A MOST PECULIAR PATIENT

Vienna, 1923...

Controversial professor and psychoanalyst Doctor Sigmund Freud was now sixty-seven years old, four years after World War One had officially ended. That same year, he had been diagnosed with severe cancer of the jaw, the result of his long-time addiction to voracious cigar smoking. He lived with his wife, Martha, and their youngest daughter, Anna, age twenty-eight, who graciously helped with his medical comforts as well as acting as his personal secretary. Of his six children, only Anna showed a keen interest in her father's work. Freud's apartment and office was located on the second floor at Berggasse 19, on a quiet, leafy residential street in the former Imperial city's Alsergrund district, a few miles west of the Danube River.

Freud accepted only three patients per day -- afternoons from Sunday through Thursday -- for hour-long sessions each. This schedule left him time for necessary daily reading and writing, mail correspondence, regular meals with his family, and private walks for exercise and thinking. Against doctor's orders, however, Sigmund continued to secretly smoke his beloved Reina Cubana cigars, whenever he was alone and away from the ever watchful eyes of both Martha and Anna.

At one o'clock on a bright Spring day, after some brief morning showers had passed through the city, Herr Doktor Freud's first patient arrived. Despite being fluent in eight languages, Freud warmly greeted the middle-aged man in German, the most common tongue of Vienna. Sigmund led his patient into his consulting room, and drew the thick, wine-colored velour window drapes to partially subdue the light. He motioned for the man to recline and relax on a long, comfortable couch positioned against a wall under a lithograph of the rock-hewed Egyptian temple ruins of Abu Simbel. The consulting couch was covered with a large, exotically-patterned Persian carpet, and featured some velvet pillows at its slightly raised head. The rest of the room displayed dozens of small stone figurines of various Greek, Roman, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian gods and goddesses -- arrayed on desktops and in curio cabinets. Bountiful hardwood bookshelves lined the room's perimeter. Other framed lithographs of historical scenes -- plus photos of friends and relatives -- also adorned the walls.

"I will be sitting here in this green leather chair behind your head where you cannot see me. I will ask you questions and listen carefully for your answers, while taking detailed notes. This technique, which I have pioneered, is referred to as 'free association,'" Freud explained. He was wearing a light grey three-piece wool suit, with a white shirt and dark burgundy tie.

"I must first ask, what is your age and your occupation?" Sigmund began.

"I am thirty-seven years old, Herr Doktor. I am a commodities trader, mostly dealing in corn and wheat futures."

"I see...Are you married?"

"Yes, sir, for eleven happy years. We also have been blessed with three thriving children."

"Very well...What specific problem may I help you with today?"

Here, the man suddenly appeared nervous and anxious. "It is of a rather embarrassing nature, Herr Professor. Specifically, it is a sexual issue. I understand that you alone have dared to research and publish upon such a sensitive subject at length, so perhaps you can help me in this regard," the man confessed.

"I see...Please, then, describe your difficulty, and leave out no detail, for only complete openness and honesty can aid me in understanding your case. Nothing you say will shock me, I assure you. Plus your words, of course, are completely confidential."

The man cleared his throat. "Herr Doktor, for the last few weeks, I find myself unable to perform my marriage duties in the bedroom. I find myself stopping when fondling my wife's breasts and wanting nothing less than to suckle her nipples like an infant. I seem to have lost the desire for coitus. I am ashamed for myself, and for my wife's sake. I'm afraid that I am not a loving husband anymore..."

"Yet, I perceive that you are a normal and healthy man. Am I correct?"

"Yes, Herr Professor. My family physician has assured me of that. It was he who referred me to you, assuming my problem is some kind of mental disorder."

"Just so...please, then, tell me about your relationship with your mother."

"I was devoted to her with all my heart, until her sudden death two months ago. Her loss seriously shattered me." Freud heard the man's voice crack with emotion.

