

EXT. PLAINS OF VOJVODINA, AUSTRIA-HUNGARY - NOVEMBER 1900 -
EVENING

INTERTITLE: Vojvodina. Austria-Hungary. November 1900.

A train travels along the peaceful, snowy plains and farmland
of Vojvodina. The locomotive blows out steam.

In the distance are groups of leafless birch and willow
trees, and an occasional rooftop.

The sky is cloudy. A storm, imminent.

The train crosses a bridge over the frozen river Danube.

Gushes of wind sway sporadic riverbank shrubs and threaten to
dislodge small, frozen river boats anchored at its side.

The rain starts.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

MILEVA MARIC (25), a serious looking, petite woman with dark
hair and intense brown eyes, sits in a train compartment.

She reads a copy of the 'Annalen der Physik' journal. The
article title reads 'On the Law of Distribution of Energy in
the Normal Spectrum by Max Planck'.

Mileva stands up to close the window, revealing her large,
pregnant belly.

She sits back down and snuggles into a big shawl.

Mileva doesn't reach for the journal but for a stack of hand
written letters in her bag.

She gently holds on to them as she caresses her belly with
her other hand. She stares out into the windy, cold night.

There is lightning on the horizon.

EXT. LAKE COMO, ITALY - MAY 1900 - NIGHT

INTERTITLE: May 1900. 7 months earlier.

The storm continues.

A forested hill overlooks Lake Como.

Boats anchored at the port of Lake Como, rock with the waves
and the wind.

The small town seems abandoned, except for an occasional flicker of light behind closed shutters of old, historic buildings.

Nestled among the conifer trees is a secluded two-story house. Lightning reflects in the dark windows.

INT. EINSTEIN FAMILY HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The downstairs living area is dark. Only an occasional bolt of lightning lets in a glimpse.

Traditional living area, full of heavy oak furniture, is filled with Einstein family portraits. Albert, his sister and parents. He is always front and center.

The theme continues on the staircase leading up.

INT. EINSTEIN FAMILY HOUSE SPARE BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Small second floor bedroom with a slanted ceiling and an iron cast bed.

Mileva sits fully naked by an open window, looking outside.

Her lover, ALBERT (22) quietly approaches. He is taller than Mileva. He has a round face and dark, very curly hair and thick mustache.

ALBERT

(hugs her)

My Dockerl. I woke up and you were not there.

He gently wraps a blanket around her shoulders. She rises and turns to him.

MILEVA

I'm right here, Johnny.

Albert lovingly strokes her face and hair.

ALBERT

I love you so much.

He kisses her passionately. She smiles but diverts her eyes timidly down to yet another framed photo of Albert and his family.

She runs her fingers over the frame.

ALBERT (CONT'D)
You know these philistines could
never understand ...

MILEVA
Promise me our lives will never get
that monotonous?

ALBERT
If you promise me you'll never be
like her?

He points towards the photo and his mother on it.

MILEVA
I do.

He smiles and gently cups her cheek with his hand.

ALBERT
Instead, they'll be filled with
science, and discoveries ...

His hand moves to her breasts and her stomach.

MILEVA
... the light, and the waves...

She follows his lead with her hand on his body.

ALBERT
... atoms, particles and force
fields ...

His hand goes down past her stomach. She sighs.

MILEVA
... the Sun, the Moon, planets, the
stars ...

He brings her in closer.

The lightning strikes again, followed by THUNDER.

Mileva's blanket drops on the floor, taking along with it the
framed photo. The photo lands face down.

Albert and Mileva kiss passionately. She giggles as he
nibbles on her ear and neck.

Not letting go of Mileva, Albert leads the way back to bed.

The storm continues.

EXT. COURTYARD, SWISS FEDERAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (ETH) -
DAY

The courtyard of the well-respected University, surrounded by its imposing buildings, is a hubbub of student activity - some sit grouped on the grass, some rush to their next class, others ride their bikes.

All students are male.

Mileva sits on a bench, alone and further away from a larger and more cheerful group.

She is fully engrossed in her notebook. She rapidly writes formulas and sketches charts next to them. Her brow furrows.

Mileva doesn't notices her best friend approach.

HELEN (25), a petite woman dressed just as plainly, startles Mileva.

HELEN

So, how did it go?

Mileva quickly snaps her notebook closed and puts it in her bag. She gets up.

MILEVA

I haven't told him yet.

