
LIEBE LISE



Our goal is to produce a historical drama feature film based on ten months in the life of Lise Meitner, an Austrian Jewish physicist who was forced to flee Nazi Germany in 1938 while her research led towards an earth-shattering discovery: the theory of nuclear fission.

March 12, 1938. The German annexation of Austria puts Dr. Lise Meitner, an Austrian-Jewish physicist working at the Kaiser Wilhelm Institute for Chemistry in Berlin, in grave danger. Anti-Jewish laws passed by the Nazi regime since 1933 have ousted nearly all Jewish professors and researchers from their positions, and many have already fled the country. When Lise applies for a visa to leave Germany, she finds that her Austrian passport is now invalid. Throughout the spring and summer of 1938, she is trapped in a rapidly deteriorating situation in Berlin.

Doors close, one by one. Lise's case is brought to the attention of SS leader Heinrich Himmler, who orders that she must not be allowed to leave the country. With the help of a conspiracy of a dozen international physicists, an escape is meticulously planned. Lise's last hope is to flee immediately by train to The Netherlands via a lightly-patrolled border station. Lise's neighbor, Kurt Hess, a chemistry researcher and avid Nazi, tips off the police that an escape is imminent. The police go to a former student of Otto Hahn, Lise's brother-in-research of 30 years. The loyal former student misleads the police, and the escape just barely succeeds. The border guards are bribed in advance and Lise makes it across.

In exile, Lise stays briefly in the Netherlands, then moves on to Copenhagen and from there to Stockholm, where she begins a new research position. There, she continues her former research while still in contact with her old team in Berlin. In December 1938, on a winter walk with her nephew, Otto Frisch, also a physicist, Lise proposes a revolutionary theory that changes world history: nuclear fission. The uranium atoms are splitting into two pieces, and the energy released in this process is quite large.

Otto Frisch returns to Copenhagen after the new year. There, he types notes based on his and Lise's calculations and gives them to the famous physicist Niels Bohr, who is leaving for a physics conference in America. Lise's theory electrifies the American physics community, eventually leading to the Manhattan Project and the Atomic Bomb. *We believe that this project has both mass appeal and cultural significance. The individual escape of Dr. Meitner is compelling on its own, but the ramifications of the weaponization of her discovery fundamentally changed the course of history. In the near-term, it affected the course and outcome of World War II and in the long-term it led to the development of arsenals of weapons of mass destruction and the continuing real possibility those present of self-caused armageddon.*