

[PDF] German Girl?

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Description:

“So when was the last time you saw your father?” he asks. I look down at my hands as they fidget with the hem of my dress and say nothing.

He sits on Oma’s (grandmother’s) bed in front of me and, reaching over, pinches my cheek with two fingers. In the tone of voice that adults reserve for talking to six-year-olds, he asks again, “Now, tell me Vivian, when did you last see your Papa?”

I shake my head and say, “No, I haven’t seen him for a long time. I don’t know where he is.”

The finger comes again, hooking my chin and forcing my head up and toward him. I look into the pale, watery eyes of the man in the gray Gestapo uniform. My heart

pulses so hard in my ears that I can barely hear his words. "Have you seen Papa this week, Liebchen" (Sweetie), he coos. "Who are his friends?" I shake my head "No," knowing that a few hours earlier Papa came to our street, near the apartment. He stood in the shadow of the corner house, watching me. I knew that he had come to see me, and somehow, instinctively, I also knew that I should not go to him and that he could not come to me. We looked at each other, and then he turned and slipped away. It will be almost ten years before I would see him again.

The Gestapo man stands and abruptly leaves the bedroom.

It isn't until I see him in the living room, talking to Oma, that my tears come.

In *German Girl?*, I reflect on my extraordinary childhood years, 1942 to 1953, growing up in Nazi Germany. As a "Mischling", a child with one Jewish parent and one Christian parent, my experiences during World War II, and its effect on the years that followed, provide a unique picture of wartime life as seen through the eyes of a child.

My Lutheran grandparents hid and protected me while my mother was jailed and questioned tortuously on the whereabouts of my father. A Jewish man, my father lived "underground." In "German Girl", I describe my father's ingenuity and bravery, the enduring strength of my mother and the simple pleasures and comforting love of my grandparents stolen in a time of horror for so many. I have included copies of historical documents and photographs of the people discussed in the book.*

In "German Girl", I have filled my book with memories, pictures, reproductions of forged documents and the incredible story of growing up alongside the appalling destruction of WWII in East Berlin.

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