(before Helen can speak)

I know, I will. I'll tell him after class. I hope he won't be too disappointed.

Mileva and Helen start to walk. As she does, it is very obvious that Mileva limps noticeable but neither women pay attention to it.

It is, however, very obvious that they are the only women walking and how ordinary they look.

HELEN

It is not his place to be disappointed or not, you know. He will just have to take it like a man.

(beat)

I am glad you'll have Albert's support.

MILEVA

And, are you meeting the most wonderful Mr. Savic this week again?

They giggle girlishly.

They come upon Mileva's colleagues MICHAEL BESSO (27) and MARCEL GROSSMAN (22). They all greet each other formally.

BESSO

Fraulein Maric. I was hoping I'd run into you. How did it go?

Mileva is confused for a moment. Helen gives her the 'I cannot believe you told them' shocked look.

An awkward beat.

GROSSMAN

The exam, of course. Have you received your score yet?

Relief.

MILEVA

Oh. Yes, yes I did. I'm afraid I failed, Herr Grossman. Again.

BESSO

But that's just impossible. You're our best mathematician.

MILEVA

(cracks a smile)
I'm afraid it is. Theory of Functions just doesn't sit too well with me. But, considering I ...

Helen interrupts by taking Mileva's arm.

HELEN

You will excuse us gentlemen, we really must be on our way.

BESSO

Oh, of course Fraulein Kaufler. Fraulein Maric.

(beat)

Could I walk you to Dr. Webber's lecture, Fraulein?

MILEVA

(smiles)
Thank you, Herr Besso but I already have a companion.

BESSO

Please, Fraulein, allow a friend a little chivalry.

MILEVA

Goodbye dear friend.

Mileva and Helen leave. They exchange a look and a quiet giggle at their friend's expense.

As they enter a building, Besso and Grossman exchange an inaudible well-intended jab, laugh and continue on their way.

INT. CLASSROOM, SWISS FEDERAL INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY (ETH) - LATER

Mileva and Albert sit in the back of a small classroom. Other than Mileva, the class is all male.

A student is in front of a blackboard filled with equations, drawings and numbers. He is desperately trying to solve the problem but is stuck.

DR. WEBER (40s), a big man with a thick white beard, leans on his desk and looks intently at the petrified student.

DR. WEBER

Is this truly your best work? After the whole semester?

(dramatically)

Has anyone been paying attention in class?

Dr. Webber dismisses the student with a slight motion of his hand. The young man hurries back to his seat.

He strolls, scanning the class. Students turn away as he passes.

Mileva is focused on the problem in her notebook. Albert acts silly as he tries to get her attention.

DR. WEBER (CONT'D)

Gentlemen. Anyone?

Dr. Webber notices Albert's silly behavior. He strolls to stand right above him menacingly.

As Dr. Webber is about to speak, Mileva quickly closes her notebook and with great eagerness raises her hand.

DR. WEBER (CONT'D)

Fraulein. Please.

Mileva stands up. As she leaves her desk, she hits her leg on its edge. She stumbles but quickly corrects herself.

A few students chuckle quietly.

Everyone looks as she walks to the black board. Despite her limp, she holds her head high.

She writes on the board. A bout of nausea. She pauses.

Two students whisper mockingly amongst each other. Mileva notices.

MILEVA

Kollege, is anything the matter
with my work?

The two go quiet.

But, another student on the opposite end of the classroom raises his hand.

MALE STUDENT #1

Professor? Her equation is
unmistakably flawed.
(insolently, at Mileva)
She hasn't calculated the volume of
the tube.

MILEVA

I've included gravitational field
strength, the density of ...

MALE STUDENT #1

(interrupts)
You are missing surface tension,
aren't you?

MILEVA

(points to formula)
Do you mean this one here? Force
per unit length. It's right here.
(writes on the board, to
Dr. Webber)
Herr Professor, what was missing
was the radius of the tube, not the
volume.
(beat, turns to student)
Anyone who passed elementary
geometry should have known that.

Mileva sharply turns back to the board. While the student is left red faced, Albert smiles proudly.

MALE STUDENT #1
 (mumbles to self madly)
 Frigid old maid.

A confident Mileva finishes and puts the chalk down.

Dr. Weber approaches to verify.

Another sudden bout of nausea. She instinctively reaches for her belly and looks for Albert.

He winks and smiles proudly.

Dr. Weber's pretends to hesitate but finally smiles.

