



# SANS SOUCI

*Aubrey E. Dyett*

## **SANS SOUCI**

Abused and beaten by his father, Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia resolves to escape by fleeing to England with the help of his friend and lover, Hans Hermann von Katte. The plan is underfoot when one of the party betrays the Crown Prince, and he and von Katte are imprisoned to await court martial for treason. The outlook is grim; the King is demanding the severest punishments, possibly even the executions of his son and his son's hated lover. But the Crown Prince's friends are determined that Fritz will not live his life out as a lonely, embittered man, forced to watch his friend die.

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# Love is an Open Road

*An M/M Romance series*

## SANS SOUCI

**By Aubrey E. Dyett**

### Introduction

The story you are about to read celebrates love, sex and romance between men. It is a product of the *Love is an Open Road* promotion sponsored by the *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* and is published as a gift to you.

### What Is Love is an Open Road?

The *Goodreads M/M Romance Group* invited members to choose a photo and pen a letter asking for a short M/M romance story inspired by the image; authors from the group were encouraged to select a letter and write an original tale. The result was an outpouring of creativity that shone a spotlight on the special bond between M/M romance writers and the people who love what these authors do.

A written description of the image that inspired this story is provided along with the original request letter. If you'd like to view the photo, please feel free to join the [Goodreads M/M Romance Group](#) and visit the discussion section: *Love is an Open Road*.

No matter if you are a long-time devotee to M/M Romance, just new to the genre or fall somewhere in between, you are in for a delicious treat.

### Words of Caution

This story may contain sexually explicit content and is **intended for adult readers**. It may contain content that is disagreeable or distressing to some readers. The *M/M Romance Group* strongly recommends that each reader review the General Information section before each story for story tags as well as for content warnings.

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each and every author also gives freely of their time and talent, it was decided that all edits suggested may be accepted or rejected by the author at any given time. For this reason, some stories will appear to be more tightly edited than others, depending on the choice of the author.

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# SANS SOUCI

By Aubrey E. Dyett

## Photo Description

It is the middle of the 18th Century. The King of Prussia, slender and elegant in clothes of the finest cut, heavy lace at throat and cuffs, his dark jacket open to reveal a cream waistcoat and wearing fine breeches and knee-high boots, stands alone in the centre of a magnificent music room watched by his courtiers, ladies of the court and a group of musicians. He is playing the traverse flute, his eyes fixed intently on the music sheets in front of him as he plays, accompanied only by a harpsichord. In the wings Johann Quantz watches.

## Story Letter

*Dear Author,*

*I am Frederick the Great. As you can see, I stand there all alone. When I was young, my father killed my lover Hans Herrmann von Katte and made me watch. This changed my life forever. But what if Hans and I had managed to escape together, or at least, managed to be together? Would we have loved each other until the end of our lives? Would our bond have survived even marriage to others and hiding ourselves from the court? Please, show me a reality where we would have been happy, loving and together.*

Please, no alternate ok-homo universe, I'd prefer this to take place in our universe. Please try to be as close and true to actual history as possible and give those two a happy ending which works within history!

Note: I very much wanted to see this story from Terra's prompt written last year, and hope it will find an author willing to bend the history of a king just this tiny bit. All kudos for this prompt go to Terra's original brilliant idea!

*Sincerely,*

*Joan*

## Story Info

**Genre:** historical

**Tags:** royalty, non-explicit, abuse, arranged marriage, angst, long lost love, tearjerker, grief, coming of age, family drama

**Content Warnings:** death

**Word Count:** 15,365

*Acknowledgements*

Thank you, Joan and Terra, this was a wonderful prompt. Thank you, Raevyn and Sue, for your patience. Thank you, Jennifer Mattison, for your wonderful editing. Thank you, Frederick, for being one of the most fascinating princes and kings of them all!

*Dedication*

I dedicate this story to Hans Hermann and You Know Who.

**SANS SOUCI**  
**By Aubrey E. Dyett**

*Nothing has been changed...*

## Chapter 1: August 18, 1991, 00:51 am

*As for the rest and what concerns my person, I want to be buried in the park of my château at Sanssouci without pomp and without the slightest ceremony, accompanied by my dog and by two valets bearing torches. ~ Frederick II*

“Have they left?” Christoph Keith barely turned his head.

There was but one person who knew where he could be found keeping vigil near the open crypt. The undertaker would close it over the next few days with the help of the builders and officials of the Potsdam-Sanssouci Foundation. He knew that because he was one of the few historians and architects in a key position. For the moment nothing more than a thick tarpaulin and a heavy tent kept the weak drizzle off the entrance to the vault.

“As good as, Master,” Strutzki answered, coming to a halt at his right shoulder. “There’s the Brandenburg police unit at the gates, along the fences and the outer perimeter. It’s half a Hundertschaft. They are under strict order to stay where they are. Then there are several teams of the riding squad patrolling the park on their horses.”

With slitted eyes Christoph scanned the barely visible area far down where the terraces and the gates intersected. He lifted an eyebrow.

“All ours,” Strutzki answered the question he hadn’t voiced aloud. “To the last man. All the horsemen are ours. The guards at the Southern gate and the entire visible perimeter, also ours. Once the caterers have left, and they should do so any moment now, we’ve got at least two hours.”

Christoph nodded. He wasn’t impatient. It had taken years to get there. In fact, it had taken 205 years. No, he wasn’t impatient at all.

“Thank you. That should suffice.”

Without a further word Strutzki melted into the shadows behind him.

Christoph looked down at his hands resting on an ancient portefeuille. The leather was scuffed and worn, yet well-oiled and tinted a pleasant leaf green. Gold-embossed letters in a carefully outlined crest spelled Anthony A. Keith-Falconer. This as well might be 205 years old. It was only likely that the Scottish branch of his family had held onto their heirlooms even then, and according to von Katte it always had contained the original letters.

He did not open the briefcase, though his umbrella kept it dry. There was no need to open it. He had read those letters and diaries, those three small booklets no one ever should know about, so often, that he knew them by heart. Every elegant scrawl, every spilt dot of ink, every scratched word: he knew them all. Intimately. A tapestry of subterfuge and hidden passion, of princely revolt and treason, of courage and late-found honour.

His superiors at the foundation would have killed for these documents. They might have considered them forgeries though, or at least officially stated them to be so. Who would believe a boy-child of eighteen could find his courage again, after buckling to his king, anyway? And be capable of an act of such selflessness? Who would believe that over the course of two centuries men of such diverse backgrounds might follow a common goal?

Christoph smiled. Yes, who would believe such a thing?

\*\*\*\*

## **Chapter 2: May 28, 1730 – June 15, 1740**

*Every man has a wild beast within him. ~ Frederick II*

To His Excellency Monsieur The Chevalier Hotham.

Potsdam, 28th of May, 1730.

Monsieur,

Here joined are letters my Mother, Sister and myself have written to her Royal Majesty, the Queen Caroline of Anspach. I trust you will see that she receives them and hope for a timely response.

Frederic

To Her Majesty Caroline of Anspach, the Queen of Great Britain.

Potsdam, 27th of May, 1730.

Dearest Sister and Aunt, Your Majesty!

Even though I already had the honour to write Your Majesty and to describe the unfortunate situation in which myself and my sister find ourselves, I was not entirely deterred by the not so propitious response we received the last time. I cannot believe that a ruler of such virtues and merits, which incite such a general admiration, will forsake a tenderly devoted Sister by refusing the marriage of my Sister with the Prince of Wales, after this marriage has already been decided upon by the Hannoverian Agreement.

I have already promised Your Majesty that I will never marry anyone except the Princess Amalie, Your dearest daughter; I repeat this promise in case that Your Majesty agrees to the marriage of my Sister to the Prince. We have got into the most awful situation and all will be lost, if Your Majesty would continue to delay a fortunate response. In such a case I would feel myself be disengaged of all the prior promises and forced

to agree to the decisions and wishes of the King, my Father, and to marry the party he will decide upon.

However, I am convinced that Your Majesty will consider our deserts and agree to a fortuitous joining of our houses.

I remain Your Majesty's loving nephew,

Frederic

\*\*\*\*\*

[--excerpt of Frederick's personal diary. vK]

Potsdam, June 4, 1730

I cannot but despair of this dire place I am living in. That which I always feared has just hours ago happened to me. My hands still shake as I remember and I cannot still them however much I might wish to appear untouched.

Today, the King has completely forgotten that I am his son, and treated me like the basest of all human beings. Worse than he would treat a horse or hunting dog. I entered his room this morning as usual. He had barely seen me that he grabbed me by my collar and thrashed me in the most gruesome manner with his walking stick. I tried in vain to ward him off; he was in such a terrible rage that he didn't restrain himself in the least, and he stayed himself not until his arm had tired.

I have too great an amour propre to continue to suffer such treatment, and I am decided, one way or the other, to make an end of this.

\*\*\*\*\*

To the Crown-Prince Frederick of Prussia from Sir Charles Hotham.

Berlin, 6th of June, 1730.

I give your Highness the strongest assurance of my utmost compassion and distress on learning of your perilous situation. It is our wish to assist Your Highness in any reasonable effort to alleviate such peril, but on learning of your proposed flight to

England, I must advise caution. Caution at all costs, given the current unsettled state of affairs in Europe. Not that England will not welcome you, and with all high regard and respect, but we are of the mind that an adjournment, perhaps for further deliberation and due reflection, might be considered judicious, thereby allowing both parties sufficient time to make all necessary and proprietary arrangements for your arrival.

