

ANALYSIS AND EXILE

BOYHOOD, LOSS AND THE
LESSONS OF ANNA FREUD

VIVIAN HELLER



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CHARACTERS

Part I

Peter Heller, a little boy subject to *pavor nocturnus* (night terrors).

Hans Heller, enlightened industrialist, father of Peter Heller.

Margaret Steiner, “Mem,” artist, mother of Peter Heller.

Jenni Steiner, mother of Mem, center of a Viennese salon.

Leopold Steiner, father of Mem, General Secretary of the Skoda Works.

Inge Schön Heller, lover and second wife of Hans Heller.

Max Fellerer, Mem’s architect lover, who designed a summer house for her.

Karl Frank, member of the anti-Nazi underground.

Käthe Leichter, tutor to Mem and member of a radical left-wing organization.

Anna Freud, among her many accomplishments, founder of a progressive school.

Eva (“Muschi”) Rosenfeld. After the tragic death of her daughter Madi, she opened her house to an experiment in education.

Dorothy Burlingham, youngest daughter of Louis Comfort Tiffany, who came to Vienna to be treated by Sigmund Freud.

Erik Erikson (also known as Homburger), teacher at the Hietzing School, later world-renowned psychologist.

Peter Blos, teacher and director of the Hietzing School, later analyst.

Bob, Mabbie, Tinky and Mikey Burlingham, children of Dorothy Burlingham.

Characters

Victor Rosenfeld, son of Eva and Valentin (“Valti”) Rosenfeld. A friend present throughout Peter’s childhood and youth.

Sigurd and Basti Beer, Elizabeth and Mario Iona, Walti Aichorn, Ingho Wimmer, Ernstl Halberstadt (later analyst Ernest Freud), students at the Hietzing School.

Sylvia, Peter’s girlfriend in his Gymnasium days.

Tommi Wolf, younger cousin of Peter Heller.

Victor Opalski, brother-in-law of Inge.

Part 2

Eclectic group of deportees from Austria and Germany, ranging from Cambridge intellectuals to professional wrestlers.

PART I

1.

Early Sorrow

Vienna, 1920s

1.

WHEN my father was a little boy in Vienna, he told Anna Freud this dream:

He is walking on the rim of the white gravel path that leads around the oval pond in the upper part of the Belvedere Gardens. The birds are singing, the sun is out; his hands are in his pockets, he's whistling to himself. Suddenly he becomes aware of a distant rumbling that seems to be coming from the lower part of the garden. He looks down the path and doesn't see anything at first. Then a blue-black machine with a brilliant array of handles and shafts comes into sight; it is flattening the gravel, making it level and smooth. The machine is heading straight towards him; he tries to get up off the path onto the soft green grass, but even though it's only a matter of a few inches, he can't lift his feet. The machine comes closer and closer, finally catching him up and pressing him with its huge rods and shafts. He calls out for help as loud as he can, but no one comes to rescue him. There is nothing he can do; the machine grinds him up.

Night after night, this dream kept coming back, so that he was afraid to fall asleep. But sleep always caught up with him in the end, no matter how hard he tried to resist. Sometimes he woke up in the kitchen, face-down on the stone floor; other times, he woke up in a bath of ice-cold water. He knew that he had been screaming because his voice was hoarse. Sometimes there were bruises on his arms and legs.

Anna Freud told my father that she knew something about dreams, and that by putting their heads together, they could probably make his dream go away. And so a conversation began that lasted for the next four years, and that played itself back to him for the rest of his life.

In the preface to his case history, which he published when he was 63 years old, my father wrote that he was brought up in a “left-wing liberal, capitalist avant-garde style.” Culture had taken the place of religion in his family; he remembered being brought to Seders at his grandfather’s house, but these occasions had felt a little like funerals, awkward and embarrassing.

At the time of his dream, his father Hans was taking his doctorate in economics and running the family business. Heller Candy was as famous in Vienna as Nestlé or Schraff’s; the factory took up several city blocks, with a giant smokestack, a vast courtyard, labyrinthine interiors, and an underground storage vault known by the workers as “the Catacombs.” The candies that poured out of the factory’s gates were miniature works of art. Simple sugar took on a lavish variety of forms – pink grapefruit slices, translucent pears, pink-gold peaches, garnet-red raspberries, purple grapes; brown-gold walnuts, stamped with the company crown; light-gold honeycombs, with their own bees; black licorice mountain flowers; pastel-colored chocolates in the shape of seashells, butterflies, and swords; dark chocolate in the shape of pianos, flutes, and violins; liqueur-filled chocolate bottles, with labels that said “Amaretto” or “Kirsch” or “Cointreau”: chocolate walking sticks, chocolate mushrooms, chocolate stags, chocolate dwarves, chocolate mountain huts, chocolate dredls and chocolate Christmas stars (*see* Plate 1).

