

Two¹ Contributions to the Theory of Sex

for two actresses and two actors

by Ken Kaye

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Act I “A Case of Hysteria” Vienna, 1890

6 roles played by 2 female and 2 male actors (page 1)

Act II “A Case of Paranoia” Vienna, 1916

10 roles played by the same actors (page 50)

¹ **NOTE TO SELF:** The 3-act version, though brilliant, demands too much from the audience to work as a play. Here is a one-hour, simpler version.

Synopsis of *Two Contributions to the Theory of Sex*

Sigmund Freud's theories, that the greater part of mental life is unconscious, that adult behavior is largely rooted in childhood urges and frustrations, and that the latter include sexual instincts, were revolutionary and shocking when he first presented them, yet came to be more or less accepted today among educated people—though his clinical methods are barely in use.

This play neither seeks to idealize Freud nor to lampoon him, but uses Freud the clinician, Freud the lecturer, and Freud the iconoclast to tweak our ideas about sex and the unconscious. Each of its acts is based closely on actual cases that Freud treated and wrote about, though the cases are combined imaginatively and the audience is left to speculate about what was true and what was imagined — by the patients, by the doctor, and by the author.

-- Ken Kaye

Act I. “A Case of Hysteria” (Vienna, 1890)²

Frau Emmy von N. is a widow in her late 40s³

Fraulein Elisabeth, 20, is the youngest of Emmy’s three daughters

Helga is Emmy’s maid, played by the same actress.

Gunther, Emmy’s son-in-law and Elisabeth’s brother-in-law, is in his late 20s⁴

Elisabeth’s father, 55⁵ is played by the same actor as

Dr. Sigmund Freud, a neurologist/psychiatrist, aged 34.

At Rise: The sitting room of Frau Emmy’s rented house in a suburb of Vienna. The audience sees a foyer and front door to the right, separated from the sitting room by a portion of wall containing a closed door. House left, a door leads to the rest of the home. Half drawn curtains reduce the afternoon light; the lamps have not been lit.

Emmy reclines on a couch. Bloomers, drawers, and a camisole clothe her from elbow to neck to toe. Freud sits on the edge of the couch, massaging her legs. Helga stands at the side of the room, holding Emmy’s black dress, corset, and shoes.

Surprisingly, this is Sigmund Freud treating one of his first important cases.

² Adapted from Cases 2 and 5 in Freud and Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, first published in 1895. The following character descriptions quote that work.

³ a woman of “an unusual degree of education and intelligence” who has “traveled a great deal and has many lively interests.”

⁴ “not outstanding intellectually, but a man after the heart of these cultivated women, brought up as they had been in a school of consideration for others.”

⁵ “an extremely gifted and able man who had made a high position for himself as an industrialist on a large scale,”

FREUD

There, you see? Let the muscles relax. We stimulate the nerves, but we relax the muscles, eh? Now the other leg.

Massages silently, with patient grunting from time to time. Helga watches with interest.

EMMY

That feels good, doctor. I kno-o-ow you're right.

FREUD

You don't need to talk now. Just lie there for a few minutes. I'll borrow your *Frankfurt Times*, if I may, until you're ready to begin the hypnosis.

Taking the newspaper from a side table, he moves to the front of the stage, facing an audience of medical colleagues.

FREUD

A puzzling case. We have here an intelligent, capable woman, taking a leading role in civic organizations. Yet the poor lady is the victim of one of the most bizarre hysterias that I have ever seen.

In the background, Helga helps Emmy dress.

EMMY

(toward Helga) Keep still! Don't say anything! Don't touch me!

FREUD

(momentarily startled) When I first saw her, her face bore a strained and painful expression, her eyebrows were drawn together and her eyes cast down; there was a heavy frown on her forehead and her lips were tightly pursed. *(Emmy now sitting, Freud taking an arm chair opposite her.)* She spoke in a low voice, as though with great difficulty, stammering from time to time. Her fingers exhibited a ceaseless, almost spastic agitation, tightly clasped together.⁶ Furthermore, she frequently interrupted her remarks by producing a curious clacking sound from her mouth which defies imitation.

EMMY

Klhh! Klhh!

FREUD

Something like the call of a grouse. Yet what she told me was perfectly coherent. Having traveled to six or eight of the better spas in Germany and Austria to no avail, she has now taken this house for a year in the hope that we Viennese physicians can succeed where nature failed.

⁶ In the case, Freud also wrote "There were frequent convulsive tic-like movements of her face and the muscles of her neck, during which the right sterno-cleido- mastoid often stood out prominently."

I decided to try Dr. Breuer's technique of treatment under hypnosis. I also prescribed warm baths, and I massage her entire body twice a day.

Exit Helga

Frau Emmy is an excellent subject for hypnotism. I have only to hold up a finger in front of her (*does so*) and order her to go to sleep, and she sinks back with a dazed and confused look. (*She does so.*) Sleep well. Sleep deeply. All your symptoms will get better, day by day. Your pains will go away, and you will sleep well every night. Now you are sleeping deeply, but you can hear me and you can talk to me. (*pause*) Tell me your name, and then say my name. (*pause*) Tell me your name, and then say my name.

EMMY

Emmy.

Dr. Freud.⁷

FREUD

Emmy, when did you first begin to make the clacking sound?

EMMY

When Lili was dying.

FREUD

She died in childbirth?

EMMY

About a month afterward. (*pause*) I was sitting by her bed. I wanted to remain absolutely quiet. A mouse ran across the floor. (*shudders*) Oh! Horrid creature!

FREUD

You don't need to be afraid of it. There will always be things that startle you occasionally, but you will not need to make the clacking sound. All those symptoms of your nervous illness will go away, along with the sensations of cold in your legs. (*Emmy's demeanor relaxes.*) Can you remember being frightened by mice or other animals, earlier in your life?

EMMY

A toad terrified me, in the cellar. And I dreamt – many times – a vulture was tearing out my intestines. And a boy was tied up and they put a white mouse into his mouth, and he died of fright.

FREUD

You saw that?

⁷ "She spoke more slowly in hypnosis, with some delay each time before answering, but without her characteristic stammer. The facial tic and hand movements that had been frequent were now visible only at times of greatest stress, and completely absent under hypnosis."

EMMY

(clenching and unclenching hands) No.

FREUD

Who told you about that?

EMMY

My nurse.

FREUD

Something that your nurse told you, more than forty years ago. *(pause, looking at audience significantly.)* When you awaken, you will realize that such a thing is never going to happen to you, and it will not frighten you any more. *(pause)* You have had a deep, relaxing sleep. Out of ...

EMMY

(eyes still closed) I am not asleep, doctor. You are the one who is dreaming.

FREUD

Be that as it may, out of the hypnotic state you will completely forget about the toad in the cellar, the mouse that you mistook for a ball of wool. You will forget the dream about the vulture. None of those thoughts will ever frighten you again. *(Emmy is visibly relaxing.)* Furthermore, you will not be startled into making the clacking sound, any more. *(pause)* When I say your name, you will wake up thoroughly rested. Emmy.

