

Three Contributions to the Theory of Sex

a play in three acts

for two actresses and two actors

by Ken Kaye

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Act I Vienna, 1890

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

Act II Vienna, 1905

7 roles played by the same actors (page 29)

Act III Vienna, 1916

10 roles played by the same actors (page 49)

Synopsis of *Three 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 three 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. Frau Emmy and Fraulein Elisabeth von N. (1890)¹

Emmy is a widow in her late 40s²

Elisabeth, 20, is the youngest of Emmy's three daughters

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

Marthe, a different maid, also played by the same actress.

Gunther, Emmy's son-in-law and Elisabeth's brother-in-law, is in his late 20s³

A strange man is also played by the same actor.

Elisabeth's father, 55⁴ 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.

The tableau should be such that it takes the audience a few moments to realize we are seeing a 19th century physician's house call, and more surprisingly, Sigmund Freud treating one of his first important cases.

¹ The cast should read Cases 2 and 5 in Freud and Breuer, *Studies on Hysteria*, first published in 1895. The following character descriptions quote that work.

² a woman of "an unusual degree of education and intelligence" who has "traveled a great deal and has many lively interests."

³ "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."

⁴ "an extremely gifted and able man who had made a high position for himself as an industrialist on a large scale,"

Act I

FREUD

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

EMMY

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

FREUD

(pause) Just let them relax. *(pause)* All over, that's right. Then I'll massage your back and your arms.

EMMY

Yes.

FREUD

Now you turn over. That's right.

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

EMMY

Not every doctor does such a good job, you know.

FREUD

No?

EMMY

Not at all. When my husband was in his last illness and his legs were so swollen, he needed to have them massaged twice a day, but Dr. Fö-ö-örster's idea of massage was three minutes of pummeling once or twice a week. The rest of the time it was up to us.

FREUD

You and Helga?

EMMY

No, not Helga, my daughter E-ee-elisabeth, you saw her in the garden yesterday, remember?

FREUD

(absently) Um hm.

Act I

EMMY

Elisabeth was an angel of mercy to her poor father, doctor, such pain he was in!

FREUD

All right, now don't talk so much. Just relax. Let your arm hang loose while I massage it.

EMMY

(pause) Ahh, doctor. *(pause)* Yes, Elisabeth was his angel. He wouldn't let me stay with him. He said, "You have so many interests that no one else but you can take care of; I don't want you wa-a-asting your days playing nurse to me."

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 an arm chair near the front of the stage, facing the audience. Opens the paper, then lays it down in his lap, pensively. Lights a cigar. Spits in a spittoon by the side of his chair. Emmy rises and goes behind a Japanese folding screen that doesn't completely hide her from the audience. Helga helps her dress and fix her hair. Freud addresses the audience as medical colleagues.

FREUD

A puzzling case. We have here an intelligent, capable woman, well in control of her financial affairs, 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.

My distinguished colleague, Dr. Breuer, says he has treated few patients as startling as Frau Emmy when she is in the full grip of her symptoms.

EMMY

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

Act I

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 moves from the couch to an arm chair opposite him.)* 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.⁵ 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. This made it seem all the more strange when every two or three minutes she suddenly broke off, contorted her face into an expression of horror and disgust, stretched out her fingers, and exclaimed in a completely different voice:

EMMY

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

FREUD

(momentarily startled) She was probably under the influence of some recurrent hallucination of a horrifying kind and was keeping the intruding material at bay with this formula.

These interruptions come to an end with equal suddenness, and Frau Emmy takes up what she had been saying, without explaining or apologizing for her behavior (apparently without herself having noticed it).

EMMY

(to Freud, who turns his attention to her) I was brought up lavishly, but under strict discipline. I married at twenty — an extremely gifted man who had already made his fortune as an industrialist.

⁵ 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."

Act I

FREUD

(turns back to the audience) In quick succession, they had three daughters. The youngest, Elisabeth — the “angel” she referred to — seems rather sickly and withdrawn; perhaps it is just the passing melancholia of an unmarried girl under the domination of an awesome mother.

(to Emmy) Your symptoms seem to have begun around the time your husband died.

EMMY

Very gradually, yes, beginning about three-ee-ee years ago.

FREUD

And then, was it about a year ago? You suffered the loss of your middle daughter?

EMMY

After she gave birth to my first grandchild.

FREUD

The death of your husband, followed soon afterward by your daughter’s untimely death, would be sufficient cause for melancholy in itself.

EMMY

They were both severe losses. But grief was not the cause of my depression. It’s this lack of sleep! As I’ve explained, I have sensations of cold and pain in my left leg, flowing down from the small of my back. The pain leads to insomnia, and that’s what makes me so terribly depressed, doctor.

FREUD

(to audience) 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.

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.

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.

Act I

EMMY

Emmy.

Dr. Freud.⁶

FREUD

Emmy, when did you first begin to stammer when speaking?

EMMY

Ever since I was a child.

FREUD

And the facial tic? And the clacking sound that you sometimes make?

EMMY

When Lili was dying.

FREUD

So, more recently than when you lost your husband.

EMMY

Lili was to have been married in '87, but my husband died that winter and Lili put off her wedding until the following year. She married Gunther in February of '88, and died in February of '89.

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. The mouse had nothing to do with your daughter's death. But are you saying that was the first time you made the sound?

EMMY

When anything startles me.

⁶ "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."

Act I

FREUD

You will get over that. There will always be things that startle you occasionally, but you will not need to make the clacking sound. Nor will you shout “Keep still!” or any other peculiar formula. 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

Yes.

FREUD

Tell me about that.

EMMY

How a boy was tied up and they put a white mouse into his mouth, and he died of fright.

FREUD

You saw that?

EMMY

(*clenching and unclenching hands*) No.

FREUD

Who told you about that?

EMMY

The newspaper.

FREUD

Not this Frankfurt Times, right here? This article about the apprentice who was tied up and abused?

EMMY

Yes.

FREUD

He was beaten, and he died, but it says nothing of any mice.

EMMY

A dead rat.

Act I

FREUD

No, there were no mice or rats. That must come from some other memory.

EMMY

We had a nurse who looked after my brothers and sisters and especially me. I was the baby. She told me the story.

FREUD

So, the newspaper today reminded you of 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*) Can you remember the first time you yourself were frightened by an animal?

EMMY

How my brother found a toad in the cellar.

FREUD

When did that happen?

EMMY

How a mouse ran across my hand.

FREUD

When did that happen?

EMMY

How a monster with a vulture's beak was tearing at me and eating at me all over my body.

FREUD

I don't think that ever happened.

EMMY

It was a nightmare! Horrible! And how I went to pick up a ball of wool, and it was a mouse, and ran away. That was not a dream.

FREUD

When did that happen? (*pause*) When did that happen? (*pause*) Frau Emmy, when did that happen?

EMMY

(*annoyed*) I – don't – know!

Act I

FREUD

All right. I want you to tell me about each of those incidents again tomorrow under hypnosis, but tomorrow you will find that you do remember when each incident happened, what you were doing at the time, and with whom, and what your thoughts were.

EMMY

I want you to stop asking me when this happened, when that happened, when the other happened.

FREUD

(astonished; then, after a pause) In a few moments I shall ask you to wake up. 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 story the nurse told you to frighten you, about the boy with the mouse, and also 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, or reciting "Keep still!" and so forth, 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?

Act I

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, where he addresses the audience from a sheaf of notes. Elisabeth and Emmy talk soundlessly for a minute, then (out of direct light, as there is only a spot on Freud) help each other change for the next scene, in which Helga again stands by with Emmy's corset. A different 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. I must continue with the hypnotherapy. 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.

Act I

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. For instance, he suggested to a hypnotized female subject that she should dream of having lesbian relations with a friend. The friend appeared in the dream carrying a shabby handbag with a label stuck on it bearing the words "Ladies Only." The woman who dreamt this had no knowledge of our science. 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. She reported fewer pains and cramps in her leg and neck, she had slept better, and the sensations of hot and cold actually went away in response to my suggestions. The clacking and shouting, however, continued whenever she was startled. It happened particularly when someone came into the room unexpectedly. I persisted in asking Frau Emmy about the origins of her violent reactions, the clacking sound, "Keep still!" and so forth. She kept coming up with new memories of being frightened, always suggesting a legitimate horror of such things rather than the underlying sexual anxiety that 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. (*Shakes her head slowly but firmly.*) You say it was in a hotel.

EMMY

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.

Act I

FREUD

(when she doesn't continue) Were you in your hotel room? *(After hesitation, she nods.)* 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) You have been back to Schwartzwasser, and other spas, many times. *(She nods.)* 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.

