

Karl: Not at all! You see, there was Belgrade . . . there were the Turks, and here was I, with my seven hundred halberdiers . . . We were practically surrounded. There was only one way we could go.

Marie: And that was?

Karl: Forward!

Marie: Oh yes.

Karl: My standard bearer was just in front of me. As the wind unfurled my flag I saw the motto of my house . . . Attempto . . . I dare . . .

Marie: An inspiration, my dear cousin. *(The music continues in the distance.)*

Karl: To-night I wish I had a different motto—Caesar's motto—Veni, vedi, vici . . .

Marie: You came, you saw. . . .

Karl: Yes, but have I any chance of conquering?

Marie: Maybe.

Karl: In Belgrade with me they would treat you like a queen.

Marie: A queen.

Karl: Does that mean nothing to you?

Marie: Oh yes . . . but so much depends on the king.

Karl: Oh I see, I'm not romantic.

Marie: Have I said that?

Karl: Then you mean . . . ?

Marie: I mean you have given me a great deal to think about. Come . . . let us go indoors.

Karl: So soon?

Marie: Yes, I must retire and think about Belgrade.

Karl: Then I may hope for a favourable answer?

Marie: Perhaps! *(The ball-room door opens and the music increases.)*

Marie: Karl, please! We are in public.

Karl: Who is that man?

Marie: Oh, merely a Jew . . . by name Josef Suss Oppenheimer.

Karl: Josef Suss Oppenheimer . . . Now we'll have a bit of fun.

Marie: You will pardon me. . . I am very tired.

Karl: May you dream happily of Belgrade, fair cousin. I'll now to the gambling rooms and try to win a fortune for you.

Marie: Good-night, dear Karl. Your ardour hastens my decision. *(Her voice recedes into the background.)*

Karl: Pretty girl, eh, Jew? You know I nearly gave you a beating for your intrusion.

Suss: Then, your Highness, I should not have been in bad company. Has not your Highness beaten a Marshal of France?

Karl: Come this way. You trim your words, Jew, as neatly as if you'd studied in Versailles.

Suss: I have, your Highness.

Karl: Ah . . . are you one of the Viennese Oppenheimers?

Suss: Only a third cousin.

Karl: I'm glad you're no closer. They've just refused me a loan, damn them!

Suss: They have no conception of how to treat a great gentleman. *(The door opens and a blending of music and men betting can be heard, after which the door closes.)*

Karl: I like you Suss. *(There is the sound of men betting and the clinking of glasses.)*

Player: Will you take a seat, your Highness.

Karl: Certainly! What did I come here for? To look on? Five hundred.

Player: A thousand.

Karl: Two thousand.

Player: Four thousand!

Karl: That's more than I can muster.

Suss: If your Highness will give me the honour to stand backer?

Karl: What? Oh, thank you, Jew. Four thousand!

Player: Your Highness wins.

Karl: Come on again, one thousand.

Player: Two thousand.

Karl: Three thousand.

Servant: Sir, a stranger waits on you in the hall.

Suss: Very well, pardon, Highness. *(Sound of footsteps and opening and closing of doors. The distant sound of music ceases with the closing of the final door.)*

Suss: Welcome, uncle.

Rabbi: You sent for me because of the child? You promised to take her, Josef.

Suss: Yes, I know, but not yet, it wouldn't be good for me. Nor good for the child. You see, I have a thousand things to settle, I am pushed, driven to and fro. I . . . I . . .

Rabbi: Why don't you want the world to know you were married? That you were happy once.

Suss: Yes, but Leah died when the child was born.

Rabbi: I ought to curse you when she makes me speak of you. Yet I find myself blessing you for her sake. Naomi is now fifteen.

Suss: Yes, but don't you see it wouldn't be fair to her. She is so young, so innocent, you can shelter her better than I.

Rabbi: She is making for herself an imaginary father out of what I have told her. Now she wants to see the real one. I shall bring the child to a quiet house in the country near you, where and when I shall bring her I shall let her know in due course. *(The sound of a voice approaching.)*

Karl: Jew, where are you? Where are you? *(Sound of door opening and singing in drunken voice.)*

Karl: I've been looking everywhere for you. I've come to pay you my debts. You brought me luck, Jew. So you have a visitor.

Suss: This is his Highness the Field Marshal Prince Karl Alexander and this, Highness, is my uncle, our teacher, Rabbi Gabriel van der Straaten.

Karl: A Jewish Rabbi, eh? A mag-nus, a sorcerer, an alchemist. Can you make gold?

Rabbi: No, I cannot make gold.

Karl: I am very interested in alchemistic experiments. I'm not rich. Your nephew knows that—he furnished me with this suit. But if you cared to come to Belgrade with me.

Rabbi: I am no maker of gold.

Karl: Read my hand. You cannot refuse me that. Come, speak up!

Rabbi: I beg you to excuse me.

Karl: Tell me, I'm not afraid. I've stood in a hundred battles. I've fought a duel over a pocket handkerchief. Do you think I can't stand it if an old Jew foretells trouble for me?

Rabbi: I beg you to excuse me.

Karl: Say on.

Rabbi: I see a first, and a second event. The first I will not tell you. The second is a ducal crown.

Karl: You lay it on thick, sir magnus. A ducal crown. With my cousin the Duke still very much alive and a grown-up Crown Prince as well—a ducal crown.

Rabbi *(in subdued voice)*: Josef, what I told you still holds good. *(There is the click of a door closing.)*

Karl: What was the other thing you saw? Gone, eh? Your uncle is not very courteous, Jew.

Suss: You must excuse him, Highness. He is morose and peculiar, but—

Karl: But what was it he refused to tell?

Suss: We can forget that Highness. My uncle is a visionary. Events which to him are real, to us as men of the world are only ludicrous fancies. But a ducal crown—that is real.

Karl: Real, eh? How much will you advance me on this ducal crown?

Suss: I am at your Highness's disposal with all that I possess.

Karl: Very well, Jew, I'll take you at your word. Announce yourself to my levee to-morrow as the Keeper of my Privy Purse. *(The door opens and footsteps approach.)*

Courier: Your Highness, I am a courier from the capital.

Karl: From Stuttgart?

Courier: Your cousin, the reigning Duke, was thrown from his horse yesterday.

Karl: Was he hurt?

Courier: Killed, your Highness.

Karl: Leave me!

Courier: But Highness—

Karl: I'll see you later, leave me *(courier departs.)* So you're excited are you, Jew? But don't forget the Crown Prince, he won't die so conveniently. What are you aiming at? This is pure chance.

Suss: No chance, your Highness, but a mysterious knowledge, an infallible and unshakable instinct tells me my fate is linked with yours completely, with all that I have and all that I possess. Just as I am bound to you, so you are bound to me, Karl Alexander! *(Sound of music.)*

End of Act I.

IS it suggested that the German aircraft factories have been turning out ping-pong sets, or toys for the Christmas market?—Lord Rothermere.



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