EMMY

Oh. I feel rested, doctor. Ho-o—ow long was I asleep?

FREUD

Not long. Do you ...

Enter Elisabeth, an attractive but rather severely dressed young woman in black, who walks with a pronounced limp.

EMMY

(jumping up, startled, her face contorted into an expression of horror and disgust, spreading and crooking her fingers) Klhh! Elisabeth! My God! Klhh! Keep still! Don't say anything! Don't touch me! *(suddenly returns calmly to her chair)* Dr. Freud, have you met my daughter, Elisabeth?

ELISABETH

How are you today, doctor? Have I interrupted the treatment?

FREUD

No, no, I am just going. You've been out picking wildflowers?

ELISABETH

Aren't they lovely? Where shall we put them, mother? You see, I've brought lots of cyclamen. Do you like cyclamen, Dr. Freud?

FREUD

My second favorite flowers.

ELISABETH

And your favorite are ...?

FREUD

Artichokes! (*all laugh*)

EMMY

An angel, doctor, as I told you. An angel. Shall I expect you tomorrow, then? At eleven?

FREUD

I shall do my best not to be late for our session as I was this morning. Good day, madam. Good day, Fraulein.

Exit to the foyer, then downstage and out to a podium that stands just to the right of the set. Elisabeth and Emmy talk soundlessly for a minute, then (out of the light) help each other change for the next scene, in which Helga again stands by with Emmy's corset. Her black dress hangs over the folding screen.

FREUD

Perhaps I made some error in the way I gave the suggestion. One should not abandon a course of treatment on the basis of one failure. On the other hand, it would be foolish to imagine that this lady's symptoms were nothing more than an exaggerated fear of animals, or of being startled, or both, and that merely telling her under hypnosis to stop being afraid of those things would cure her. In the first place, we know that these creatures are symbols of the male sexual organ.

You scoff at that? Come on: a vulture's beak, tearing away at her body! To those who object to such assertions on the grounds of delicacy, I can only reply that such delicate sensibilities have no place in the medical profession. But if they object on grounds of skepticism, we can respond with good scientific evidence.

For example: An experimental psychologist named Schrötter made suggestions to subjects under deep hypnosis, and their dreams that night were full of symbolic transformations of his suggestions. If he told a subject to dream of normal or abnormal sexual intercourse, the dream, in obeying the suggestion, would make use of symbols in place of the sexual material, and those were the

same symbols already familiar to us from psychoanalysis. Difficulties are, however, thrown in the way of our forming an opinion of the value of these interesting experiments by the unfortunate circumstance that Dr. Schrötter committed suicide soon after reporting them.

But to return to Frau Emmy: I found her somewhat improved the next day, and a bit more each subsequent day. Fewer pains and cramps in her leg and neck, she had slept better, but the clacking and shouting, continued whenever she was startled, particularly when anyone came into the room unexpectedly. She kept coming up with new memories of being frightened, always insisting on a legitimate horror of such things rather than the underlying sexual anxiety that I knew must have been converted into the symptom.

Finally, one day under hypnosis:

Lighting returns to the room and couch where Emmy is under hypnosis, eyes half-closed. Freud moves to the chair next to her.

A hotel. You were in a hotel?

EMMY

(Shakes her head slowly but firmly.) I can't.

FREUD

(pause) You can tell me. The first time you behaved in that peculiar way, you were staying in a hotel.

EMMY

(overcoming great reluctance) At the spa in Schwarzwasser.

FREUD

(when she doesn't continue) During the day, or night?

EMMY

A waiter ... one of the waiters ... had concealed himself under my bed. *(pause)* He waited for me to retire, and then ... then he *(highly agitated)* threw himself upon me.

FREUD

(when she doesn't continue) And what happened?

EMMY

When I screamed, he ran out.

FREUD

(after thought) Would I be correct in supposing that ever since then, you are always most careful to lock your rooms, and to check under the bed and in the armoire for any intruder?

EMMY

Always.

FREUD

You have nothing to fear. Such a thing will not happen again. When you wake in a few moments, you will be free of your symptoms, having realized that the terrifying incident you experienced in Schwartzwasser will not happen to you again, anywhere, thanks to your appropriate caution.

He stands and moves away, addressing the audience again.

I must confess that I entertained some hope of having removed the symptom, not only through that direct suggestion, but also because it has been our experience that once a patient has gone back to the origin of her hysterical symptom, reawakening the unpleasant memories that had been repressed, a kind of catharsis occurs and the hysterical defense against those memories is no longer necessary. You can imagine my disappointment, therefore, the next day.

EMMY

I hope that you won't think ill of me. (*To offstage Helga.*) Please ask Elisabeth to come down. (*goes to couch and lies down.*)

FREUD

My dear lady, why should I think ill of you?

EMMY

My sister has written me about a naprapath in Munich who has extraordinary success curing nervous ailments. I have decided to go to Munich and try him.

FREUD

Oh, no, Frau Emmy, that would not be advisable at all. We have just begun a course of treatment that requires ...

EMMY

There, I said you would think ill of me.

FREUD

My dear lady, I do not think ill of you! It is only that I cannot allow you to ...

EMMY

My dear doctor, I cannot allow you to prolong a treatment that has been – he-e-elpful, but, let us say – as helpful as it is going to be. It takes away my pains for a day or two, but they return. (*Elisabeth knocks.*) Come in.

ELISABETH

You sent for me, Mother?

FREUD

Frau Emmy, I beg you to continue trusting in my care. It is really a matter of weeks before we can evaluate the progress.

EMMY

Now don't pout, doctor. I'm leaving you another patient in my place.

FREUD

Madam, you were right, I do think ill of you.

EMMY

I have told you about Elisabeth's pains whenever she walks. You yourself asked me about her limp.

ELISABETH

Mother, I must go with you.

EMMY

No, dear, I am through dragging you with me from one faint hope to the next. It is time to put your needs first. You must do everything Dr. Freud suggests.

(*to Freud*) Dr. Kauffman, the gynecologist, believes that her walking problems are due to a "retroverted uterus." Is that possible?

FREUD

Yes, quite possible. Has he given you abdominal massages, Fraulein?

ELISABETH

Yes, sir. And exercises to do four times a day.

FREUD

And did that help?

ELISABETH

Dr. Kauffman says my – "uterus" – is turned around the proper way now, but ...

EMMY

But she complains of a sore area on her leg. Show the doctor.

I thought perhaps your hypnosis might help her.

FREUD

Perhaps so. Perhaps. Would you like to come see me at the clinic, Elisabeth?

ELISABETH

If you think hypnosis will cure me.

FREUD

I am not sure that hypnosis is the way. But come around two o'clock tomorrow, and we shall see what we can do.