Imbued with the socialist ethos of “Red Vienna,” Hans prided himself on being an enlightened industrialist. Within Vienna, his workers had access to the Heller Swimming Pool, the Heller Sports Club, the Heller Dance Group, the Heller Fussball (Football) Team. Outside of the city, in the town of Prein, there was a peaceful and secluded spa resort that was open to “*Heller Leute*” (Heller people) throughout the year.

But although he was committed to maintaining the high standards of the firm, Hans didn’t want to see himself as a businessman. He avoided socializing with people in the trade; he made his elegant house

on the Karolinengasse into a meeting place for artists, poets, musicians, intellectuals – American composer George Antheil, comedian Max Pallenberg, actress Sybille Binder, etc. etc. When he wasn't entertaining his talented friends, many of whom depended on his financial support, he was spending long nights at his desk, writing a novel entitled *Ein Mann Sucht Heimat* (*A Man Searches for a Homeland*), which he eventually published under a pseudonym and which never brought him much acclaim.

A tall, imposing man with delicate nerves, he had married his childhood sweetheart after four years of service as a lieutenant in the First World War. Her name was Margaret Steiner, but she went by Kletta, Menga, Greta, Gretl, Memka, and Mem – no one name satisfied her entirely. Mem, a kind of childish name, is what everybody who knew her well called her. Like Hans, she was an assimilated Jew who came from a background of high culture and money. Her father, Leopold Steiner, was General Secretary of the Skoda Works, the leading Austro-Hungarian conglomerate in armaments and heavy industry. Her mother, Jenni Steiner, led a literary salon that included the philosopher-writer Popper-Lynkeus and the young literary critic Georg Lukacs. Raised in the lap of luxury, Mem wanted to break away from what she saw as bourgeois hypocrisy. But although in this regard she and Hans were in sympathy, other elements soon began to pull them apart. A photograph taken of Hans and Mem in 1924, four years after their son, Peter, was born, when Hans was 28 and Mem was 25, provides a glimpse into their life together (*see Plate 2*).

The three women have just stepped out of a costume ball, with Mem standing in the center, in traditional Austrian peasant dress. She turns her head to the side, staring off into space, restless and disconsolate. The wreath of leaves that crowns her head only draws attention to the mixture of refusal and desire that sets her apart from everyone else. Hans stands behind her, in a tuxedo, tailored shirt, and white cravat, taking on the camera with an amused smile. But there is also a quizzical expression in his eyes, as though he is waiting, a little impatiently, for someone to make him more comfortable. The man to his right and the woman to his left are enjoying a moment of flirtation; the pleasure that they steal so easily offsets the distance between my grandparents.

When Hans was serving in the First World War, he had written long, passionate letters to Mem and she had fallen in love with him. But after a few years of marriage, during which she had sparkled in society, the

young man who had written to her so beautifully seemed like a stranger to her, remote, overbearing, and impotent. She discovered that he was seeking out other women, including a close friend of hers who tried to commit suicide when Hans broke off the relationship. Mem helped her friend get back on her feet, but she also made a pact with her: if either of them ever wanted to end her life, the other would assist in her suicide.

During the same period, Mem had a miscarriage. She wasn't prepared for how devastated she felt. While she was losing their child, Hans was off on a business trip. She had never felt so completely alone.

In his memoirs, Hans admitted that when he came back home, he had only the vaguest understanding of what Mem had just gone through. He had been off in Denmark, enjoying himself. "I took my first flight on a commercial plane, went to the famous seafood restaurant WIVEL and ordered delicacies that were unavailable in Austria and enjoyed a little flirtation with a Danish actress." When he came back, he felt sorry for his wife, but he couldn't understand why her mood was so dark. From what he understood, these things happened all the time. Why was she so terribly upset? They were both young and healthy, after all. When the doctor allowed it, they would simply try again.