Furthermore, we are duty bound to inquire of the French Court as to their thoughts before any action is taken that might reflect on ourselves. This will, of necessity, require a delicate touch and must not be hastened if dialogues are to be satisfactory to all parties.

It is of our considered opinion that your Father, His Prussian Majesty, may yet soften in his enmity towards your sister and yourself in some small measure, affording you the rights and privileges deserving of a Crown Prince, thereby circumventing your proposal with the effect that rendering any such action as is hereby planned, would be deemed unnecessary.

Our advice is ever thus: Patience above all else. Patience and forbearance. Be strong and withstand for now until a more propitious time.

I remain, with the utmost respect, Your Royal Highness' most obedient servant,

Charles Hotham

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To Premierleutnant Monsieur von Katte.

Potsdam, 2nd July, 1730.

My Beloved Friend,

Never did I feel, dear Katte, such a solitude as I am experiencing now that you are far from me. The memory of our last encounter keeps me company still when the sun sets and the night is so empty and quiet. Then I think of you and your gentle touch. I think of your warm skin against mine, your hands running along my arms, holding me close to you. Will

you forgive me, my love, that I chase thoughts of my Father's anger with memories of your hand around my masculinity? Will you forgive me when I embrace that pillow your head has lain on and press my face into it, trying to catch the fragment of a scent reminding me of you?

I, trained in such eloquence as befits a future king, am speechless when I try to express my feelings, whether they are physical or mental, of the times you are with me. All I can think of is how complete I feel, how much of a person with sentiments other than hatred, suspicion and sorrows.

Until now I did not know what it means to be truly alone, now that you are far from me. It was the happiness of our friendship which taught me this. Therefore I hope you will understand how much I wish for our imminent reunion.

Consider yourself showered with my kisses, I rest your eternal devoted friend,

Frederic

\*\*\*\*

To His Excellency Monsieur The Chevalier Hotham.

Potsdam, 11th July, 1730.

Monsieur,

Having learned by M. de Leuvenner, the Danish Minister, a judicious well-affected man, what the King my Father's ultimate intentions are, I cannot doubt but you will yield to his desires. Think, Monsieur, that my happiness and my Sister's depend on the resolution you shall take, and that your answer will mean the union or disunion forever of the two Houses! I flatter myself that it will be favourable, and that you will yield to my entreaties.

I never shall forget such a service, but recognise it all my life by the most perfect esteem, with which I now am, tout a vous,

Frederic

\*\*\*\*

[--*excerpt of Wilhelmine's personal diary. vK*]

Berlin, 11th of July, 1730.

The most horrible evolvement! These past days my Brother even again accepted the usual kindly punches and whippings. We tried to hide our sorrows from the Queen, but my Brother grew ever more impatient and told me daily that he was firmly decided to flee, and that he only waited for the proper occasion. He was so bitter, that he did not anymore heed my warnings and even became angry with me.

When one day I tried everything to calm him, he said to me:

'You want to preach patience, but you never want to be in my stead. I am the most unfortunate of all people and from early morning surrounded by his spies, who interpret my words and deeds in the most horrific manner. The most innocent pastimes are forbidden to me: I don't dare read, the music is forbidden, and I can enjoy these things but furtively and with great fear.

However, what finally drove me to deepest desperation is an event which occurred recently in Potsdam, something I did not want to share with the Queen, to not upset her. When, one morning, I entered the room of the King, he took me by my hair and threw me down to the floor, and after he used the strength of his arms on my body, he dragged me to the nearest window despite my desperate resistance. There he wanted to try himself as the Mute of the Seraglio, because he grabbed the rope which secures the drapes and wound it around my neck. I was lucky in that I had time enough to get up and hold both his hands, and I started screaming. One of the lackeys raced to help me and ripped me out of his hands.

Daily I am in this danger, and my suffering is so desperate that there is only violence left to end them. Katte is devoted to me, I am certain of him, and he will follow me to the end of the world should I want that. Keith as well would join me. These two people will make my escape possible and help me flee. I will not tell the Queen anything, she would talk to the Ramen, which would destroy everything. I will inform you, Sister, in secrecy and see to it that you receive all my letters.'

My sorrow is abject, as I am contemplating this sorry tale. The situation of my Brother is so horrible that I cannot even chastise him for his plans, but I foresee only dire consequences. At least he agreed to wait until the responses from England have arrived.

\*\*\*\*

[--excerpt of *Lieutenant-Colonel Rochow's personal diary*. vK]

Potsdam, 14th of July, 1730

I have seen to all the train's equipment, and sorted out a few of the horses that do not look healthy enough for the pace the King will be forcing on us. Same for two of the dragoons who are suffering from an unknown ailment and fever I do not want to see spread among other troops.

I received personal orders by Grumkow and the King to be especially mindful of the Crown Prince. There seem to be indications of a possible attempt to liaise with England, but I doubt anything shall happen while we head for Anspach. Once we reach the Rhine, however, I shall be of utmost vigilance. The scandal would unsettle more than just the immediate family.

We will set out very early in the morning, so I have only ordered a small bottle of wine and some cold meat and asked the cook to send it up with the young chambermaid.

\*\*\*\*

To the Crown-Prince Frederick of Prussia from Sir Charles Hotham.

Berlin, 16th of July, 1730.

Your Royal Highness,

Monsieur von Katte has just delivered Your Royal Highness' letter. The trust which Your Royal Highness professes in me fills me with the utmost gratitude. If it were just my own person I would dare the impossible to prove my deepest respect and willingness; however the ignominy done

me touches my own sovereign, and therefore I cannot fulfil Your Royal Highness' wishes. I will try to give this affair the best possible semblance, and even though it disrupts our current negotiations, I hope that they will not be entirely finished.

I remain, with the utmost respect, Your Royal Highness' most obedient servant

Charles Hotham

\*\*\*\*

[--excerpt of *Wilhelmine's personal diary*. vK]

Berlin, 20th of July, 1730.

Great surprise and delight then, to receive from my Brother an unexpected letter, delivered into my hands. A long wait until alone before daring open the envelope, and even then was ready to conceal it should I be disturbed.

Good news at last, the best of tidings though they still fill me with dismay and sorrow that it should have come to this. His plans are underway, despite the difficulties of the past months. He talks of a red coat, a travelling roquelaure, and a grey one as well by which they may be meaning to use as a distraction while my Brother makes his escape, unhindered.

And of Katte, who has in his possession over 1000 ducats and numerous small jewels and has been selling my Brother's valuables. I hope he did not attract too much notice among the noblemen here in Berlin on doing so.

The plans have been made, the horses waiting under pretext of riding out in the grey of a summer's dawn. His preparations are complete and all that is needed now is for the day to come. He has suffered enough, all patience at an end now, and my thoughts go with him, across the Rhine to Speyer and to France to meet with von Keith. Thence after some pause and joining von Katte, to England and safety. I have his promise that he will work out my deliverance from here as soon as he is able.

\*\*\*\*

To His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince Frederick of Prussia.  
Berlin, 21st of July, 1730.

My Dear Beloved Brother,

I received your letter with eager anticipation, delighted to read the news, but I now respond in a more cautious mood. I would not live up to my being your loving, concerned sister without a warning: Be vigilant in everything you do, be careful in whom you trust and those who you involve in your project. Rumours abound here, and nowhere is safe from someone discovering your real intentions.

As for the King, our Father, I fear he is suspicious, but I have no one to confide in about my worries and I am left alone for the most part, missing you and yet knowing that, should all go to plan, you are soon to be safe, far away from the brutal hands of your persecutor.

If only you were here to talk to me about your work and your bravery and assure me that all will be well in the end, whatever perils you have to endure. But that would be selfish of me and I am glad, indeed more than glad, that you will be in England soon, accompanied by your friends and that you will not have to suffer ever again.

Your loving sister,

Wilhelmine

\*\*\*\*\*

[--excerpt of Frederick's personal diary, written on the eve of his flight. vK]

Steinfurth, August 3, 1730

I had forced myself to be still, legs indolently stretched across the narrow expanse of the coach and slouched into my corner in a posture which would have had my father foaming at the mouth within seconds.

The past two weeks had shown me that both von Rochow and Colonel Waldau, whenever I had the pleasure of riding with them instead of the king, expected the crown prince to be the

spoiled and sullen child my father painted me. As long as I gave them that, they left me to my own devices. Not that they were any less suspicious, but at least they showed no undue interest in my correspondence and the books I was reading. Unlike my father they also allowed me at least some privacy.

That had been sparse during this journey. The king had forced me to travel in the royal coach for most of the journey to Anspach, and he'd insisted we stay at the smaller inns and lodgings rather than accept invitations from the nobles we visited on our way into the Reich; all of which meant that he could keep me close and under constant surveillance. I even hadn't been able to relieve myself unobserved.

To my relief that had changed during our last leg to Anspach. In Erlangen I had been able to steal a few private moments with Hans' servant, my Beloved's letter now safely hidden inside my coat's lining. I had even been able to pen a few hasty lines for the man to take back to Berlin. If all went well we would soon be reunited in The Hague.