Freud comes downstage. Emmy and Elisabeth depart, taking the screen with them and making minor adjustments so the room is now Freud's clinic.

I find it hard to concentrate on the daughter's case while still smarting from the mother's resistance to my treatment. Frau Emmy would have been a very important case for me – I mean for psychoanalysis. But I'll later learn that I was only one in a long string of doctors whom she at first tantalized with a striking amelioration of her symptoms, then dropped like spurned suitors in favor of her true love, her neurotic illness. (*Aside:*) Prick teaser. (*Resuming lecture*) The whole masquerade served to maintain her control over the daughter, as a matter of fact, as much as to keep the doctors courting her.

Fortunately, Fraulein Elisabeth turned out to be one of my most successful cases.

Elisabeth sits at one end of the couch. Freud pokes her leg, through the dress.

There?

ELISABETH

Ohhh! Yes, that hurts.⁸

FREUD

And there?

ELISABETH

Ohhh!

FREUD

Fraulein, exactly when did these pains begin?

ELISABETH

I don't know, about three years ago.

FREUD

After your father died?

ELISABETH

Yes, I suppose so. Around that time.

⁸ "Her expression was as though feeling a voluptuous tickling sensation, at times throwing back her head and closing her eyes."

FREUD

Can you remember the very first time you felt the pains?

ELISABETH

Not really.

FREUD

Maybe I can help you remember.

ELISABETH

By hypnotizing me.

FREUD

Perhaps that won't be necessary. I want you to lean against my hand as I press your forehead. Close your eyes. Now, at the moment I remove my hand, something will come to you, and it will be the memory of that first time you had the leg pains. *(removes his hand)* What came into your mind?

ELISABETH

Nothing – to do with my leg.

FREUD

But you did remember something.

ELISABETH

I remembered – I used to rest Father's leg there, when I helped him exercise – you see, he couldn't leave his bed. And I remember one day –

Freud removes his jacket and trousers, lies on the couch with one leg on her lap and his eyes closed. The light dims. Elisabeth massages first Father's lower leg, then his thigh, with both hands. She is now talking through the space where Freud was, toward the audience.

This is embarrassing to talk about. Well, I suppose nothing shocks you. I don't want you to think what I felt was of a – sexual nature, I'm sure it wasn't that – and after all it was only his legs – the legs of a fifty-five-year-old man, in a weak and feeble condition. But I remember thinking, I am stroking a man, or something like that. And I was sure he wouldn't feel anything – inappropriate, but I just sort of wondered, if one were a nurse in a military hospital, and if the patient were a young soldier, and if one stroked him like this, would it be – dangerous?

She covers him with an afghan.

I got up from his bed, thinking, oww! I sat in one position too long with his heavy leg resting on me. But it's never gone away.

Realizing she is not going to continue, Freud suddenly rises and puts on his pants and jacket.

FREUD

So that was earlier than the onset of your stiffness in walking.

ELISABETH

I suppose so. Perhaps a year earlier.

FREUD

Our time is up for today. Can you come each day at the same time? I should warn you that it may take a few weeks to get to the root of the problem.

ELISABETH

I would be so happy if your “talking cure” actually takes my pains away. Shall I try to remember the first time I had the problem walking?

FREUD

No, my dear. There’s no homework. I shall see you at two o’clock tomorrow.

He comes downstage to the podium. Elisabeth leaves through the anteroom, returning quietly toward the end of this lecture.

Rather a contrast, eh? Between the hostile resistance that sends the mother to a “naprapath” in Munich and the alacrity with which the daughter promises to devote herself to the talking cure. But rest assured that we shall encounter resistance in the daughter’s case as well; and more than that delicacy that stopped her from saying she observed my – I mean her father’s – erection just then. The resistance is nearly always as great as the desire for help.

As this is the first time in the course of these lectures that I have touched upon sex quite so explicitly, let me say that psychoanalysis sees no occasion for euphemism. With material so important, we shall call everything by its true name, and the fact that I am speaking to a mixed audience can make no difference in this. The women present, by appearing in this lecture room, have tacitly expressed your desire to be treated on the same footing as the men.

Fraulein Elisabeth, have you remembered what I told you not to bother trying to remember?

ELISABETH

Yes! I mean, I didn’t try to remember. But I do remember now.

FREUD

What?

ELISABETH

When my affliction began, this – limping. We were in Karlsbad, the summer before last. My sister, Lili, the middle one? She was in the third month of her pregnancy. She was terribly ill – the morning sickness, they call it, only she was sick all day and all night. Gunther, my brother-in-law, asked me to go with them to Karlsbad in order to help Lili, and I lived with them all that summer.

FREUD

This is the sister who died.

ELISABETH

Yes.

FREUD

Where does he live?

ELISABETH

That is a big family issue now because after Lili died Mother wanted us to keep the child, but he insisted on keeping it and then he moved to Berlin.

FREUD

I see. Anyway, you were staying in Lili's house that summer, and she was ill, and you remember when you first began walking with a limp?

ELISABETH

We had been out for a long walk – up the Pass, to see the falls – there's a kind of inn up there, and we stopped for a glass of wine, and then all the way home. I think we left about noon and didn't return until evening.

FREUD

A very long walk for your sister, being with child.

ELISABETH

No, just Gunther and myself.

Gazes off to the left forestage where Gunther appears, strolling, carrying his jacket, a dashing young man in a straw hat and eyeglasses.

Anyway, that night my legs stiffened up, and the next day I couldn't walk at all. We thought it was just over-exertion, you know, and we even laughed about it, but it never got better ...

FREUD

What do you remember about that afternoon with Gunther?

ELISABETH

Nothing, really. I've never thought of it from that day until now.

FREUD

What comes to you now?

ELISABETH

Only that it was the last time I could walk without pain and stiffness in my legs.
(*Gets up, takes parasol, joins Gunther at side of stage, takes his arm, laughs.*)
Yes, I shall! Why should I not pretend?

GUNTHER

My dear sister-in-law, it is not fair of you to pretend to be my sweetheart, when I, as a married man, may not pretend to be yours.

ELISABETH

I don't care if it's fair or not. It's the loveliest day of the summer, and other girls are out walking with their sweethearts, and I shall pretend what I choose!
(*laughs*)

GUNTHER

(*amused*) But suppose an eligible bachelor comes by and fails to recognize you as a potential sweetheart for him?

ELISABETH

You and Lili are supposed to be finding one for me, didn't you know?

GUNTHER

No one told me that. What are your specifications?

ELISABETH

He must be about – this tall, have a [*color of Gunther's*] mustache, wear glasses ...

GUNTHER

Eyeglasses!? Elisabeth, a girl as pretty as you deserves a man with good eyesight.

ELISABETH

No, no; intellectual. He must wear glasses.

GUNTHER

Well, other things are more important. Frau Emmy will insist that he be rich.

ELISABETH

An intellectual! He will never be rich.

GUNTHER

He must be very clever.