Only in retrospect was Hans able to understand how blind he had been to Mem's grief. "I must have been a selfish, primitive young man when it came to understanding traumatic events as opposed to theorizing about the human psyche or interpreting literature," he confessed. But even here, he seems to be posing, like a man apologizing in front of a mirror.

Eventually Mem started to go out again and, for some reason, wherever she went, she found herself crossing paths with a tall, blond, Aryan architect by the name of Max Fellerer. When she was with him, she was able to laugh and enjoy herself. She started to go out in the hope of running into him.

One night at a party, she was sitting next to Fellerer on a couch and she found herself nestling under his arm. When she got up to leave, he got up too. Without exchanging any words, they went to his apartment. On that first night, after they had made love, she realized that she couldn't go back to Hans again. Hans had never fully understood her as a woman in all these years; Fellerer had understood her in a single night.

When she finally gathered the courage to tell Hans, she burst into tears. "I don't want to hurt you, but our marriage is done," she told him. "I've met someone else."

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At first Hans flew into a rage, but then he became resigned. “If you really feel this way, there’s nothing I can do. I won’t try to stop you – but I hope you understand that nothing is going to make me give up Peter.”

Mem eventually moved to Berlin to pursue her dream of becoming a screenwriter. She told herself that she had no way of supporting her four-year-old son, that, in the long run, it would be better for him to be raised by his well-positioned father. In return for custody, Hans agreed to send her money for as long as she remained unmarried. She and Hans claimed that they were still good friends and that they would always love each other, rejecting the idea that marriage was a form of ownership. But despite their enlightened views, there was a great deal of bitterness on both sides. Mem felt that Hans was incapable of real emotion; Hans blamed Mem for undercutting his masculinity.

At the time of the dream, Peter was eight or nine years old and Mem and Hans were separated but still not divorced. Although Mem had long since moved out, Peter still hoped that she would get tired of her little apartment in Berlin and come home. She had told him again and again how close she felt to him, closer than she felt to anyone else. As it was, she came back to see him every few months, though these fervently anticipated visits were never long enough. But who was she really?

II.

By the time she was 16 years old, Mem was already engaged to Hans. They were childhood sweethearts and they had made a vow that when the war was over, they would get married. But they were also believers in free love, and while Hans was serving in Italy, Mem was gathering experiences.

Suitors came to the stately house on the Wattmangasse and she would receive them in one of her many satin negligees. “Have you brought me a gift?” she would demand. “No? Then go away! And don’t give me that hangdog look!” Or, “Do you think I’m running a flower shop here? Next time, bring me something interesting or don’t bring anything at all!”

Apart from various young men, tutors came to the house to give her lessons in Latin and art and history. One of the tutors was a young woman by the name of Käthe Leichter. She was a member of the Viennese Youth Movement, a radical left-wing organization, and in the years that followed, she became the most important socialist feminist in Austria.

But, like everyone else, she needed money, and for a time she supported herself by tutoring students from wealthy families.

Her new student made such an impression on her that she wrote about her in her diary. She remembered walking into the magnificent salon of the Steiner house and finding Mem sprawled on a couch, nibbling on caviar when all Käthe could afford was cornbread with turnip marmalade. Her pupil was striking, if not conventionally beautiful. “She had the same eyes – enormous green–grey eyes with long eye lashes – as her equally enticing mother, and she had black hair,” she records. “She was completely impudent, spoiled and wild, and she was raised in an atmosphere of excess and laxness that made me as critical of the milieu as the product.”

In the beginning, the idealistic Käthe thought that maybe she should walk away, that she was violating her own principles by working in an environment like this. But there was something about her pupil that made her stay. “Soon I was overcome by the originality, the directness of thinking, the fluent mode of expression, the swift and certain power of judgment of this little girl,” she admits.

And again, “When, half an hour later, after we had gone through a little art history, she explained to me what she saw in a painting of the holy Saint del Piombo or in the Primavera of Botticelli, and I stood overwhelmed by the new impressions that flooded my educated awareness before these images, I was once again intrigued and reconciled.”

While Käthe taught her pupil about history and art, Mem tried to instruct her earnest teacher about more down-to-earth things. “Ideas are very good, but what about men? If you don’t have sex, you are merely sublimating your desires. If you deny it, you’re fooling yourself!”

One afternoon, after their lessons were done, they decided to go out to get ice cream. But before they left, Mem pulled her tutor aside. “You’ve taught me so much. I will repay you now by teaching you how to put on a hat.” And they stood in front of the mirror for a long time, getting Käthe’s hat to sit properly before going out.