Around noon our coach had clattered through cobbled streets and came to a halt under several huge oaks. Our coachman called out, and I could hear that our horses were being unhitched. With a nod at Waldau and von Rochow I left them, and cut across the plaza, stretching my legs. What a welcome change!

It was hot and humid, and that would get worse once we descended into the Rhine valley. It didn't help that I wore the doubled coat, with its French red on the inside hidden by a thin layer of black silk. I was dripping with sweat as if wearing winter furs. I sought relief at the horses' trough, standing aside while the coachmen led the unhitched beasts to drink. Von Rochow was already commandeering a switch of horses for the coach and the point riders, ours to be picked up again by the rest of the train following a day behind us. I had to give it to him, he knew how to keep the train tight and efficient.

That my beloved Hans hadn't been able to join us at Canstatt, held up in Berlin as he was, had been a severe set-back. Instead,

I had had to gain Page Keith's good will during the short halts we made, and such a timid conspirator he is! Nothing like his brother, who is like a grown man already, despite serving my Father. A fast growing up that should have meant, but from where I sat, resting, I could see him cast nervous glances at von Rochow and the King. I so longed to ride into The Hague, secure in the knowledge that Peter already was waiting for me with Hans at my side. As it was, Robert would have to do.

And so on we had travelled, only to find Sinzheim without accommodation for us. Again my plans were thwarted, and we ended up here in those two secluded barns in Steinfurth. Father in one, I in the other, and Robert was sleeping across the barn, while Buddenbrock, Waldau and von Rochow guarded the space between my bed and the entrance like watch dogs. I have to wait for their snores, the silk I have torn out of the roquelaure; it was ready to disguise me. As soon as everyone sleeps I will get Robert and we will take the two best horses. At least Landau is not so far off.

\*\*\*\*

Darmstadt, 6th August, 1730.

Preliminary Report:

In the early morning of the 4th of August, resting in the barn assigned to us, I was woken by Gummersbach the valet.

"Monsieur Oberst-Lieutenant, please awaken! Prince Royal is up, has on his top-coat, and is gone out of doors!" he said, and I was up and outside immediately, due the warnings Your Majesty gave me. I just had to don my boots and was ready; in a minute or two. The morning was grey and foggy and I found the Crown Prince actually on the green there. He was wearing a red roquelaure, and leaning against one of the travelling carriages.

"Good morning, Your Royal Highness!" I said. At that moment Page Robert von Keith came with a pair of horses, and I asked: "Where to with those horses?"

Keith, seeing how it was, answered with visible embarrassment, "Monsieur, they are mine and Kunz the Page's horses."

"His Majesty does not go till five this morning; back to the stables!" I ordered; and affected not to suspect anything.

Page Keith returned, trembling in his saddle. Friedrich strolled towards the other barn, clearly wanting to be out of my company. Seckendorf emerged from the other barn; awake at the common hour.

"How do you like his Royal Highness in the red roquelaure?" I asked him, but he did not react to this.

By last night's arrangement, the Prince was to set out an hour before his Father, which circumstance had helped Page Keith in his excuses. Naturally the Prince had now no wish to linger on the green of Steinfurth, in such a posture of affairs.

Major Friedrich Wilhelm von Rochow

\*\*\*\*\*

To the Honourable Peter von Keith, Wesel by Express

Bonn, 10th of August, 1730.

Sauvez-vous! Tout est decouvert!\*

The King, my Father, has been informed of my plans by your brother, Page Robert von Keith, in Mannheim already. Gummersbach recounted that he fell to his knees in front of the King, and, with tears and obtestations, made a clean breast. Page Keith has confessed that I and he were to have been in Speyer, or farther, at this time of the day; flying rapidly into France. I was escorted onto the royal yacht, not even allowed into Frankfurt. I now fear for your and von Katte's life. This may be the only warning I can get out, please, my dear friend, heed it!

Frederic

\* *Save yourself! All is found out! ~vK*

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To the Colonel Pannewitz, Colonel of the Gens d'Armes  
16th of August, 1730.

I order you to put Premier Lieutenant Hans Hermann von Katte under close confinement. This order is of immediate effect and failure to successfully comply will have the direst consequence you may imagine.

Friedrich Wilhelm

\*\*\*\*\*

To Her Majesty Caroline of Anspach, the Queen of Great Britain from Captain Guy Dickens

Berlin, 22th of September, 1730.

Your Royal Highness,

Please allow me to inform you about developments at the court of Prussia as I have witnessed it.

The Crown Prince, his Royal Highness Frederick of Prussia, has been taken on the 6th of September and sent to Cüstrin, a quiet town some sixty or seventy miles eastward of Berlin, where he now is incarcerated in the Fortress in a bare prison cell. His sword and uniform and every sign of his state had already been taken from him at Wesel. His diet is fixed at tenpence a day. Food is cut for him. He is not allowed a knife.

Wilhelmine has now become a close prisoner in her apartment in the Berlin palace. Sentries have been placed at every door.

The von Bülow's, brother and sister, he in the King's service, she in Wilhelmine's have been hurled out to Lithuania. Minister von Knyphausen has been ordered to leave the court, never to appear again. The Lieutenant von Spaen, who kept false watch, and did not tell of von Katte, gets cashiering and a year in Spandau. Doris Ritter, the daughter of Potsdam's cantor who played music with the Crown Prince on occasion, is to be whipped by the Beadle and to beat hemp for three years.

Poor Katte had a hard audience of it too. He fell at Friedrich Wilhelm's feet; and was spurned and caned; for the rest,

beyond what was already evident, had little or nothing to confess: Intention of flight and of accompanying in flight very undeniable; although preliminaries and ulterior conditions of said flight not perfectly known to Katte; known only that the thought of raising trouble in foreign Courts, or the least vestige of treason against his Majesty, had not entered even into their dreams. A name or two of persons who had known, or guessed, of these operations, were wrung from Katte and Katte, stripped of his uniform, was locked up in the grimmest manner. Berlin, with the rumour of these things, is a much-agitated city.

I remain, with the utmost respect, Your Royal Highness' most obedient servant,

Captain Guy Dickens

\*\*\*\*\*

Wesel, 29th of September, 1730

To the honourable Princess Friederike Sophie Wilhelmine

Most honourable Princess,

I do acknowledge myself to be more than bold in daring to write to you, such is the sorrow I have caused you and your brother. There is no way I can ask or indeed expect your forgiveness, but I hope the confession of my fault may obtain some small clemency at your hands despite the hatred and disgust that must surely fill your heart at the thought of reading words written by the one who betrayed your family and friends.

There is nothing to excuse my deeds, apart from the dread fear of a foolish youth who sought only to please his King; not for any thought of profit or gain, but in a heartfelt desire to see our Prince welcomed once more into the bosom of his father. But all in vain. My rash and fanciful hopes for my King to see the result of his cruel treatment of the Crown-Prince came to naught and instead I am rewarded most graciously while the Prince is locked away as a common criminal. But that would be bearable if it were not that von Katte is deemed a traitor and might suffer the final penalty.

Everything has fallen apart and I am left shamed and disgraced. Not by the King or indeed by the Court. No, that would be an easier burden to bear. The shame is all mine, von Katte's probable death on my head and mine alone, and my Prince, your brother's punishment also.

Hear me out I beg you. There is no future for me now. No amount of reward and high praise, no Courtly approval will ever ease the pain in my heart at the result of my perfidy. Von Katte's face haunts my dreams and I can see only one course of action ahead that will save us all.

You must write to Quantz within the day.

He has the ear of those who will be needed. He must find some way for me to take von Katte's place should the Court Martial come to the decision that all who have seen the King's rage and demands for justice are anticipating.

I remain Your Highness's

Most humble and abject servant,

Robert von Keith

\*\*\*\*

To the Honourable Monsieur Quantz.

Berlin, 29th of September, 1730.

My dear Quantz,

I have this day received a letter from Robert von Keith, pleading for my forgiveness. I would not find it in my heart to grant him clemency but for that he has offered a trade, himself for von Katte on the scaffold, should my Father the King have his proclaimed will. Von Keith has no idea how this could be achieved, however. He proposes that his brother, Peter von Keith, in hiding in England for the moment, should be persuaded to return to the Wesel with the intent of taking Robert's place as sentry in the Fusilier Regiment. He seems to think this would not be a difficulty as they are considered much alike in looks.

I am writing to you for guidance on this matter, knowing full well that you hold the Crown-Prince, my dearest Brother and your favourite pupil as well as close friend, in great esteem and trusting that you will keep this in confidence, as you have kept my Brother in your heart for so long. I also am, I beg your pardon, aware of certain secret means and available resources that you and everyone surrounding my Brother have.

I leave matters in your hands, trusting that you will make every effort to find a way to save my Brother's beloved companion, and knowing that, should you be successful, you will be rewarded with the Crown-Prince's eternal gratitude.

-- Wilhelmine

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To the Honourable Peter von Keith from Johann Joachim Quantz.

Dresden, 2nd of October, 1730.

Mindful of the great debt you owe to your Crown-Prince and of your affection to that same august person, you are requested to return to Wesel with all haste and to remain there, in hiding until our plans are complete. You will be furnished with a modicum of cash and small lodgings which you are not to leave, and your brother, now garrisoned with the Fusilier regiment there, will attend you on your arrival and endeavour to answer your questions.