"I am sorry to hear of your loss. However, such a traumatic event can scar our subconscious in negative ways that can last for years if left unexamined and then purged. Let me ask you this: Do you lately think about your mother when fondling your wife's breasts in attempting to make love?"

"Why, yes...how did you suspect such a perversion, Herr Doktor?"

"You must understand that it is no perversion. It is simply the normal, preliminary childhood sexual urge. To cure your guilt in this situation, you must realize that your desire to suckle at your wife's breasts is merely a repressed desire to bring your dead mother back to life. You miss her emotionally and want her to return -- to nurture and comfort you with her warm milk as she did when you were a child. Naturally, you would recoil at having further sexual interactions with your own mother, such as in the act of martial coitus. Hence, you resist completing the act of love with your wife."

Just then a clock on a small table in the room chimed the hour. The famed psychoanalyst double-checked his pocket watch, which he had retrieved on its gold chain from his light grey suit's vest pocket. Two o'clock it was.

"Our hour is up, but think deeply upon what we have just discussed. Make another appointment with my secretary if your problem persists after a few days. I could readily hypnotize you and plant a post-hypnotic suggestion in your subconscious as a cure if it later becomes necessary. Tell your wife everything about what we have just discovered. Your sexual relations should be restored quickly now that you know what is the probable underlying cause of your concern. I bid you Good Day, for I must now greet my next patient."

The man grasped Sigmund Freud's hand as he began to depart. "Thank you, Herr Professor! You have restored both my marriage and my sanity." He offered a slight bow of respect, then left the office, smiling and greatly relieved.

Anna led the next patient -- an attractive, blue-eyed woman in her mid-twenties -- into her father's consulting room. After cordially greeting each other, Freud explained his session procedures. Once the woman was comfortably reclined on the couch, the hour began. Seeing as she had recently arrived from Strasberg, France, the pair spoke in French rather than in German.

"Dr. Freud, I am plagued with reoccurring dreams focusing upon trains. Specifically, I dream time and again that I am Anna Karenina -- you know, from Tolstoy's famous novel -- and that I am compelled to commit suicide like she did by kneeling down in front of a fast approaching freight train until I meet my demise and am plunged into blackness."

"I see...do go on..."

"Although I read that particular Russian novel years ago and found it quite powerful, I must confess that it was by no means a favorite book of mine, nor did I ever bother to re-read it. Yet its disturbing ending returns to me regularly in my sleep at night. Why should that be the case, sir?"

"Train imagery can signify many different things in dreams. For example, they can symbolize power and strength, new opportunities, forward progress, or a desire to escape. They might also be a reflection of something you long for, or even a rushing sense that your life is going out of control."  
 "Professor Freud, can I ask you an unusual question? Do you happen to believe in the theory of reincarnation?"

"It is an integral aspect of the Hindu religion, certainly, but there is no solid proof of its existence."

"Yet in the faith of Tibetan Buddhists, Doctor, the spirit of their Dali Lama is said to be reborn after death into the body of another -- a specially designated boy who can uniquely and specifically recognize actual objects and possessions of the prior, deceased Lama."

"Yes, I have heard of this purported phenomenon. But I sense that it must still remain just a coincidence, nothing more."

"Then, may I ask if one could possibly be 'reincarnated' or possessed from a fictional character found in literature? In other words, has the imagined spirit of one Anna Karenina somehow taken over part of my subconscious? Or am I simply losing my mind? These continual dreams of trains and my associated death events are negatively affecting my mental well-being, Dr. Freud. I worry that they will continue, or even possibly grow worse. Will you please help me? I can remain here in Vienna for as long as you prescribe."

"Very well. Please make another appointment with my secretary. I must think upon your dream circumstances before offering a prognosis, then hopefully suggest a cure. Now, I notice that you are not wearing a wedding ring, Mademoiselle. May I assume that you are unmarried? And have you ever been so depressed that you entertained thoughts of taking your own life?"