In the ice-cream parlor, the lesson continued. “Now I’ll teach you how to flirt.”

“But I don’t like flirting! Why should grown-up people play such stupid games? I think that men and women should be open and honest with each other.”

“Nonsense. You don’t believe in it because you don’t know how. Here,

stare at that boy at the table over there. Just stare at him – there, now he’s looking at you. Now smile a little, just a little, and turn your head away. Very good. Look at that! In another second, he’ll find some excuse to come over to our table. Just you watch. Think of it as a social experiment.”

While Mem taught Käthe how to flirt, for her part Käthe encouraged Mem to make something of herself. They became close friends and took summer vacations together in the Austrian Tyrol. When Mem became unhappy in her marriage, Käthe urged her to go to Berlin and realize her dream of making films. Why should someone with a talent like hers confine herself to being the dazzling center of a salon? Let her walk away from affluence and complacency. Let her make something of herself.

Disillusioned with Hans, disgusted by bourgeois life, overflowing with plots, stories, ideas, Mem chose to go away and pursue her ambitions – but she agonized over whether she had done the right thing for the rest of her life. As for Käthe, she eventually fell in love and had two sons. When the war came, she saw to it that her sons got out of Austria before it was too late, but she lingered over the arrangements for too long and was interned in Ravensbrück, where she eventually died. According to feminist historian Gerda Lerner, she succeeded in reconciling the various aspects of her life: “In Käthe Leichter’s life there was no divide between theory and ... [action]; she combined her work as a journalist and organizer with her duties as mother and wife, her political leadership role with her research work as a social scientist.”

Of course, Mem was different. She wasn’t as fearless as Käthe; in fact, she was afraid of many things. She was afraid of becoming mediocre, of losing her power over men, of the ease of wealth, of the hardships of poverty, of being too dependent, of ending up alone, but, above all, of everything that deadened her imagination, her creativity. If she was going to be a screen writer, there was no question that she had to live in Berlin, the capital of European film. But what if Peter started forgetting her? There was no way to silence this fear, which grew louder over the years.

III.

While his mother struggled to find her way, Peter had his sessions with Anna Freud, which followed the same pattern every day. The chauffeur would pick him up from the Evangelical Elementary School in his father’s

Italian sports car and drop him off at 19 Berggasse. Walking up the worn marble steps to the second floor, he would run his hand from knob to knob of the iron railing, counting to himself. When he finally got to the door, he peered through the little glass spy hole, trying to see if the door-keeper was peering back at him. In the waiting area, he kept his eyes on Sigmund Freud's door and now and then he caught a glimpse of him, thin and bent, with a balding head and a grey beard, sitting at an enormous desk crowded with ancient figurines. Everyone said that Sigmund Freud was a very great man, but when Peter actually crossed paths with him, he would simply say, in a faint, mumbling voice, as though he had a piece of unchewed food in his mouth, "Is this really the Heller boy? My, how you've grown," exactly as any other grown-up would.

In Anna's office, there weren't any figurines, only a portrait of Sigmund Freud that followed Peter with its eyes. The portrait couldn't see him when he lay down on the couch, which made up for the fact that he couldn't see Anna, even though he was often tempted to twist around and check whether she was really listening to him. Since he wasn't allowed to look at her, he looked instead at Wolfi, a coal-black German shepherd with sharp yellow teeth, that lay on a tattered rug with his head between his paws. He was afraid of Wolfi the first few times, but after that he mainly felt sorry for him, trapped indoors all day, without any hope of going outside.

Sometimes just the clicking of Anna's needles made Peter want to jump off the couch, run around the room, and knock her lace-covered tables down. If only Wolfi would leap up and bark like mad! He knew just how to get him to do it, but it wasn't allowed.

As time went on, Peter learned ways of distracting himself without Anna noticing. If he squinted, for example, he could make out the titles of her books, even though the glass-covered bookshelf was halfway across the room. Once she let him take down a book and leaf through it, even though, strictly speaking, it was against her rules. It was by the philosopher Nietzsche: she had his complete works, which took up two entire shelves.

