

RADIO PLAY FROM THE WORLD-FAMOUS NOVEL

Jew Suss

Adapted by Robert Waldron
from the famous novel by
Lion Feuchtwanger

Resume of Act I.

Josef Suss Oppenheimer, a wealthy and ambitious young Jew, is travelling in his coach to the town of Wildbad together with Landauer, an elderly friend and constant companion. On the road, they meet Magdalen Sybille, the daughter of Weissensee, Lord President of the State Council of Wurttemberg. Suss is struck by the beauty of the young girl but at the urging of Landauer continues his journey to the inn at Wildbad.

Arriving, he encounters Karl Alexander, a brave soldier but an ineffectual prince—a cousin of the reigning Duke. By servility and extreme generosity he ingratiates himself with the blustering Prince. Suss's uncle, Rabbi Gabriel, arriving in due course, is ordered by the Prince to foretell the future. He prophesies that Karl Alexander will be Duke. The soldier is incredulous, even when later a courier announces the death of the reigning Duke. The crown prince still lives. But Suss is resolved—the prince is his guiding star. And so the first act concludes with these words:—

Suss: Highness, 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.

ACT II.

Scene I.

Karl: Gentlemen, when the untimely deaths of my predecessor and his son in rapid succession, make me Duke, my oath of allegiance to the Constitution bound me, among other duties, to defend our country against her enemies. How can I do that without a proper army?

Weissensee: Highness, we cannot afford a larger army.

Karl: We've got to afford it. Weissensee! *(He thumps the table.)*

Weissensee: But the people cannot pay, Highness! What with the late Duke's extravagances the coronation expense and your personal requirements, the treasury is empty.

Karl: Then fill it, my Lord President. Do you hear me, fill it. Yes, you gentlemen can wriggle in your chairs, till the seats of your breeches are worn out. But with or without your help, I intend to raise and maintain a bigger army.

Weissensee: Your Highness, it can't be done.

Karl: It can and will be done!

Weissensee: But Highness, the taxes—

Karl: Weissensee, enough! Gentlemen of the Council, retire. Get out, I say. Suss, I want you! *(There is the scraping of chairs and rising of feet and the rumble of objecting voices as they depart.)*

Suss: Your Highness?

Karl: Why did you leave me alone with those half-wits? They've no idea of progress, the fools! They can't even realise we need a bigger army.

Suss: If they are so old-fashioned, so petty, then we must do without them. I have prepared a scheme which will give us a powerful army. And then

everything will follow in its train. As your Highness will see, it will not involve increased taxation. Merely a system of fines.

Karl: You're clever, Jew.

Suss: Thank you very much, Highness.

Karl: I'll leave you now to draft your scheme. We must have a bigger army and have it immediately. *(Karl rises and departs, closing the door after him.)*

Suss *(soliloquising as he writes)*: Josef Suss Oppenheimer, from day to day your power grows more and more. Some time, not far off, you will be the greatest man in the land—greater than your Duke—greater than the Emperor!

The door opens and footsteps approach.

Landauer: Pardon Excellency!

Suss: Good Landauer, why such formality?

Landauer: Reb Josef, you are now the Councillor of Finance for His Highness, Karl Alexander, Duke of Wurttemberg.

Suss: And my presentiment—

Landauer: May still be crazy.

Suss: You are very ominous and dignified this evening, my friend.

Landauer: Rabbi Gabriel awaits you in your apartment with Naomi.

Suss: What! Naomi is here! He brought her to the palace? Where is the Duke?

Landauer: Where he usually is—amusing himself with some pretty face.

Suss *(pushing back chair)*: Wait here. Landauer. No one must see them.

Least of all His Highness. *(Sounds of Suss walking, then opening and closing of doors.)*

Suss: Uncle, Naomi, my child, you are beautiful just like your mother.

Naomi: And you are as I always knew you would be. Just as Uncle Gabriel told me. When are you going to come and stay with me, Father?

Suss: As soon as I possibly can, my child.

Naomi: I know it's so difficult. Everybody wants you. But I want you too. I know everybody worships you. The Duke—he must be so kind—and I've heard all the wonderful things you are doing for the people.

Suss: Naomi, oh I am so happy. I hate to let you go.

Naomi: But, father, you will come to Hirsau soon?

Suss: Yes, my child.

Naomi: How soon?

Suss: I can't promise exactly—perhaps to-morrow.

Rabbi Josef, you see how the child yearns for you. Does your own advancement mean more than your daughter's happiness? She needs your parental care.

The door opens and footsteps approach.

Suss: Uncle, please the child. Yes, Landauer?

Landauer: Josef, the Duke is calling for you.

Suss: Quick! See them safely departed, through my private entrance. What madness to bring the child here.



NAOMI: And you are as I always knew you would be . . . When are you going to come and stay with me, Father? . . . I know it's difficult. Everybody wants you. But I want you too.