He moves almost offstage. Emmy, still in her underwear, is awake, rubbing her leg. Doorbell. Helga goes through to let Freud into the foyer, takes his hat and walking stick. Freud opens the sitting room door and enters.

Act I

EMMY

(Leaping from her chair) Keep still! Klhh! Don't say anything! Don't touch me! Klhh! Dr. Freud, oh *(sitting down suddenly)*, I wasn't expecting you so promptly. You're always late.

FREUD

Frau Emmy, I am sorry that I startled you.

EMMY

You didn't startle me. Klhh! Why do you say that?

Well, doctor, how much longer do you plan to continue these ineffe-e-ectual visits?

FREUD

(startled) That depends on your progress, Madam. How are you feeling today?

EMMY

Te-e-errible.

FREUD

In what way?

EMMY

Every way! I had neck cramps all night, I never closed my eyes. Today, my leg pains have returned, more intense than ever. I doubt if your massage can do anything to relieve them. But for Go-o-od's sake, let's get started. *(lies down for massage)*

FREUD

Frau Emmy, I think it will be more productive if we begin immediately with the hypnosis.

EMMY

(wearily, rising to her feet) Helga!

FREUD

That won't be necessary, because afterward I shall massage you as usual.

EMMY

(sighing) Very well, doctor. *(Goes to armchair, sits down, sees Helga approaching with her corset.)* Stupid girl, what are you sta-a-anding there for?

Helga goes back behind the screen. Freud holds up a finger, and Emmy sinks back.

Act I

FREUD

Go into a deep sleep. Deeper than yesterday, and as you go deeper, let your limbs relax totally. *(pause)* Tell me, now, why all your symptoms returned last night.

EMMY

(pause) It was not true.

FREUD

(pause) What was not true?

EMMY

Yesterday.

FREUD

(pause) What about yesterday?

EMMY

The man hiding in my hotel room.

FREUD

That was not true.

EMMY

No.

FREUD

What actually happened?

EMMY

It was at Schwartzwasser. I could not sleep. It was ten minutes after three in the morning. I put on my dressing gown and went for a walk in the corridor. My maid's room was at the end of the corridor.

FREUD

(when she doesn't continue) Helga's room?

EMMY

No, Marthe – a former maid. *(pause)* I saw light under her door, so I knocked on the door and called her name, softly. *(pause)* The lamp was suddenly extinguished, and she came to the door but she only opened it a little.

Act I

Blackout except spot where Marthe emerges from behind the folding screen, hastily covering herself with a robe. Emmy remains in her chair, without turning, in the hypnotic state. Freud, however, immediately rises and takes a few steps toward the maid.

MARTHE

I will be right there, madam.

EMMY

No, no, just let me come in for a moment, girl.

MARTHE

Madam, but I am not dressed, I am putting on my robe.

EMMY

Don't be silly, you don't need to dress, just let — me — in! (*pushing an imaginary door in front of her*)

MARTHE

Ohh!

Marthe falls back a couple of steps, and as the light follows, we see an apparently naked man behind her, whom she attempts to conceal. They freeze. Freud takes a few steps toward them so as to have no doubt about what he sees, then returns to his chair near Emmy. Marthe and the man disappear. The sitting room lights come back up.

FREUD

What did you do?

EMMY

I fainted. When I woke up, I was back in my own bed and the sun had risen.

FREUD

So it was a dream?

EMMY

It was nothing of the kind.

Act I

FREUD

Did you confront the maid?

EMMY

Certainly not. I dismissed her.

FREUD

When was this?

EMMY

Two years ago, in April, at Schwartzwasser.

FREUD

(thinks for a moment) Frau Emmy, I believe that this experience would not have been so disturbing to you, but for the fact that it reminded you of something that happened much earlier, perhaps in your childhood? You will now recall that earlier experience. *(pause)* The unpleasant memory that came to you when you found your maid with a man in her room. *(pause)* Tell me what came to you.

EMMY

(looking angry) Nothing.

FREUD

All right. You remembered enough today. Tomorrow, as soon as I put you to sleep, you will instantly remember what we need to know, and you will tell me about it without omitting any important detail. Now, when I say your name, wake up refreshed and relaxed, without any pains or cramps. *(pause)* Emmy.

EMMY

Hello, doctor.

FREUD

How are you feeling?

EMMY

Oh, much better. Those pains are so awful when they come! Why did they return like that?

FREUD

I'm afraid I do not yet know. But I think we are making some progress.

EMMY

Doctor, I'm most grateful for all that you've done.

Act I

FREUD

Well, I have not done much — yet.

EMMY

Yes, yes, you have, and – am I going to have my massage? (*rings for Helga, goes to couch and lies down*) I hope that you won't think ill of me. (*Helga knocks at the interior door.*) Come in.

FREUD

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

EMMY

(*to Helga*) Please ask Elisabeth to come down. (*Exit Helga.*) Well, do you promise not to?

FREUD

I promise.

EMMY

My sister has written me about a naprapath in Munich who has extraordinary success curing nervous ailments. (*pause*) 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

(*enters*) Do you need 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.

Act I

EMMY

I shall go to Munich, Dr. Freud.

FREUD

As you wish, of course. (*Begins to massage her leg.*) But I insist upon continuing to care for you in the meantime.

EMMY

I leave tomorrow.

Elisabeth and Freud are astonished.

I expect to return in a month, and if I'm no better, then I shall seek your advice again. 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

Don't you want to know who she is?

FREUD

Who who is?

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. The best thing you can do for my peace of mind, darling, is to get better yourself. You must do everything Dr. Freud suggests. (*to Freud*) Dr. Kauffman, the gynecologist, believes that her walking problems are due to a "re-e-etverted 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.

Act I

FREUD

And did that help?

ELISABETH

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

EMMY

She is somewhat better. Her posture used to be much worse. But she complains of a sore area on her leg. Show the doctor.

Elisabeth indicates her left thigh, just above knee.

I thought perhaps your hypnosis might help her.

FREUD

Perhaps so. Perhaps so. 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 that the scene becomes Freud's examining room.

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. (*To himself:*) 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.

Act I

Something brings to mind the old joke about the delicate constitution. Do you know it? The impecunious Jew whose doctor tells him, “Your delicate constitution can’t maintain your hard life here in the city without a rest,” and he orders him to take the waters at Karlsbad. To save the fare, the man tries to stow away on the train, only to be thrown off bodily at the first stop. He boards the next train, is caught as soon as the conductors call for tickets, they thrash him soundly and throw him off at the next stop, and this happens with increasing severity as all the conductors and stationmasters are warned by telegraph to expect him. Finally, someone asks him, “Where are you trying to go with such determination?” “To Karlsbad,” he says, “if my delicate constitution will stand it.”

Elisabeth enters through the anteroom. It is the next day. She sits at one end of the couch. Freud takes the armchair, facing her. He pokes her leg, through the dress.

ELISABETH

No, that doesn’t hurt.

FREUD

There?

ELISABETH

No.

FREUD

There?

ELISABETH

Ohhh! Yes, that hurts.⁷

FREUD

And there?

ELISABETH

Ohhh!

FREUD

There?

⁷ “Her expression was as though feeling a voluptuous tickling sensation, at times throwing back her head and closing her eyes.”

Act I

ELISABETH

No.

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.

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 – coming home from a party, the Christmas when I was seventeen.

FREUD

You came home, and ...?

Act I

ELISABETH

That's all that came to mind.

FREUD

Tell me what happened when you got home.

ELISABETH

I closed the door, and at once Mother called me.

She was upset. "Come up! Come up!" My father had taken a turn for the worse. It was the beginning of the last phase of his illness. I didn't leave him again.

FREUD

You mean that was the last party you attended until after his death.

ELISABETH

Yes. The last, ever, as a matter of fact.

FREUD

You never go out to parties any more?

ELISABETH

No. I don't know anyone here, really.

FREUD

Tell me more about that Christmas party.

ELISABETH

Oh, it was very gay, we danced, we drank wine, we laughed. (*said with sadness and regret, rather than nostalgia*)

FREUD

You went by yourself?

ELISABETH

Yes, well, no, it was at my sister's house. She had only recently been married.

FREUD

Did she live nearby?

ELISABETH

It was a ten minute carriage ride. (*pause*) We walked home, actually.

Act I

FREUD

We?

ELISABETH

My middle sister, Lili, and her fiancé, Gunther. (*pause*) Also a young man escorted me home, the son of one of father's friends.

FREUD

Did he come in with you? (*She shakes her head.*) Can you tell me what those tears are about? (*She shakes her head, sobbing softly.*) Have you seen the young man since?

ELISABETH

At Father's funeral. And then last year – Mother and I were invited to his wedding.