ELISABETH

Why? Am I not clever enough for both of us?

GUNTHER

And modest.

ELISABETH

No, no, he should think well of himself.

FREUD

(interrupting) So, for a long time you had been in love with your brother-in-law.

ELISABETH

No! Ooh, these pains! My legs! Oh, my God, doctor, is there nothing you can do for my pain?

FREUD

That was more than an idle flirtation.

ELISABETH

No, no, no! Ooh, God, my legs.

FREUD

Think, Elisabeth. Think of what your fantasies were.

ELISABETH

(after a pause) Yes, I shall! Why should I not pretend?

GUNTHER

My dear sister-in-law, it is not fair of you to pretend to be my sweetheart, when I, as a married man, may not pretend to be yours.

ELISABETH

I don't care if it's fair or not. It's the loveliest day of the summer, and other girls are out walking with their sweethearts, and I shall pretend what I choose!
(laughs)

GUNTHER

Very well. *(Embraces her and kisses her) .)*

ELISABETH

(she responds passionately at first, then pushes him away) No! *(to Freud)* Stop it! Oww! It is not true, you are making me think those things. Oh, God! It is not true, I am not capable of such wickedness. Never, never, never, never! Stop saying such things!

FREUD

(pause) What were the thoughts that came to you as you were walking that day with your brother-in-law?

ELISABETH

(Hesitates, but returns to Gunther) Yes, I shall! Why should I not pretend?

GUNTHER

My dear sister-in-law, it is not fair of you to pretend to be my sweetheart, when I, as a married man, may not pretend to be yours.

ELISABETH

I don't care if it's fair or not. It's the loveliest day of the summer, and other girls are out walking with their sweethearts, and I shall pretend what I choose!
(laughs)

Gunther pulls away, distraught..

Gunther! What is it?

GUNTHER

Oh, my God, I can't tell you.

ELISABETH

You can tell me, Gunther. Trust me. I was Father's best friend and confidante, you know. I can be yours, too.

GUNTHER

Not about this.

ELISABETH

What is it? *(Offers her hand; he rises.)*

GUNTHER

I never loved your sister. It was you I loved, from the first day I came to the house, but you were only a girl of sixteen. I hoped that by marrying Lili, I would come to love her, but I cannot stop thinking of you. When I'm with her, it is you I see *(they embrace)*; when I make love to her, it is your alluring body I conjure up, your tender caresses I long for with every centimeter of my hard, hot ...

FREUD

All right, all right! (*Turns to audience as Elisabeth and Gunther disappear.*) It was easy to prove to her that the fantasies she herself had told me admitted of no other interpretation than that she had long been head over heels in love with her brother-in-law. But it was a long time before I could convince her that we are not responsible for our feelings. She was reluctant to forgive herself for what she considered great wickedness toward her late sister, even though it was only in fantasy. Eventually I managed to get across to Elisabeth that her falling ill in these circumstances, somaticizing her guilt in the form of her hysterical symptoms, was sufficient evidence of her moral character.

But I didn't rely on psychoanalysis alone to achieve the full cure. I also ordered Elisabeth to go out to parties with people of her own age, to stop dressing in black and carrying a mournful expression with her wherever she went; and she followed these prescriptions as diligently as though they had been medicine tablets to be swallowed four times daily.

This positive response inspired me to take an even more friendly interest in her life.

EMMY

(*Entering room from interior*) Dr. Freud, so go-oo-ood to see you.

FREUD

Frau Emmy, how are you?

EMMY

No better for having seen my naprapath, I assure you. But no worse, either. I have decided that my whole problem is due to poor diet and insufficient exercise. You won't agree with that, of course.

FREUD

My dear lady, there is no substitute for a good, balanced diet and moderate constitutional exercise every day. Of course, you should resume your therapy with me as well.

EMMY

None of that just now. Your patient is Elisabeth. She seems to walk without any pain at all. I don't know whether to thank you or the gynecologist for that. Do you think she is cured?

FREUD

Absolutely not. I must tell you that she has the oldest disease known to mankind. She is in love.

EMMY

Oh, piffle, I've known that for some time, doctor. I'll find a husband for her and cure that. But surely you don't mean to sugge-e-est that there was nothing else wrong with her?

FREUD

That's exactly what I'm suggesting; nothing wrong but the exhilarating feelings of love combined with guilt about feeling that way toward her late sister's husband, expressed in her horror at noticing, I suspect, the physical manifestation of his sexual interest.

EMMY

For that you went to medical school?

FREUD

Frau Emmy, I hope you'll forgive me if I seem to meddle in your family affairs?

EMMY

Go on.

FREUD

May I ask how long you have known with whom your daughter has been in love?

EMMY

Elisabeth had a schoolgirl infatuation with Gunther from the day he walked into our house.

FREUD

Then – do you think that, having been bereaved over a year now, and with your grandchild to raise, he might be interested in marrying Elisabeth?

EMMY

I know it for a fact. Gunther wrote to me three months ago proposing to do exactly that.

FREUD

Well, that's wonderful!

EMMY

My dear Dr. Freud, it is not wonderful. Frankly, I can make a better match for Elisabeth. Gunther's prospects were good at one time, but he has clearly not made the success of himself that my late husband and I had hoped for. I trust that you will not tell Elisabeth of his proposal.

FREUD

Oh, but madam, their love is a ...

EMMY

I don't wish to speak further of the matter. Frankly, doctor, love has nothing to do with it.

FREUD

(to audience, as lights behind him dim) Love has nothing to do with marriage? Oy! *(Shakes head, then shrugs; goes to podium)* But what am I? A marriage broker? This is a time to step aside. You can lead your patients to understanding, but you can't make them act on it.

The sad truth is, Frau Emmy has the power to bring Elisabeth's neurotic symptoms back, and to keep her at home as long as she needs her there. The psychoanalyst is not half so powerful in the interest of his cure as the patient's family can be in opposing it.

I must admit that I was almost as far from solving the mystery of Fraulein Elisabeth's symptoms, when I completed her analysis, as I was from solving the mystery of her mother's symptoms when that lady terminated her own cure so abruptly and prematurely. You might say that we found the reason for the daughter's hysteria, but not the how. It originated in her anxiety over sexual arousal, confused with the seductive aspects of her relationship with her father – no doubt unintentional on his part. Her symptom served to keep far from her awareness the fact that she longed for her sister's husband, a sin made all the worse when the sister died.

But we cannot yet explain why her hysteria took the particular form of a limp and sore leg. The truth is that we have absolutely no idea how mental pains can be converted into physical pains. No idea at all.

(Lighting his cigar) Now we take a short break. Those of you gentlemen who smoke, I must warn you that some self-styled comedians with but little knowledge of psychology cannot resist an occasion such as this to make jokes about cigars, cigarettes, and pipes. Such jokes are a defense mechanism by which orally fixated compulsives deny themselves one of the normal pleasures of life. The kindest thing to do is, tactfully ignore them and enjoy your smoke.