"I want to be a great writer," he told her. "My father says that a great writer must have read everything." He rattled off the titles of some of the books that Hans had read to him, hoping that she would notice how advanced they were. No answer – just the snoring of Wolfi on his rug and the clicking of her knitting needles. Was she even listening? He was nothing to her, just another one of her customers. Why had he ever

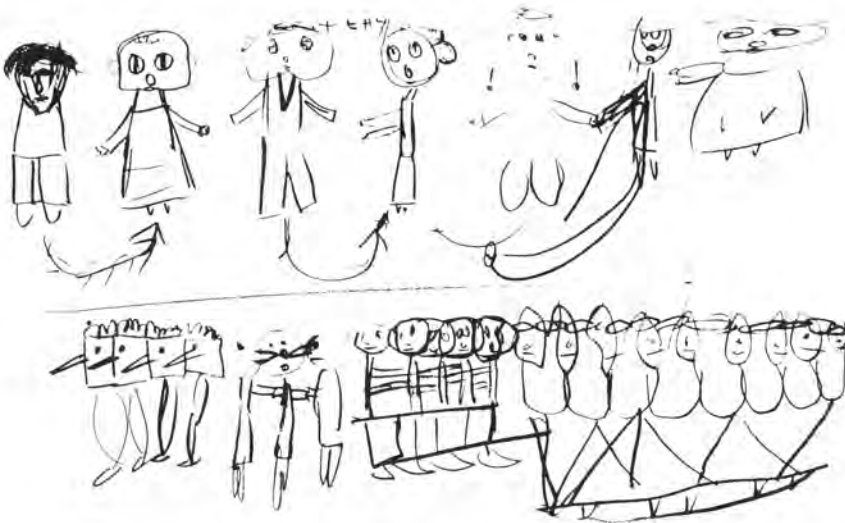
Early Sorrow

thought that she was beautiful, with her drab clothes and her hair pulled back in a bun? She was only really interested in hearing about shameful things, things that normal people, like his nursemaid Thesi, considered piggish and disgusting, like his habit of spying on men in the public toilet.

He didn't know why he had to come here every day. Wasn't it just a waste of time? She didn't even think it was that important to be great. She said that it was more important to develop into a real human being, whatever that meant. How could a grown person not care about being great? Didn't it bother her that she was going to die? Her own father had written that there was no such thing as God, which meant that when you died, you just evaporated into space and your atoms scattered across the universe. The only way not to disappear was to be great, like Goethe, or Shakespeare, or Karl May, who had written at least 100 adventure books. If you couldn't be immortal like Zeus, at least you could be immortal in words, like the creator of Faust or the author of *Winnetou*.

Sometimes he hated the sound of her voice, so reasonable and steady and matter of fact. Other times he wondered what would happen if he broke all of her rules, fell down on his knees and hugged her legs.

She told him to draw pictures of his dreams, even though drawing really wasn't what he did the best. She liked looking at his drawings, no matter how sloppy they were, and would ask him what every squiggle meant.



One of Peter's childhood drawings

He made his drawings more and more elaborate, so that he could stretch out the time of sitting right next to her on the couch. She didn't use perfume, the way his mother did, but she smelled nice anyway.

Still, he wished that she would pay less attention to his drawings and more attention to his stories, because, as his father said, a writer needs an audience. She didn't want to use all their time hearing him read his stories out loud; she said that it was more useful for him to lie on the couch and say whatever came into his head. He could still tell her his stories, but they came out sounding more like dreams, and he often forgot important details when he was telling them to her, only remembering them later, when the driver was speeding him back home. Finally, she told him that if he brought his stories to her, she would read them in the evening, when her sessions were done. He pictured her sitting in her red velvet armchair late at night, with Wolfi lying at her feet and his pages in her hands. He gave her a ten-page novella that he had finished before he started coming to her, all about a factory owner who starts out wanting to kill himself and ends up deciding to stay alive after he starts a revolution in the factory. She liked the story so much that she typed it up for him, and she typed up all his stories after that, keeping them in a special drawer along with her own papers, so that they wouldn't get lost.

In a way, Anna was like a mother to him, or maybe a cross between a mother and a scientist. She never hugged him or kissed him the way his mother did, and she wouldn't let him hug or kiss her (although it was alright for him to talk about wanting to). But she knew things about him that not even Mem knew, things that he had never planned on telling anyone, like what happened to his body when he got excited, or the fact that he sometimes wet his bed.

