

# BELLE VUE



BELLE VUE:  
SIGMUND FREUD, MINNA BERNAYS,  
AND THE MEANING OF DREAMS

A Novel By

Barry G. Gale

**CAMBRIDGE  
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P U B L I S H I N G

Belle Vue: Sigmund Freud, Minna Bernays, and the Meaning of Dreams,  
by Barry G. Gale

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*To Heather, Megan, and Ian,  
with Love and Appreciation*

Do you suppose that some day a marble tablet will be  
placed on [Belle Vue], inscribed with these words:  
In this house on July 24,  
1895, the Secret of Dreams was  
Revealed to  
Dr. Sigmund Freud  
At this moment, I see little prospect of it  
—Sigmund Freud to Wilhelm Fliess, June 12, 1900

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The Belle Vue resort, on the outskirts of Vienna, Austria, circa 1895  
(Reproduced with permission of the Sigmund Freud Foundation)

**It is July 24, 1895**

## PART I.

### AT DINNER

#### 1.

##### **8:15 PM. Renaldo's Restaurant at Belle Vue.**

"But don't you think the turn of the century will be critical in world history, Doktor Fliess?" Minna Bernays' azure eyes flashed with excitement as she glanced across Renaldo's faux Italian baroque interior—marble floors, stucco walls and niches, and yellow brocade curtains covering open, panoramic windows.

Sigmund Freud knew how vivacious and alluring his wife's younger sister could be, spirited beyond belief at times, yet also how dangerous, unpredictable. Every time she opened her mouth in company the bottom of his spine tightened. Just one misstep, some inadvertent faux pas about their relationship—the secret out, his life summarily destroyed. He needed to control Minna but realized how futile the hope. Discretion was not in her nature.

"Please call me Wilhelm." A tall, attractive man, with tapered beard, broad mustache and prominent Roman nose, Dr. Wilhelm Fliess was Freud's close friend and medical colleague from Berlin.

"All right, Doktor Fliess. Well?" Minna's smile broadened.

"I don't know. Nineteen hundred—it seems it will just be another year," Fliess said.

"I disagree." Minna sent angry looks to Freud but he refused to engage in what he considered her childish behavior. Minna hated Fliess though until that evening she had never met him, hardly a requirement for her. She liked to call Fliess Sigmund's favorite "boyfriend," which irritated the hell out of Freud.

"I sensed you might not agree," Fliess said.

Minna's handsome head rose, her full, sensuous lips twitching nervously. "It's more than just a new year, it's a new century, a new beginning, a new frame of mind."

"Might you be romanticizing things, dear Minna?" Fliess asked. He

stroked his mustache.

Minna's mood shifted, her eyes serious, face somber. "Romanticizing? I guess I'll have to ask—in what sense?"

"In the sense that a year is just another year," he said.

"Even one which might mark a turning point in human history?" Minna let out a piercing, dismissive laugh. She twirled several ivory bracelets she wore around her right wrist.

Round and round they go, Freud thought, just like her mind, never stopping long enough for anyone to understand what she wanted, who she really was. Was it even possible to appreciate Minna in all her infinite variety? He doubted it.

"Most years mark some sort of turning point in history, wouldn't you say?" Fliess said as he whisked away a pesky fly with the back of his hand. "Why should nineteen hundred be any different?" He seemed uncomfortable as he pulled a stiff collar from his perspiring neck. He looked over to Freud, apparently for help.

Freud straightened his well-worn, light blue linen suit jacket which framed a matching waistcoat and deep blue cravat. One year shy of forty, his friends thought him too disheveled to be handsome and too imposing to be plain, but his appearance, they could attest, elicited the considered attention of strangers almost immediately upon first encountering him. Yet his appearance, he realized, never served to get him what he wanted; what he knew he must have; what he felt the world owed him.

"Minna is not one to take logic for an answer, dear Wilhelm, or even truth," Freud said, hoping to rescue his friend. "When talking to her one must assume that she is right and you are wrong until proven otherwise."

Minna stuck her tongue out at Freud. The gesture reddened the face of a waiter busily replenishing the table's wine glasses and elicited a raised eyebrow from Freud's wife Martha. Freud felt embarrassed. Can't Minna ever behave? While her antics could be maddening—she often darted from emotion to emotion with hardly a moment for serious thought—the more difficult she became the more powerfully he was attracted to her. He found her uncensored, irreverent soul and volatile personality refreshing as well as beguiling. Nothing was subtle about Minna, but nothing was dishonest, either.

"But, Doktor Fliess," Mrs. Fleischmann jumped in, "isn't a new year different from any previous ones, or newer than any that came before, though I suspect that every new year is by definition newer than every year that came before?" She giggled. "Or something like that?"

Martha Freud's mother, Mrs. Bernays, had invited Goldi Fleischmann, her best friend, and Goldi's husband, Jakob, to the dinner. Freud had dined

with the elderly couple before. Mrs. Fleischmann, a small, finicky woman who often spoke to the rhythm of her gently dancing hands, frequently peppered her sentences with nonsensical hyperbole and then laughed giddily when she realized that what she said did not make sense. She also had a pronounced lisp, which made even her most sober statements seem less so.

Fliess looked flummoxed. “I guess so, Frau Fleischmann, if I understand your question correctly.”

“Probably more than I do myself,” she said in response, giggling once more.

“Oh, Goldi!” Mrs. Bernays chastised.

“Just a thought, Emmeline,” Mrs. Fleischmann said as she lowered her shoulders.

Jakob Fleischmann seemed about to join in the conversation, but then demurred, his face sad.

