

## Introduction

As described in the Prologue of this book, my colleague and friend Michael Münkwitz did, indeed, find Jacob Hintze's trumpet hanging up in a church in the small village of Belitz in eastern Germany. The church records and the wording of the votive plaque commissioned by Hintze's widow were almost all the information we had of his life story. We knew he was an innkeeper, we knew that he and his wife, Elisabeth Bauchen, were from patrician families, and that they had children. We learned that Jacob had been killed in a duel with one Joachim Wadegahte, son of Heinrich. Jacob Hintze had been a staff trumpeter and had been granted the living of the inn on the post road by the Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin. That was all, and so it might have remained had I not come into possession of a small wooden trunk filled to the brim with papers. I am not at liberty to reveal the source of these papers, nor can I vouch for their authenticity... or even their actual existence, quite frankly. In fact, I may have just dreamt the whole thing. All I can say is, the story I tell here *ought* to be true. Sorting through these perhaps mythical papers, transcribing from the handwritten script of the original (if it exists), and then translating has been a labour of several years. I have tried wherever possible to keep the voice of the original and to do as little editing as possible. It is not my role to present this as anything but Jacob Hintze's story. My only interference is to set the scene in the Prologue and to close the story in the Epilogue.

I decided to leave all place names in their original form, and likewise the few of Hintze's phrases in other European languages. There are also terms in German that I have decided not to translate. I have provided a glossary. The dates are in the Julian calendar, which was in use in Hintze's time in the Protestant north, and so are ten days earlier than those in our modern calendar. I have provided endnotes to give readers further information on major characters and incidents. Among the papers was a list of quotations, mostly from the Bible and Lutheran scholars, with numbers beside them. I am sure these were intended as epigraphs, so I have rendered them as such, except for those on the Prologue and Epilogue, which I extracted from the text on the votive panel on which the trumpet was hung. I have left them all in the original language and have provided translations. To make Hintze's travels clearer, I have provided very simple maps.



*For the purposes of Jacob Hintze's story, this map shows only the very basic political divisions. Boundaries changed over the course of his life, and after the Peace of Westphalia the divisions became excessively confusing. Large sections are seen on contemporary maps as mosaics of tiny, interlocking principalities. Hintze himself would have been hard put to name even a few of them*

## Prologue

*Der Feind verfolgt meine Seele und zerschlägt mein Leben zu Boden*  
For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life  
down to the ground

*Psalmen Davids/Psalm 143:3*

The trumpet-maker placed the little folding stepstool below the votive panel hanging on the whitewashed church wall. It was on the south side of the altar, fairly high up. Sunshine entered from the clerestory above but slanted away, so the panel was in relative gloom. He climbed up gingerly; the stool wobbled and settled, he placed his fingertips briefly against the wall to steady himself, and now he was at eye level.

The Lutheran church in Belitz is a small and ancient building made of red brick, a common building material in that eastern part of Germany, bordered by the Baltic Sea. The church sits in a soft green acre, surrounded by the memory stones of burghers and common folk long gone, and shaded by fine trees, their trunks green-washed by moss on their windward sides. The cobbles of the lane leading to the church hark back to the time of the Democratic Republic; hellish to drive on, costly to maintain, but cheap to install. Quite good enough for the country farmers of the time, the simple people who had seen few cars, and had never dreamed of owning one.

Even in summer the interior of the church was cool, although the sensation on the skin could as much have arisen from the silent peace of the place than from the mere temperature of the air. The atmosphere of the nave was scented with time; a distance compounded of dust and wood, decay and incense, and the cloying aura of long-burnt beeswax and tallow. Not a famous place; not a vast cathedral with riches adorning its walls, or with vaults filled with treasures from devotion, time and long use. A small, rural church in a small, rural back-water, noticed only because it was on the old coach road, one stage shy of Rostock. An obligatory stopping place for people with more important destinations and meetings and deals on their minds.

Years ago, a visiting musician had told the trumpet-maker of an instrument hanging up on the wall. It was probably a military instrument from the First World War, he had reasoned; there were many of those on the market. But here he was at eye level looking directly at a votive panel dated 1677, dedicated to a trumpeter killed in a duel, one Jacob Hintze. And there was his trumpet, still hanging up on one side of the

panel. On the other there used to be a sword, the pastor told him, but that had long since vanished. You'd steal a sword, but a trumpet...?

As his brain told him what his eyes saw, comprehension squeezed the trumpet-maker's heart. He nearly fell off the stepstool. Seventeenth century! No question. And here was an inscription, just where you would expect to find it on a trumpet made in the Imperial City of Nürnberg in the days of the Holy Roman Empire. Around the decorative garland on the bell he read:

MACHT WOLFF BIRCKHOLTZ IN NÜRNBERG 1650

Wolfgang Birckholtz he knew of: a famed maker of the period, one of the closeknit cadre of instrument-makers who produced the lion's share of the fine brass musical and military instruments of Europe.

But who in the world was Jacob Hintze?