The Crown-Prince knows nothing of this, imprisoned as he is under the strictest guards, forbidden all but the most simple of comforts and, as with his true companion, the one who chose to remain in Germany when he could have fled like a coward, likely to be condemned to a traitor's death.

Plans are in progress. If you bear any love for your friends and your Prince, you will endeavour to return as swiftly as possible.

I remain, with the utmost respect, Your most obedient servant,  
Johann Quantz

\*\*\*\*

Brigantine Raffalla, The Hague, 12th of October, 1730

Captain's Log

Course: SWbS Winds: SbW

Woke to strong winds and rough seas. Heavy rain.

5 pm. Lights of an unknown ship in the North and one to the South. Made haste to hide lights.

7 pm. Harbour in sight. Weighed anchor, no shore leave. Crew bedded down.

11 pm. Gig taken to shore crewed by senior officers with passenger Peter von Keith on board. Gig returned unseen and crew roused to prepare to sail on outward tide.

Signed Hendrik Klaasen

\*\*\*\*

To Captain Johan Sheffield of the merchant ship Anna

Edinburgh, 12th of October, 1730

Wherefore we will and command you to set forth at the next tide and make sail for Danzig, there to await the arrival of one calling himself Peter von Keith. We do not foresee such an arrival before early November. Regardless, you will wait until he arrives.

Upon this being accomplished, leave with all seemly dispatch for Edinburgh, accommodating the aforementioned person in your own cabin and making his presence unknown to any foreigners or indeed any persons who make enquiries.

On your return, send your boy for my carriage, confining all crew below decks until your passenger has been removed to safety.

Falconer

\*\*\*\*

To the Honourable Johann Joachim Quantz.

Wesel, 16th of October, 1730

Honoured Sir,

As requested, I write to you from the solitude of my lodgings which are small and away from any persons heretofore conversant with your obedient servant. I arrived late last night, in the darkness and was seen by no one other than the innkeeper who did not see my face, cloaked as I was against the rain and cold.

I have told the man I must keep to my room for the present time, as the cold air and fogs are injurious to my well-being. As such, I have no need to join the other guests and my absence is therefore not a matter of any interest. I trust this subterfuge meets with your approval.

As requested by your honourable self, I write also to tell you that I have, this very morning, received a missive from my brother who informs me he will visit late in the evening of the morrow with important news.

I remain

Your humble servant,

Peter Karl Christoph von Keith

\*\*\*\*

[--excerpt of Peter von Keith's personal diary. vK]

Wesel, 27th of October, 1730.

I had not thought to ever see him again, my handsome younger brother, but there was a tap at the door to my room, and when I opened it, in some hesitation, he was standing in the dark passageway outside my sparse lodging. His dark green jacket and white breeches concealed beneath a long cloak so that no one would have recognised him for a soldier. A Fusilier Private now, instead of a page to the King, but his reward sat heavily on his shoulders, a look of shame in his eyes as he faced me.

We embraced, joyous in our meeting, even in such a miserable place. I had thought never to see him again and we spent long talking in hushed voices, lest any other person might overhear us and wonder who the invalid in the end room was conversing with. He spoke of home and of the King and of his own perfidious act of betrayal but I could not find it in my heart to condemn him. He acted as we all did, thinking of ourselves only, Frederick to escape to England and safety, von Katte to spend his life with his beloved and to help him, myself to go along with both of them, easy in such company and heedless of any hurt to those we left behind.

Then he told me of his plan. I tried to discover how sincere he was, tried to dissuade him, but he was not to be swayed from his course of action, telling me that, should I choose not to involve myself, it would make no difference. All that was needed now was for him to leave the garrison and head for Cüstrin, there to await von Katte's arrival.

He was calm and at peace, firmly set on his course, his conscience soon to be free and his sins atoned for. I kissed him before he left, and wiped my tears from his cheek, and he was brave and smiled and asked for my forgiveness and blessing.

I will not see him again. My beloved brother has left his uniform and dressed in my own salt-stained clothes in preparation for the journey. Tomorrow I needs must take his place in the garrison. He has told me his duties and I will have no difficulty finding my place there. The regiment is different from my old and once I have cut my hair and shaved no one will recognise me.

He has few, if any, acquaintances, and we were always thought of as twins among those who were less conversant with us. A better life for me, but at what cost. Our parents can never know, and there is little prospect of finding my way back into the hearts of those I loved.

To His Majesty the King of Prussia.

Wesel, 1st of November, 1730

Sire,

It is with humble gratitude and deepest honour that I accept the mark of distinction which you have bestowed upon me. Your Majesty may rest assured that I shall do my utmost to prove myself worthy of the post of Private Fusilier.

I have the honour to be, as ever, your Majesty's most humble servant,

Robert von Keith

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To the General Major, the Honourable Hans Heinrich von Katte.

Cüstrin, 2nd of November, 1730

Honoured Sir, My Dearest Father,

Into tears, my father, that's how I want to melt away, when thinking that this letter will cause the greatest grief to a faithful father's heart.

That all the hopes for my future welfare and its comfort in old age has to disappear at once; that all applied effort and diligence for my upbringing to the maturity of the desired happiness even have been in vain; yes – that I will have to bow in the prime of my years without presenting to you in this world the fruits of my efforts and my achieved sciences. How didn't I think to ascend the world and make your conceived hope one satisfied; how didn't I think that I will not lack of happiness and well-being; how wasn't I occupied from the certainty of my reputation.

But all in vain! How futile man's thoughts are: At once everything is falling apart; and how sadly is the scenery of my life coming to an end; and how is my current state distinguished from that with which my thoughts have gone; I must – instead of promenading the way of honour and reputation – walk the path of disgrace and a shameful death.

Be strong and compose yourself again my father, and believe me, God is with me in this game, without whose will nothing happens, not even a sparrow on the earth may fall!

Meanwhile, I thank you with filial respect for all the father loyalty shown to me, from my childhood to the present hour. And now nothing is left for me but to close with this consolation: Even though, my father, you haven't experienced anything high and distinguished from me in this world, oh! so please be assured that you will find even higher in heaven.

Your faithful until death son.

Hans Hermann

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Private letter from Chaplain Müller of the Gens-d'Armes and Chaplain Besserer, Chaplain of the Garrison to Johann Joachim Quantz.

Cüstrin, 7th November, 1730

Dear lodge brother, the honourable Monsieur Quantz,

A dark day, and no pleasure in the doing, though some small satisfaction that justice was seen at the end. The man went to his death with more courage than previously shown in his treachery of the Prince, or expected by those few of us who knew him, regaining some small semblance of his own honour and reputation in the eyes of God if not in the eyes of those he betrayed. We are cautious still about the success of our venture: there may be others who saw the execution and might question the hasty covering of the body and its swift shrouded removal afterwards. We have little to fear from the Major and the two brother officers who accompanied our brave soldier: their silence is assured, but we will be glad when he, who should by rights and the will of the King be lying in his grave now, is safe in England.

Of Frederick, we have heard nothing. He would not have seen the exchange, no one outside the five of us would, and our tragic Prince now labours under the dread and awful knowledge that his desire to leave the tyranny of his father's rule has

caused the death of his closest friend and confidant. How good it would be to relieve him of that grief and tell him of the truth. To tell him of his friend's pious and heartfelt confession, his admittance of guilt and his acceptance that only a great miracle by God's hand could save him. And by some quiet means to tell the Prince of that miracle. Not by the hand of God, but a miracle nevertheless. But it is not to be. It cannot be, at least not until our plans are complete and maybe not even then.

There is still much to do. Peter now has to take our brave soldier's place, and all the while Robert lies unknown in the grave prepared for the one he betrayed. The grave must be watched also, lest those who may have suspicions as to the outcome of the execution, seek confirmation to the contrary. And we are also charged with making our guest secure in his new life as Peter Christoph Keith and all the duties pertaining thereof, and meet transport arranged for him. Our man at the coast already reported the merchant ship to be waiting there.

We both close with this thought: he who betrayed the Prince, although shameful in his actions then, proved himself worthy at the end. We spoke to him briefly before the exchange took place and he asked for clemency, humble and honest in his sincere regret for his act and his willingness to forfeit his life in reparation. We gave him absolution and our personal forgiveness and the words seemed to comfort him. God alone knows how much he had suffered already, in the knowledge of what he had done.

But it is over now and he is at rest and at peace and God will surely see fit to welcome him, a repentant sinner who sacrificed himself for another.

We will carry all proof and bywords to the lodge master, there to be shut away forever.

We remain Your Most humble servants,

Chpl. Müller

Chpl. Besserer

To His Royal Majesty, the King, Friedrich Wilhelm  
Cüstrin, 19th November, 1730.

Most serene and all-gracious Father,

—To your Royal Majesty, my all-gracious Father, I have, by my disobedience as Your subject and soldier, not less than by my undutifulness as Your Son, given occasion to a just wrath and aversion against me. With the most and all-encompassing obedient respect I submit myself wholly to the grace of my most all-gracious Father; and beg him, the most Gracious to pardon me; as it is not so much the withdrawal of my liberty in a sad arrest, as my own thoughts of the fault I have committed, that have brought me to reason: Who, with all most obedient respect and submission, continue till my end,

My all-gracious King's and Father's faithfully obedient Servant  
and Son,

Friedrich

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To the Honourable Monsieur Johann Quantz.

