



The Honeymoon Period

By Curt Finks

19 October 1997

GANTOB Pamphlet X11

This story was rediscovered on 26 November 2023, when Ali and Gillian Finks (not real names) were readying themselves for a move from The Manse in Badenoch.

The original, printed squint on an inkjet printer in 1997, was found tucked behind a bureau in Ali's study. He recalled reading it during one of his father's visits, shortly after the older Finks had returned from a tour of the Baltic states and central Europe that he had seen advertised in a newspaper.

As much as possible has been left of the original text, incorporating many of the handwritten annotations by Curt Finks himself. Café L_____ has not been named, because an internet search (using details deduced from Finks Sr's extensive slide collection) reveals that the original café has changed hands and name.

It was noted during editing, that there was a confusion of hospitals which impacted on the plot. This can be seen in the following excerpt. The hospital in question was not the "general hospital" suggested by Curt Finks below. This "correction" has therefore been ignored. Some unfamiliar terms that did not add to the story have also been omitted.

Flicking the hair from her face, he moved his lips from hers and briefly kissed her cheek and the gold and diamond studs in her left earlobe, then concentrated on her favourite spot between her shoulder and neck. He closed his eyes to avoid the disapproving stare of the sour plum face of the woman who sat behind them like a *long-forgotten germknödel*.^{7.}

A brief walk from the Secession building took them to the 13A bus-stop; a school-trip of yellow satchels and moon boots took up all the seats, forcing them to stand. Hanging ^H onto the rail in the rotating *heurige*-accordian centre of the bus was a hazardous experience, the driver seemingly impatient, spinning round corners to reach the ^{terminus} *Algemeine* ^A *end-terminal* - the *Krankenhaus*.

As a piece of fiction, it is not clear how many of the details – a mix of tourist locations and more local knowledge – were observed by Curt Finks during his trip, and how many were plucked from his imagination and reading. When sorting through his father's affairs many years later Ali found letters stretching over a period of over a decade, starting in 1997, from a woman called Paula. They were in chronological order, housed in envelopes with Austrian stamps.

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Othmar's escape had been swiftly followed by his employment in a Viennese Café. A chance discussion with the bar-tender at Café L_____ led to a job as dish-washer and espresso maker. Digs were made available behind the washed-Gothic *Votiv Kirche*. The café supplied meals to employees during their shifts, along with an endless supply of *Großer Brauner* coffees, served on a little metal tray with accompanying glass of water, teaspoon resting neatly on top. Othmar's precipitous decline had gone from free-fall to stop, before the terminal impact that had been predicted by staff at his previous residence.

Days off, which Othmar took as two half-days a week, were spent at the small *Kino* on the Burgring. After the lunch rush he would demolish his complimentary *natur Schnitzel* with fried potatoes and rush to the matinée performance at the art-house cinema. If he was to express a preference, he veered towards the classics – he despised the snap-shot pop-video scene changes of the modern American movies, but was obsessed with the European output of the 1960s. This was a suitably imagined dating ground for his unknown parents. Leaving at the very end of the inevitable string score, in the evening he would creep along the dark corridor of the Dr. Karl Lueger Ring, trees hiding him from the knowing eyes of the tram passengers until he reached the safe haven of the Subway. The yellow-fronted sandwich franchise offered him anonymity – uniform day and night lighting with white walls and an unchanging menu. The upper and lower eating areas were divided by a few steps lined by cheese plants housed in huge earthenware pots filled with what looked like hardened animal dropping. The walls were decorated with black and white New York scenes taken at odd angles, usually involving a thirtysomething couple in smart clothes. A few weeks into his return to the real world, restless in these sterile surroundings, Othmar planned his return.

The roof of the Gloriette was a favourite haunt of the two lovers. Downstairs, the restaurant wafted smells of toasting ham and cheese into their touching noses. A viewing telescope had spat out their last five *Schilling* piece to roll through the wooden slats, but that had not spoilt their appreciation of the sweep down through the gardens to Schönbrunn Palace to the cluttered 19th century panorama of the Vienna skyline. On the hillside across the city she noticed an unfamiliar dome, greened copper on white.

She asked him where it was, what it was called, but he didn't know. After a game of hide and seek round the huge gilt eagle she reached down through his jacket to bare shoulders and pulled him into a sustained embrace. Down the spiral stairs to the postcard kiosk, he led her by the hand to explore uncharted territory.

Figure 1. Sketch of Otto Wagner's *Kirche am Steinhof*, in the grounds of The Psychiatric Hospital of the City of Vienna.



Othmar's wages were more constant than those of his student colleagues. He could not expect tips as a dish-washer, so he received a *pro rata* supplement. His coffee making skills, learnt at classes during his spell in the *Krankenhaus*, earned him an additional bonus. Two mornings a week a voluntary duty earned him extra *Schillings* to save his boss the corporate rates for recycling. His early morning errand took him, before the rush-hour, on the underground to Heiligenstadt. Lugging five or six bags of clinking bottles, he headed from the station towards the incinerator, the Fabergé egg topped chimney leading the way until a left turn past stepped white port-holed flats into the wholesaler. After feeding bottles of Gösser, Budvar

and Heineken into the rotating deposit machine he claimed his cash at the till. He handed in Herr Tache's new order, to be delivered on Friday as usual, and left with a single bag of empty bottles carefully wrapped in the bags. He dropped these off in his digs before returning to wash the first dishes of the day. During these chores, Othmar would imagine his hoarded treasures featured in great works of art, canvassed, individual, but inspired by the curved mass-produced bottle labels of Vöslauer *Mineralwasser*. He thought of Luksch and started scrubbing the dishes furiously, eager to return to his friend.