END OF ACT I

Act II. A Case of Paranoia (Vienna, 1916)⁹

Captain Heinrich von H., “a young officer, home on short leave of absence.”

A male physician in the audience played by the same actor.

The Captain’s Mother-in-law, 60

Frau Doctor Elisabeth Dietrich, 46, formerly Fraulein Elisabeth from Act I, now played by the older actress.

A female physician in the audience, the same actress.

Marie, 20, the mother-in-law’s maid

A streetwalker (silent) played by the same actress.

Anna Freud, 18, played by the same actress.

A female medical student in the audience, the same actress.

Sigmund Freud, 60, now famous as a revolutionary influence on Western thought and culture.

Freud’s consulting room is furnished with his collection of primitive figurines, along with books and personal memorabilia such as pictures of Rome, group photographs of psychoanalytic societies and international lecture tour, etc.

His first speech is in dim light, a soliloquy.

FREUD

I am reading a lecture to the Botany department of a large German university. Somehow I get bogged down in the introductory explanation. The audience keeps interrupting me with questions and arguments, and I try to assure them “I’ll come to that question later in the lecture” or “That’s the subject for a different lecture.” But members of the audience persist in standing and expounding their own views.

An hour passes. I have yet to reach the body of my talk. As I read each page, I peel it off the top of my manuscript, letting it fall from the podium; I seem to do this with increasing violence as though to force my way into the heart of the

⁹ The cast might read the Sixteenth Lecture in Freud’s *General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, first published in 1920. If further background reading is desired, browse *The Interpretation of Dreams*.

Act II

matter, but each time the next page seems to repeat and belabor the same opening statement, which invites more irrelevant questions – and answers – from the audience. It seems that everyone here is an expert on my subject. They have ceased to pay attention to me. I shout, “Excuse me!” I raise my hand, I wave my arms. “Hey, remember me? Your guest speaker?” But they ignore all my attempts to get a word in.

I wake up trembling like a child who has suffered a nightmare of monsters and torture.

Lights up during the last two sentences to reveal Freud sitting in his armchair at the head of the couch, with a cigar in his hand. The door to the waiting room is slightly ajar. The captain enters the waiting room, looks around, and seeing the door ajar, knocks on it.

FREUD

Ja?

HEINRICH

Dr. Freud?

FREUD

Yes, Captain von H. (*rising*) You are punctual.

HEINRICH

Dr. Freud, good of you to see me on such short notice. As I explained to the young lady on the telephone, ...

FREUD

Wait a moment, please. Go back and close the door. (*Turns away from him to return to his chair; after the captain has closed the door, Freud waves him to the other armchair.*) It annoys me immensely when people do that, whether they are patients or one-time visitors. They are saying, “There is no one out in your waiting room; you were available on short notice; you are not so very important that anyone else is likely to arrive, so there is no need to close the door.” Hostile gestures like that should be responded to in kind. You were saying?

HEINRICH

Well (*taken aback*). I am here on behalf of my wife’s family. Arriving home last week on short leave of absence, I found my wife, her brother, and their parents – three households – in consternation and bitterness over my mother-in-law’s irrational behavior. Everyone seems convinced that nothing more can be done about it, but having studied psychology in the university and read your Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis, it occurred to me that our good lady might make a suitable patient for you.

FREUD

Have you discussed the idea with her?

HEINRICH

I would like to do that, upon your recommendation. I believe that she respects my judgment immensely, and that she would be inclined to such a suggestion, as she herself constantly acknowledges that her ideas are crazy. I must say, she is in the greatest distress. (*pause*)

FREUD

Please go on.

HEINRICH

My in-laws are most happily married, and live in the country some few miles from the town of B _____. A few months ago, an incomprehensible thing happened. My mother-in-law received an anonymous letter telling her that her excellent husband was carrying on an intrigue with a young girl. With no evidence other than the letter, she believed it on the spot, and since then her happiness has been destroyed. The incredible thing, to all of us in the family, is this: We know who wrote the letter – a housemaid of hers, who had a grudge against the young woman who was named. My mother-in-law fired the housemaid, and no longer believes the contents of the letter. She laughs at the whole incident. Yet she has only to hear the other girl's name mentioned, or encounter a member of the girl's family on the street, for a new attack of suspicion, agony, and reproaches to break out.

FREUD

Definitely.

HEINRICH

Definitely?

FREUD

Your mother-in-law should definitely come and see me. (*rising*)

HEINRICH

Well then (*rising*), I shall have her make an appointment as soon as possible. You will bill her husband for her treatment, of course, but as to today's appointment, I would rather bear the cost of this interview myself. (*Taking billfold from his pocket.*)

FREUD

Sir, the only price you will pay for this interview will be the disappointing discovery that your in-laws may end up less grateful to you for your concern than they ought to be.

HEINRICH

(nodding thoughtfully) I appreciate your saying that, doctor. Good day.

FREUD

Good day.

Goes to podium; Captain is careful to close the door on his way out.

Mystery number one: as you may have noted, this young officer is on leave in the middle of a war – a stupid war, a hopeless war from our side – in which nine out of ten of his men will be killed, wounded, or captured. Yet he takes it upon himself to worry about his mother-in-law's mental health, and further to assume the role of a family rescuer. Is it merely that here is the only front on which he can hope to score a victory? Or does his concern for the lady go deeper?

Mystery number two: This officer does not come from the intellectual circle here in Vienna in which psychoanalysis has managed to gain some understanding and respect. By all indications, his people belong to a faction of nationalists who are vocally anti-Semitic and openly contemptuous of Viennese culture. We Jews are seen as conniving, conspiring, enemies of the true Germans – those good Christian Germans whose loyalty to the Kaiser has dragged Austria into this war in which she has already been decimated yet is not free to sue for peace. Is this captain's interest in psychoanalysis so strong, and his concern for his in-laws so sincere that he crossed enemy lines, as it were, to get treatment for her? Or is he a spy, a saboteur, bent on proving that Sigmund Freud is a charlatan and his theories are impotent?!

Mother-in-law goes straight through to sit on the couch.

I found the captain's mother-in-law to be exactly as he described her, a well preserved lady of fifty-three, who gave exactly the same account her son-in-law had given. Her housemaid had cherished a positively venomous hatred for another girl from her own village, of no better family than herself, but who had succeeded better in life. Instead of going into service, the other young woman obtained a commercial training, then a job in the factory of the same employer and, owing to wartime vacancies, had been promoted to a good position. She was even addressed in the office as "Fraulein." The girl who had become a lowly housemaid was only too ready to accuse her former schoolmate of all possible evil.

Marie enters through the interior door, opens the window blinds, and begins dusting the house where she is employed. Freud doesn't appear to see her as he re-enters the consulting room.

Now, my patient had a tendency to discuss confidential matters with her housemaid perhaps a little too freely, and one day she happened to be discussing an elderly gentleman who had visited the house.