FREUD

You were in love with him?

ELISABETH

Perhaps I thought so, the night we walked home from the party. But it was not to be, that's all. I felt so bad leaving Father alone, and needing me when I wasn't there. So I devoted myself to caring for him in his last months, and I just – didn't answer any of Gunther's letters, I couldn't, and he very understandably found someone else.

FREUD

Gunther? Isn't that the name of your brother-in-law?

ELISABETH

Did I say Gunther? I meant Harold – his name was Harold. Yes, Gunther is my brother-in-law.

FREUD

Was that night – the night of the Christmas party – the first time you experienced the hyperalgesia – the supersensitive area and the soreness in your leg?

ELISABETH

No. But – I remember now when that started! I used to rest my father's leg there, when I helped him exercise – you see, he couldn't leave his bed. And I remember one day –

Act I

Freud – now Father – puts on a silver beard, removes his jacket and trousers, and lies down on the couch with one leg on her lap and his eyes closed. The light dims. Elisabeth massages Father’s leg with oil; first his 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 of an inappropriate nature, 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 continues massaging him silently for a few moments, then stands up, arranges his legs on the couch, and covers him with an afghan.

I got up from his bed, thinking, ooh, I sat in one position too long with his heavy leg resting on me. But it’s never gone away. (*pause*)

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

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,
only to change her dress and return 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. Often greater! A man wakes up with a frightful toothache. He rushes to the dentist. The dentist, seeing that the tooth is badly decayed, reaches for his forceps. The man suddenly fends him off, and if the dentist is not the stronger of the two, the patient may escape! Sometimes, indeed, the dentist may be severely injured in the struggle. I myself have barely escaped psychic injury on several occasions.

I have hopes that the Fraulein will not fight me quite so energetically as her mother did, because her sexual feelings have not been repressed for as many years. Yet the nature of that repression, and its effects, are familiar to us. Oh, these well brought up children! It is remarkable how, in the same city, in the same period of history, children from the so called “better” and the so called “poorer” classes can learn such profoundly different mores about sexual matters, with the “better” upbringing turning out to be decidedly the poorer. In fact, we can imagine two little girls growing up in the same house. You have a cultured, prosperous family owning the house, and then you have the servants with their own families, below stairs. The owner’s daughter is permitted to play freely with the child of the caretaker, a little girl her own age. Quite naturally, their games become “naughty.” They will watch each other in the performance of intimate acts, play “father and mother,” and stimulate each other’s genital parts. The caretaker’s daughter may take the lead in this, since she has been able to observe a good deal about sexual matters. These occurrences will be enough to rouse certain sexual excitations in both children which will come to expression in the practice of masturbation for a few years, after the games have been discontinued.

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 euphemisms, and is not ashamed of concerning itself 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. No science can be treated in a manner adapted to school-girls. The women present, by appearing in this lecture room, have tacitly expressed their desire to be treated on the same footing as the men.

Act I

So. The daughter of the house and the caretaker's daughter have a common experience thus far, but the final result will be very different. The caretaker's daughter will continue masturbation, perhaps up to the onset of menstruation, and then give it up without difficulty; a few years later will find a lover, perhaps bear a child; choose this or that path in life. Perhaps she becomes a popular actress, marries an aristocrat and winds up a society matron! Even if her career turns out a little less brilliantly than that, in any case she will be unharmed by the premature sexual activity, free from neurosis, and able to live her life.

Not so, the "well brought up" child. She will very soon, while yet a child, acquire a sense of having done wrong. She will struggle against the masturbatory satisfaction and conquer it, though not without retaining the feeling of guilt. When later on as a young lady she comes to learn something of sexual intercourse, she will react with revulsion and wish to remain ignorant. Probably she will then suffer a fresh irresistible impulse to masturbation, which she assumes to be deviant and about which she won't dare to unburden herself to anyone. When the time comes for a man to choose her as a wife, the neurosis will break out and cheat her out of a happy marriage and the joy of life.

Sighs heavily, returns to his consultation room.

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 I couldn't walk properly. 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?

Act I

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 the first time that you had problems with your legs?

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 must have walked about ten kilometers, and 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.
The author envisions him with a reddish
mustache, wearing glasses. Elisabeth
shakes off the image, which disappears.*

Anyway, that night my legs just 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, and Dr. Kauffman helped me a little, but ...

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?

Act I

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 (*indicating Gunther's height*), have a red 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.

Act I

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

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; she responds passionately at first, then pushes him away.)*

ELISABETH

(to Freud) No! 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?

Act I

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 drops to his knees, sobbing.

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 own behavior had long since redeemed the “sinful” thoughts; that her falling ill in these circumstances, somatizing her guilt in the form of her hysterical symptoms, was sufficient evidence of her moral character.

After I had conducted the psychoanalysis of Fraulein Elisabeth for five months, I had a dream – an absurd dream – about my father. In the dream, I received a letter from the town council of my birthplace concerning a hospital bill for the year 1851. I was surprised by this, since that was five years before I had been born. I went into the next room, where my father was lying dead, and I told him about the letter. To my surprise, he recollected that in 1851 he had once got drunk and had to be locked up, not in the hospital but in the jail. I asked him, “Did you get married then?”

Well, as I say, it was an absurd dream. So I put it aside after writing it in my journal, and didn’t bother to analyze it. A few days later, however, a colleague happened to mention a venerated professor of ours, and in that instant I remembered my dream. Now this was even more absurd, for the dream seemed to have nothing to do with the professor. I realized that here was an unanalyzed dream that would not go away, and furthermore that my dismissing it as “absurd” was the most patent kind of resistance. Well, I shall not bore you with details – only mention that my father is not dead, it is the professor who is dead, and he was one who, after initially taking a liking to me and helping me, later disapproved of the direction my work has taken and became personally hostile to me. And the five years that figured in the dream? Well, that was the extraordinary length of time it had taken me to pass my exams after medical school, a fact which this same professor once remarked upon, in public, with derision. The dream wasn’t about my father at all, yet in another way it was, because he had been married in 1851 – a form of jail, some might say – and it had taken him five years to produce me. The dream was a way of reassuring myself that five years was not such a terribly long time in which to produce a worthwhile purpose. Nor was five months too long for a patient’s analysis. And maybe I was consoling myself, also, for the five years that have elapsed since I began my studies of hysteria. The letter in the dream demanding, “When will you pay that hospital bill?” was my way of asking myself, “When will this clinical work pay off? When will you be rich, or at least financially secure? When will you be famous, or at least professionally respected?”

Act I

With Fraulein Elisabeth, there was enormous improvement. 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

Now, now, 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.

Act I

EMMY

For that you went to medical school?

FREUD

These last three years have been stressful for your daughter, as they have been for you, of course. But – 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 ho-o-oped 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 had one case in particular in which I learned this at my own cost – and the reputation of psychoanalysis is still suffering from it. I took a young boy, in his early teens, into treatment for an unaccountable terror of going out of doors. He would never leave the house, nor would he stay home alone. He insisted that no one but his mother could protect him against the dread of being alone. He allowed his father to come and go, but would actually bar the door whenever the mother attempted to leave the house. The mother herself had formerly been very nervous, but had been cured a few years earlier by a visit to a spa. She was more fortunate than Frau Emmy, she found a cure, or putting it more precisely, she there made the acquaintance of a wealthy man who became a friend of the family. My patient, her son, after many weeks of analysis confessed to me that his thoughts had been preoccupied by some signs of affection that he had noticed, quite by chance, between his mother and this so called family friend. He had guessed the nature of her cure.

Well, after making it clear to me why he had been so insistent upon restricting his mother's freedom, he also managed to make it clear to her what his motives were – without saying it in so many words. The mother instantly put an end to my harmful influence. The boy was sent to a home for nervous patients, and he is still there, frequently pointed out as “an unhappy victim of psychoanalysis.” I, of course, have had to maintain a silence in the face of these libelous accusations, because I consider myself bound to protect my patients' privacy. Yet I recently learned from a social acquaintance that the intimacy between the mother and the wealthy man is common knowledge, and that in all probability it was arranged by her husband. To this “secret” the boy's mental health was sacrificed.

Let me end this lecture by admitting to you 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. The reason has to do with the purpose which a symptom serves in Elisabeth's case, 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.

Act I

But these facts only appear when we go backward. This is the most aggravating thing about our science, and I expect that it will prove an insuperable obstacle to the main stream of medical opinion ever accepting our theories. We can only trace symptoms backward to what must have been the patient's forgotten history. But from a knowledge of the premises, we could not have foretold the result.