She turned to watch the scenes flash by through the train window. In one of its brief uncovered stretches the U-Bahn was travelling past the *Naschmarkt*. She imagined the smells of spices, street food and diesel generators. Her lover sat in the aisle seat. As she turned her head to speak to him, his head craned and twisted for a kiss. Flicking the hair from her face, he moved his lips from hers and briefly kissed her cheek and the gold and diamond studs in her left earlobe, then concentrated on her favourite spot between her shoulder and neck. He closed his eyes to avoid the disapproving stare of the woman who sat behind them like a long-forgotten *Germknödel*.

A brief walk from the Secession building took them to the 13A bus-stop; a school-trip of yellow satchels and moon boot clad children occupied all the seats, forcing them to stand. Hanging on to the rail in the rotating concertinaed centre of the bus was a hazardous experience, the driver seemingly impatient, spinning round corners to the reach the terminus – the *Krankenhaus*.

Figure 2. Sketch of “Mineralwasser” based on a bottle with label by Hundertwasser



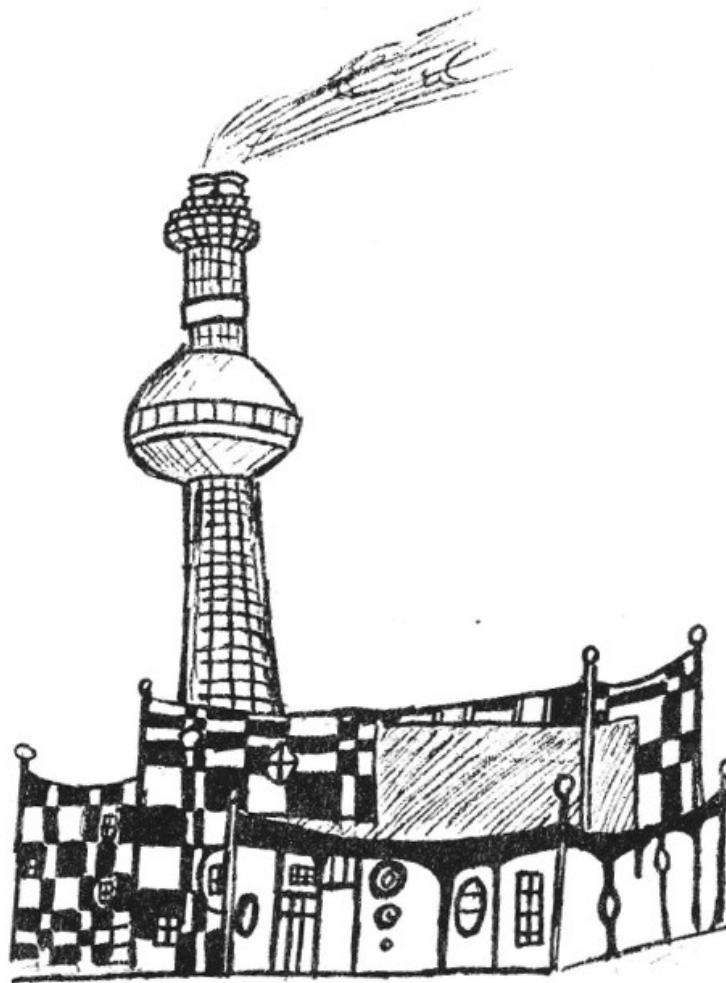
Herr Tache was always looking for ways to improve his café. The interior had been refurbished since he had taken over. He had removed the pillars with their encircling tables, and made the bar and surrounding area much more spacious as a result. In the winter months the outside tables were rarely used and he cut back on staff. Today, however, he was worried. Othmar had not returned from his errand to the *Naschmarkt* to sniff out some quality coffee beans at more affordable prices. It was past lunch and the dishes were mounting up, the regulars impatient for their meal, others shouting for cups of *Melange*. Desperate to keep face, he stormed into the kitchen, carefully measuring ground Julius Meinl coffee into the metal filters, slotting them into the front of the machine, checking the water levels, and fiddling with the dials and switches. With the coffee prepared to the best of his abilities he steamed milk in a tall jug at the side. Rinsing dishes quickly, he barked to the waiter to finish off the coffee and rushed half a dozen plates across to the chef who was nursing already over-done *Schnitzels* and *Tafelspitz*. He cursed Othmar under his breath. He had been wary about employing somebody without references, and with his strange tics, but his extraordinary coffee making skills, even with the establishment's idiosyncratic machine, had persuaded him. He turned off the radio when he reached the swing doors, the DJ droning on about a favourite Jürgen Koppers remix of some British pop track.