Freud felt sorry for the old gentleman. For all Fleischmann’s business acumen and accumulated millions—he served as Central European representative of Britain’s Consett Steel Works for over thirty years during a period of rapid industrialization—he could barely get a word in edgewise when his wife spoke, which meant all the time Fliess and Minna were not dominating the conversation. But Fleischmann was a jolly good fellow since he also loved cigars and offered Freud several expensive ones.

“I’m not trying to bully you, Doktor Fliess, though my brother-in-law might believe otherwise,” Minna said as she gave Freud a snarly look, “I’m just trying to provide perspective. I for one have faith in the future and am staggered just to think what the turn of the century might bring.”

“Well, let’s hope it will bring progress for all of us. Undoubtedly preferable to any possible alternative, wouldn’t you agree?” Fliess said adroitly.

Disarmed, Minna nodded. “Yes, I can certainly agree with that!”

Minna’s aggressive behavior toward Fliess irritated Freud but in the end his friend did not seem to mind. In fact, before he left for the evening Fliess whispered into Freud’s ear, “About Minna, yes—I now see what you mean.” He then winked, which made Freud cringe. Fliess was suspicious of his relationship with Minna, although Freud had never revealed to him how intimate it had become.

During the dinner Mrs. Bernays remained stern and aloof and could hardly contain a look of disdain every time Fliess began to speak, even though when he did he said nothing about his unusual medical ideas, most of which, Freud had learned from Martha, her mother found horrifying.

Periodically, Mrs. Bernays stared at Freud with cold, even suspicious

eyes. Once when he exchanged smiles with Minna he noticed her frowning. She likes to look down her nose at me, set impossible goals which she knows I cannot attain, criticize me no matter how hard I try! A well-proportioned woman who communicated unmistakable authority as well as perceptible power and energy, she was someone he did not wish to fight with but nonetheless invariably did. He had come to see her as an always terrifying specter—someone who could easily impact things, but whom things could rarely impact in turn. A formidable person not to be trifled with.

If only she would go away. Be out of his life forever. But people like her never go away. That would be too convenient.

Mrs. Bernays' clothes looked severe, almost funereal that evening. The deep blue of her dress seemed the most melancholy of colors, a midnight blue. A death-like blue almost verging on black. In stark contrast, her jewelry appeared light and sparkling. In an age when ladies did not own costume jewelry, she wore a pair of Cartier garnet earrings with bracelet to match, her husband's tenth anniversary gift.

Saturnine but at times striking, her face was defined by a broad, convex forehead and an elegant jaw. Her jaw seemed to bespeak, if not truth, then at least conviction, while her skin, tortuous, heavy, and worn, appeared two sizes too large for her body. Wrinkles, deepest along both sides of her short, thick neck, also creased her face and forehead.

"The cake! The cake!" she bellowed. "Let the festivities begin!"

A Renaldo's waiter placed a round yellow cake coated with cinnamon, sugar and walnuts in the center of the large rectangular dinner table and then lit the cake's three candles. "To Martha, Happy 34<sup>th</sup>!" was written in white icing across the cake's top.

Mrs. Bernays slowly rose, wine glass in hand. She raised it above her head. "Let us toast my daughter on this auspicious occasion. To wonderful Martha, a woman beloved by all, and the mother of such bright and handsome children!" She turned to Martha. "Happy birthday, my darling!"

A chorus of congratulations rang out from the assembled guests.

"Sigmund, don't you want to say something?" Mrs. Bernays said sharply.

"Yes, yes, of course," Freud said as he reluctantly rose, irritated he had not been mentioned in his mother-in-law's tribute to Martha. Should he have been surprised?

He turned to his wife and raised his wine glass. "To Martha, without whom the Freud family could not exist for nary a day. Happy birthday, Princess!" Martha smiled tepidly while Minna, her face sallow, looked away.

“Speech,” Goldi Fleischmann said as she pounded the cloth-covered table with her fork.

“Yes, indeed,” Mrs. Bernays added.

Martha seemed apprehensive as she stood. Adorned conservatively in a light brown dress imprinted with small red roses—a dress her mother had always loved—Martha’s skin appeared moist and shiny from the heat. Speckles of perspiration trickled down her face from several places on the top of her forehead, collecting at the upper ridge of her tight bodice collar, which looked nearly soaked through from the accumulated moisture. From time to time she would discreetly run a finger across her forehead, but the flow would not be arrested for long.

She looked about, her face dour. “I don’t know what to say. It’s all just too wonderful.” She broke into tears as she dropped into her chair.

“This should be a happy time for you, Martha, not a time for tears,” Mr. Fleischmann intoned.

“She’s just so happy, Jakob,” Goldi explained. “Can’t you see that they are tears of joy?”

“Well, I hope so,” Mr. Fleischmann said.

“Yes, that right,” Martha said in a barely audible voice, her sad hazel eyes peering out from under thin, dark eyebrows. “I’m just overtaken. I can’t thank everyone enough.” She wiped her cheeks with her handkerchief and then gently blew her nose.

Mrs. Bernays wrapped her arms around Martha’s shoulders to comfort her, pushing Freud, who was sitting next to his wife, to one side. He bristled at the intrusion but Mrs. Bernays did not seem to care.

Freud’s favorite sister, Pauli, a close friend of Martha’s, and her husband Valentin, were also at the dinner. The Winternitzes did not say much until the birthday cake had been devoured, presents opened and applauded and the conversation had turned to their plans to immigrate to America. Freud noticed his mother-in-law becoming nostalgic when the subject came up.

“We hope to sail next fall, if everything works out. I need to tie up some business arrangements with my partners here in Vienna.” A slim, undersized man with quick eye movements and a ready smile, Valentin spoke in a soft but careful voice, as if consciously trying to explain something to people with limited understanding.