Act II

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

One feels such a hypocrite, knowing what one does about him and yet receiving him and his wife as though one knew nothing of it. You know what I'm referring to, of course.

MARIE

No, ma'am.

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Oh, everyone says he keeps a mistress! It's common knowledge, Marie, I suppose it must be true. And if everyone else knows about it, his wife surely does, too – and knows that everyone knows. I cannot imagine anything more awful than to hear that my husband had a mistress! (*Moment's pause, then turns to Freud.*) It was the day after I made that remark to Marie that the anonymous letter arrived. It was perfectly obvious.

FREUD

That your maid got the idea from you yourself.

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Precisely. That's what's so silly, how I could have believed it, even for a moment!

MARIE

(*to Freud*) She obviously wanted to believe it!

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Nonsense. How dare you?

MARIE

(*excitedly*) She wishes her husband did have a mistress. (*Saucily sits on the arm of Freud's chair.*)

MARIE AND CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

(*in unison*) That kind, considerate, moral gentleman!

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

(*to Marie*) Leave the stage at once.

Marie ignores her.

FREUD

As you recall making that remark to Marie about a mistress, what associations come to mind?

Act II

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

(pause) Nothing important. *(pause, during which Marie returns to dusting as before.)* I cannot imagine anything more awful than to hear that my husband had a mistress!

(Moment's pause, then turns back to Freud.) I was thinking that I told the story recently to Heinrich – my son-in-law, whom you met – but that was months after it happened.

Heinrich enters from the interior, kisses his mother-in-law, kisses Marie, and then kisses Freud. He sits on the arm of Freud's chair, wearing the same uniform but with a sword at his belt and dress helmet under his arm. He hands the helmet to Freud, who is uncertain what to do with it.

Heinrich is everything we desired for our Lisa. A man of the world. That is one compensation for the officer's life. If only this war would end before ... Of course, Lisa has not been able to travel with him.

Marie, by a few adjustments in her costume has become a streetwalker of the period.

She has such a good husband.

Heinrich walks past the streetwalker, responds to a gesture, and they exit together.

Like her father – a good, kind, considerate man. I've been very lucky. It's natural for a man to become less interested in the physical side of love in middle age, as you must know. I have had to face up to that. Frankly, doctor, I don't know about other women my age, but I still long for it.

FREUD

In an active, healthy woman like yourself, madam, it is normal for sexual desires to continue unabated.

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

I sometimes think about it – a good deal. And men no longer do, at sixty, do you?

FREUD

Many men continue as sexually active as ever. Some do not, for a variety of reasons. Have you talked with your husband about it?

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Oh, no.

Act II

FREUD

No, of course not. Heaven forbid! Yet you seem comfortable enough discussing sex with me; why not with the person whose privilege it has been to share those pleasures with you?

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

But you are a doctor. I ...

FREUD

Your husband is, I am told, an intelligent and sensible man; and you say he is kind and considerate. In any case, no doctor can advise you without knowing more about your husband's libido.

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Perhaps I should resign myself to things as they stand.

FREUD

And torture yourself with fantasies about your son-in-law?

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

I beg your pardon?

FREUD

Fantasies about your son-in-law. You are infatuated with him.

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Oh, my, no, I love him as a son, and I couldn't ask for a better son-in-law.

FREUD

Unless it were one as handsome and virile as Heinrich, who would slip into your bed after the household is asleep ...

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

(Rising, gathering her purse, etc.) You must be mad.

FREUD

My dear woman, I am only stating out loud what you already know. Your son-in-law is the focus of all your sexual energies. You have been obsessed with him, day and night. You feel terribly guilty, of course, not only on account of your marriage vows, but perhaps more because he is your daughter's husband. Nonetheless, there it is. You ...

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

(fleeing) Excuse me, I'm sorry, I should never have ...

FREUD

Don't be sorry! Be glad!

Act II

Chases her out to the waiting room

Allow those fantasies into your consciousness, and don't feel ashamed of them. It is not as though you had acted upon them!

Oh, my. Not my best bedside manner, I guess.

Comes back in, closing the waiting room door behind him; steps downstage to address the audience.

You see, don't you, that the young man must have sensed her lust and been aroused by it himself, at the same time he was disgusted and terrified by it. Thus his initiative in getting her to see me. But what you don't see is what would only have become clear to this woman after an extensive analysis: the fact that her infatuation with her son-in-law does not stem merely from the loss of heterosexual relations with her husband, but even more from the loss of the tenderness and intimacy with her daughter that the young man robbed her of. What she fled from was not me, nor my bluntness in saying what she already knew, but the fear that psychoanalysis might penetrate to what only her Id knows: that she has long had strong homoerotic feelings toward her daughter, and that her fantasy of the husband's mistress is about her wish to have a mistress of her own!

Sits at his desk and begins writing. Anna and Elisabeth enter the outer room from the street.

ANNA

Come in, Dr. Dietrich. I'm sure he has had his last appointment of the day.

ELISABETH

Anna, I won't call you Anna unless you call me Betty.

ANNA

Betty, then! But now I have a confession to make, and you must forgive me for not telling you weeks ago.

ELISABETH

What is that?

ANNA

I read your case.

ELISABETH

What do you mean?

ANNA

Right after we became friends and you told me you had seen Father years ago about some neurotic symptoms, you remember I asked you a little about what those symptoms were?

Act II

ELISABETH

Yes, I didn't mind.

ANNA

What I learned from you were enough details to look up his report of the case.

ELISABETH

I wasn't aware he had reported it.

ANNA

Oh, yes. You were one of his most important early patients. And he'll be delighted that I brought you round. (*Knocks softly*) Papa?

FREUD

Ja? Is that you, Anna?

ANNA

(*Breezing into the room, Elisabeth in tow.*) Father, I made a friend at the Orphanage, and I've brought her home to meet you.

FREUD

How do you do?

ANNA

Dr. Betty Dietrich. And you have met before, Papa. About twenty-five, twenty-six years ago. You must guess who this is!

FREUD

Betty – ?

ELISABETH

I was Fraulein Elisabeth von N. (*imitates the stiff walk of Elisabeth in Act I*)

FREUD

But of course! I do remember! Retroverted uterus, stiff leg, hysterical hyperalgesia and abasia. I hope your symptoms haven't recurred?

ELISABETH

Oh, no (*showing that she walks normally*), I've been fortunate, doctor. That uterus of mine served well through six pregnancies, and I've four surviving children to show for it. Doting husband, active life. He is the reason I'm in Austria, in fact: My husband is General Gunther Dietrich, the Kaiser's military representative to your Emperor.

FREUD

My daughter said "Doctor"?

Act II

ELISABETH

Yes, I'm a pediatrician, so, in Vienna for the past eight months, I have tried to make myself useful at the Orphanage.

FREUD

Has Anna warned you, doctor, that this household lacks patriotic enthusiasm for the Great War?