*Jacob Hintze's trumpet hanging beside Elisabeth Bauchen's votive plaque*

## Chapter One

In which my oldest son shoves a quill into my hand and as good as dips it in the ink for me

*Sprich wahr, und beschäme den Teufel*  
Tell the truth and shame the devil

*Anonyme Sprichwort/Anonymous Saying*

“How are you feeling father?”

My eldest, Michael, was visiting from Wolfenbüttel; he’s a violinist there with the court ensemble. He sat me down at a table in the *Neuer Krug*, the post inn we own in Neu Heinde near Belitz, and looked me in the eyes.

“Fine. Just fine.”

“Are you sure? Come on, now.”

“Never better. Why do you ask?” I tried to lay on the old sincerity but he could see right through me. Always could. He knew. I’d never told him how my father had died, or his father before him—hadn’t told any of them—but he sensed that not everything about me was well.

“Be honest with me, papa.”

The place was silent; middle of the day with no lingering travellers. The silence stretched. Ticks of the bracket clock, creak of a board upstairs, whinny of a horse out in the back.

“I have a little pain now and again...”

“I know you do. I can see it.”

Silence again while he appraised me. I could see his mind working in his face; I could watch thoughts passing and a decision arriving with the slight nod of confirmation, long before he opened his mouth.

“Remember when we rode to Wolfenbüttel for my audition?” I nodded. God, that was years ago. He was fourteen then, and now he was... what... twenty-three. “Every day on that journey you would tell me the most amazing stories. Remember?”

“Oh, rubbish all of it. Lies. Keeping you amused over long stretches of track, that’s all.”

“Oh, right! Just like those yarns you tell around the tables in here of an evening. Rubbish as well, eh?”

“Well, what of it?” I answered defensively. I had a hint of what he was driving at, but I wasn’t sure I liked where he was going. “No harm in sharing a few memories with fellow travellers.”

“Memories? Not lies then?”

“Memories, damn you!”

He sighed. “Listen: you have a wonderful story locked up in you, papa.”

“Oh, come on! I’m nothing special.”

“What? Fighting in the war, sailing in ships, marching over ice, carrying secrets?”

Now he had me worried. I suppose over the years since I had retired from the Duke’s service I must have spilt a lot of yarns, kind of loose-lipped, but there are other things that should never be told. Or so I thought then.

“Am I really any more interesting than any other soldier who’s served his time? Survived as long as I have? Nothing makes me special.”

“Horseshit! A man who has spoken with princes, bandied words with kings. And if even half of it’s true, you owe it to us to tell it.”

“But I do tell it, in my own way.”

“*Write it down!* Write it down so we can all read it.”

“*Write?* No, no. I’m not a bookish sort of man.”

“Rubbish! The house is full of books...”

“...mostly your mother’s...”

“...and you read and write all the time. You know it.”

“Even so, I don’t have the time for such nonsense.” He was edging me into a corner, getting me on the defensive. No swordsman likes that. “Anyway, it’s far too busy around here.”

“I’ve already raised the idea with mama and the kids. They’re all for it.”

“Oh, have you now? You cheeky bastard!” I got all prepared to dig my toes in, blast his impudence. Ganging up on me, were they? I folded my arms over my chest. “So, now I won’t.”

“Oh? It is all lies and rubbish then? Just as you said. Everyone will know it’s all invention. I wouldn’t be surprised if they stopped listening to you...”

What a corner to be squeezed into, the clever little bugger. I sat there for a while realizing this weasel had me beaten. I was a bit angry at first—I hate to be beaten—but then I thought, why not? “Tell the truth and shame the devil”, as the saying goes.

“I’ll think about it,” was all I said to him. Damned if I’d surrender that quickly.

“Think quickly, Papa. You’re not as healthy as you...” I started to rise out of my chair. “No, stop! No protests. Don’t fool yourself, because you can’t fool me. Sit down, *please*. Write it now, or it won’t get written.”

“I’ve *told you* I’ll think about it. Now piss off!”

“I have to return to Wolfenbüttel in three days. Why don’t I see what you’ve done before I leave?”

“I said *pisss off!*”

He was right, of course. So, here we go. I may be an innkeeper now, but I will always be a trumpeter. My name is Jacob Hintze. Sure, you see an innkeeper, but what about these fine cavalry whiskers and the goatee? A little grey now, I'll admit, but my blue eyes are as sharp as ever. And I've still got a cavalry swagger about me, damn you. A trumpeter is not just a common soldier, and this host of yours is not a common innkeeper, as I will soon tell you. Sure, I was brought up on a farm and learned a lot about the ways of crops and cattle, but I was from a patrician family with our own coat of arms. You had to be well-born or you'd never get an education and work all your life in a duke's service, as I did. So, don't judge me by what you see now. It's not what I like to do, truth to tell, but I'm too damned old and beaten up to do much else and, frankly, I'm not long for this world. Michael was right, blast him; when you're under a sentence of death, as I am, it makes you want to tell your story, and I just hope I can get it done before it's too late.