He felt guilty about liking her so much, especially because she really didn't approve of Mem. She was never happy when Mem came to visit him; she thought that it would be better for him if Mem stayed away. But Mem's visits, which were never long enough, were his favorite times in the world. As a grown man, he still remembered them vividly, describing one in a thinly fictionalized story:

Boredom blows itself up in you like a balloon. The nanny takes her charge to task. She says to the child, "An intelligent boy does not get bored." And to his father, she says "Certainly Herr Heller

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the boy longs for the lady of the house, his mother, but he misuses his misery to shirk his responsibilities.”

In the vacation with his mother, everything is different. They wade in high reeds until they are close to huge grey birds; they find mushrooms in the darkening woods. They pick berries in the clearings. They are in high spirits. They find, for example, a scooter in the shop of a bent little man who calls the scooter “Pezickel” and they laugh so hard that they can scarcely bring the purchase to an end. They have their secret words whose meaning can’t be explained to anyone. She speaks about “difficult grown-up things” with him and he understands everything. She also tells him fantastic stories like the one of the railroad manikin. All this is shot through with the premonition of departure, which is at the same time a remembrance of former farewells.

In the same story, he will describe a departure scene that repeated itself as relentlessly as his Belvedere dream:

On the platform white steam hisses from a valve of the black machine.

“Chocolates, cigarettes!” She still runs to the bookstand which makes him anxious. Finally she is back again.

“We’re both grown-ups now,” she says. “This time it doesn’t bother us so much.”

“Not half a year? Only three months?” On the great clock of the railroad hall the hand leaps ahead.”Go now,” he says. He is afraid she might miss her train.

Men with light brown suitcases. A crying little girl holds her handkerchief in her fist.

“You go too,” she says, “and don’t turn around.” Along the broad squares of the platform he must not, just as in olden days when he was still little, tread into the cracks, otherwise she won’t come again for a long time. A baggage cart drives toward him. Attention. Now I stepped on the crack or doesn’t that count?

“She’s gone,” he says to the chauffeur. “Home please.”

The house always felt bleak and cold in the days after his mother left. If only he could follow her to Berlin! He begged Hans to let him go by himself on the train, and Hans didn’t say no, but then Hans talked to Anna, who said that it would be a very bad idea.

When he told Mem what Anna had said, she wasn’t at all surprised. She knew very well that Anna disapproved of her, which was probably quite flattering to Hans. In a conversation that Peter recorded as a grown man, Mem revealed that, at some point, she had been in direct contact with Anna Freud. She had been told that she should refrain from being too physical with her own son, a piece of advice that infuriated her. When one listens to the recording, one can hear the pauses, the trembling in her voice:

I was struggling in the arena of life – with affairs and love and confusion – when this dry, didactic “scientist” woman turned up: a person ignorant of the world and the exuberantly blossoming and sacred chaos of life. For to live means to have a child, man, lover. What can such a person know of life! She should first feel in her whole body what it is like to want a man. I was a woman: she wasn’t. With the profound hatred of the spinster – which is at the bottom nothing but envy – she had the impudence to offer me impertinent remarks that I will not be able to forget as long as I live. And I, poor, confused person, felt compelled to allow her to say such things to me. “Children,” she told me, “are not there for the purpose of giving pleasure to their parents.” By her I had to be enlightened about my duties. Ah – if I were to meet her after my death, I would hit her straight in the face. Surely, I am unjust. Still: I was right. They took away my son because I had no money – and I had all the ... complications with men – and then the good contact, the soul connection between us was destroyed by this alien person, this employee of Hans – and to him, as her client, she was of course by far more polite and considerate.

Although he had no way of understanding these feelings when he was a boy, Peter knew that Mem would have been quite happy if he stopped

seeing Anna. But Hans was now in charge of him, and Hans felt that Anna was getting somewhere with him. Peter was glad that he didn't have to decide, because he was becoming very attached to Anna. Even though he told her all kinds of disgusting things, she didn't think that he was a pig. And she said that his stories were very well written and quite sophisticated for a boy who was only nine years old.

One evening, in the midst of reading to him, Hans broke off. "There's something I need to explain to you," he said, in a serious voice.

"Why can't we go on reading?" Peter said, reaching for the book.

"Your mother and I will always be good friends," Hans went on, holding the book away from him. "But you should stop waiting for her to move back in with us."

Peter turned his face to the wall, tracing the pattern of leaves on his wallpaper until he reached the stain that looked like a panther with scraggly fur. Hans didn't say anything more; all Peter could hear was the ticking of his cuckoo clock. When he turned back to Hans, he seemed small, as though he was looking at him through the wrong end of a telescope. He wished that Hans would put his glasses back on; his eyes reminded him of soft-boiled eggs and he hated the embroidered handkerchief that his father was wiping his glasses with – he hated the big "HH" and the little Heller crown, the mark of a tradition he would have to carry on. "Why did you have to stop reading?" he complained, pulling his blanket over his head.