The young Frenchwoman replied yes, then no to Freud's questions. "I sometimes feel lonely, but not depressed," she shyly added.

"Your situation is somewhat atypical but indeed compelling. However, I confidently feel that together we will be able to figure out your predicament and banish your anxieties."

The clock chimed precisely three o'clock, so the young woman was politely ushered out as the last patient of the day was introduced at the room's threshold by Anna.

This new man was slightly disheveled, being of average height and weight, with uncombed brown hair but rather piercing blue eyes. He was clean-shaven but his dark suit was worn and rumpled. He admitted that he was thirty-four years old as he was further led into Freud's consulting room and directed to its legendary couch.

"I suppose I should tell you about myself before explaining my problem and exactly why I came here," the man began, in a precise and distinct German voice.

"Yes, that is my preferred method of introduction in getting to know a new patient," Sigmund offered. "Please continue."

"I was a stubborn and strong-willed child, Herr Doktor. I loved my mother but hated my father, who regularly beat me. I did poorly in school, yet I enjoyed singing and joined the local church choir, and even considered becoming a priest at one time.

I was conscripted into the German army during the Great War. I was wounded by shrapnel in my left thigh during the Battle of the Somme, and later went temporarily blind due to a mustard gas attack in our trenches, which necessitated my being hospitalized for a lengthy period. While still recovering my health there, I learned that Germany had lost the war. The past few years have been a struggle for us army veterans, as you probably know. We were stabbed in the back at Versailles by our conquering enemies -- the French, the British, and greedy world Jewish bankers -- with our nation subsequently humiliated and driven towards the verge of ruinous bankruptcy.

Like many war veterans, I had no job and no money. I drifted, living day to day as a pauper. Because I always enjoyed drawing and art, I applied to the Vienna Academy of Fine Arts, but was twice rejected. I resorted to painting watercolors and postcards of Viennese street scenes to earn a meager living. You see, I am fond of architecture too, as well as music and the opera. By chance, Herr Doktor, have you ever attended Wagner's *Lohengrin*? By going without some meals and rigorously saving my few shillings, I confess I have actually seen its magnificence ten times! Ten!"

The excited patient paused, calmed down somewhat, then continued.

"Recently, I attended some political rallies, and discovered that many Germans felt as strongly as I did about restoring our national pride and honor. It was thrilling to learn that I was not alone in my feelings! My hopes for the future were rekindled!"

"So what brings you here to see me now?" Freud asked. He was taken by the sudden fierce passion expressed by this rather bland-appearing stranger. The man seemed to transform himself as he spoke, his voice sounding more forceful and self-assured as he continued talking with remarkable determination. As for the quick but disparaging mention regarding world Jewish bankers, Sigmund remained silent -- seeing as he himself was Jewish. He wisely felt that now was not the time to comment upon that remark at this initial stage of the consultation.

"I feel that I am destined for great things, Herr Doktor! Transformative things which will benefit both Germany and the world. I am but a poor, ordinary man now, yet I feel that history itself is beckoning me. My admired hero is Frederick the Great. Despite my lack of fine education, I have carefully read several fascinating books about him. I believe in my heart that I can, and indeed must, somehow emulate him. Can this desire be normal and possible, Professor?"

Freud was busy scribbling notes with his silver fountain pen while carefully listening to his patient. Sigmund wrote: patient admits hatred for his father, with likely desire for revenge; openly displays anti-Semitism; possibly harbors delusions of grandeur; exhibits a potential inner conflict between creative and destructive tendencies.

"Our time is almost up, Herr Schicklgruber. I cannot comment yet on your last question. However, I wish to see you again next week at your convenience. Check with my secretary to see which appointment times are still available. And seeing as you appear to be temporarily 'short of funds,' I can suspend my consultation fees until another time, if you agree. Good Day to you, then, until next time."