ELISABETH

It is a disheartening situation. Anyone in your country who feels enthusiasm for it at this point, patriotic or otherwise, ought to have his head examined.

ANNA

Betty and I have had long talks about the war, Papa.

ELISABETH

I understand your feelings, believe me. In fact, even my husband was saying that our Austrian kinsmen deserve Germany's eternal gratitude for supporting our southern front.

FREUD

Kinsmen? Our language is German and our culture is German; but speaking as a Jew, doctor, few Germans regard us as kinsmen or allies.

ELISABETH

My husband and I, Dr. Freud, do not belong to that segment of German opinion. Nor does my mother, as you will recall – anti-Semitism is not one of her many faults.

FREUD

Your mother – wait a minute – Frau Emmy von N. Oh, yes, she was a problem. Still living?

ELISABETH

And making my sister and me, and our families, miserable.

FREUD

I am sorry for her.

ELISABETH

Actually, I'm sorry for her, too. Instead of being able to enjoy her grandchildren, her only contact with us is through our solicitors. It has been going on all these years, ever since I married my brother-in-law ...

ANNA

Your dead sister's husband!

Act II

ELISABETH

Yes. Mother wanted to find a rich husband for me, because she was afraid that any son-in-law who wasn't terribly wealthy would squander our money and leave her penniless.

FREUD

And did that happen?

ELISABETH

Of course not. But I am sure you see many people, Dr. Freud, who can never be satisfied.

FREUD

I'm afraid that is not, in itself, a clinical condition. It's a human condition, for which there is no cure. Have you read any of my work, Dr. Dietrich? Or only what my detractors say about it?

ELISABETH

As a pediatrician, I am familiar with some of your theories on infancy. Not long ago I heard one of your former students lecture, a Dr. Alfred Adler, who ...

FREUD

Adler! He is one of my betrayers, who downplay the role of sexuality in infancy in order to gain greater acceptance for psychoanalysis – that is, for their sanitized version of psychoanalysis, compromising scientific truth for public acceptance. What is worse, they propound such views as part of a conspiracy to discredit me personally.

ANNA

You don't mean that, Papa.

FREUD

I do! Only half an hour ago I had a patient who was a plant.

ANNA

A plant? (*glances at a vase of flowers or plant*)

FREUD

Planted here, you know? Like a bomb, with the intention of destroying my reputation.

ELISABETH

Do you still massage your patients?

FREUD

Never. Physical contact tends to inflame the patient's sexual fantasies.

Act II

*They look at one another as if trying to recall,
then each looks away for a moment of private
thought.*

I expose myself to enough slander without fueling it in that way.

ELISABETH

Is it – uh – possible, sir, that you provoke unnecessary animosity from some of your colleagues by being so adamant on the question of the sexual drives?

FREUD

Adamant!? You speak as if it were a matter of negotiation rather than a question of truth. You don't know what you are talking about!

ANNA

Papa ...

ELISABETH

Excuse me, I ...

FREUD

In the first place, get it right! It's not my emphasis upon the sexual and other aggressive drives that makes me the object of satire and vilification by the medical mainstream. (*Holds up newspaper.*) It is because we dared to speak the unspeakable: that the object of the infant's sexuality is incestuous. A fact which, by the way, was perfectly evident to Sophocles two thousand years ago. Do you recall the lines in which Jocasta consoles her troubled Oedipus?

ELISABETH AND ANNA

(*in unison, a Chorus*) "Many a man, in dreams, hath lain with her who bore him. He sleeps best who with such omens troubles not his mind."

FREUD

Our studies of the "Oedipus complex," doctor, which we discovered through the interpretation of dreams, throw more light than was hitherto dreamt of on the history of the human race and the evolution of religion and morality – to say nothing of warfare. In fact, your husband "the Kaiser's military representative" should read my next book.

ELISABETH

(*pacifying*) I shall read your book. I cannot promise that my husband will. I apologize for dropping in like this, uninvited.

ANNA

But you were invited! Papa, please be more gracious.

Act II

FREUD

I beg your pardon. I was ranting. I am glad to learn that you lead a happy and productive life. But now I must ask you to excuse me.

ELISABETH

Not before you see what I brought you. (*From her purse she gives him an artichoke, wrapped in fancy paper.*) I told Anna I would bring you a present that would make you laugh.

FREUD

What's this? An artichoke?

ELISABETH

Oh, you don't remember! (*disappointed*) Whenever I see one, I recall your joking that your favorite flowers were artichokes.

FREUD

Did I? You know, I probably wasn't joking. Thank you; I shall consume your present this very evening, while you, no doubt, will be dining with the aristocracy and regaling them with your account of Sigmund Freud the madman. We mustn't keep you.

ANNA

Father!

ELISABETH

Good day, doctor. I will see you tomorrow, Anna.

ANNA

(*shows her to door*) He suffers from abdominal pains, Dr. Dietrich, I mean Betty. Please forgive his testiness.

ELISABETH

Say no more about it, dear. It makes no difference. (*exit*)

ANNA

Papa, you were rude to her!

FREUD

Insufferable woman.

ANNA

She is a lovely woman; it's you who were insufferable. Your abdominal pain again, isn't it?

FREUD

I suppose it is. (*collapsing on couch*) But how does she presume to challenge me ...

Act II

ANNA

Yes, I know. Let me massage it. (*unbuttons his vest, gently massages his abdomen.*) You have had a bad day.

FREUD

I suppose.

ANNA

Had to psychoanalyze a plant, poor man. (*both laugh*)

FREUD

I always wanted to be a botanist, anyway. (*sigh*) It's the price of success. I don't see how I could have avoided this, but it certainly is a pitiful state of affairs, isn't it? My every word published and translated throughout the world, lecture tours offered at mouth-watering fees, while at the same time I am pilloried and ridiculed – and nowhere more than here in the city where I have lived my whole life. And where my children are trying to live as normal members of society. It must be hard for you.

ANNA

Not so hard. Shhh.

FREUD

She was a most interesting case, though.

ANNA

Betty?

FREUD

Who is Betty? Oh. No, I mean the mother-in-law – that plant. She was most human, as a matter of fact. Sexually frustrated, therefore in the grip of a fantasy that she twisted around to make it less threatening, and then couldn't shake off. (*pause*) A most attractive woman, too.

ANNA

You felt sexually attracted to her?

FREUD

(*hesitates*) You mustn't ask me that. So you don't misunderstand, I will tell you that a psychoanalyst does use his own sensations of attraction as clues to what the patient is feeling toward him. Or, more precisely, what the patient feels toward the person he has come to represent for her.

ANNA

In other words, you were sexually attracted to her.

Act II

FREUD

(pushing her hands away) Let me have a nap before dinner.

ANNA

I wonder whether the stirring you feel in such a situation is really sexual, or something else? Could she seem attractive to you because she needs help and you need to rescue people? Could the need she stirs be your need to be appreciated, rather than a sexual need?