Edinburgh, 21st of November, 1730

Honoured Sir,

I write you from Edinburgh. My journey here was swift, for which I have profusely thanked his lordship, Lord Falconer, and my reception more welcoming than I had anticipated given my somewhat uncouth appearance, unshaven and dishevelled from the prison cell where I was kept without comforts.

My endless thanks and deepest gratitude to you. Without you, I would now be in a grave in Wust. None of this would have come to pass and there would be no future for me. Instead I am looking forward to living a life, albeit a different one than what I have foreseen, yet an honourable and hopefully dutiful one. Lord Falconer has connected me, as von Keith, with Admiral Norris and I may soon ship out to Portugal to commit myself to the Portuguese army.

I am aware of that I may not contact my family, above all my poor, dear father, to let them know about my rescue. The pretence of my death needs to be kept up for everyone to safeguard all parties involved. However, there is one person who will not endanger anyone amongst us, and who I feel has to know, and not just because he is closest to my estimation.

The Crown Prince needs to know I am alive. And when can that be achieved? Already I weep for him, the darkness of his cell, his belief that I am dead and his cruel treatment at the hands of his father. I yearn to tell him the truth. I beg you, do not make this purgatory last a lifetime. If I can not return to my love then at least let us both know we still walk on this earth and breathe the same air. Write to me soonest, I beg you.

You asked how I find myself after my recent trials. Let me tell you, that I am warm, well-fed, and entertained, given the freedom to venture into the city at will and provided with more than sufficient for my needs for which I am very grateful. Lord Falconer is a gracious host, and keen on making our subterfuge work and the best possible outcome for everyone involved. I take it you and him have also been in correspondence. He speaks very highly of you. He has initiated me into the Edinburgh lodge.

I have taken to exploring the docks in my spare time, watching the activities in the Custom House and even learning about glass making which I find a charming process. Mr. James Balfour has taken me under his wing showing me how ash and seaweed and sand can be turned into glass bottles that are then sold for 20 pence a dozen.

I have purchased a horse, a decent enough animal, needing some discipline but broad hipped and strong enough to see me through a long day's ride.

From one styling himself Peter von Keith from now on.

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To the Honourable Monsieur Peter von Keith, Portugal.

Berlin, 9th of December, 1730.

My dear Monsieur von K.,

Steady yourself for a long trial ahead. It is not of my opinion, not indeed that of Quantz himself, that a speedy reconciliation be undertaken. You are still a matter of much debate and interest in Court, and it is our understanding that any attempt to effect a meeting or even written communication would be fraught with danger. My brother is still under guard and arrest, not as rigorously as before thankfully, but close-watched for any signs of misdemeanour like a small child supervised at a distance by his nurse, ready to step forward should anything go amiss.

I can recount that he fell into a dead faint when believing to witness your beheading and has been listless for a long period of time. He has not spoken of you since that day. Not for lack of interest or any loss of affection, have no fear, but from a deep sorrow that makes it impossible to utter your name. And he refuses to give our father, the King, the satisfaction of knowing how much hurt he has given both of us.

Be strong, dear friend. There are plans for my own marriage to the Margrave of Brandenburg-Bayreuth, meaning that I can easily keep contact only until then. I suppose Monsieur Quantz and possibly also Monsieur von Keyserling, who was responsible for part of your flight, will then keep you apprised. I almost am afraid of mentioning it, but I dare say it will make it across Europe as a gossip anyway. My brother is close to agreeing to marry Elisabeth Christine von Braunschweig-Bevern. He believes he can defer until after my own marriage, but certainly will not hold out much longer. The King is impatient and of a constantly growing less patient temper in this respect. A Crown Prince, he says, has the duty to provide heirs.

Quantz has spoken of finding a suitable time to tell my brother of the plot and I think both he and I, and after some reflection of Frederic's hot temperament, I believe you as well, believe that this moment will not be before his marriage. His

Majesty might not be very forgiving should my brother defect once more. It has to be handled with great care and delicacy and I would caution you not to expect a sudden return. In fact, consider it a premise to have to wait until after Frederic's coronation.

I hope this epistle finds you at least of hale body and sound mind, and I hear there are good horses to be found in Portugal. Until I hear from you again,

-- Wilhelmine

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[--*excerpt of Hans Hermann von Katte's diary, written as Peter von Keith's. vK*]

Berlin, 15th of June, 1740.

My homecoming as the Honourable Peter Karl Christoph von Keith last week has barely caused a ripple in the waters of either the capital or the court.

Von Keyserling delivered my commission as Royal Equerry, which, as he explained, would allow me to be close to His Majesty without inciting any suspicions. George\* arranged my betrothal to Adriane von Knyphausen, another screen of smoke. I have met her, and she is an intelligent and pleasant young woman of serious composure. I have the suspicion she may have been forewarned of my nature.

I'm told it would be opportune if I feigned a minor disgruntlement with my station, so as to not raise the interest of some of the established courtiers. A clandestine meeting with my father has been arranged for next month according to von Rochow, whose marriage with my sister has been a happy and fortuitous one. If Frederick and my father could forgive him for his role in our lives, so can I. We were so young and foolish, and von Rochow was the man among us boys. He tells me that the King already wrote the order to make my father General Field Marshal and to elevate him to the rank of a Prussian Earl. It means much to me and I hope our meeting will go well.

And as of yet I still have not met my love. Twice I have ridden past the Charlottenburg Palace, just to be close to Frederick, to know we were separated by little more than a few thick walls and within a stone's throw of each other. All the letters in the world cannot replace the sight and touch of my Prince, who now is my King. I want to kneel before him in honour and in love. I need to hold him again, to ask him forgiveness and how he has fared. I need to hear from his own lips of his joy to know we will not be separated now and ever again.

Oh my Prince!

*\*Lord George Keith, the 10th Earl Marischal, contact of Lord Keith-Falconer on the continent ~vK*

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Pleasure\*

This night, vigorous desire in full measure,  
 Hans Hermann wallowed in a sea of pleasure.  
 A body not even a Praxitiles fashions  
 Redoubled his senses and imbued his passions  
 Everything that speaks to eyes and touches hearts,  
 Was found in the fond object that enflamed his parts.  
 Transported by love and trembling with excitement  
 In Cloris' arms he yields himself to contentment  
 The love that unites them heated their embraces  
 And tied bodies and arms as tightly as laces.  
 Divine sensual pleasure! To the world a king!  
 Mother of their delights, an unstaunchable spring,  
 Speak through my verses, lend me your voice and tenses  
 Tell of their fire, acts, the ecstasy of their senses!  
 Our fortunate lovers, transported high above  
 Know only themselves in the fury of love:  
 Kissing, enjoying, feeling, sighing and dying  
 Reviving, kissing, then back to pleasure flying.  
 And in Knidos' grove, breathless and worn out

Was these lovers' happy destiny, without doubt.  
But all joy is finite; in the morning ends the bout.  
Fortunate the man whose mind was never the prey  
To luxury, or grand airs, one who knows how to say  
A moment of climax for a fortunate lover  
Is worth so many aeons of star-spangled honour.

Charlottenburg Palace, 17th of June, 1740

*[\* This poem was found among the papers of Peter von Keith after his death. It is clearly a first version of the poem of the same name and text accrued to Frederick later, and it has been kept by the Swedish branch of the von Keiths until after Frederick's death. Then it was added to the lodge's folder of related information; by von Keyserling, we believe. ~vK]*

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### **Chapter 3: August 18, 1991, 01:32 am**

*A crown is merely a hat that lets the rain in. ~ Frederick II*

“We’re in the clear.”

Daniel von Katte spoke out before he had reached Christoph’s hiding place. That in itself told him they were finally as alone in the park and palace as they ever would be. This was the moment, the single point in time so many people had schemed and planned for, and it was about to become history.

Von Katte slipped into the shadow of the tent and took up residence to his left. A nod, and a handshake, more wasn’t necessary for them. What an irony, Christoph thought, that their common goal had brought him not just a comrade in crime, but also the best friend a man could wish for.

“Are they under way already?” he asked.

“We should see them in a moment.”

And so they did. Far down near the enclosure, still the other side of the gate, two weak flames fluttered into existence, their light reflected in the brass and silver of the horses’ harnesses.

As it should be, he thought.

The mounted police would be securing the gate once the casket had passed. As in a salute two of the horses dipped their necks and jingled their accoutrements as the small assembly down there, clad in black and barely visible, started moving.

They both stepped out from under the tent in expectation, and in respect. It had ceased raining. Instead the lights illuminating the palace behind them glittered off millions of dew drops clinging to leaves and the blades of grass.

From nowhere, really, four more darkly clad figures joined them on the terrace, melting into their presence from the palace itself, and the paths, until they all were awaiting the procession, which slowly was making its ascension. A much smaller group of people than those who had watched Hans Hermann von Katte’s stately burial this afternoon.

More befitting than that, and exactly as he, as Frederick, had wished.

As the procession climbed the first terrace, Christoph could make out more details: six carriers with a slim and very plain casket, all dressed in plain black

clothes, two valets in sombre blue Prussian uniforms carrying the torches leading the way. Strutzki followed, an Italian greyhound on a leash, picking up its legs to match the men's measured, long strides.