“You’re an architect, Herr Winternitz, yes?” asked Fliess.

“Yes, Doktor Fliess, I am,” Valentin said.

“Where in America do you plan to settle?” Mr. Fleischmann asked.

“Valentin’s got a wonderful offer to work in Chicago,” Pauli Winternitz said, her almond-shaped, reddish-brown eyes bright and

engaging.

“I thought that place burned down.” Mrs. Bernays looked surprised.

“It did—some time ago—but it is being rebuilt using the latest architectural and engineering designs,” Valentin explained. “For an architect it is a veritable *tabula rasa*. Some of the new techniques are amazing. I expect one day buildings will stand thirty, even forty stories high. Some perhaps even higher.”

“Bah! Not in my lifetime!” Mrs. Bernays said.

“Oh, I wouldn’t be so sure about that, Frau Bernays,” Valentin said.

“Valentin’s got an offer from Adler and Sullivan, one of the most prominent architectural firms in Chicago,” Pauli announced proudly.

“Dankmar Adler, the principle partner, is a distant relative,” Valentin explained.

“Sigmund, did you hear that?” Mrs. Bernays said. “Valentin’s a success even before he sets foot in America!”

“Wonderful,” Freud murmured.

Mrs. Bernays turned to Valentin, “I assume you will be disembarking in New York?”

“That’s correct,” Valentin said.

“Maybe they can visit Eli?” Minna suggested, looking at her mother.

“Just what I was thinking.” Mrs. Bernays turned to Pauli. “Do you think you’ll have a chance . . . ?”

Pauli looked uncomfortable. She turned to her husband. “I don’t know our schedule . . . .” Valentin nodded. “But I’m sure we can make time,” she added.

“Magnificent!” Mrs. Bernays addressed the assembled group. “That’s where my son Eli is. He emigrated there with his family last year. He’s very successful, you know.”

“He’s into commodities,” Minna added. “The trade side of that, I believe.”

“I miss him so,” Mrs. Bernays said, her face forlorn. “Pauli, if you could just say hello, just touch him, that would mean so much. Someone from home!”

“Give us his address and we’ll make certain we do,” said Pauli.

“Let me know when your plans are firm and I will write him immediately,” Mrs. Bernays said. “I’m certain he’d love to meet you at the dock.”

Good luck in that regard! Although close friends at one time, in recent years Freud and Eli had become arch enemies, to Martha’s great dismay, since she had always been close to her older brother, much closer than she had been to Minna. Yet Freud felt the ever petulant Eli would never go out

of his way to help anyone and he knew what little regard Eli had for Pauli and Valentin. He also hated the fact that his mother-in-law habitually compared him unfavorably to Eli. It was as if Eli, with halo in place, could never do anything wrong, while Freud, with horns protruding, could never do anything right.

When Josefina, the Freud's Catholic *Kinderfrau*, ensconced with the children at one end of the table, came close to say something to Martha, Minna, sitting directly across from her sister, shuddered and turned her head away, and Freud knew why. Josefina had been running her mouth again. Spreading ugly rumors about Minna and him. Gossiping with anyone willing to listen. Minna wanted to kill her; he'd like to kill her, too. How many people has she already infected with her poisonous chatter?

At one point during the dinner Mrs. Bernays mentioned that she heard, from time to time that evening, many strange, frightening sounds which had come to haunt her of late, something she described as the Horn of Death, though when she inquired no one else seemed to hear anything. Freud maintained a straight face but inwardly chuckled. People will think she's a crazy old biddy, a fact I already know.

Pregnant with their sixth child, Martha looked listless and unhappy, which worried Freud. She also tried to avoid eye contact when he happened to glance her way, stretching her neck one way and then the other, which she did when nervous. I'm tired of her always looking so pathetic, so needy. Always making me feel so damn guilty! She also seemed fidgety whenever Minna spoke, which made Freud anxious as well. Does she know something now she didn't know before?

Dr. Hermann Rosenthal, a heavyset, usually ebullient man who Freud had invited to the dinner, looked as uncomfortable as Martha; angry as well. Freud didn't like the expression on Rosenthal's face. He'd been cold to Freud lately, chillingly so. A friend since their early medical days—they had hated all the same doctors at Vienna's General Hospital, where they had interned together—Rosenthal had counseled Freud about Minna, so he knew all the sordid details. And people who knew were also people who could tell. Freud hoped he could trust him, but given human nature . . . ?

Freud exchanged playful looks with Minna from time to time. Perhaps too many times. Yet he could not stop staring at her. Those happy eyes, that vibrant face. Did Martha catch one of these exchanges? He wasn't sure.

From time to time Freud would fantasize about running away with Minna, but then grim reality would set it. Where would they go? Who would support his large family? Everything seemed so impossible. Yet he needed Minna, as much as he needed light and air. She brought him hope,

confidence; ignited passions he never knew he had; transformed him in ways he never thought possible. Her mischievous smile brightened his darkest moods.

Yet he feared her as much as he desired her. She tore at him constantly, with small but lethal doses of sarcasm, menacing jocularly, reckless nonchalance that both attracted and disturbed. He never knew what she might say or do. Her actions kept him in a breathless state, desperate for reason and moderation. He had no comfort with her, no life without her. Is that why he found her so attractive? Why he saw her as so essential to his own happiness?

Freud felt awash in the inconsequential, the practical, the mundane—too many people dragging him down, needing his help, pushing him to do better. Everybody wanted him to improve their lives, but what about his own? He could not warm to family life, which he found boring, distasteful; too many conflicting personalities, so many hurt feelings which needed patience and tender care. Can an adventurer also be a nurturer? He didn't believe so.

