

VATI #2

(Bench Scene)

Berlin, Nazi Germany, 1938.
A bench in a public park.

NOTE: Young Anne Lehmann used German terms of endearment for her parents. She called her mother Mutti (pronounced: “MOO-tee”); and her father Vati (pronounced “VAH-tee”).

Vati & Mutti (Mr. & Mrs. Lehmann) are a Jewish married couple living 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 cannot 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, theaters, even a bench in the park. Vati has been increasingly anxious for his family and has been desperately trying to get them all out of Germany.

VATI is a proud 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 and embitterment has surfaced – feeling 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 changes.

(*Vati enters. 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 is torn about what to feel – angry, confused, betrayed, hurt – a
confusion of emotions. Then he shows an outward appearance of calm,
and control.)*)

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

(*Vati crosses to the bench – he sits*)

ANNE

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

VATI (*cutting her off*)

Anne...sit down.

(*Anne slowly, cautiously sits
(Anne is very uncomfortable; while Vati tries to act as if nothing were
wrong.)*)

ANNE

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

VATI (*cutting her off*) (*changing the subject*)

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

ANNE

Vati, please...

VATI

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

ANNE

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

VATI

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

ANNE

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

VATI (*isn't hearing Anne*)

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

ANNE

Vati...

VATI (*lost in his own thoughts*)

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 shouting)

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

ANNE (*crying*) (*scared for Vati*)

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 seems defeated)

VATI

I guess...I guess nobody takes walks anymore...too old fashioned.

...So...let's go home.

(stands)

...let's go home.

END OF SIDE.