

## Back Of Card Najee Ziade Australian Transport Group

*It is the spring of 1939 in the age of anxiety. In months Europe will be Hitler's. And Badenheim, a resort town vaguely in the orbit of Vienna, is preparing for its summer season. The vacationers arrive as they always have, a sampling of Jewish middleclass life: the impresario Dr. Pappenheim, his musicians, and their conductor; the gay Fran Tsauberblit; the historian Dr. Fussholdt and his much younger wife; the "readers," twins whose passion for Rilke is featured on their program; a child prodigy; a commercial traveler; a rabbi. The list waxes as the summer waxes. To receive them in the town are the pharmacist and his worried wife, the hotelier and his large staff, the pastry shop owner and his irritable baker, Sally and Gerie (two quite respectable prostitutes), and, mysteriously, the bland inspectors from the "Sanitation Department." The story unfolds as matter-of-factly as a Chekhov play. The characters on stage are so deeply held by their defensive daily trivia that they manage to misconstrue every signal of their fate. Finally, de facto prisoners in their familiar resort, the vacationers, now increased by the forced crowding-in of other Jews hardly on vacation, take on the lineaments of undefined disaster. The text builds a sense of foreboding in which each human detail is so persuasive, so right in its fidelity to the terrible evasions of the time, that it leaves the reader transformed by what he and the author know must happen to Badenheim's people. Badenheim 1939 owes everything to its author's astonishing capacity to recreate the energies and confusions of innocent and uncomprehending victims who, always loyal to civility and social graces, fail to even dimly see the cruel terms of their imminent fate.*

A collection of short stories including "The City," "The Suicide of the Astronaut," and "Prayer on the Last Friday", and four essays

Badenheim Nineteen Thirty-nine

Escape to Hell and Other StoriesStanké

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