He was tired of playing Job, suffering, righteous. Although he came naked out of his mother's womb, he would not go into eternity unclothed nor unaccomplished. Nor, he hoped, unhappy, which at times seemed his only destiny. He craved professional recognition, the joyous comfort that comes with acceptance by one's peers. He'd been a rebel long enough. To what end? For what purpose? Sheer arrogance and pride! He was on the verge of great discoveries, notions which would upend the common understanding of who people are; insights which would illuminate the true nature of human motivation, the very structure of the unconscious mind, mankind's eternal other self.

Those ideas were sacred, immutable and he would fight to protect them. After so much sacrifice, turmoil, struggle, to do otherwise would be madness! Yet could he have both—Minna and fame? My wife's sister! It's not done! It's absolutely forbidden! Loving Minna was daunting and filled with peril; not loving her was as well.

Everything was coming to a head. The pressure was becoming unbearable. People were talking. Josefina was spreading gossip like the plague. Minna was demanding a commitment. He felt attacked, cornered. He knew he had to decide. But was it already too late? Was what he and Minna wanted becoming irrelevant? Was time finally catching up with them, no matter their hopes?

Emil Fluss, Freud's friend since childhood, was also at the dinner. With thick lips and a pink cherubic face, a mass of disorganized light brown hair covered everything above Fluss's grayish-green eyes, so much

so that Freud felt his friend looked like a child's string-puppet. Two large dimples which appeared in each cheek when Fluss smiled tended to reinforce the impression.

Outside of a few pleasantries, Fluss did not say much that evening but seemed to absorb the atmosphere of the dinner with equanimity if not actual comfort. On his way out of the restaurant, he quipped to Freud, "So that's our intrepid Doktor Fliess, eh Sigmund!"

"Yes," Freud said impassively, not looking up, "and it best you keep your mouth shut."

Emil liked to make fun of Fliess and his strange ideas, almost as much as Minna did. What both refused to understand was that Fliess was one of the few people willing to give Freud's ideas a fair hearing, which at this point in his career he desperately needed. When Emil and Minna disparaged Fliess they were criticizing Freud as well, for many saw them in a similar light, ambitious dreamers concocting harebrained ideas at the very margins of respectable medical thought. Untrue, but who cared what Freud thought!

Martha, arms overflowing with presents, approached her husband on her way out of Renaldo's.

"Can we talk tonight, Sigmund? I think we really need to talk." Martha looked grim.

"We can always talk, Princess, you know that."

"Unfortunately, Sigmund, I'm not sure that's always the case."

Freud felt immediately uncomfortable.

## PART II.

### IN THE MORNING

#### 2.

##### **8:54 AM. The Freud parlor at Belle Vue.**

"This heat is unbearable. In Reichenau or Mariazell, it would not be like this. But Belle Vue . . . ." Mrs. Bernays shook her head in despair. "I can hardly breathe." She dramatically planted her left hand upon her bosom and tried to take a deep breath which, when she exhaled, produced a strained, wheezing sound.

"It's hot everywhere, Mutti," Martha said. Busily embroidering, she sat next to her mother in the far corner of the room, separated only by a side table bearing a small electric lamp and a vase filled with sky blue mountain hydrangea.

"Not like this—and not this early in the morning." Mrs. Bernays grimaced as she spied the hydrangea, one of her least favorite flowers.

"Yes, I think so."

"Martha, nothing like this. Purgatorial heat. It occurs only in Vienna. If Sigmund were more successful, of course, we wouldn't have to be at Belle Vue again."

"Oh, please, Mutti. Show a little grace, some compassion." Martha's frustration was palpable.

"I would like to, Martha, but I will not turn my back on reality."

"You don't have to," Martha said, "just try to be kind from time to time. Anyway, this is not Vienna." The soft timbre in Martha's voice seemed strained. "We're two thousand feet higher here."

"Not high enough. Never high enough."

Martha did not respond but momentarily closed her eyes.

Mrs. Bernays suspected Martha did not like when she expressed her disdain for Belle Vue because she did not want to admit how much she hated it herself. That would be standing up to Sigmund too much, her holy idol. Martha was always trying to run from what was distasteful in life, put the best face on things, see light and happiness where no one else could.

But that was no way to live! Better to hold one's ground—confront the ugly, the wretched, the sordid, engage problems before they got out of hand.

"Goldi asked me the other day why we keep coming back to Belle Vue," Mrs. Bernays said. "She knows how much I detest it. Was Sigmund his old stubborn self again? she asked. Oh no, not Sigmund, I said. It's not actually his fault."

"Really?" Surprised, Martha looked up.

"Yes, really. It's his patients' fault. Didn't you know? Naturally, Goldi was confused, more so than usual. I said it's all very simple. The more patients Sigmund has the more distance we can travel. Many patients mean Switzerland or maybe even Italy. Italy would indicate an especially good year. Too few patients and we're stuck with Belle Vue again."

"Can't you show him the least bit of understanding?" Martha said sharply.

"I show him what I think he deserves, nothing less, nothing more."

"Well, I think he deserves more."

"That's quite obvious."

Martha mindlessly defending Sigmund again! How naive! How childishly romantic! To her he's always right, just perfect. If I were her I'd take Sigmund by the nape of his neck and give him a good shaking. Grow up, Herr Doktor! Live up to your responsibilities! This family needs your help more than ever!

