

RADIO PLAY FROM THE WORLD-FAMOUS NOVEL

Jew Suss

Adapted by Robert Waldron
from the famous novel by
Lion Feuchtwanger

RESUME OF ACTS I AND II.

Josef Suss Oppenheimer and his friend Landauer are journeying to Wildbad. Through an accident on the road they meet Magdalen Sybille. Suss immediately falls in love with the daughter of the Lord President of the State Council of Wurtemberg, but Landauer does not approve of his companion's affection for a Christian girl. The two men, arriving at the town, encounter Karl Alexander, a poor man but a cousin of the reigning Duke. Suss has a presentiment that the Prince will be his stepping stone to power, and by servility and generosity ingratiates himself with Karl Alexander. His belief is confirmed by the prophecy of his uncle, Rabbi Gabriel. Karl Alexander will be the next Duke of Wurtemberg. The Prince is amused at the prediction. The Duke still lives; moreover, he has a grown-up son. Not even the sudden announcement of his cousin's accidental death convinces him of the Rabbi's veracity, but the prophecy is true. Some time later the Crown Prince dies suddenly, and Karl Alexander becomes Duke of Wurtemberg, with Suss as his financial counsellor.

With his rise to power and a more plentiful supply of money, Karl, notwithstanding his recent marriage to Marie Auguste, daughter of the Prince of Thurn, gives himself up to wine, women and song. No maiden is safe where the Duke is concerned. Unknown to Karl, Suss has a fifteen-year-old motherless daughter, Naomi. The Jew, understanding his master's weakness, guards his child by placing her in the charge of the Rabbi, who resides in the forest of Hirsau. During a ball held in Karl's honour, Suss is afforded the opportunity of becoming better acquainted with Magdalen Sybille, who is his particular guest. Karl, spying the young girl, instructs the Jew to see that she is conducted to his bedroom. Suss endeavours to save Magdalen by declaring she is the Lord President's daughter, but Karl remains obstinate. And the Jew, rather than sacrifice the favour of his Prince, betrays his lover. Weissensee, hearing of his daughter's misfortune, is broken-hearted. His lament touches Suss, reminding him of his own daughter, Naomi. He is moved to compensate for his action and to reward the father for the outrage of his daughter. And so the second act concludes with these words: Suss: As matters stand now, my Lord President, I dare promise you quite definitely, honour and promotion.

ACT III.

Scene I.

Karl: Is the Jew here yet? Oh, my head!
Suss (*entering*): You sent for me, Highness?
Karl: Oh, my head!
Suss: Is your Highness ill?
Karl: No—no! Just had too much damned wine last night.
Attendant: Your Highness, drink this. (*Puts glass down.*)

Karl: Ah, that's better. Suss, I want you to do a little commission for me.
Suss: Yes, Highness.
Karl: Take this gift to the Demoiselle Weissensee with my compliments.
Suss: Willingly, Highness.
Karl: But remember, Jew, she is mine—all mine.
Suss: Ma vie pour mon souverain.
Karl: Your life for your sovereign—a worthy motto, Jew. Forget it not when you meet Magdalen Sybille, a delicate morsel.
Suss: As your Highness commands.
Karl: You did well, Jew, to invite her to meet me. I'll see to it that you are well rewarded. A German prince does not do things shabbily.
Suss: Thanks, Highness.
Karl: You showed taste, Jew—but forget the Lord President's daughter, she's a wild filly. Hits out and bucks and bites and glows all over—then so ice-cold when she should be accommodating. But her eyes are like pools—like forest pools. That's right—like forest pools.
Suss: Your Highness wishes me to convey the present immediately.
Karl: Oh, yes, go now, I'll reward you. You can have anything you ask. I'll reward you, Jew, for this—I'll reward you. (*Door closes.*)

Scene II.

Lady-in-Waiting: If your Excellency will wait here, the Demoiselle Weissensee will attend at her convenience. (*The door opens and footsteps approach.*)
Suss: It is most gracious of you to receive me, Demoiselle.
Magdalen: I am obeying his Royal Highness's wish.
Suss: On his Royal Highness's instructions I am to hand you this.

Magdalen: Please convey to his Royal Highness my grateful thanks for his present.

Suss: You make yourself quite clear. The Royal messenger is dismissed. May Jew Suss remain?

Magdalen: I have borne so much, I can endure this also.

Suss: Leave your naive dreams behind you Magdalen Sybille! They were all right for the forest of Hirsau, now the Duke is your reality. Regard him well. Take a firm grip of him. He is a worth while reality. But let not the Duke claim you. Let it be power.

Magdalen: You are insolent, Jew.

Suss: No, Demoiselle. We stand equal to equal now. You and I, each with a hand on the lever of power. Let it be your destiny.

Magdalen: Jew—

Suss: You are perplexed, Magdalen Sybille. Then let me explain. You thought I failed you? Perhaps I did. But I couldn't help myself. Ever since I was a little boy in the Ghetto I have suffered everything, sacrificed everything for one thing—power. I can allow nothing, neither friendship nor sorrow nor pity nor love, to prevent me from following my star up to the end. You, too, Demoiselle Weissensee will understand what that means, and now, may the Jew be permitted to retire?

Scene III.

(*A crowd is gathered and above the noise a voice is heard.*)

Woman: A Jew has killed a child! A Jew has killed a child!

Landauer: Listen to the Gentile rabble. They're clamouring for the blood of our race. Poor Seligman is innocent—he never murdered the Christian



SUSS: You thought I failed you. Perhaps I did. But I couldn't help myself. Ever since I was a little boy in the ghetto I have sacrificed everything for one thing—power.