The famed psychoanalyst took some coffee and a fresh slice of his favorite apple strudel from Martha by way of a brief break before taking his usual late afternoon walk. His beloved daughter and secretary Anna kissed him on the cheek, and also reported to her Papa that the day's post had recently arrived.

Three patients, and three interesting case...yet the final one was the most disturbing and dramatic. Freud pondered many things on his trek to his favorite local park, admiring the colorful blooming Spring flowers and observing the frolicking squirrels once he arrived. He sat on a convenient park bench, then stroked his neatly trimmed white beard, and removed his black round spectacles to rub his eyes while deep in thought.

His mind returned to his earlier new female patient. Perhaps the reoccurring train imagery indicated that the young Frenchwoman secretly desired marriage and the apparent loss of her virginity, so as to 'die' through suicide (with the train representing a powerful male symbol) in her dream -- hence, signifying a release and transformation from youthful innocence into robust sexual womanhood. Could that be the answer? Sigmund slowly smoked three satisfying cigars during his contemplative sojourn back home, despite suffering lingering mouth pain from his recent jaw surgery. Such is vice!

Herr Schicklgruber returned thirteen days later, rather than the following week. He was clearly agitated and enflamed with further passions and radical ideas.

"I am convinced that the destiny of the German Aryan Race is to rule the world, Herr Doktor! But we are thwarted at every turn by our envious enemies, especially by the scourge of the Continent -- the mongrel Jewish hordes. We must cleanse Europe of their vile pestilence! Their wealth and influence in business, education, banking, and the press strangles the corrective impulses of our newly inspired leaders! Through collaboration and support from my many Nationalist friends, Herr Professor, I hope to soon write a book outlining the tragedy of what our country has suffered these past years, and share my vision of how we can forge a New Germany -- a proud, indomitable nation which will rise phoenix-like from its current pathetic ashes!" His voice was now becoming almost shrill in its fanaticism.

Freud listened quietly to these ravings, then calmly brought the topic back to his patient's earlier session remarks regarding his revered hero, Frederick the Great.

"There is always a danger in trying to emulate such blind megalomania, Herr Schicklgruber. Pious goals and slogans -- coupled with the thirst for power and conquest -- have littered the pages of history with nothing but violent wars, futile death, and destruction. I urge you to focus, instead, dear fellow, on simply reorganizing your own life: learn a practical and productive trade, find a suitable wife and marry, raise a good family. Such actions will yield untold riches in terms of your own personal peace and happiness, while benefiting society as a whole.

As for your professed disgust with the Jews, I must point out that Jews have been wrongly cast as useful scapegoats for untold centuries -- beginning with the false canard that they were the 'killers of Christ.' In fact, this unfair prejudice against the Jews is related to little more than sheer jealousy and envy, with hatred directed merely at a devoted people who work hard and invest their money wisely, and are hence successful and thriving.

Finally, Herr Schicklgruber, I must declare that I myself am a proud Jew, and I insist that you cease making such offensive remarks regarding my people in my presence hereafter, should you wish to continue as my patient."

The agitated man, clearly shocked, abruptly rose from the consulting couch, and rushed out of Freud's office, swearing, "Time will tell which of us is correct, Doktor! Just wait and see!"

He never returned to Berggasse 19 again.

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Fifteen years later, on March 13, 1938 Nazi Germany annexed Austria. [Adolf Hitler -- now the Head of State ("*Der Fuhrer")* as Chancellor -- had earlier replaced his birth father's last name, 'Schicklgruber,' which he once used as a secret alias, with the stepfamily name -- Hitler.] This annexation, the *Anschluss*, would prove to be the first step towards the start of a terrible Second World War.

Soon afterward, Jewish property and assets were being systematically confiscated by the German government in both Germany and Austria. All Jews were deemed pariahs and were severely harassed. Next, Jewish books and artworks were collected and destroyed. Harsh legal restrictions and extra taxes were levied on anyone suspected of being even remotely Jewish. Those who had enough money fled to Poland or Czechoslovakia, but only a certain percentage of those fleeing persecution were allowed in. Panic ensued as tens of thousands of Jewish refugees roamed Europe searching for a place to resettle. Those most fortunate made their escape to Britain or to the Americas.