Far behind them the horses closed ranks and four abreast in the gate guarded what was about to take place. Even the cutting wind held its breath as Frederick came home at last.

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## Chapter 4: August 21, 1786 – August 17, 1991

*Rogues, would you live forever? ~ Frederick II*

To His Highness, the Lord Adrian A. Keith-Falconer,  
Edinburgh.

Potsdam, 21st of August 1786

Dear Lord Keith-Falconer,

Reff.: No. 31 page 31 of Z. by V. \*

The news, I am afraid, will have travelled faster than this humble letter. I heard Mirabeau has announced His Majesty's death on the eve – and before the fact – by courier already. But, Your Highness, if I may be so forward, this epistle also should contain information more direct than what has been dispersed by the official channels.

First let me assure You that I have followed His Majesty's orders as closely as I could. There was nothing anyone could do about the burial. Margrave Frederick William was adamant His Majesty should be buried in the Court and Garrison Church Potsdam and on the day after. It was done with much untoward haste and such an affair and pomp as would not have pleased our Master.

Two regiment-surgeons and I washed the corpse, decently prepared it for interment. I had to dress Him in the uniform of the First Battalion of Guards, then we placed Him in a leaded coffin. He was borne to Potsdam in a hearse of eight horses, in full view of the people. All the next day our Master's body lay in state at the palace for the whole of Berlin to come and pay their dues. He looked so wasted, worn; but beautiful in death, with the thin grey hair parted into locks, and slightly powdered. And at eight in the evening, He was borne to the Garrison Church and laid beside His father, in the vault behind the pulpit there.

But not all was lost. However, as I am sure You would want me to, let me recount the days before His interment:

Wednesday morning, we had to inform everyone that they would have to wait. The King was in a kind of sleep, of stertorous and ominous character, as if it were the death-sleep. He was unable to recollect Himself. When He at intervals opened His eyes He appeared to be unaware of where He was or who was with Him. After hours of this, on a ray of consciousness, the King bethought Himself of Rohdich, the Commandant; tried to give Rohdich the parole as usual; tried twice, but found He could not speak and with a look of sorrow turned His head, and sank back into the corner of His chair. Rohdich burst into tears as the King again lay sleeping.

The rattle of death began soon after, and lasted at intervals all day. His physician, Christian Selle in Berlin, was sent for by express. He arrived about three of the afternoon. The King seemed a little more conscious, knew those about Him, and His face was red rather than pale, in His eyes still something of their old fire. Towards evening the feverishness abated. Doctor Selle expressed his concerns over that, outside of the room. I believe he considered it a fatal symptom.

The King fell into a soft sleep, with warm perspiration; but, on awakening, complained of cold, repeatedly of cold, demanding many eiderdown quilts. On examining feet and legs, one of the Doctors made signs that they were in fact cold, up nearly to the knee. 'What said he of the feet?' my King asked some time afterwards, the Doctor having now stepped out of sight. 'Much the same as before,' I answered. The King shook His head, incredulous.

He drank once, taking the goblet in both hands, a draught of the fennel-water, and seemed relieved by it. This was His last refection in this world. Towards nine in the evening, there had come on a continual short cough, and a rattling in the breast. Drawing breath became more and more difficult. For the most part He was unconscious, never more than half conscious.

As the wall-clock above His head struck eleven, He asked: 'What o'clock?' 'Eleven,' I answered. 'At four,' He murmured, 'I will rise.' Superbe sat on her stool near Him. About midnight He noticed she was shivering for cold. 'Throw a quilt over her,'

said He. That, I think, was His last completely conscious utterance. Afterwards, in a severe choking fit, getting at last rid of the phlegm, He said, 'La montagne est passée, nous irons mieux.' \*\*

The other attendants, Hertzberg, Selle and one or two more, were in the outer room; none in Friedrich's except me, His Kammerhussar. To save the King from hustling down, as He always did, into the corner of His chair, where, with neck and chest bent forward, He was in a position in which breathing was impossible, I at last took the King on my knee; in which posture I for above two hours sat motionless. Till the end came. It was the least I could do for Him, Your Highness.

Within doors, all was silence, except this breathing. At twenty minutes past two, the breathing paused, wavered, and ceased. He was at rest. Thursday morning, 17th August, 1786, at the dark hour just named. 'He has lived,' Rodenbeck said, 'seventy-four years, six months and twenty-four days.'

And He died at the hour that He wished to be interred. This was not to be.

As so ordered by my late Sovereign and Master I have written to inform His Highness, Prince Ferdinand of Prussia, the Lords Levin von Katte and Wilhelm von Borcke of the same facts.

Until Your Highnesses have decided upon future activities I will take good care of faithful Superbe and Praxis. Superbe is expected to have her litter in three weeks. My family and I have already agreed to keep her and her descendants for as long as is necessary. We all, and I in particular, feel honoured to serve our Master in this way. I am, and always will be, at His service and anything You or the other Highnesses decide to do to fulfil His dearest wishes will command me.

SIR,

Your Highness's

Most humble and most obedient servant,

Otto Strutzki, Kammerhussar

*\* This refers to the code book Frederick sent Lord Keith-Falconer after Lord George Keith's death. Keith-Falconer kept it with Frederick's letters, thank God. He used Voltaire's Zadig. This find enabled us to decode most letters and diaries of that period. As we could verify, equally worded letters were found in the correspondences of the houses von Katte, von Borcke and Yorck of Wartenburg. ~vK*

*\*\* We are over the hill, we shall be better now. ~vK*

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Records of the 27th secret meeting of the Charlottenburg Lesser Court Lodge

Reff.: No. 22 page 203 of Z. by V.

Present are:

Dietrich von Keyserling, Ernst von Keyserling, Jürgen Quantz, Adrian Keith-Falconer, Heinrich von Borcke, Karl von Ingersleben, Magnus Keith, August von Katte, Wilhelm Strutzki, Henry of Prussia

The lodge confirms that the last will proper of his Majesty the King Frederick II of Prussia has been recovered and that it details a specific burial rite which has not been observed by his successor, Margrave Frederick William. The will details:

*“As for the rest and what concerns my person, I want to be buried in the park of my château at Sanssouci without pomp and without the slightest ceremony, accompanied by my dog and by two valets bearing torches.” ~ Friedrich II*

The King is buried together with his father in the Court and Garrison Church Potsdam, however. Due to Kammerhussar Monsieur Strutzki we also are in possession of his diaries and recent pieces of correspondence. One of his last diary entries document that the King had dearly wished for a joint resting place with his lover and lifelong friend, Hans Hermann von Katte, who pre-deceased him as Peter von Keith thirty years ago, and with his beloved dogs.

As the lodge could affirm, the actual vault has been built ample enough for a double resting place. Hans Hermann von Katte currently is buried, as Peter von Keith, here in Berlin.

His Royal Highness, the Prince Henry of Prussia states that his own knowledge of his brother's wishes aligns with what Kammerhussar Monsieur Strutzki brought before the lodge. He asked for a vote on the addition of this wish unto the observation of his brother's will. The resulting vote was unanimous. If we are to effect Frederick's last will exactly as he wished, we may as well see to it that he will rest forever with his beloved friend.

The secret circle resolves that members and chosen family members as well as successors pursue professions, occupations and responsibilities which will be helpful to those goals.

The secret circle further resolves that every measure be taken to keep our knowledge of what has passed and of the true natures and identities of Peter von Keith, Robert von Keith and Hans Hermann von Katte secret.

Lastly, the secret circle resolves that the here present Kammerhussar Monsieur Wilhelm Strutzki be designated the keeper of Frederick's Superbe and Praxis, breeds and guards their female and male lines until their descendants may accompany Frederick to his vault.

All the present lodge brothers pledge their families and descendants to work towards these common goals.

This secret lodge may not dissolve until the sworn to ends are achieved.

Berlin, 4th of October, 1786

*Henry of Prussia*

*Adrian Keith-Falconer*

*August von Katte*

*Magnus Keith*

*Dietrich von Keyserling*

*Ernst von Keyserling*

*Heinrich von Borcke*

*Karl von Ingersleben*

*Jürgen Quantz*

*Wilhelm Strutzki*

Berlin, May 22, 1943

To the Commander of 33rd SS Waffen Grenadier Division

You are ordered to move the caskets of Frederick William I and Frederick II of Prussia to the secluded bomb shelter in Berlin that my ordinance, the bearer of this message, will lead you to. Complete secrecy is of the utmost importance. Take such measures to ensure this secrecy as you deem necessary. Any and every kind of measure will be acceptable.

Hermann Göring

Minister of the Interior for Prussia

\*\*\*\*

Führerbunker, 30. März 1945

An den Kommandanten der Müncheberg Panzerdivision

Wöhlermann in Berlin

Befehl des Führers:

Transportieren Sie die Särge der nachfolgenden Personen aus dem Schutzkeller in Berlin nach Bernterode in Thüringen und deponieren Sie sie dort in unserem Munitionslager im Salzstock. Die Särge sind vor den anmarschierenden russischen Verbänden unbedingt geheimzuhalten.

König Friedrich Wilhelm der Erste

König Friedrich der Große

Feldmarschall Paul von Hindenburg

Frau Gertrud von Hindenburg

Ebenfalls einzulagern sind die beigefügten Kunstbestände und Artefakte aus den Berliner Schlössern und Sanssouci. Es ist unerlässlich, daß diese wichtigen Erbstücke unserer großartigen Militärgeschichte geheimgehalten werden, bis unser glorreiches Deutsches Reich wieder aufersteht. Enttäuschen Sie mich nicht!