Mrs. Bernays opened her fan and worked it in staccato fashion about her face and shoulders. A Chinese *Mai Ogi*, it had slats of sandalwood covered by a sheer blue cloth and adorned with painted yellow canaries. The fan was light to the touch and powerful in its effect, a combination she greatly admired. It supplemented an all too languid electric version, which hung from the middle of the high ceiling. To some, the ceiling fan created the appearance of coolness, if not indeed the fact. To Mrs. Bernays it represented everything wrong with society: lots of activity and motion, very few results. It also gave off churning sounds of metal against metal, a sort of screeching she could not abide.

Martha looked up from her work, her face pained. She lay her embroidery on her lap and began to massage her temples with her fingertips.

While her mother believed her daughter attractive, especially when compared with most women her age, she did see several imperfections. Martha's mouth and jaw descended too quickly toward her neck from the line of her straight forehead, and her eyes, with long blue ovals under each, seemed too large for her small spherical face. Her nose was too upturned and while her lips were wide and tender, the lower more so than

the upper, both often seemed stretched thin from tension.

With a colorless complexion, beyond pale, her daughter often looked as if she had just recovered from some enervating illness: not quite sick looking, but not quite well, either.

Martha's most attractive feature was her soft and lustrous hair, which she wore parted in the middle with her braided tail held in place by a small tortoise shell clasp.

While Mrs. Bernays considered Martha's overall appearance pleasant, her daughter's face revealed little confidence and perhaps less than ordinary promise. She did exude a certain sweetness, though—a daintiness, a delicacy—which seemed to compensate. Most people remembered the sweetness, or at least her mother did.

With considerable effort Mrs. Bernays awakened her heavy limbs, pressed her short, strong arms against the seat of her upholstered chair and rose slowly. Standing motionless for a moment to steady herself, she looked around to get her bearings, smoothed out the drape of her dress and, wooden walking cane in hand, began to wander, limping noticeably, about the room. The train of her skirts swept across the geometric inlays of the Arenberg parquet floor.

A strange, almost unwilling feeling constrained her gait, as if her legs fought every step. It must be the heat, she thought. After all, I'm not that old, though for some I must appear ancient, decrepit. Especially, Sigmund.

Her cane had been a gift from her daughters on her fortieth birthday. She needed it for a congenitally bad left hip. Its twisted ivory handle, which had turned brownish-yellow from years of use, boasted an engraved sterling collar and below, a polished steel tip. As she walked, she blew her breath upward to cool her face as she continued her frequent bursts of fanning.

"Reichenau and Mariazell are out of the question. This summer, anyway," Martha said.

Does Martha need to take Sigmund's side on every question? He can't be right all of the time, can he? No one is right all of the time, not even me!

"Huh!" Mrs. Bernays looked up at the fan whirling above and shook her head. "How I hate electricity!"

Martha looked startled, her eyes blinking into focus. "I didn't realize electricity was something to hate or not."

"If electricity can't make that stupid fan move any faster then it certainly is something to hate."

"Better having it than having nothing."

"Not so sure about that; nothing does not promise more than it can

deliver,” Mrs. Bernays said, pleased with her little piece of logic.

“And electricity does?”

“Electricity promises so much, but gives us so little, *mein Schatz*, my darling. If it really worked I wouldn’t have to supplement that mechanical fan with my own quite feeble human efforts. Taking advantage of an old woman like that.”

“Why don’t you ask it to try harder?” Martha said. Though nervousness still dominated her pallid face, a small, devilish smile began to emerge. “If you’re nice to it, perhaps it will go out of its way to help you.”

Martha liked to make fun of her frequent anthropomorphisms, and Mrs. Bernays chose not to respond at first. “I guess I hate modernity,” she finally said. “That’s probably it. It’s all just too middle class for me.”

“Never quite thought of it in that way.” Martha shrugged.

Mrs. Bernays realized she had a tendency to jump to the philosophical from the essentially prosaic, her way of systematizing life, bringing everything together even when doing so made little sense. But she felt it made much more important the many insignificant things which often filled her tedious days. As her beloved late husband Berman used to say, organization overcomes chaos and gives meaning to life; the more organization, the more meaning one can expect. She thought that was true—at least sometimes.

“Like Sigmund’s new telephone,” she said. “Have you ever seen anything so preposterous?” Mrs. Bernays’ eyes brightened as her tongue ran along her lips.

“Oh?” Martha struggled to hold back a smile. She lifted her head higher. “It’s all the rage now, and Sigi thinks it is indispensable for his practice.”

“Practice? *What* practice?”

“Mutti, not again. Why do you look for every opportunity to pounce on him? Can’t you ever give Sigmund a chance!”

“Sigmund is running out of chances, *mein Schatz*.”

“In your mind he might be, but certainly not in mine.”

“Anyway, it rings and you jump.”

“What are you talking about?”

“The telephone, my dear child. How much more middle class can you get?”

Martha shook her head in frustration, but did not respond.

“Martha, I predict modernity will make slaves of all of us one day.” Mrs. Bernays spoke in her best oracular tone of voice. “Mark my word.”

“What threatens you, Mutti, other people find of inestimable value.”

“Perhaps.” Mrs. Bernays sighed. “But it’s too hot to argue.”

“Yes, I agree. Much too hot to argue now.”

The parlor of the Freud suite of rooms at Belle Vue, a frayed inn *cum* ersatz castle, was all too representative of middle class Austrian resort furnishings. Filled with overstuffed armchairs, Turkish rugs on occasional tables, and imitation palm fronds in tall Japanese vases, it was awash in the so-called Biedermeier style of furniture then popular in Austria and Germany: heavy pieces of fruitwood, maple, mahogany and birch marked with patterns of pressed brass ornamentation of Greek origin.