A few days later, Anna told him all about eggs and sperms, and what a man's penis was for, and what husbands and wives did together when they were ready to have a child.

"I'm sure that Mem and Hans never did anything like that," Peter said.

"How do you think it happened?" she asked him.

"In a doctor's office," he shrugged. "With the doctor telling them what to do." It was hard to lie still after that, so he drew instead, covering several pieces of paper with lop-sided circles and squiggly lines.

"Do you wish I hadn't told you?" she asked, when the hour was finally over.

"No," he said, jumping off the couch in relief. "It was quite worthwhile."

On the way home, he stared out of the windows of the car, looking at the couples walking along the Ringstrasse, some hand in hand, others

arm in arm, others walking a few feet apart. Could it really be true? He shook his head. He was never going to get married, that was for sure. He couldn't believe that Mem, who was always so elegant and clean, would do something as dirty and disgusting as that.

His father's new girlfriend, Inge, was starting to spend nights at their house, spreading herself out on Mem's place on the bed. He could sometimes hear her and Hans laughing together behind the closed French doors. They weren't married, so what were they doing in there? Inge wasn't nearly as intelligent as Mem; she didn't read much, and she talked about silly, empty-headed things. He liked it when she kissed him on the lips, but he didn't like it when she talked baby-talk to him and made him sit on her lap.

Anna felt it was very clear that Peter wasn't happy at the Evangelical Elementary School. He didn't get along with the students there: they spoke in a lower-class dialect that he could barely understand, and they were constantly drawing him into fights by calling him names like "filthy Jew" or "rich Jewish pig." He was obviously an intelligent boy, but his mind was being coarsened and dulled. Why not enroll him in the school that she had helped to form, a school that would not only engage his mind in a positive way but reinforce his therapy?

The school was located in Hietzing, on the Wattmangasse, in a comfortable, middle-class neighborhood. Unlike the Evangelical School, it had no high metal fence; it had a low picket fence instead. The students spoke the same refined German that Peter spoke at home, and many of them had lost a parent to death or divorce. Classes were held in a narrow, two-storey house that smelled of freshly cut wood and that wasn't visible from the street, nestled in the backyard of Eva Rosenfeld, one of Anna's closest and most trusted friends.

Life at the Hietzing School seemed amazingly relaxed to Peter after the grinding discipline of the Evangelical School. There were only two hours of classes in the mornings, and the students sat at work tables rather than desks. There was never a problem about going outside; as a matter of fact, students were allowed to climb out of a window on the second floor into the gnarled branches of a walnut tree, lingering in this "balcony" or sliding to the ground. After lunch, there was a period of free work during

which students turned to projects they had chosen themselves. A few of the children did free work all afternoon, but most of them went off to analysis, either with Anna or with other analysts who were part of the Freudian circle.

Anna had always believed in the importance of developing a pedagogy that would correspond to the principles of psychoanalysis. Eva Rosenfeld, who was under analysis with Sigmund Freud, not only provided her with the physical setting that she needed to realize this goal but devoted her days and nights to helping her see it through.

Eva's sprawling household was completely intertwined with the school; there were at least four or five students boarding upstairs with her at any given time. Music classes were held in her parlor, with Eva taking part, organizing musical events. When anyone was hurt, or hungry, or upset, they came to Eva first. Bustling, attentive, and capable, she could always be counted on.

And yet, although the Rosenfeld house was always full of life, there was a sadness there, just below the surface. Two of Eva's sons had died of dysentery at the end of the First World War, leaving her with her daughter, Madi, and her son, Victor, a lean, tousle-headed boy who was roughly Peter's age. In 1927, when Madi was 15 years old, she fell to her death while climbing the Backenstein, a mountain overlooking the Alpine lake of Grundlsee.

Some said that Eva helped to create the school as an answer to her grief, while others said it would have happened without her. There is no denying that the foundations of the school were sunk into the same flowerbeds that Eva and Madi had planted together when Madi was a little girl. After Madi died, Eva was never without young boarders in her house, including little Ernstl Halberstadt, Anna's nephew, whose mother had died when he was five years old. Tending to the needs of others, Eva was able to forget herself and to keep Madi's memory intact. "I let myself die so that Madi could live," she said when she was an old woman, perhaps somewhat morbidly but definitely still in the style of someone who had been involved with the Freuds.