When his worried family finally convinced Sigmund to abandon their life in Vienna and flee to freedom, the Nazi bureaucracy quickly thwarted the attempt. Freud was informed that he would be required to pay a huge cash 'flight tax,' plus lose all of his apartment furnishings, books, files, and rare antiquities. His plans to leave were thus stymied.

But fortunately, Freud had an admiring friend high in the German government, a Dr. Anton Sauerwald, who had studied chemistry at Vienna University under Professor Josef Herzig -- one of Sigmund's old colleagues.

Sauerwald was eventually able to appeal directly to Adolf Hitler on Freud's behalf. He travelled straight to the Chancellery in Berlin to present his appeal.

"*Mein Fuhrer,* as you know, Herr Doktor Freud is internationally famous. Although he is a Jew, the world might look favorably upon both you and our new *Reich* if you grant him and his family special permission to emigrate to Britain."

Hitler looked up from his desk and thought a long moment, stroking his toothbrush moustache with a restless index finger. A deluxe copy of the rambling screed which was his 1925 autobiographical book, *Mein Kampf* ("My Struggle") was nearby, for all to notice. The Chancellor remembered his two meetings with Freud from many years ago, but he never told anyone about their discussions. *Der Fuhrer* then inwardly smiled when he realized that he had never paid the Jewish psychoanalyst for his consulting sessions.

"Very well, Sauerwald. Exemption granted." He scribbled a hasty note on official stationary and signed it. "Give this to the proper customs authorities. Let them leave."

Anton was taking a big risk, however, for he failed to tell the German Chancellor that Freud had earlier covertly shifted much of his money to foreign banks, so as to have some funds to live on when in eventual exile abroad. Most of his books, files, and valuable collectables were likewise secretly transferred and hidden away. As for the hefty 'flight tax' the Freud's were still expected to pay, Sigmund would ask his dear friend, Princess Marie Bonaparte in France, to lend him the money. She eagerly agreed. Meanwhile, cancer of the jaw was killing Freud, and his condition was now deemed inoperable. He was suffering constant pain.

Sigmund, Martha, Anna, their housekeeper, and their family physician were soon given their precious exit visas and boarded the Orient Express in Vienna on June 4, 1938. They arrived in Paris the following day, and spent the night as guests of Marie Bonaparte. From there, they traveled overnight and arrived in London's Victoria Station on June 6. A new home was arranged for them at 20 Maresfield Gardens, Hampstead, North London.

Professor Dr. Sigmund Freud would live for just a few months more, but at least he would die a free man. He passed away on September 23, 1938, at the age of eighty-three.

Other than his wife and favored daughter Anna (who later continued on with her father's work in the psychiatric field), Sigmund never told anyone that he had once briefly psychoanalyzed Adolf Hitler, when *Der Fuhrer* was a young man hiding under the alias 'Herr Schicklgruber.'

Freud spent some of his last days wondering: Could I have done more to help cure Hitler and possibly avert the certain coming European disaster? Might such an intervention have somehow helped change world history?

The world-renowned pioneering psychoanalyst would never know.

Germany invaded Poland on September 1st the following year. World War Two had begun. Before the horrific carnage ended, six million Jews had been exterminated, and over seventy million combatants and civilians lost their lives. Germany was left in shattered ruins.

Adolf Hitler committed suicide in his Berlin bunker on April 30, 1945. He was fifty-six years old. In the private office of his underground command center, Hitler had hung a prominent oil painting of his hero, Frederick the Great, and was often seen to earlier stare at it, undoubtedly wondering in his peculiar, disturbed mind: "If only..."

THE END

by Jack Karolewski

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