

ArtsPower
"My Heart In A Suitcase"
Updated: January, '07

VATI #2:

(Bench Scene)

Berlin, Nazi Germany, 1938.
A Bench at a Public Park.

(Note: Young Anne Lehmann used the German terms of endearment for her mother & father. Thus to her – her mother was Mutti; and her father was Vati.)

Vati & Mutti (Mr. & Mrs. Lehmann) are a Jewish married couple living with their daughter Anne in pre-World War II Nazi Germany. Life for Jews has become increasingly hard. Many laws have been passed that harshly discriminate against Jews. Vati can not work in banking anymore. Mutti can only shop at Jewish stores. Their daughter Anne can't go to public school anymore. Jews are barred from public places like restaurants & theatres. Jews must wear the yellow star to mark them as Jews. Vati has been increasingly anxious for his family and has been desperately trying to get them all out of Germany.

VATI is a wounded veteran of World War I, having lost his arm (he wears a prosthetic arm) fighting for his beloved Germany. Vati is an intelligent, private, serious man. Lately an internal anger, bitterness, and sadness has surfaced – feeling betrayed and forgotten by his beloved Germany.

ANNE is a young girl, intelligent, sensitive, and now painfully aware and frightened of all the discrimination that surrounds her and her family.

Here, Anne & her father have gone to the public park to take their usual Sunday walk

ANNE (to the audience)

Anyway, it was our same old-fashioned Sunday walk - our same walk - to the same bench - but today, ... everything changed.

(Vati has entered. They turn to look - the bench has a sign on it saying: "Juden Verboten" - "*Jews Forbidden*".)

... Vati, look.

(Vati & Anne stare at the sign in disbelief.)

(Vati seems fixated on the sign - torn about what to feel - angry, confused, betrayed, hurt - a confusion of emotions. Then he shows an outward appearance of calm, control.)

VATI (trying to pretend that everything is normal)

Come along, Anne. We will take a short rest from our walk.

(Vati crosses to the bench - **he sits.**)

ANNE (nervous, protesting)

But Vati, the sign says "Jews Forbidden"! I think we're supposed to go and sit on the benches painted yellow.

VATI (still pretending that everything is normal)

We will sit here just as we have done so every Sunday afternoon.

ANNE (still scared, starting to protest)

But Vati, there are some yellow benches over by the...

VATI (cutting her off)(firm but trying to be calm)

Anne, ... sit down.

(Anne slowly, cautiously sits also.)

(Anne is very uncomfortable; while Vati tries to act as if nothing were wrong.)

ANNE (nervous)(pleading)(quickly)

Vati, we could be arrested for sitting here. Like Uncle Max - he wasn't even doing anything - just working in his shop - and they just walked in and pulled him out into the street and they were beating him and...

VATI (refusing to listen)(changing the subject)

(talking about 'normal' things - to cover that something is wrong)

So - are you excited about your new school? Mutti says some of the volunteer teachers will be the great scholars from the university.

ANNE (not following Vati's lead)(nervous, pleads)

Vati, please,...

VATI (continues 'normal' things)(covering)

You know, your school will be beside the largest synagogue in Berlin.

ANNE (nervous)(looking around)

Vati, I think, ... I think people are beginning to stare.

VATI (sarcastic)

(getting agitated)(his angry starting to show, but in control)

Stare?...Now why should they stare? Nothing to see here – just a German citizen – a veteran – who’s earned the right to sit on a park bench in a public place on an autumn afternoon.

ANNE (pleading)(panicking)(growing more upset)

Vati, please... can’t we just keep on walking?

VATI (faster – talking about himself – bitter)

A capable banker who now – for some reason ... I don’t know ... can’t seem to find a job anymore.

ANNE (concerned for Vati – seeing his pain)

Vati,...

VATI (bit by bit – losing his composure)

(almost accusing)(angry)(faster)(breaking down)(losing it)

Or ... or maybe they are staring - staring at my arm. – my wooden hand. But don’t you see? - it’s not something I’m ashamed of . No – I carry it with pride – I gave my arm to the Fatherland – I lost my arm fighting for my country! – Yes! – A Jew! – A Jew who gave his arm and would gladly have given his life!

(now practically shouts)(raging against the world)

... But now – now I can’t sit on a park bench in a public place on an autumn afternoon?!!!

ANNE (crying)(scared for Vati)(pleads with him)

Vati, stop it! Stop it! Please! I don’t want to sit here anymore. Can’t we just go home now, Vati? ... please?... please?

(LONG PAUSE)

(Vati starts to settle down; but now seems spent – defeated.)

(finally...)

VATI

(giving in to Anne)(sadly, giving up)(slowly)

(tired, spent, defeated, sad)

I guess,... I guess nobody takes walks anymore,... – too old-fashioned.

(defeated)(giving up)(slowly)

... So,... let’s go home.

(He stands.)(defeated)(slowly)

... let’s go home.

(Vati slowly exits – slumped, defeated.)(Anne sadly watches.)

END OF SCENE