Elisabeth's was a case history made up of commonplace emotional upheavals, and there was nothing about it to explain why she should have fallen ill while another young woman nursing a dying sister merely grieves awhile and then goes on with life. Nor was there anything to explain why it was particularly from hysteria that she fell ill, nor why her hysteria took the particular form of a painful abasia. We traditionally explain away the problem by saying that this patient must have had a constitutional tendency toward hysteria. But the truth is that we have not yet answered the most basic questions. We have absolutely no idea, for example, how it is that mental pains can be converted into physical pains. Extraordinary, is it not? No idea at all.

(Lighting his cigar) Now we take a ten minute break. Those of you 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, with which they are, in fact, obsessed. The kindest thing to do is, as tactfully as possible, to ignore them.

END OF ACT I

Act II

Act II. A Case of Paranoia (1905)⁸

Fraulein C. is 30, “a singularly attractive and handsome girl, who looked much younger than her age and was of a distinctly feminine type.”

Frau D. is about 60, the supervisor in Fraulein C.’s office,⁹

Herr Walter J. is a co-worker in the same office, a bachelor of 24, “a cultured and attractive man.”

Herr M., “a well known lawyer,” is older and more formal than Herr J. but is played by the same actor with minimal costume change.

A photographer appears briefly;

The author also appears, and both of these are played by the same actor as

Sigmund Freud, 49, the most controversial psychiatrist in Europe.

The scene is Freud’s consultation room, with a small waiting room visible where Frau Emmy’s foyer had been. A desk faces the wall, its chair swiveling so that only one other armchair is needed. The couch is still center stage.¹⁰

The room, with a change of lighting, will become Herr J.’s apartment, at which time the waiting room will become a staircase landing or hallway outside the apartment.

Fraulein C. sits nervously in the waiting room. Freud (who has grown a neatly trimmed beard) is behind his writing desk, and his friend M. sits on the edge of the couch.

FREUD

So the young lady hasn’t exactly come to see me of her own volition.

⁸ The cast should read “A case of paranoia running counter to the psychoanalytic theory of the disease,” 1915, in any edition of Freud’s *Collected Works*.

⁹ “A white-haired motherly old lady” who “treated her with affection, though sometimes she teased her; the girl regarded herself as her particular favorite.”

¹⁰ Photographs of Freud’s suite of rooms in Vienna appear in *Berggasse 19* by Edmund Engelman. The most salient feature, besides the couch and other period furniture, was a collection of figurines from Roman, Greek, and primitive societies.

Act II

HERR M.

I did tell her that I thought it absolutely essential. Otherwise I would not be able to advise her as to where she stands, legally. Naturally, she's a bit resentful. I tried not to make it sound as though I didn't believe her, but ...

FREUD

But, in fact, you don't.

HERR M.

Well, I do, as to what happened. Whether the interpretation she puts upon the events is correct – that the young man is actually planning to blackmail her – well, I should like to take his deposition before forming my own position as to that.

FREUD

Why don't you?

HERR M.

It's a sensitive business. Once I get a court order for a deposition, names will be recorded, Fraulein C. will be exposed to the risk of a countersuit, and so forth. I thought if indeed it were some kind of delusion, and if you could persuade her of that, we might protect her from further embarrassment.

FREUD

I see. Well, I'm no detective.

HERR M.

Nonsense, my friend, of course you are.

FREUD

Why don't you bring the young lady in.

*Herr M. opens the door and beckons to
Fraulein C. Freud comes around the desk
to shake her hand.*

Fraulein C., how do you do?

FRAULEIN C.

How do you do.

FREUD

Won't you have a seat?

Act II

FRAULEIN C.

(sitting) This doesn't look like a doctor's office.

FREUD

No. We psychiatrists don't have much use for examining tables, bottles of antiseptic, and things like that.

FRAULEIN C.

Oh.

FREUD

My friend Herr M. tells me that you have suffered a very distressing experience.

FRAULEIN C.

Yes, I have.

FREUD

Can you tell me the whole story from the beginning.

FRAULEIN C.

You tell him, please, sir.

HERR M.

No, Fraulein, the doctor needs to hear it from you.

FREUD

(After C. seems unable to speak) Perhaps you would be more comfortable if Herr M. were to leave us alone?

FRAULEIN C.

No! *(clutches M.'s arm)*

FREUD

Well, then. *(pause)* I understand that you were involved in a love affair with a gentleman who works in the same office with you.

FRAULEIN C.

Yes.

FREUD

One of your superiors?

FRAULEIN C.

No, not really. We're both assistant editors.

Act II

FREUD

It is a publishing firm?

FRAULEIN C.

Yes.

FREUD

(after waiting for her to continue) Fraulein, I don't want to interrogate you. Why don't you just tell me what happened?

FRAULEIN C.

(beginning to cry) He wants to make a fool of me, and he has already succeeded, because here I am.

FREUD

You know, you have already done the difficult part, by taking Herr M. into your confidence. You trust him. As for me, I am a doctor, and nothing ...

FRAULEIN C.

(annoyed) Oh, that's not the problem. I don't mind talking about it.

FREUD

Is it that you fear we may not believe you? *(She nods.)* It seems you have nothing to lose by trying.

FRAULEIN C.

(drying eyes) About three months ago, Walter – Herr J. – began paying attention to me. He asked if he might call on me on a Sunday, and take me for a drive. Then he began taking me to the theatre, and dinner, and more Sunday drives, and soon I realized that I was in love with him, and I told my mother that I thought he was in love with me, too.

FREUD

I assume you live with your parents?

FRAULEIN C.

With my mother. My father died many years ago, and my mother has only me to support her.

FREUD

Go on.

FRAULEIN C.

He was not in a position to marry me.

Act II

FREUD

I'm not sure in what sense you mean.

FRAULEIN C.

Herr J. is a self-made man. He is very well brought up, but lacks any money of his own until such time as he shall rise to a higher position. That could be ten years, which is all right for him, because he is only twenty-four years old. But in ten years I shall be forty, Dr. Freud, so we knew that marriage was out of the question. Walter would not hear of giving up our friendship on that account. In fact, he suggested that we should become more – intimate. “It is senseless to sacrifice to social convention,” he said, “all that we long for, that we have an indisputable right to enjoy and that can enrich our lives as nothing else could.” He promised not to expose me to any risk, of any kind, and in the end – well, I consented to go to his flat. In the daytime.

Herr M. has become Walter. He pours two glasses of sherry from a decanter. Freud fades to the side of the room next to his desk, with his back to the wall behind which is the stairway landing.

WALTER

My darling – I have been looking forward to this afternoon.

FRAULEIN C.

Oh, Walter. So have I. I don't think one ever knows one's friends until one sees where they live.

WALTER

I didn't mean just that.

FRAULEIN C.

Oh.

WALTER

I have been looking forward to being able to embrace you, and kiss you, without having to worry about the censorious overseers of Vienna.

FRAULEIN C.

(teasing) “Censorious!” My goodness!

WALTER

(drawing her to couch) Opprobrious. *(kisses her)*

Act II

FRAULEIN C.

Oh, yes, those opprobrious overseers. (*They kiss again.*)

WALTER

Although, perhaps “pharisaical” would be better? We’re offending the pharisaical feelings of the fashionable families of Phienna. (*Going for another kiss.*)

FRAULEIN C.

(*laughs*) Come on, there’s no such word as “pharisaical.” Is there?

FREUD

All right. So you went on that way for a while, and eventually ...

FRAULEIN C.

Eventually I was – in disarray.

Walter partially unbuttons her dress, lets her hair down, etc. As they resume kissing, he reaches inside the bodice of her dress to caress her. After about twenty seconds, we hear the click of a camera’s shutter, which startles her.

What was that?

WALTER

What?

FRAULEIN C.

That click.

WALTER

I didn’t hear anything.

FRAULEIN C.

It sounded like it was in the desk. (*Points toward where Freud is standing.*)

WALTER

(*laughing*) Silly, you must have heard the clock.

FRAULEIN C.

(*Looks at the clock, which stands on the mantel nowhere near the desk.*) Oh. It startled me. Is there nothing in the desk?

Act II

WALTER

No, of course not. Come here, you silly goose. (*Lies full length on couch, pulling her on top of him.*)

FREUD

So then you were lying together on the sofa, ...

FRAULEIN C.

(*Kissing resumes.*) Ummm-hmmm.

FREUD

And where was the desk in relation to you?

FRAULEIN C.

Ummm.

She waves in that direction; Walter catches her arm and pulls it down. They giggle.

FREUD

Excuse me for interrupting, but I must know; were you undressed?

FRAULEIN C.

(*sitting up*) Just – a little.

Walter removes jacket, tie, shoes; unbuttons shirt. C. removes dress and shoes. (Still wearing camisole and corset)

I think I removed my dress so it wouldn't get wrinkled, that was all.