Apart from contributing hugely to the running of the school, Eva brought a sense of family to it. For her, the school was a community defined in opposition to the authoritarian, anti-Semitic world outside, a community in which competitiveness and meanness had no place. No

matter how irrational the world became, the school would be an island of humanity. “As Jews, we were always outsiders,” she said. The community within the school became everything.

By becoming the mother of the school, Eva was able to endure her grief. Yet despite all she did for everyone, there was a touch of iciness in her that nothing could melt and that only the children with the keenest feeling for maternal unhappiness could detect, Peter being one of them.

Although the school was rooted in Eva’s Austrian–Jewish life, it was financed by a blue-blooded WASP. Dorothy Burlingham, the youngest daughter of Louis Comfort Tiffany, had come to Vienna with her four children in search of emotional stability. Married to a New York surgeon who suffered from manic depression, she and her children lived in constant fear of his psychotic breaks. Seeking treatment for herself and for her oldest son, she had entered into analysis, first with Theodor Reik and then with Sigmund Freud. Before long, she was forging a friendship with Anna Freud that was to draw many other lives into its orbit.

All four Burlingham children attended the school: Bob, 14, Mabbie, 12, Tinky, 10, and Mikey, 8 years old. For Peter, the Buringhams were perfect in every way, and he wanted desperately to be accepted by them. As he wrote later, “I admired, worshipped, and loved the fair, fine, sensitive, attractive patrician children in their effortless grace, their carelessness, their American sense of humanity, even in their lack of zest or commitment.” Their way of being was wild and seemingly uncivilized, yet they were unflinchingly elegant, and even noble, in his eyes.

The entire family was magical to him. Tinky, who was one year older than him, was the most magical of all. Slender and fair, with a mischievous smile, she became his childhood love. Peter was enthralled by Tinky’s boyish looks, her imagination, and her elusiveness.

Anna and Eva had been very close before the Buringhams appeared on the scene. Anna cherished her relationship with Eva as one in which she was understood, not merely as an analyst but as a human being. It was Anna who rushed to Eva’s side when she received the news that Madi died. At Eva’s request, she had gone into Madi’s room and gathered together all of her things. And yet it was Dorothy Burlingham who provided Anna with a second family, and a way of leading a life that was separate from her father. “The Professor,” as she always insisted on calling him, was a figure of absolute authority for Dorothy, but Anna was her partner in

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life. Whether or not they were lovers, no one knows, but the life-altering intensity of their friendship was evident to everyone. Finding herself in the path of that intensity, the self-denying Eva stepped aside.

These were the three founders of the school. Without them, the school would never have come into being. Taken together, they provided a substitute for the mother that Peter was in the long process of losing.

2.

Visitations, Habitats

Vienna, 1929–30

AND so Peter sits at a low table covered with blocks of wood, bottles of ink, clumps of moss, branches of trees. At his elbow sits a boy with curly brown hair and a long, pointed face that resembles a satiric mask. In a few years, Victor, known as Vicki within the school, will transform himself into Victor Ross, taking on the manners of a British gentleman and becoming the lord of a magnificent Cornwall estate, to the envy of Peter, who will never manage to earn as much money as Victor will. But for now, Victor is a middle-class Viennese boy, restless, clever, acutely conscious of social rank, surrounded, as he is, by children of privilege, some of whom have moved into his mother's house. He and Peter are whittling branches into spears, competing to see who can finish the job in the least amount of time.

Across the table from them sits Ernstl W. Freud, who is carving a face into a bar of soap. If only the teachers had supplied him with a real walrus's tusk, so that the image that he is carving would never dissolve! (What would his grandfather Sigmund have to say about this?) Elfin and pale, with transparent skin and a silvery voice, he seems to be made of air. His future occupation as a specialist in prenatal psychology will be strangely compatible with his looks, which won't alter much over the years. For now, he is absorbed in his bit of soap, staying out of the competition across the table.

A sensitive-looking man stands at the opposite end of the table, bending over the woodcut that he has just stamped onto a piece of brown paper. This young man, whose name is Erik Homburger, is guiding the class with a light hand. Before he began to teach at the school, he was trying to make his way as an artist, but then he fell into a depression and