DR. WEBER
 Well. Well done, Fraulein Maric.
 (beat)
 Gentlemen, I certainly hope that next time you will pay more attention to method, rather than form.

The bell RINGS.

The students leave the classroom. The embarrassed student gives Mileva a dirty look.

Mileva takes time packing her bag. Albert wants to hang back but, with a stern look, Mileva urges him to leave. He does.

She is left alone with Dr. Weber and hesitates to leave the classroom.

DR. WEBER (CONT'D)
 Great showing, Fraulein. Rarely do you disappoint.

MILEVA
 Dr. Weber, I was wondering if I could talk to you for a moment?

DR. WEBER
 Sure, my dear.
 (gathers his papers)
 Walk with me.

Mileva follows Dr. Weber out the door.

INT. ETH HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Dr. Weber walks briskly. Mileva's limp prevents her from keeping up with him, but she does her best.

Dr. Weber bows his hat to several passing colleagues.

Mileva narrowly avoids a collision with a group of men.

DR. WEBER

Now, I'm afraid I know what this is about. It's the second time you failed the exam.

Mileva avoids another collision. She's out of breath. Dr. Weber opens the door to his office and they enter.

INT. DR. WEBER'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Mileva SLAMS the door behind her.

DR. WEBER

You never underperform. I can talk to your doctorate committee but ...

MILEVA

(out of breath)
There's no need, Professor.

Dr. Weber turns to Mileva, surprised. He comes closer and sizes her up. She's stands frozen from nerves.

Dr. Weber sees Mileva's hands protectively covering her belly.

DR. WEBER

It's that Swiss boy, isn't it?

Mileva nods a quiet 'yes'.

In a fit of a sudden rage, Dr. Weber swipes the books off the desk and they CRASH everywhere.

DR. WEBER (CONT'D)

(agitated)
This is exactly the reason why higher education is not meant for women.

(waves a clenched fist in frustration)
So much time and effort. Wasted. And for what?

(beat)
Babies. Pfff. Any fool can do that.

(calmer)
You were one of the first. I will never understand your kind.

Mileva crouches down and picks up books.

MILEVA

Not many would have a women like me
and he does. We love each other.

DR. WEBER

A woman like you?

Dr. Weber turns away. Mileva gently places the books back on the large desk. She looks down at her hands for a moment.

MILEVA

We, Albert and I, plan to continue
our ...

Dr. Weber chuckles. He lights up his pipe and casually picks up a portfolio with Mileva's name written on it.

DR. WEBER

Ah, Albert Einstein. First,
'remarks'. Then, lab fires. Now,
he's decimating my class.
(walks to fireplace)
All this for nothing.

As the last moment, Mileva appears and snatches the portfolio out of his hand. It has managed to char lightly at corners.

MILEVA

... our work! And to imply that
Albert loves me only to spite you
is ...

DR. WEBER

He took you away from me, didn't
he?
(sarcastically)
Congratulations Frau Einstein.

Mileva's taken aback.

Dr. Webber is also shocked and takes a moment to compose himself.

Then, he softly approaches her and cautiously takes the portfolio from her hand.

DR. WEBER (CONT'D)

My apologies.
(places portfolio on a
shelf)
(MORE)

DR. WEBER (CONT'D)

And *when*, not if but *when*, you come back to us at *Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule*, this will be right here waiting for you.

MILEVA

(gracefully)

Thank you.

DR. WEBER

(busies himself)

Now, would that be all?

Emotional, Mileva nods and starts to leave.

DR. WEBER (CONT'D)

Fraulein Maric.

Mileva turns back.

DR. WEBER (CONT'D)

My most sincere congratulations.
Truly.

Mileva smiles with genuine relief.

MILEVA

Thank you. Goodbye.

As Mileva exits, they both steal final glances.

INT. TRAIN COMPARTMENT - NIGHT - PRESENT

A sharp train WHISTLE wakes Mileva up. She jerks.

Mileva bring the letters to her chest and kisses them. She rubs her belly protectively.

She looks out the window and sees a small, modest train station. The train slows down as it enters the platform.

The station sign reads 'TITEL'.

Mileva sees her father waiting. He is the only one there. MILOS SR., is a tall, scrawny man in his late 40s. He wears a proper white-collar suit and a tired look on his face.

EXT. TRAIN - MOMENTS LATER

Mileva exits the train carrying a single suitcase.