FREUD

And you were caressing each other intimately?

FRAULEIN C.

Yes.

They resume position on the sofa, continue for another ten seconds or so. Then we hear the camera's shutter again.

There! What was that?

WALTER

What was what?

Act II

FRAULEIN C.

That click. Like a camera!

Flustered, putting her dress back on.

WALTER

(laughs) You're crazy. *(Sees that she is serious.)* I didn't hear anything. There wasn't any click.

FRAULEIN C.

Excuse me, but I am not crazy.

WALTER

My darling, liebschen, wait a minute. What's going on?

FRAULEIN C.

(Fixes her hair, etc.) I don't know, but I'm not going to be part of it.

WALTER

He buttons his shirt hurriedly.

If I have offended you, I apologize, dearest. I thought your desire was as strong as my own, and we ...

FRAULEIN C.

I want an explanation of what is in that desk.

WALTER

Let's look. Come on.

He opens the desk drawers, lifts the blotter, et cetera. C. watches suspiciously. Freud steps around the wall so that he is now outside the flat, on the landing, about to go downstairs.

FRAULEIN C.

I must go, anyway. It's getting late.

WALTER

But you only just arrived.

FRAULEIN C.

Please, Walter.

Act II

WALTER

Of course, my dear, I understand. But I don't understand. At least, you do see there is nothing here.

FRAULEIN C.

Yes, all right, I do see that. I don't know what that sound was.

WALTER

Perhaps – perhaps the wind bending a branch outside the window, or the sofa creaking. That's what it was. The sofa, with the two of us lying on it, look.
(Bounces up and down on sofa.)

FRAULEIN C.

Yes, I'm sure that's right. Forgive me, I feel like a fool.

WALTER

No, no, don't apologize. It's perfectly understandable. You needn't go, now.

FRAULEIN C.

I think I want to go home, anyway, Walter. I feel a bit – unnerved.

WALTER

Very well, my dearest, but only if you kiss me goodbye as tenderly as you kissed me hello.

They embrace passionately, but remain standing.

FRAULEIN C.

Goodbye.

WALTER

Wait a moment, I'm going to walk you to the trolley. *(Puts on his shoes.)*

FRAULEIN C.

No, no, better not. Only tell me you don't think I'm a fool.

WALTER

No *(opens door)*, it's all right.

Act II

On the landing, Fraulein C. meets Freud (a photographer holding a box camera). She gasps. She looks back and forth between him and Walter, whose eyes meet hers in confusion and embarrassment. The three hold this pose for five seconds, then C. exits as if via the stairs, Walter returns to the room to assume the garb of Herr M., and Freud comes downstage to the podium.

FREUD

No, no, you are not seeing what is really happening here. You say, “She sees a man in the hall, holding what may be a camera, and she thinks that the click she heard was this photographer taking advantage of her dishabille.” But to understand such a delusion we must see and hear and feel the patient’s Unconscious.

It is our emphasis upon the Unconscious in mental life, ladies and gentlemen, that has called down upon us all the malevolence in humanity. Do not be astonished at this intense conspiracy of opposition to psychoanalysis, and do not suppose that it is due to the difficulty of imagining such a thing as the Unconscious, or to the relative inaccessibility of the evidence for it. We know it has a deeper source. In the course of time, man has had to endure from the hands of science two great outrages upon his naïve self-love. The first was when Copernicus realized that our earth was not the center of the universe, but only a tiny speck in a space of inconceivable magnitude.

The second was when Darwin (in the year of my birth, coincidentally) robbed man of his peculiar privilege of having been specially created, implying that we have an intrinsic animal part of our nature. Both those men met with the most violent opposition from their contemporaries, and in Darwin’s case the outrage is still being felt.

But man’s craving for grandiosity is already suffering its third and most bitter blow, from present-day psychological research, which is endeavoring to prove to the “ego” of each one of us that he is not even master in his own house, but must remain content with the paltriest scraps of information about what is going on unconsciously in his own mind. This is the thorn that touched off the universal revolt against our science of psychoanalysis, the total disregard of academic courtesy in debates, and the liberation of our opponents from all the constraints of impartial logic. And then, as if proclaiming the existence of the Unconscious were not offensive enough to the world’s Pharisees, we have been compelled to announce that deep in the recesses of that Unconscious lurks something that would have come as no surprise to Darwin. (*Makes an obscene gesture with the forefinger of one hand and a circle of thumb and forefinger on the other, singing.*) “Birds do it. Bees do it. Even monkeys in the trees do it.”

Lights reveal Fraulein C. and Herr M. in Freud’s consultation room, as before.

Act II

You say that the man in the hall was carrying a box the size of a camera. But it could, in fact, have been anything at all that size; you can't be sure it was a camera.

FRAULEIN C.

At the time, I was not sure. But later, the more I thought about it, the more I felt sure it was a camera, and the next day, when I told Walter what I'd seen, I could tell from his reaction that I was right. They must have had the camera set up in the hall, with a peephole.

FREUD

Why?

FRAULEIN C.

To photograph the two of us engaged in a form of intimacy that society generally regards as indecent.

FREUD

Was it the first time in your life that you had engaged in such intimacy with anyone?

FRAULEIN C.

Yes.

FREUD

Do you regard it as indecent?

FRAULEIN C.

(angry) I regard it as something private, not something to be displayed to the world!

FREUD

My dear, I quite agree. I only wonder what possible motive Herr J. could have had in doing such a thing.

FRAULEIN C.

He intends to blackmail me, to make me resign from the firm. Perhaps he feels that, as I have been there longer, I'm in the way of his promotion.

FREUD

And the accomplice with the camera, what could his motive be?

Act II

FRAULEIN C.

Money. I presume Walter paid him. Or perhaps he is one of those degenerates who, I understand, make their livings selling such photographs to young boys and other perverts.

HERR M.

(starting to comfort her) Well, ...

FREUD

(waving him away) Fraulein, I understand your distress. Whether your suspicions are correct I cannot say, but your unhappiness about what occurred is genuine, and I think I can offer you some counsel as to that. Unfortunately, I have another appointment shortly, but may I suggest that you come to see me again on Monday, by yourself?

FRAULEIN C.

(Looks to M., who nods.) Thank you, doctor. Thank you both, for taking me seriously. I wonder if you have an opening later in the day? I had to ask for a half day of leave, today, and ...

FREUD

(marking calendar on desk) How about six o'clock? That's settled, then. *(Shows them out to the waiting room.)* Let me defer any recommendation until after Fraulein C. and I have had the opportunity of another chat.

HERR M.

Freud, I appreciate your help. Please send the bill to my office.

FREUD

No, no, there will be no bill, my friend.

HERR M.

I won't hear of that. This was a professional consultation.

FREUD

Did you send me a bill for the advice you gave me at the club last year, about my landlord?

HERR M.

That was five minutes!

FREUD

It was of more monetary significance to me than whatever paltry advice you shall receive from me in this case.

Act II

HERR M.

Nonsense, ...

FREUD

No, let's not argue it further, eh? Fraulein, I'll see you Monday at six.

FRAULEIN C.

Thank you, doctor. (*Exit*)

HERR M.

Thank you indeed, Freud, but I must insist on ...

FREUD

My pleasure. (*Whisking him out the door, then approaching the podium pensively.*) The case had a special interest for me, other than merely a diagnostic one. The diagnosis should have been easy: the young lady suffered from a paranoid delusion, stimulated by conflict among her feelings of sexual arousal, guilt, loneliness, hope, and fear. But in the literature of psychoanalytic theory, we had already put forward the view that patients suffering from paranoia are suffering against an intensification of their homosexual tendencies. And a further interpretation had been made, that the supposed persecutor in a paranoid fantasy is in reality the loved person, past or present. Clearly, therefore, the persecutor would always be of the same sex as the persecuted.

I seemed to have, in the case of Fraulein C., the first exception. The relation between paranoia and homosexuality had so far been consistently confirmed by my own observations and analyses and by those of my friends. But the present case emphatically contradicted it. The girl seemed to defend herself against love for a man by transforming the lover straightaway into a persecutor. There was no trace of a struggle against a homosexual attachment.

In these circumstances the simplest thing would have been to abandon my theory that the delusion of persecution invariably depends on homosexuality, and throw out all conclusions in previous cases.

Otherwise, I would have to advise the lawyer that this was no paranoia, but an actual experience which had been accurately interpreted. Caught between those two unsatisfactory choices, I found a way out. Perhaps there were some additional details that the girl had forgotten. That was why I asked her to return on another day.

Lights reveal Fraulein C. sitting in the waiting room, in a different dress. He ushers her into the office.