On one wall hung a large reproduction of Hans Makart’s *Charles V entering Antwerp*. On another an equally large copy of Anton Romako’s *The Hot Springs of Gastein in Festival Illumination*. Mrs. Bernays liked the Makart but thought the Romako overbearing. Martha felt just the opposite. On the fireplace mantel under a large rectangular French mirror Mrs. Bernays thought she recognized a clock by Andreas Peter of Villingen or someone of that period. It had a walnut case with ebony-colored wood accents, and it displayed Roman numerals with an engraved brass dial depicting Diana, goddess of the hunt. Handsome, Mrs. Bernays was dismayed when she realized it no longer worked, the time set forever at twelve past three.

The whole room, spacious but somber and graceless, had a sense of missed elegance about it. The light brown wallpaper seemed bland as did the grayish white wood trim of the crown moldings. If one had to choose, she thought sepia the color to describe it.

Most disturbing, the room had the musty smell of one infrequently occupied and only perfunctorily cared for; a room occasionally dusted but never thoroughly cleaned.

Several floor lamps and additional table lamps, all with thin linen shades, stood about the room, none distinguished in character, shape or color. Stout pitchers of water and tall drinking glasses rested on two of the side tables, the one next to where Martha sat, another on a table nearer the windows.

Through a series of tall, floor-to-ceiling casement windows inadequately covered by long, sheer curtains, the room overlooked a large, open courtyard terrace which sat some thirty feet below. The windows, set in an overhanging bay fashion, were open wide, or as wide as their large, creaky iron cranks allowed. A modest breeze only moved the curtains an inch or two back and forth, in waltz-like rhythms, and only now and then.

The early morning light from the windows played across the room, primarily in continuous horizontal bands of copper-colored hues alternating with muted degrees of yellowish shade, as if produced by some

natural magic lantern. The greatest source of heat emanated from the windows; they also provided the greatest source of air.

The furnishings, the heavy heat and humidity, and the musty, almost acrid smell gave the room a hellish atmosphere, consistent with Mrs. Bernays' feelings about Belle Vue.

### 3.

#### 9:10 AM. The Belle Vue terrace.

"This heat is marvelous," Sigmund Freud said, his eyes opened wide. "In Reichenau or Mariazell, it would not be like this. But Belle Vue—it penetrates right to the bone and warms the soul."

Minna turned to Freud, his strong, expressive face resplendent under the brilliant morning sun.

"It is marvelous," she agreed. "But Mother must be having fits. You know how she reacts to heat."

Freud smiled. "Let us hope Martha can keep her calm. For all our sakes."

"Sigmund! You're terrible! What did Mother ever do to you?" The sun's rays had turned Minna's face a crisp, brownish red.

Freud raised his head and looked over toward Minna, an ironic expression on his face. "Are you serious? What hasn't your mother done to me?"

Minna nodded and smiled broadly. "I withdraw the question," she said.

"Thank you."

Minna laughed and sat up. "Mother says that I should not talk so much."

"Your mother says a lot of things," Freud replied.

"Undoubtedly that's true. But do you think she's right?"

Minna's eyebrows rose as she pulled her head back, leaning it to one side. She had a child-like, happy look on her face.

"You have a lot to say and I for one don't mind hearing it. Why not talk? Just don't talk about *us* to anyone!"

"Of course, not. I never have. Anyway, Mother says it's tawdry and crass to talk. Just because you like to doesn't mean you should."

"I think the latter applies more to your mother than to you, if I may offer an opinion." Freud leaned over and picked up a half-smoked cigar from a small, multi-colored wooden ashtray which sat at the edge of the coffee table. He wedged the cigar into the right side of his mouth.

"Yes, it does apply more to her, doesn't it?" Minna mused.

"Of course it does."

Freud lit what remained of the cigar and took several tentative puffs. "On the other hand, it might be tawdry and crass not to talk. Especially when you have something of value to say."

Minna thought for a moment, her right index finger pressed against her lips. "Yes, Sigmund, I think I can agree with you on that."

"Even cantankerous Sigmund can be right some of the time." Freud drew in deeply and let the stream of smoke exit through his nose and mouth. He savored the taste as it did.

"Enough of the time for me, anyway," Minna said.

"And others?"

"Don't judge yourself harshly simply because others do."

"If not harshly, then how?"

"Why don't you try a little kindness now and then?"

"I've tried being kind but I've found it ill-suited my nature, dear Minna. Haven't you noticed?"

"Yes, unfortunately I have."

Minna always encouraged Freud to be affable, accommodating. She told him he would have to be if he ever hoped to achieve success. If you act like an outcast you'll always be one, she would say. But he did not agree. He felt he was in a war of ideas where intellectually his life was at stake. In those circumstances, being nice didn't get you anywhere. Perhaps being resolute and tough didn't either, but it certainly felt better. Minna did not find Freud's point even remotely humorous.

The morning sun lit the Italian stone slabs which made up the surface of the courtyard terrace of the Belle Vue resort. Looking northeast from the terrace, through arches supported by Corinthian-style columns and across Alpine foothills filled with black firs, beeches, oaks and hornbeams, one could see Vienna, several miles away and almost two thousand feet below. To the left, intersecting the city, the majestic Danube snaked its way from northwest to southeast to the urban valley below. On cloudless summer days, Vienna's Ringstrasse and the steeple of medieval St. Stephen's Church, home to the Catholic Archdiocese of Vienna, could be seen in the far distance.

The sweet but pungent aroma of pine trees floated on gentle breezes from the southwest and filled the warm summer air. The scent of acacia and jasmine had succeeded that of lilac and laburnum and the wild mountain roses were in full bloom.