FREUD

You're asking an astute question. It's funny, though, I just had a completely different association. Something flashed through my mind that I'd not thought of in many years.

Anna has moved her chair to a position just upstage of the couch, facing it, occasionally making a note on a small pad.

Both. All. The whole anti-Semitic lot: Jung, all of them. Cowards and traitors.

ANNA

You're paranoid.

FREUD

What did you say?!

ANNA

It breaks my heart to say. Yet I am sure you, of all people, know ...

FREUD

What did you say? I didn't hear you.

ANNA

I didn't say anything.

FREUD

You think I'm paranoid.

ANNA

Forget it.

FREUD

(Erupting from the couch; this time she is cognizant of his location.) Go follow your friend's beloved Dr. Adler! You don't need to study with me. Any one of them would love nothing more than to be your training analyst. You had a schoolgirl's infatuation with Jung from the day he entered this apartment – and if you don't think he was more interested in your adolescent body than in your adoring mind, then you don't know Jung!

ANNA

Well, Papa, if I do train with someone else some day, then you will do what you will do. (*Trying to conceal the tears that come with confronting him.*) But you revile me in advance, on the assumption that you already know I am going to “betray” you. Either you don’t regard me as capable of analyzing the evidence, reaching scientific conclusions, and arguing cogently for the truth, regardless of its palatability – or you aren’t really confident that your own conclusions will stand scientific scrutiny. Which is it?

FREUD

Nonsense.

ANNA

Which is it? Do you believe that I am stupid? Or are you afraid that you may be wrong and your “traitors,” as you call them, may be right?

FREUD

You think I’m paranoid.

ANNA

Yes, I do. And as long as we’re not mincing words, I have read enough of your writings on paranoia to understand all that the diagnosis implies.

FREUD

Oh, no, you haven’t. A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, my daughter. Don’t tell me about paranoia. I wrote the book on paranoia. And if you knew the first thing about it, you’d know that accusing their victim of paranoia is the refuge of conspirators.

ANNA

I know, “Just because you’re paranoid doesn’t mean they aren’t out to get you.” But I also know that just because they’re really out to get you doesn’t mean they won’t shit on you even more when they find out you’re paranoid.

She stares him down. After a few moments, Freud once again lies back on the couch. Anna resumes taking notes.

FREUD

Last night’s dream: I had just published a brilliant monograph on the coca plant, its anatomical structure and its medicinal uses. This is true, by the way, except that I published the work thirty years ago. In the dream, I open the monograph and the pages come off, from the outside, like the petals of a flower.

Act II

What association comes to me now? My father bought us a book, my sister and me, when we were very small, bought us a very pretty book with engravings of animals, as I recall, knowing that we would only pull it apart. My mother must have protested that we were too young to care for such a beautiful book, yet he insisted that it didn't matter, that even as we tore it we would learn something from it. And in the dream, that is what I do, I tear the leaves off my book and eat them ...

ANNA

Like an artichoke!

FREUD

Yes, like an artichoke. The truth is, I do like artichokes. How uncanny.

*He sits up, gradually turning to face the audience.
Anna leaves the stage.*

There is more to that dream – I must be brutally frank with myself. It's about my frustrated ambitions. In my present field, I have continued to tear apart my own theories like the pages of that book, constantly trying to get to the heart of things, searching uncompromisingly for the truth, but am I appreciated for that any more than for what I did in my youth? Then, I had respect without fame, whereas today I suffer fame without respect. *(has reached podium by this point)*

A female physician in the audience interrupts:

FEMALE PHYSICIAN IN THE AUDIENCE

You seem to be saying that sexuality is at the root, not only of all neuroses, but indeed all human motivation.

FREUD

I will say more: I will say that infantile sexuality is at the root of it all.

FEMALE PHYSICIAN

I think this is about your "root", if you will pardon my frankness.

Laughter from a male physician and a medical student, whom the author has planted elsewhere in the audience.

FREUD

Frankness needs no pardon, especially among professionals. Your rudeness, however, is another matter.

MALE PHYSICIAN

Does this theory of infantile sexuality mean anything beyond the obvious fact that the infant arrives in an uncivilized state, and has to be socialized?

Act II

FREUD

It means much more; for example, that his uncivilized state is deeply disturbing to the over-civilized, repressed impulses of his mother, who in turn then over-stimulates him ...

FEMALE STUDENT

There you go, dissing women. You boast of being a revolutionary thinker who shocks and offends established views, yet you hold on to the established assumptions of male domination and female corruption.

FEMALE PHYSICIAN

Like that “penis envy” crap.

FEMALE STUDENT

Quite so.

FREUD

If I might just ...

MALE PHYSICIAN

(to the woman physician, not to Freud) Excuse me, but you’re missing the point if you dismiss the theory of penis envy simply because you find it insulting. I would prefer to show that it doesn’t hold up on logical grounds, and in fact there is evidence from studies in our clinic that ...

FEMALE PHYSICIAN

Excuse me, but this young woman had the floor.

FEMALE STUDENT

Well, I just wanted to say that, true to his name, the speaker takes an obvious joy in shocking the public and alienating the establishment. I’m not shocked or embarrassed by anything he says, but I think the proof has to be in the pudding, doesn’t it? If Dr. Joy’s theories yield clinical methods that relieve patients of their pain, ...

MALE PHYSICIAN

But he has just said that psychoanalysis must not be judged by its power to cure, ...

FREUD

Wait a moment ...

MALE PHYSICIAN

... but that, on the contrary, its value is only in what the psychoanalyst learns about human nature!

FREUD

Stop, please. Stop! Ladies and gentlemen, this discussion is getting out of hand. I must foreclose any further questions and responses until afterward, when we shall adjourn to the lounge for liquid refreshment. Let me summarize my scientific observations; illustrating the main point, if I may, by reference to what just happened among you. Where do your competitive feelings originate? The gentleman feels threatened; partly because these are ladies disagreeing with him, partly because his career aspirations have been thwarted by younger and more creative minds.

Sir, do you not see how directly you associate your failure to win the respect of your colleagues with your fear of sexual inadequacy? Loss of stature – loss of erection. As to you, doctor (*to the female physician*), was it purely your intellect that drove you to cut off your male colleague so sharply? I have too much respect for you, madam, to suggest that the substance of your remarks would have been any different had you been a man, but in the energy behind those remarks, did I not discern the flush of sexual excitement, as you reached across the room – metaphorically speaking – to fend off that bright sword he brandished so provocatively, grab hold of it and beat it down?

Suddenly, the female student in the audience stands and says, piercingly, as a spot focuses on her alone and other lights instantly extinguish:

FEMALE STUDENT

Klhh! Keep still! Klh! Don't say anything! Don't touch me!

That light fades and a single spot comes up on Freud, alone, frozen for a few seconds.

END OF PLAY¹⁰

¹⁰ read without pauses, 50 minutes.