How are you today?

Act II

FRAULEIN C.

Fine.

FREUD

Really?

FRAULEIN C.

No, not really. It's more than I can bear, to go through the whole day at the office. Herr J. takes every opportunity to harass me, pestering me to talk with him, denying my accusations, insisting that they are ridiculous.

FREUD

But not managing to convince you.

FRAULEIN C.

You know, I want to believe him. But every time I catch myself wanting that, something happens to remind me that I have been duped.

FREUD

Like what?

FRAULEIN C.

Oh, I see him whispering with Frau D., and both of them peeking at me out of the corners of their eyes.

FREUD

Who is Frau D.?

FRAULEIN C.

The old bat at work – I told you about her.

FREUD

Did you? I don't think so.

FRAULEIN C.

She's my supervisor, actually. Been with the firm for two hundred years.

FREUD

(smiling) That's a long time. How old is she really?

FRAULEIN C.

I don't know, about the same as Mother. I'd say fifty-five or sixty.

Act II

FREUD

Who refers to her as “the old bat”?

FRAULEIN C.

I’ve only begun to see her for the witch she is, in these past few weeks. I used to like her, she was very nice to me, but the day after the first time I went to Walter’s flat, he was passing her desk – on the way to me, I thought – and he stopped and said something to her ...

Frau D. appears to the left of the set, standing with a file folder in her hand. Walter approaches, whispers something, she laughs. Both look toward C., then resume their whispered conversation.

FREUD

Wait a moment. You said “the first time” you visited Herr J.’s flat. Were you there more than once?

FRAULEIN C.

Yes, twice.

FREUD

Why didn’t you tell me that, last time?

FRAULEIN C.

I don’t know, didn’t think of it? I guess I was trying to give you only the important details.

FREUD

So when you thought you heard a click, and saw a man in the hall with a box, was that your first visit?

FRAULEIN C.

No, the second. I had been there once before.

FREUD

Well, tell me about that first time. Did anything happen then to arouse your – suspicions?

Walter enters the room. Frau D. disappears.

Act II

WALTER

I have been looking forward to being able to embrace you, and kiss you, without having to worry about the censorious overseers of Vienna.

FRAULEIN C.

(teasing) “Censorious!” My goodness!

WALTER

(drawing her to couch) Opprobrious. *(kisses her)*

FRAULEIN C.

Oh, yes, those opprobrious overseers. *(They kiss again.)*

WALTER

Although, perhaps “pharisaical” would be better?

We’re offending the pharisaical feelings of the fashionable families of Phienna.

He partially unbuttons her dress, lets her hair down, etc. As they resume kissing, he reaches inside the bodice of her dress to caress her.

FRAULEIN C.

Oh! *(Sits up, pushes his hand away.)* I can’t.

WALTER

What’s the matter?

FRAULEIN C.

I can’t.

WALTER

Can’t what?

FRAULEIN C.

Can’t stay. Mother is expecting me. I only just had time to see your flat, and – now I’ve seen it.

WALTER

(laughs) You’re teasing me.

FRAULEIN C.

I’m not. I really must go.

Act II

WALTER

Never! (*Grabs her.*)

FRAULEIN C.

Please! (*upset*) I'll come again, I promise. You shall make love to me, only not today. There are certain days that are not good for intimacy – you mustn't embarrass me by pressing further. Say you don't mind, please?

WALTER

Of course, it's perfectly all right. But you can have a cup of tea, can't you? You only just got here.

FRAULEIN C.

I must go, dearest. Forgive me?

WALTER

Never.

FRAULEIN C.

Kiss me. Goodbye. (*Goes out door to landing.*)

FREUD

(*running around the wall, to intercept her on the landing*) And did you pass anyone on the stairs?

FRAULEIN C.

No, not that time. It was the second time, about a week later. After I heard the click. (*Re-enters room through the door, while Freud re-enters around the wall.*) You see, we were on the sofa, partially disrobed. (*Starts to unbutton her dress.*)

FREUD

Wait a moment, please. Do you remember anything from the first visit? After you left?

FRAULEIN C.

(*thinking*) No. I just went home. I told Mother that I had been shopping.

FREUD

When did you next see Herr J.?

FRAULEIN C.

(*frowns*) The next day. At the office.

Act II

Frau D. appears as before, Walter approaches, whispers something, she laughs. Both look toward C., then resume their whispered conversation.

I could tell, by the way Frau D. looked at me, that he had told her everything. I couldn't imagine why he would betray me like that. Was he that angry with me for having left his flat? Then it dawned on me – and the realization made me sick – that the two of them were lovers, had been lovers all along, and Walter's attentions to me were only part of a conspiracy to humiliate and destroy me.

Comes downstage, center, where Walter joins her. Freud moves to the side, near Frau D.

How could you be so cruel to me?

WALTER

What's wrong?

FRAULEIN C.

You told her!

WALTER

Told her what? (*Trying to quiet C. so that Frau D. doesn't hear.*)

FRAULEIN C.

Or has she known all along?

WALTER

She must guess that we are friends, naturally, she sees us talking with one another frequently. But she would have no way of knowing more than that.

FRAULEIN C.

Oh, yes, she would. Tell me, how many times has she been to your apartment? Or do you meet at her house, when her dear husband is away?

An argument ensues, while Freud begins to speak. We may catch a few hissed words from C., such as "old bat" and "witch", while Walter says "please!", "dear!", etc. Before they fade from view, their gestures indicate that he is succeeding in convincing his lover that she was the victim of a delusion, and she will regain enough confidence to agree to visit him again in his room.

FREUD

These new details remove any doubt as to the pathological nature of Fraulein C.'s suspicions. It is easy to see that this white-haired elderly supervisor is a mother substitute. (*Frau D. nods slightly and half smiles, henceforth behaving like an illustrative prop for his lecture.*) In spite of his youth, the suitor has been cast in the role of the father, and the strength of the mother complex has driven the patient to suspect a sexual link between these two partners, however unlikely such relations might be. Now, with this fresh information we have saved our theory, resolving the apparent contradiction. The development of paranoid persecution delusions is always caused by an over-powerful homosexual bond.

The original persecutor – the person whose influence the young lady wished to escape – was not a man, after all, but the woman editor, who supposedly knew about her love affair and was jealous. In other words, her attachment to an older woman, who reminded her of her mother, stood in the way of her first steps along the road to normal sexual satisfaction; and indeed succeeded in destroying her relations with the man.

We know that our patient had been fatherless for many years. We may also assume that she would not have kept away from men up to the age of thirty if not for a powerful emotional attachment to her mother. This became a burdensome obstacle when her libido began to respond to the call of a man's insistent wooing. She tried to free herself, to throw off her homosexual bond; and the only way she could achieve this was by creating a paranoiac delusion. The mother thus became, not the lover, but the hostile and jealous watcher and persecutor. In yielding to the man's entreaties to grant him a second visit, the healthy part of herself scores a victory over that persecuting homosexual attraction.

*Spot follows Freud away from Frau D.
Once she is out of the spotlight, Frau D.
leaves the stage.*

(*Lecturing from his notes at the podium.*) One might think that the resistance was now definitely overcome, that the girl who until now had been bound to her mother, so to speak, had succeeded in coming to love a man. But at the second visit to her lover's flat a new delusion appears, making ingenious use of an accidental noise and the coincidental passing of someone on the stairs who carries a box about the size and shape of a camera. It still seems strange that a woman's imagination should fight so vigorously to protect herself against the love of a man. The explanation lies in the fact that in order to overcome the homosexual bond with the mother, she is taking her mother's place with father. But along with this fantasy of the parents' sexual intercourse comes the universal fantasy of the child watching her parents' intercourse. This is why she creates the third party, a photographer.

Act II

During the preceding paragraph, C. and Walter have returned to his room and resumed their position on the sofa. His shirt is open, she is wearing camisole, corset, bloomers, etc. Freud leaves the stage.

WALTER

... Phienna. (*Starts to kiss her*)

FRAULEIN C.

(*laughs*) Come on, there's no such word as "pharisaical." Is there?

WALTER

Wait a minute. Too many obstructions. (*Begins to try to unhook corset.*) How in heaven's name do you ever get into this thing?

FRAULEIN C.

Silly! One doesn't get into it. They wrap it around one at age thirteen, and there it stays for the rest of one's life. (*giggle*)

WALTER

Just as I've always suspected. Well, I give up.

FRAULEIN C.

Poor marks for persistence, Herr J. Here, you just undo the top part, and then ...
voila!

WALTER

Voila indeed! (*Kisses her.*)

As they snuggle on the sofa, the Author enters, in the casual attire of a century later. He still wears Freud's beard.