Wedge into the north side of the terrace and open to it stood Renaldo's, which served breakfast and dinner to guests of Belle Vue. Following breakfast, the restaurant stood empty, except for two attentive waiters in starched short white jackets over white shirts and black bow

ties. Providing Belle Vue guests refreshments during the day, they had small serving towels slung over their forearms and stood by a large, ornately carved oak server which towered above their heads.

Some dozen iron lounge chairs with matching ottomans spread across the terrace. Painted white, fitted with soft, cloth cushions, and piled high with colored pillows, they encircled low, white coffee tables with iron bases and solid wooden tops. Exposed to the sun, most of the furniture looked in need of repair.

Several concrete planters, painted in green and white stripes, dotted the terrace. They heightened the sense of nonchalance and informality that characterized the arrangement of the furniture while the bright reflection of the sun off the terrace suffused the entire area in an ethereal white light, an almost blinding luminescence, giving the scene an other-worldly, almost surreal look.

Minna and Freud lay prone, almost at right angles to each other, stretched out in their lounge chairs, their faces pointed directly into the sun. Their feet on ottomans, Minna had hers crossed; Freud's, she noticed, lay straight ahead, with the toes of his laced, black shoes pointing lazily outward in opposite directions. Between them stood a low, white coffee table and on it a pitcher of apple juice, several large cups and a small glass of *Zirbenz*. Minna loved the peppery flavor of the Alpine liqueur.

Because of the intense heat that day, the other lounge chairs stood empty, except for two occupied by an odd-looking, early middle-aged couple in country skirts and *Lederhosen*. They had with them two small, even odder-looking children, both preadolescent boys, also in *Lederhosen*. The family occupied a section of the terrace far to the right of Minna and Freud, at the very edge of the courtyard.

It soon became clear why the family had sought isolation. The children could not sit still and would run rings around their parents, screaming at each other and sometimes also at their parents. The mother would often scream back but their father would only mildly chide them, or ignore them altogether, as if years before he had given up any hope of ever controlling the boys.

Above where Minna and Freud rested, a plume of heavy blue cigar smoke had collected, forming a static cloud which the light breezes that sometimes tiptoed through the terrace did not disperse with any regularity. So thick did this cigar-made cloud become that at times it would refract the sun's bright rays into smaller, multicolored shafts of violet, blue, orange and red light which played against the top of the white coffee table which both separated and, at least at one corner, linked Minna to her brother-in-law.

“So did anybody take your side?” Minna asked.

Their conversation had turned to a recent presentation on dreams and the unconscious Freud had given to his Viennese medical colleagues.

“Yes,” he said, “but only one or two close friends. And I think only for old times’ sake. ‘A student cannot enlighten his teachers,’ one of them told me later, during our post-mortem on the meeting, ‘not with impunity, anyway.’”

“‘Post-mortem.’ What a perfectly appropriate word.” Minna smiled wistfully as two cauliflower-shaped clouds created a shadow which crept across the Belle Vue terrace.

“And, unfortunately, all too true,” Freud said.

“Did they think your ideas were too French? I’m having trouble understanding their concern.” Minna drew her body farther up her chair, spreading her bright skirts generously across her feet.

Freud frowned. “My ideas are always too something. You know that.”

Poor Sigmund! He was always getting into trouble, alienating someone here, another person there. She had never met anyone so uncomfortable in the face of criticism, so irascible after. She always stressed the need to make allies. You never know who you might need in the future. But would he listen? Of course not. He never listened to anything she said.

“So they beat you up pretty badly then?” Minna asked.

“Merciless, as usual.” Freud adopted a high-pitched, mocking tone. “‘Your theories, Herr Doktor Freud, are weak, incoherent and implausible. They lack a strong theoretical foundation. They are also deficient in logic and are unsupported by fact. Other than that, they seem absolutely wonderful!’”

Minna held back a small smile. It would be funny if it weren’t so really sad!

“And to agree with you, Sigmund, would be a daring leap of faith?”

“At least for most of them—cowards all! Every idea I presented was dismissed out of hand.” Freud swung his arm to the side. “All were denigrated as witchcraft, condemned as sorcery. One particularly belligerent fellow said he was certain that most of my ideas came straight from the den of charlatans. Can you imagine? I wanted to ask him which den and which group of charlatans, but I decided not to.”

“I’m glad you did refrain,” Minna said. “Your ideas are too bold, too new, too dangerous. Poor darling, you are being punished because you are trying to agitate the sleep of mankind.”

“Or at least the 417 people who purchased my book on hysteria.”

Minna’s smile acknowledged Freud’s dark humor. “You are an intrepid adventurer. A destroyer of illusions.” Minna’s bright face

glistening in the hot, humid air.

“Some destroyer! The only thing I seem to be destroying is myself.”

“Someday they’ll see.” Minna made a fist and thrust it skyward, in mock revolutionary defiance. “Mark my word, Sigmund. Someday they’ll apologize for the way they’re treating you. Your ideas are simply brilliant, if . . .,” Minna paused for a moment, trying to find the right qualifier, and then added with caution, “admittedly a bit unusual.” Sensing a faux pas, she quickly added, “But they are ideas which will withstand the taunts of ignorant and jealous men. Have confidence.”

Freud gave Minna a searing look and then relented. “I have lots of confidence, Minna. I just don’t seem to have much success.”

Minna looked up. I wonder why!

Freud retrieved a fresh cigar from his waistcoat pocket. “But perhaps things are finally looking up.” He smiled puckishly.

Minna’s mouth widened. “Yes?”

“Did I tell you what happened yesterday?”