Erteilt in Berlin, 30. März 1945, 04.00 Uhr, Adolf Hitler

Bezeugt durch: Martin Bormann, Oberst Below

*Translation:*

*Führerbunker, March 30, 1945*

*To Commander Wöhlermann*

*Müncheberg Panzer Division, Berlin*

*Transport the caskets of the following from the Berlin air-raid shelter to our hidden munitions manufacturing and storage facility in the Bernterode salt mine in the Thuringia forest. The caskets are to be concealed out of sight of the Russian forces now advancing.*

*King Frederick William I*

*King Frederick the Great*

*Field Marshal Paul von Hindenburg*

*Frau Gertrud von Hindenburg*

*Along with the bodies, you are also to transport and conceal the art work and artefacts from the Berlin palaces and Sanssouci. It is imperative that these most precious heirlooms of our great military history remain hidden until the moment comes when our glorious German Reich rises once more. Do not fail me in this.*

*Given in Berlin, 30th March 1945, 4.00 a.m. Adolf Hitler*

*Witnessed by: Martin Bormann, Colonel Below*

\*\*\*\*

Bernterode, April 2, 1945

Personal Delivery

To the Commander of the Müncheberg Panzer Division, Berlin

Colonel Hans-Oscar Wöhlermann

Sir,

I declare our mission accomplished. I and my officers supervised the placement of the Prussian kings, the von Hindenburgs and the Prussian heirlooms. We worked with great secrecy and used only military personnel to bring these objects down into the mine.

In a room measuring roughly fourteen by five metres, we deposited the caskets. Three of them were made of wood; the fourth, containing the remains of Frederick the Great, was metal and larger than the others. Each casket is marked by labels.

In the same room we placed the artefacts from the Hohenzollern Museum in Berlin. Each item has an identifying card attached. Most have been made for or used at the coronation of King Frederick I and Queen Sophie in 1701. More than 200 German regimental flags, many painted and embroidered, were hung above the coffins. A variety of other cultural items were placed in the room, and the entrances were sealed with brick and mortar today, on April 2.

Regards,

Major Karl Klaassen

\*\*\*\*

Urgent Dispatch

Erfurt, 27th of April, 1945

To: Capt. Walker K. Hancock

Monuments, Fine Arts, Archives

Marburg

Sir,

You are needed immediately at the Bernterode salt mine for evaluation of artefacts found in the facility. Every possible aid and as many troops as necessary are at your disposal. Please regroup with a team of specialists to Bernterode without delay.

Colonel Paul Bishop

\*\*\*\*

Personal notes, Capt. W. Hancock

Bernterode, 29th of April, 1945

Crawling through the opening into the hidden room, I was at once forcibly struck with the realization that this was no

ordinary depository of works of art. The place had the aspect of a shrine. The symmetry of the plan, a central passageway with three compartments on either side connecting two large end bays; the dramatic display of the splendid flags, hung in deep rows over the caskets and stacked with decorative effect in the corners; the presence of the caskets themselves; all suggested the setting for a modern pagan ritual. The pictures in the entrance bay seemed to have been brought in as an afterthought.

It is without doubt necessary to relocate all these artefacts to places where they will be secure from dispersal and looting. I shall have Navy Reserve Lt. George Stout brought here for evaluation of the pieces and a joint plan for retrieval.

\*\*\*\*\*

Military Government of Land Hessen-Nassau

Headquarters

To

Capt. Walker K. Hancock

Lt. Sheldon W. Keck

Marburg, September 15, 1945

We recommend that the regimental flags be transported to the United States, either as trophies of war or held in custody for future disposition. Because of their propaganda value as symbols of the military tradition, they should not be permitted to remain in Germany.

The caskets can be stored indefinitely in their present location in Marburg Castle.

Colonel Evan D. Miller

\*\*\*\*\*

To Hendrik von Keyserling

Burg Hohenzollern, June 3, 1946

Dearest Hendrik,

I hope this letter finds you reasonably well. My father, the Crown Prince, has been disquieted by the current state of affairs regarding our deceased kings Frederick William I and Frederick II. He has been in contact with Oskar von Hindenburg and it appears that the American State Department is unable to decide what to do with the caskets.

Regardless of the potential cultural and militaristic impact of our ancestors, they have a right to a decent burial place and should not be stowed away in a cellar. Needless to say that the recent theft of the crown jewels draws attention to the fact that the caskets have been taken not just from the Garrison Church, but also left Potsdam entirely near the end of the war.

If there is any chance that you, or the circle my father hints at surrounding you, can do something to convince the State Department into a timely solution, including offering any and all potential Hohenzollern sites that they might consider fit, we would appreciate this very much.

With my best regards,

Princess Cecilie of Prussia

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To Princess Cecilie von Preußen

Frankfurt, August 5, 1946

Dear Miss Cecilie Princess von Preußen,

It has been suggested by our State Department as well as the MFA&A that the Prussian kings Frederick William I and Frederick the Great be interred in the St. Elizabeth's church in Marburg. This will satisfy Allied wishes, as well as those of your father to have them buried on ground owned by the Hohenzollern family.

The burial is scheduled for August the 19th. It would give us pleasure to welcome a member of the family to participate in the burial. Transport can be organised.

Captain Everett P. Lesley Jr.

MFA&A Specialist Officer with the Frankfurt Detachment

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Minutes of the 159th secret meeting of the Charlottenburg Lesser Court Lodge

Reff.: No. 43 page 189 of Z. by V.

Present are Hendrik von Keyserling, Wolfgang Zacharias Quantz, Walter von Borcke, Joachim von Ingersleben, Victor Keith, Oliver von Katte, Hans Strutzki, Theodor Strutzki, Adrian Wentworth Keith-Falconer

According to the latest information from William Prince of Prussia both Frederick William I and Frederick II of Prussia have been safely buried in the St. Elizabeth's church in Marburg, below the floor of the north transept.

Crown Prince William of Prussia was duly consulted about the burial, but the French would not allow the Crown Prince to leave their zone, so that his eldest daughter Cecilie, along with Captain Lesley, attended the burial. The two kings were laid to rest on August 19th of 1946. There was fear that fanatics may want to steal the bodies, so the graves were covered with steel plates and a layer of concrete. Large sandstone blocks, weighing in at two tons a piece, were placed over each grave site, with the names and dates chiselled in.

We have been contacted by the Crown Prince's oldest surviving son, Louis Ferdinand of Prussia, in secrecy via the Hessian Court Lodge. He and his father both want the two kings to be transferred, the soonest possible, to Hohenzollern Castle in Hechingen.

The vote to support this plan has been unanimous.

According to several sources from within the Office of Military Government, United States, the relations between the Western allies and the Soviet Union are deteriorating so fast, that the Potsdam Treaty may be abandoned by the Soviet government. It is therefore possible that we will need volunteers to stay in the Russian zone of Germany until the situation resolves itself.

As there is no time line we can go by, the suggestion is that all concerned families inquire among their members who would be willing to stay there.

Not the least of our concerns is that the brothers Keith are both buried in the Russian zone. Robert von Keith lies in the Chapel of Wust, considered to be Hans Hermann von Katte. Peter von Keith was buried in a cemetery now in the Russian sector of Berlin, as Robert von Keith.

Hans Hermann von Katte was buried in Berlin as Peter von Keith, and has been interred in what is now the American sector of Berlin. He should be safe, and the members of the circle have access to the burial place.

As the brothers von Keyserling, Quantz and von Ingersleben pointed out, the circle will in any case need strong representation in the Russian zone, regardless of the current political development. We may have to recruit and enlarge the lodge to accommodate two circles.

By unanimous vote we all agree that the brothers Keith, Wentworth Keith-Falconer and von Keyserling keep in close contact with the house of Prussia.

Berlin, 7th of December, 1946

Adrian Wentworth Keith-Falconer

Hendrik von Keyserling

Walter von Borcke

Joachim von Ingersleben

Victor Keith

Oliver von Katte

Wolfgang Zacharias Quantz

Hans Strutzki

Theodor Strutzki

\*\*\*\*

To Princess Cecilie of Prussia

Frankfurt, March 5, 1947

Dear Miss Cecilie Princess of Prussia,

The MFA&A wishes to meet you for an exchange of information regarding the theft of the Hesse crown jewels. Please advise us of possible interview dates, preferably within the next two weeks.

Lt. Clyde K. Harris

MFA&A Frankfurt Detachment

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To Hendrik von Keyserling

Burg Hohenzollern, May 30, 1949

Dearest Hendrik,

I hope you are fine and enjoying the wonderful spring weather. I write you to inform you of my betrothal to Lt. Clyde Kenneth Harris. We will marry on June 21, 1949 at the Castle Burg Hohenzollern in Hechingen, and you will receive an official invitation from the family during the next few days.

I urge you to attend, regardless of how difficult the journey from Berlin to Hechingen may currently be. Let it suffice to say that my fiancé belongs to the MFA&A and is very understanding of my family's wishes to relocate the two Hohenzollern kings to the Castle chapel. I think it would be fortuitous and unnoticeable if he and you were to come into direct contact during the festivities.