AUTHOR

Excuse me, but I don't really see it this way at all. I want to see your breasts. (*She obediently unbuttons her camisole, starts to take it off.*) No, I don't think you would remove it entirely, but can you just leave it open like that? And then his hand can reach inside. Hmm. No, maybe his hand can be stroking her thigh, like that. (*Steps back.*) No, that doesn't work, why don't you leave it buttoned (*She rebuttons camisole*) and you just kind of fondle her, and say "Much better."

WALTER

Much better.

Act II

AUTHOR

(*pointing to C.*) “Yes, it is much better.”

FRAULEIN C.

Yes, it is much better.

AUTHOR

Now you begin to unbutton her slip, or whatever those things were called.

FRAULEIN C.

Camisole.

AUTHOR

Camisole, whatever. One button at a time. “And here’s an even better idea.”

WALTER

And here’s an even better idea. (*Opens top button.*)

FRAULEIN C.

Ummm.

WALTER

And here’s an even better idea.

FRAULEIN C.

Ummm.

WALTER

And here’s an even better idea.

FRAULEIN C.

Ummm.

AUTHOR

Okay, but you know what? I really want your breasts to be bigger. You know, *zavtig*.

FRAULEIN

I can’t do anything about that.

WALTER

I think they’re fine!

Act II

AUTHOR

Shut up! I'm writing this play. Who asked you?

WALTER

Sorry.

AUTHOR

(Squints out into the house.) Can we get an actress with bigger boobs?

Okay, okay, continue.

Exit. C. and Walter resume position on the sofa, continue snuggling for another ten seconds or so. Then we hear the camera's shutter again.

FRAULEIN C.¹¹

There! What was that!

WALTER

What was what?

FRAULEIN C.

That click. Like a camera! *(Flustered, putting her dress back on.)*

WALTER

(laughs) You're crazy. *(Sees that she is serious.)* I didn't hear anything. There wasn't any click.

FRAULEIN C.

Excuse me, but I am not crazy.

WALTER

My darling, liebschen, wait a minute. What's going on?

FRAULEIN C.

(Fixes her hair, etc.) I don't know, but I'm not going to be part of it.

WALTER

(buttoning shirt hurriedly) If I have offended you, I apologize, dearest. I thought your desire was as strong as my own, and we ...

¹¹ Perhaps the actors hurry through this third rendition of the search for the click.

Act II

FRAULEIN C.

I want an explanation of what is in that desk.

WALTER

Let's look. Come on.

He opens the desk drawers, lifts the blotter, etc. C. watches suspiciously.

FRAULEIN C.

I must go, anyway. It's getting late.

WALTER

But you only just arrived.

FRAULEIN C.

Please, Walter.

WALTER

Of course, my dear, I understand. But I don't understand. At least, you do see there is nothing here.

FRAULEIN C.

Yes, all right, I do see that. I don't know what that sound was.

WALTER

Perhaps – perhaps the wind bending a branch outside the window, or the sofa creaking. That's what it was. The sofa, with the two of us lying on it, look.
(Bounces up and down on sofa.)

FRAULEIN C.

Yes, I'm sure that's right. Forgive me, I feel like a fool.

WALTER

No, no, don't apologize. It's perfectly understandable. You needn't go, now.

FRAULEIN C.

I think I want to go home, anyway, Walter. I feel a bit – unnerved.

WALTER

Very well, my dearest, but only if you kiss me goodbye as tenderly as you kissed me hello. *(They embrace passionately, but remain standing.)*

Act II

FRAULEIN C.

Goodbye.

WALTER

Wait a moment, I'm going to walk you to the trolley. (*Puts on his shoes.*)

FRAULEIN C.

No, no, better not. Only tell me you don't think I'm a fool.

WALTER

No (*opens door*), it's all right.

On the landing, Fraulein C. meets Freud. This time, she screams; her horror has become much greater upon repetition of the scene. She clutches her hands to her chest as though exposed. Freud takes her arm and escorts her back into his consulting room as Walter disappears. Freud puts the box camera on his desk between them as they resume their interview.

FRAULEIN C.

It was just horrid, Dr. Freud. Horrid! And they have pictures (*cries*), I know they do.

FREUD

Fraulein, has Herr J. said anything to you since then that would indicate ...

FRAULEIN C.

He's just as he was that other time, he tries to convince me it was all in my imagination. Here, look at these letters he keeps sending! But I'm not crazy, doctor. I know what I saw. That box the man on the stairs was carrying was a camera.

FREUD

(*perusing the letters*) But Herr J. assures you that he has no more connection with that man than you do. And the man was outside the apartment, was he not?

FRAULEIN C.

There must have been a peephole somewhere in the wall.

Act II

FREUD

Fraulein C., if you have reason to believe that Herr J. wants to hurt you, that he is plotting with Frau D. or is in any other way not to be trusted, then I think you should have nothing more to do with him. However, I can assure you that no photographs were taken of you. You have nothing to fear along those lines.

FRAULEIN C.

How can you know that?

FREUD

Because, have you ever sat for a photographer?

FRAULEIN C.

Yes.

FREUD

Outdoors, in bright sunlight?

FRAULEIN C.

Yes.

FREUD

Have you ever sat for a portrait indoors, in a photograph studio?

FRAULEIN C.

Yes, with my mother and father, as a child.

FREUD

Do you remember the bright flash of light that he generated, by exploding potassium chlorate and magnesium powder?

FRAULEIN C.

Yes.

FREUD

And on all of those occasions, notwithstanding the bright light, you had to hold still for a few seconds, didn't you?

FRAULEIN C.

Yes.

FREUD

Fraulein, they haven't yet invented fast enough film to take pictures indoors without a flash.

Act II

FRAULEIN C.

They haven't?

FREUD

Not for another fifty years.

FRAULEIN C.

Then I am crazy.

FREUD

No, no, I wouldn't put it in those terms at all. Such things can happen, some confusing sensations, the mind misinterprets them, ... (*a new thought*) Tell me, Fraulein C., if you don't mind. During your love-play with Herr J., was there any contact of the genitals? For instance, did he touch you in the genital area.

FRAULEIN C.

No. (*puzzled*) No, why?

FREUD

Well, no matter. Let us suppose that a sensation you were unaccustomed to – a throbbing in your clitoris

...

FRAULEIN C.

My what?

FREUD

Do you know what part of the female anatomy is the clitoris?

FRAULEIN C.

No (*dismissing the suggestion, whatever it is.*)

FREUD

The female genitalia are shaped like this, with an outer opening and then an inner opening; and between them, at the upper end, is a small organ that is especially sensitive to stimulation, called the clitoris.

FRAULEIN C.

Oh (*embarrassed*), well I already told you there was no touching down there.

FREUD

Of course, but the excitement of the moment may have made itself felt there, and unconsciously registered as a sound instead, as the clit – I mean click – you heard. Or perhaps it really was the sofa creaking. All I am trying to say is that

Act II

such things can happen to perfectly sane people. You know, you have kept your virginity intact until an age when most women, if still inexperienced in sexual matters, remain so for life. Flying in the face of that destiny, apparently, brought up some disturbing feelings in you that don't necessarily need to be explored further. (*Pause, waiting for a reply.*) Tell me, Fraulein, do you wish to resume the affair?

FRAULEIN C.

No.

FREUD

Well, if you stay away from such assignations in the future, you'll have no cause to be afraid either of real photographers or of imaginary ones. On the other hand, if your answer had been yes, or if you might at some time enter into another affair or a marriage, then I should recommend a course of treatment by psychoanalysis.

FRAULEIN C.

You mean, I should become one of your regular patients?

FREUD

No, not mine. I would refer you to a woman physician, a very well qualified psychoanalyst. She would see you every day, and you must not expect a cure in less than six months to a year, or even longer.

FRAULEIN C.

A cure?

FREUD

By which I mean that you would achieve greater insight into the mixture of desires, and fears, and other intense feelings that must have been awakened when you first became aware of yourself as a sexual creature, years ago, and that perhaps got buried within you in the normal course of maturing and assuming the role of a responsible adult.

FRAULEIN C.

I don't think I need that cure, doctor. Anyway, I shan't be led into any such "assignations," as you call them, in the future.

FREUD

In that case, psychoanalysis would be a waste of your time and money. But of course you may change your mind some day. If that happens, please feel free to visit me and we shall talk about it again.

Act II

FRAULEIN C.

I promise. And I want to thank you.

FREUD

Why thank me? You have shared with me an intriguing mystery, and I have done nothing for you.

FRAULEIN C.

On the contrary, I feel much better. You have put my mind at ease.