Minna noticed a twinkle in Freud’s eyes. “No, or if you did I don’t recall.”

“I found congratulations and bouquets raining down upon me.”

She didn’t know if Freud was joking, though she expected he was.

“Really? But why, dear Sigmund?”

“An explanation as simple as it is completely satisfying. Apparently His Majesty now officially recognizes the role of infantile sexuality in the development of the psychoneuroses and Parliament, by a two-thirds majority, has proclaimed dreams the royal road to the unconscious mind.”

Minna let out a childish guffaw. “Oh, Sigmund, you are so terrible!”

“Am I?” Freud seemed pleased by Minna’s playful characterization. He lit his cigar and inhaled.

“Yes, the most terrible of all the terrible people I know, and I know many.”

The muscles in Freud’s jaw twitched. “Well, I guess I can take comfort in the fact that I’m distinguished in some way.”

Dear, dear Sigmund, my heart aches for him. If only he could show some grace, some charm, life would be so much easier for him—and me as well!

Minna knew how determined and aggressive her brother-in-law could be. His solid, well-proportioned body seemed to evince a seriousness of purpose and an unwavering belief in himself and his own ideas. His resolute, sober face, with its prominent cheekbones, forehead and jaw and his penetrating dark brown eyes, which were often quite searing and intimidating, tended to underscore those dual themes. His elegant

forehead, with its widow's peak, made him look older than his actual years but also, she thought, added to a strange but powerful air of authority which seemed to hover about him.

A broad, upturned moustache that crowned a full, dark brown beard appeared to enhance that emanation. Freud kept the beard in respectable condition by regular visits to his barber—besides cigars, one of his few luxuries. It dominated the lower half of his face and at times seemed to consume his moustache and lips with only his cigar remaining as a signpost for where his mouth once had been. Of more than casual concern, he sought to reestablish the beard's uncertain peak from time to time by stroking with either hand.

Formally attired that morning at Belle Vue, his custom when in public, even during summer holidays, his deep blue cravat contrasted with his starched white collar and shirt. Extending some three inches from the end of his jacket arms, green amethyst oval cuff links, a recent birthday gift, he told Minna, from his prosperous English half-brothers, Emmanuel and Philipp Freud, children from Freud's father's first marriage, bound his shirt sleeves together. In his left waistcoat pocket, attached to one end of a long gold chain, rested a Breguet pocket watch which Freud consulted from time to time. It had an italicized inscription on the back, *Always Together*. Minna had seen the inscription many times and knew the watch had been Martha's wedding gift to her husband some nine years before.

Five or six brownish-black Turkish cigars crowded the other waistcoat pocket. Larger in the middle than at either end, the cigars gave off the sweet but tart smell of finely aged tobacco, an odor Minna found unpleasant.

When under emotional strain, Minna often observed her brother-in-law's eyes take on a somber, rather subdued look, as if to signal to everyone around him that the cares of the world rested squarely on his shoulders, and perhaps on no one else's. This often gave his entire countenance a dark, melancholy hue which combined sorrow and anger and reflected a profound inner sense of grief and pain.

While able to focus for long periods, especially when at work, Freud could also be quite restless. He showed this in little ways: a tapping foot, a nervous finger. Yet, Minna believed, he was not merely a fidgety person, but more profoundly someone never completely comfortable in his own skin, and this became apparent to those who came to know him well.

"Maybe your manner hurt you? Did you ever think of that?" Minna felt she was being kind when she used the word "maybe."

Freud sat up, looked at Minna and then across the Belle Vue terrace. "My manner?"

“The reaction of your medical colleagues.”

Freud looked gloomy. “My manner always hurts me, Minna.”

“They don’t know how charming you can be—when you want to be.”

Minna let out an embarrassed, high-pitched laugh.

“What’s so amusing?”

“Nothing. I’m sorry. I’m not being very nice.”

“I should say you’re not.” Freud snatched his cigar from the ashtray, his dark brown eyes tight and solid, his lips stiff.

“Maybe you should have worked harder at being agreeable.”

Freud opened and closed his right fist. “It’s hard to be agreeable when you don’t agree.”

“They’re afraid of you, Sigmund. You ask too many questions. You have too many ideas.” And show too much bile!

Freud inhaled the rich, blue smoke. “I know, Minna. These are vices I do not seem able to control.”

Minna looked at Freud tenderly. “Dear Sigmund, these not need be vices.”

“If not vices, then what?”

“A vice to the common mind might very well be a virtue to the thinking person.”

Freud thought for a moment. “I’d like to believe so.” He replaced his cigar.

Minna changed positions in her chair to get closer to her brother-in-law. “Anyway, they are very much virtues to me. I believe in you, dear Sigmund. I really do.” She reached over to grasp his hand.

“I know you do, Minna,” Freud said as he squeezed her hand, “but in the scheme of things I’m not sure what you as an individual believes matters very much. I just wish more people would think as you do.”

“Perhaps someday more people will.”

Minna pulled her legs toward her, slipped off her shoes and, with leverage from her lower legs, pushed herself back, deeper into her chair. She then set her small feet upon the cushioned ottoman, her toes stretching playfully into the air. A wistful look crossed her face as she pursed her lips. Her fluttering eyelids came to rest.

If only Sigmund could show a willingness to listen to what others think. Show more sympathy for their points-of-view. His ideas are so new, in some cases revolutionary. No wonder colleagues have had trouble accepting them. Patience—that’s what Sigmund really needs!

Minna sat up abruptly, moved her body forward an inch or two, and wound her arms around her knees in a self-embrace. She clasped her hands together, each finger securely interwoven with every other, and, with her