagle again. He does not hold her back any more than he did twenty years ago, because he knows it's useless. He always accepted Maria as she was, whole, rebellious, full of charm and energy. As she was, as she lives and he loves her so.

In Whitehorse, Gray Wolf is hired as a foreman in a logging operation and goes to a friend of his sister, Eternal Flower, a Tlingit Indian from Teslin. As for Maria, who is throwing her last strength into her daughter's battle, there is one goal : to rally her family around her. During the following months, she tells her life in a book which she asks Black Eagle to publish after her death whatever happens. The copyright, she suggests, could go to a foundation that would defend the American Indians of Canada and, in particular, children who are victims of sexual abuse or kidnapping.



One night when Maria and Ray of Moon demonstrate in front of Whitehorse Residential School against the sterilization of indigenous children, three cars rush into the crowd. From the cars spring "thugs" who are paid by the government, and who, under the watchful eye of the police, are trying to disperse the demonstration with truncheons. Suffering a head injury, Maria and Ray of Moon collapse on the ground before being quickly loaded onto a vehicle of the Royal Police.



At the hospital, Maria hangs between life and death. Black Eagle, Gray Wolf and Black Bear are there, gathered around her bed. Ray of Moon is injured too, though faring better than her mother. Then they all eventually leave, with the exception of Black Eagle who asks to stay in her room and spends several nights in a chair to watching over her. When Maria finally regains her senses, Black Eagle tells her how much she has always been an example to him, and how much he regrets that he and his people have lost their dignity by submitting to white politics. Maria tries to stop him from feeling guilty.

Maria: *You did everything you could, I'm sure. I'm proud of you.*

Black Eagle: *But Black Bear...*

Maria: *He is young, he will understand. But we?... We believed in so many things, so many things that have died today.*

Black Eagle: *Everything is dead.*

Maria (shaking her head weakly on her pillow): *No, not everything. I remember saying something to a friend before. I was young, but it was me who was right: love is stronger than the revolution... In reality, love is stronger than anything.*

When White Feather takes her last breath, the whole family are with her at the end, a peaceful and beautiful end. On her nightstand, the manuscript is finished. Ray of Moon seizes it and hands it to her father.

Ray of Moon: *She was holding us together so much... What are we going to do without her?*

Black Eagle grabs the book and bows his forehead as a sign of respect.

Black Eagle: *We will do what she always did... We will fight!*

At that time, a Polish diplomat, accompanied by the Royal Mounted Police, breaks into the hospital room and accuses Gray Wolf of having deserted by leaving his boat without prior authorization. Gray Wolf explains that he is an American Indian and wants to stay in Canada. The diplomat then hands him a newspaper where, in an article on the front page, they talk about the murder of his mother, White Feather, and in which it is announced that Grey Wolf is, in fact, a communist agent who has come to Canada to instigate riots among the American Indians.

Gray Wolf will be expelled from the country. Outraged, Ray of Moon enters in a dark mood and wants to overpower the diplomat who has come to arrest Gray Wolf. But her father holds her back by force. Then Ray of Moon bursts into tears and while Black Bear moves to defend his brother, Black Eagle starts an American Indian song. It is White Feather's favorite song from the resistance, and soon the whole family joins in and sings in chorus.

The family of Maria Wolska, just like her, will not admit defeat.

OOO