FREUD

Exactly where a mind should be. I am delighted to hear it. Goodbye.

FRAULEIN C.

Goodbye, doctor. (*exit*)

FREUD

(*musings*) Well. After all, it was her sexual feelings toward her mother and, by surrogate, toward Frau D. that frightened Fraulein C. It was not the prospect of having been photographed. In fact, I suspect she rather liked that fantasy.

He idly picks up the camera and turns it over in his hands, then slowly rewinds the film.

Why would I refer such an interesting patient to another analyst instead of treating her myself? Because she is, contrary to all appearances, deeply homosexual and deeply hostile to all men. The resistance to a male analyst would be insuperable.

He opens the camera and removes a late 20th-century film canister, which he tosses from one hand to the other thoughtfully, then slips into his jacket pocket.

END OF ACT II

Act III. The Captain's Mother-in-law (1916)¹²

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

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

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

Heinrich's mother-in-law, 53, played by the same actress.¹³

A female physician in the audience, the same actress.

Marie is the captain's mother-in-law's maid, “with whom she discussed confidential matters, perhaps rather too freely.”

A streetwalker is played by the same actress.

Anna Freud, 18, is played by the same actress.

A female medical student is played by the same actress.

Sigmund Freud, 60, has established himself as one of the revolutionary influences on Western civilization's thought and culture.

Freud's collection of primitive figurines has grown, along with the number of books and personal memorabilia such as pictures of Rome, group photographs of psychoanalytic societies and international lecture tour, etc. The consulting room will make a more cluttered, disheveled impression than previously, just enough to support the dreamlike, surreal elements of our final act.

Freud's first speech is in dim light.

FREUD

I am reading a lecture to the university's 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.

¹² 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*.

¹³ “a well preserved lady, of a friendly, simple disposition”

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 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. Suddenly everyone rushes to an adjoining lounge to take liquid refreshment. I am left alone, with my lecture notes scattered across the floor.

The department chairman returns to the auditorium and asks why I haven’t joined his colleagues for a glass of sherry. I try to explain that I never really got to the point, but insensitive to my humiliation, he insists that I come next door. Animated conversation and laughter roll in from the lounge. But by the time I’ve collected myself and the pages of my lecture, the adjoining room is now completely empty, the table strewn with overturned glasses and cracker crumbs. I wake up trembling like a child who has suffered a nightmare of monsters and torture.

Lights come up during the last three sentences to reveal Freud sitting in his armchair at the head of the couch, addressing the audience, with an unlit 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. No one 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 – 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 having 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 _____, where my father-in-law manages a large factory. He could afford to retire, but his sense of duty keeps him still at work. 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 me and to the rest of 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 herself 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 medicine 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 lets herself in and 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

Act III

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 and, owing to wartime vacancies, had been promoted to a good position. She was even addressed as “Fraulein.”

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

The girl who had become a lowly housemaid with the same employer was only too ready to accuse her former schoolmate of all possible evil. 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.

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.

FREUD

No, I ...

MARIE

(cutting him off) 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 back to Freud.)* It was the day after I made that remark to Marie that the anonymous letter arrived. It was perfectly obvious.

FREUD

In effect, 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?

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. Our son went into banking. He has done well, but my husband is disappointed that he has no interest in the factory. Heinrich will join my husband as soon as he has served his commission, and my husband has no doubt Heinrich can learn the business in time for him to retire in five years. Then we shall travel, as we have done very little traveling together in all these years. At least Heinrich gets to see 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 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. Oh, he's very affectionate, but ...

FREUD

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

CAPTAIN'S MOTHER-IN-LAW

Even after the change of life?

FREUD

Quite so. Menopause has to do with the ability to conceive a child, nothing to do with the sexual act itself.

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.

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!

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.

Act III

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 excessive concern, and 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?

ELISABETH

Yes, I didn't mind.

ANNA

What I learned from you were enough details to identify 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. I remembered the case right away. I've read almost all of Father's work at least once.

ELISABETH

I didn't suppose he would remember me; that's why I wasn't planning to look him up.

ANNA

Oh, he will remember you perfectly. 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.

She 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. Unlike most wives in wartime, I get to accompany my husband on this assignment.

FREUD

My daughter said "Doctor"?

ELISABETH

Yes, I'm a pediatrician by training, 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 think I understand. In fact, even my husband was saying that our Austrian kinsmen deserve Germany's eternal gratitude for your fidelity on our southern front.

FREUD

Kinsmen? Speaking as a Jew, doctor, our language is German and our culture is German; but 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!

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 read 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 don't propound such views out of conviction, but 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.

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, for example, this man Karl Kraus. (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. 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. Your husband should read my next book.

Before I announced the discovery of incestuous drives in children, my detractors and enemies, thwarters of my professional career, were only found among my colleagues in the medical profession. Now their circle has widened to include every coffee house posturer who presumes to take a position on subjects he – or she – knows nothing of. But a man who sees the slops that are thrown in his path has his head down and his eyes on the ground, instead of on the horizon. I have a greater vision! Do read my next book, doctor, and see if I don’t explain the origins of both civilization itself, and its discontents, in the fact that society inhibits those instinctive impulses. Let Adler, Jung, and others pussy foot around the significance of sexuality in childhood personality formation as well as in adult neuroses. Yes, they’ll meet with greater acceptance than I among the readers of newspaper lampoons, but only because they sugar coat the unpalatable truth!

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.

FREUD

I beg your pardon. I was ranting. It has been delightful to meet you again and 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. I suppose you'll be dining with the aristocracy. You can regale 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

As a matter of fact, she is a lovely woman; it's you who were insufferable. Your abdominal problem again, isn't it?

FREUD

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

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 lady I turned into a 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.

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.

Can you imagine your Papa as a swordsman? Would you believe I once fought a duel? And with none other than the famous Viktor Adler, now head of the National Socialist Party? Not a political matter, though. We were both medical students – no, in fact, already trained doctors, working in the laboratory of the great Meynert, learning hypnosis. I am sure Viktor no more dreamed of becoming a politician than I did of becoming – whatever I have become. (*thinks*) Her bringing up the name of Alfred Adler must have brought – as a matter of fact, Viktor must be Alfred's cousin somewhere down the line. They are all related, though the Christian Adlers don't like to admit it. That's why we fought, as a matter of fact. In those days, we Jews let no slur pass without a challenge. Especially when it came from an ex-Jew like Viktor. He was foolish to challenge me, because we had fenced many times and I always beat him.

ANNA

You really mean – a duel?

FREUD

Indeed. Just like in the theatre.

The captain (Heinrich) enters, from the interior door, with a long, curved phallus hanging at his side where his sword was. Anna behaves as if Freud were continuing to speak from the couch, but Freud rises and clicks his heels together, at "attention." They bow to one another, the captain draws his "sword" and Freud takes an identical one from an umbrella stand. They stand back to back, take three paces, and turn to fight seriously.

With sabers, first man to draw blood is the victor. And who do you think was the victor? I was. The famous Dr. "Viktor" Adler carries a couple of scars to this day, I have no doubt; one under his beard and another under his shirt. It was my one and only duel, and I emerged – unscathed!

He has out-fought the captain and pushes him nearly off the stage, toward the wings.

Act III

I am sure you do not wish to die, Captain. You have everything to live for. Yet, if you had the choice of being sent into a hopeless position on the battlefield, very likely to be killed, or being sent back to the age of ten and your military school to be buggered again by the prefects, ...

HEINRICH

Stop! No more! (*flees the stage*)

FREUD

At bottom, a coward.

ANNA

Who? Adler? Which Adler?

Freud is returning to lie on the couch.

FREUD

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; he could sit up or stand. This time she is cognizant of his location.)
Go join them! They have a school! Many schools! You want to work with children, 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 first 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.

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. I never received the credit I should have had for my coca plant research. Its anaesthetic properties, which I discovered, have revolutionized the field of surgery, but when you hear Koller and Koenigstein's names praised to the skies for surgically removing glaucoma under a cocaine anaesthetic, does anyone mention my monograph? Of course not. Although it met with great respect at the time, I enjoy no credit for it because I left the study of medicinal plants to take up the practice of medicine. Why? You think I had the ambition to become the most famous doctor in the history of the world? No; I simply couldn't support a family on my small stipend as a researcher. (*moving toward podium*)

But, the frustration! In my present field, where I have remained focused for nearly thirty years, 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 psychoanalyst must exercise restraint when interpreting his cases to an audience that is less than thoroughly familiar with analytic technique. He has to guard against the risk that a dazzling display of acumen on his part may only reduce the credibility of his results.

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?

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 male 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?

Act III

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! Kllhhh! Don't say anything! Don't touch me!

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

END OF PLAY