With my best regards,

Princess Cecilie of Prussia

\*\*\*\*

Reuters, 1952/09/12

Earlier this September, the caskets of Frederick William I and Frederick II were removed from the St. Elizabeth's church in Marburg and taken to Hohenzollern Castle in Hechingen where

a family spokesman declared they were to remain “until Germany is united again and they can return to Potsdam.”

\*\*\*\*

Express Delivery

Berlin, Sept 19, 1952

C. v. P. TO H. v. K.

Casket of Frederick to be opened--STOP--Exchange possible--  
STOP--Tinsmith and plumber firm Rudolph in Hechingen--  
STOP--Transport HHvK immediately--STOP--Your man must  
be available--STOP--Good Luck--STOP--Cecilie

\*\*\*\*

[--excerpt of *Hendrik von Keyserling's diary. vK*]

Hechingen, 29th of September, 1952

My hands are still shaking. Unbelievable what a woman Cecilie is! We have to thank her fast thinking and immediate action for the recovery of Frederick II. In a cloak and dagger operation worthy of an Orson Welles movie Victor Keith and I managed to transport von Katte's coffin to Hechingen.

We didn't even need to deal with Mr Rudolph himself, Borcke has managed to drink him so thoroughly under the table that the switch was easy. We all were astonished at the near perfect states of both the corpses. Thank God that Victor knows how to solder. I don't think anyone will notice.

Victor is off to Frankfurt airport with the casket to place Frederick in the von Keith family vault, whilst von Katte will remain in the chapel of the Burg Hohenzollern. Borcke and I will stay for a few days, just to make sure all went according to plan.

Not yet entirely where we want to have everyone, but at least Frederick will be back in Berlin. A step into the right direction. The Circle should be pleased.

\*\*\*\*

Office of the Federal Chancellor

Bonn, 22nd of December 1989

MEMO

To Hans-Dietrich,

I've just talked to the Prince of Prussia. He wants to move the Hohenzollern kings back to Potsdam. I concur. Find a way, please.

Helmut

\*\*\*\*\*

To Daniel von Katte, Wust

Bonn, July 22, 1991

Dear Daniel,

The dates have been agreed upon by all the relevant parties. They will transport the caskets from Hechingen on the 16th of August, and the state funeral will be held on the afternoon and evening of the 17th. I was just in a session with several of the officials involved, but the Potsdam-Sanssouci Foundation will definitely direct and oversee things at Sanssouci.

Finally.

Your friend and brother,

Christoph

\*\*\*\*\*

## Chapter 5: August 18, 1991, 02:05 am

*Quand je serai là, je serai sans souci. ~ Frederick II\**

Christoph swallowed against the feeling of constriction in his throat and straightened as the pallbearers reached the final terrace. He was not alone in his sentiment. Several among the men at his sides cleared their throats or shifted, and then, as if they had practised, stood apart and formed a guard of honour in front of the vault's entrance, three to each side.

Somewhere down in the park and everywhere around them the darkness came alive. Leather creaked, harnesses and reins jingled, people moved into the shadows, there and not there. Knowing.

Without so much as missing a step the procession descended down the ramp, quietly led by the valets shining the way. Without a word spoken or sound made they fell in behind Strutzki. Inside the vault the king's heavy casket already waited with Hans Hermann von Katte, and Christoph once again felt reality shift under his feet, having him sway.

Here he was, his far removed ancestor, about to be reunited with his princely lover, and after all this time. A warm hand stole into his own right one then, and pressed. He looked up and it was Daniel, with a nod and tears in his eyes, for he as well met with family right there.

The valets stepped aside, allowing the bearers to lower the plain zinc coffin onto the low bier they had prepared after the official undertakers had left. In the back, against the wall, the two tiny caskets with Superbe and Praxis now also rested on a pedestal, their names marked on the lids. Christoph walked up to Frederick's coffin and placed the old briefcase on its lid, touched his old companion a last time, and then returned to Daniel's side.

For a full minute the thirteen men and the small dog stayed, without a eulogy, without a speech or word, and regarded the two coffins, side by side. That was all the honour he had wanted. That was the honour he received.

As it should be, Christoph thought.

And then it was over. Like one man they turned, and even before the seven of the inner circle and their valets had left the main vault, the pallbearers turned into the free masons they were and closed the entrance. Tomorrow the

undertaker the Potsdam-Sanssouci Foundation had hired would find a smoothly closed and already settling brick wall in the entrance to the inner crypt. He would not be astonished, for Christoph had advised him to expect this, days before.

Silently they walked past the palace's luminous Southern facade, to meet for a last time as the Lesser Court Lodge. They, too, would soon be history, and no one would know. Nothing had happened.

*Nothing has been changed...*

[\* *When I will be there, I will be without worry.*]

**The End**

## **List of Real and Fictional Characters**

To make this perfectly clear, of course none of the real people mentioned in this story have ever committed any of the acts related to the fictional story of Frederick and Hans, or their subsequent joint burial. Everything in this story is pure conjecture and entirely fictional!

### *Real People:*

Frederick II of Prussia (also known as Frederick the Great)  
b. Jan 24, 1712, d. Aug 17, 1786

Hans Hermann von Katte  
b. Feb 28, 1704, d. Nov 6 1730 (*or maybe Dec 27, 1756?*)

Friederike Sophie Wilhelmine of Prussia  
b. Jul 3, 1709, d. Oct 14, 1758

Peter Karl Christoph von Keith  
b. May 24, 1711, d Dec 27, 1756 (*or maybe Jul 5, 1767?*)

Robert von Keith  
b. Oct 18, 1712, d. Jul 5, 1767 (*or maybe Nov 6, 1730?*)

Johann von Ingersleben (1703–1757)

Johann von Spaen (1705–1762)

Friedrich von Borcke (1713–1742)

Johann Joachim Quantz (1697–1773)

Dietrich von Keyerling (1713–1793)

Kammerhussar Strutzki (ca. 1750–1820)

William Falconer (ca. 1703–1776)

Anthony Adrian Keith–Falconer (ca. 1730–1804)

Charles Hotham

Friedrich Wilhelm von Rochow

Henry of Prussia

Frederick William I of Prussia

Philip Stanhope

Chpl. Müller  
Chpl. Besserer  
George Keith  
James Keith  
Jürgen Quantz  
Hermann Göring  
Adolf Hitler  
Hans-Oscar Wöhlermann  
Walker K. Hancock  
Sheldon W. Keck  
Cecilie of Prussia  
Everett P. Lesley Jr.  
Adrian Wentworth Keith-Falconer  
Clyde K. Harris  
Hans-Dietrich Genscher  
Helmut Kohl

*Fictional characters:*

Hendrik Klaasen  
August von Katte  
Magnus Keith  
Ernst von Keyserling  
Heinrich von Borcke  
Karl von Ingersleben  
Wilhelm Strutzki  
Evan D. Miller  
Hendrik von Keyserling  
Walter von Borcke  
Joachim von Ingersleben  
Victor Keith  
Oliver von Katte  
Wolfgang Zacharias Quantz  
Hans Strutzki  
Theodor Strutzki  
Daniel von Katte  
Christoph Keith  
Oliver Strutzki

### **Author's Note**

What I describe in this story could have happened. All of it works, all the people did what I describe they did, everything except the two conspiracies going on underneath the surface of apparent normalcy. The outward personae have been left untouched. I involved no actual, still living people. They have been invented (please see the character list for fictional and real characters).

The rest, you can read this up for yourself: von Katte was executed, Peter von Keith flew to England, fought in Portugal and was immediately recalled when Frederick became king, as were Quantz, George and James Keith, eventually Robert von Keith and a couple of others I fed into the first complot. The king saw to it that Peter von Keith never again participated in any battle. Within a few days of his crowning Frederick wrote the love poem, later officially dedicated to another of his male friends and sent off to Voltaire.

The second conspiracy, the one which sees to Frederick getting his death wish and being buried beside his beloved dogs and together with von Katte, that one as well could have easily worked.

Again I didn't change facts at all. Strutzki was the actual Kammerhussar who attended Frederick's death. The Nazis relocated Frederick's coffin first to a cellar in Berlin, then to a salt mine. The US Army found it there and took everything to Marburg. From there the two kings went to a Hohenzollern church first and in the end were taken to the family's castle. The incident of the coffin needing to be re-soldered, because it suffered from a break in the seal, is fact. The undertaker who did this was the only person who was present when the coffin was opened, and closed again. He alone saw the actual corpse of Frederick and that very shortly before the coffin was taken in state to Sanssouci. A switch would have been easily possible

right then. Frederick and all his close entourage were freemasons and part of lodges.

So, on the surface nothing was changed...

## **Bibliography**

Many of these letters have actually been written by these people themselves or later biographers. Often I just adapted them.

I also made extensive use of Thomas Carlyle's Biography of Frederick the Great (in the public domain and on [gutenberg.org](http://gutenberg.org)), and Frederick's and Wilhelmine's actual letters (also in the public domain) which are available online. The love poem was written by Frederick himself, I just changed a name.

Some diary entries and information were taken from Greg Bradsher's article 'Monuments, Men and Nazi Treasures'. I also found invaluable information on several genealogy sites and on Wikipedia. Von Katte's death letter was traded down the time by Theodor Fontane.

## **Contact & Media Info**

[Goodreads](#)