On the cobbled roads of the sixteenth district, the driver of the 13A bus was sitting more upright than usual, drumming his fingers to the same track. Sharper turns past harvested vineyards became increasingly steep. The kids in the back were increasingly rowdy, but at least now everybody had seats. Othmar sat with his bags lined up in the section marked for prams. He was excited and twitchy. The driver knew where *he* was headed. The young couple sat with their map out, eyes jumping between the page and the electric display announcing destinations. The other passengers were probably a mixture of patients visiting afternoon clinics, and relatives. He recognised some of them as regulars.

Othmar stood to press the halt button. “*Psychiatrisches Krankenhaus der Stadt Wien*” was announced on the tannoy. Coming to a gentle stop on the icy road, the driver opened all the doors and the bus emptied. Othmar hurried with penguin waddle along the ungritted pavement, through the front gate, to the long-stay wards. The lovers, hand in hand, stopped briefly

to check the map on one of the pillars and then followed the school kids round the peripheries of the hospital ground up to the *Kirche am Steinhof*. They wandered round the impressive turn-of-the-century structure, the square white base supporting the copper dome and pillared saints. Inside they caught the winter sun through the Moser mosaic windows.

Figure 3. “Incinerator”. A sketch of Hundertwasser’s renovations



Outside, two blocks down one of the main paths, Othmar had found his old ward and friend Luksch, who was as ever taking advantage of the light to put the finishing touches to his paintings. As expected, however, he had not progressed at all over the months since Othmar's escape. Greeting Othmar warmly, Luksch grasped all the bags from his hands and smiled at him expectantly. Placing the bags gently on the ground, he heard the clinking of bottles and his smile broadened.

"Success", Othmar exclaimed.

"So I see", Luksch agreed, and the two of them quickly, but very carefully, unpacked the empty bottles, and set about unpeeling the coloured metal foil from their necks.

Waving a large and complete section removed from a bottle of Budvar, Othmar exclaimed "This gold will be perfect for the Wagner". He set about matching it up with the copper dome. Luksch found a piece for his *Mineralwasser*. As the sun cast increasingly longer shadows and the reflections turned orange, Othmar and Luksch worked ever faster to complete their art. Smoothing it down on the canvas Luksch finished his last pieced – "The Incinerator" – with a piece of silver foil from a bottle of Beck's.

The two of them stood back from the outdoor gallery, admiring the completed work in the last of the light. Othmar took a few steps closer to Luksch's picture.

"The incinerator should be finished in gold you idiot", he complained, and set about Luksch with a bottle. Several nurses rushed out into the cold dark night and hauled the two men into the ward, Luksch holding his hand to a deep slash across his left cheek, Othmar destroying most of the canvases in the struggle.

The two lovers walked back, careful in the forested darkness. On the steep gravel path, she reached forward for his shoulder. They crept in single file, following the school kids and teachers to the bus-stop, hurrying past the site of what looked to have been a drunken brawl. One of the kids slipped on an empty bottle. The couple stepped carefully around shards of glass that glinted like salt in the ice.

Curt Finks, 19 October 1997 (GANTOB: with apologies for some old-fashioned views from that era)

Key to figures 1-3

Requirements: 4 bottles of Czech Budvar
3 bottles of Beck's
2 bottles of Belgian fruit beer (red and blue foil)

Techniques: Remove the foil by peeling
Apply the foil to the sketch with glue
Smooth the foil to give an even appearance

1. Otto Wagner's Kirche am Steinhoff

The dome of this church should be decorated with gold foil removed from a bottle of Budvar. Measure out the foil and cut rectangles to allow spaces for the windows, saving one rectangle for the adornments on top of the dome. Use the remaining foil to decorate the figure sitting on the pillar, the small squares on the side of the pillar, and the wreaths and crucifixes on the main building. If you have time, ink in the black embossments between the windows, or cut from a copy of the sketch and paste over the foil.

2. A bottle of Vöslauer Mineralwasser

Hundertwasser's label was designed for Vöslauer bottles in 1992 and remains popular. It features his familiar "*spirale*". The blank spaces in the main spiral should be decorated with silver foil from a bottle of Beck's. The side details should also be filled in. The upper and lower writing may be more conveniently completed with silver pen – this effect is more in keeping with the original bottle label.

3. The Spittelau Incinerator, renovated by Hundertwasser in 1988

The sphere (the "Fabergé egg") should be decorated with gold foil. The middle squares in the sphere are also gold, but shaded squares need red and blue foil from Belgian fruit beers. Although the shaft should be left plain or decorated with silver foil, the plain ring and top ornamentation should be filled in with gold foil, re-doing the cross hatching afterwards, as required.

On the main building, the spheres on the pillars can be completed with gold foil, and the window ornamentation should be finished with the remaining silver, red and blue foil. The smoke can be sprinkled with coloured foil dust.

This pamphlet is designed to be printed on A4 paper, to fold into an A5 booklet (check your word processor for the correct setting, or do it manually). Find a sheet of pink A4 for the cover sheet.

Hopefully this gives the reader/ wannabe artist space to immerse themselves in the original sketches by Curt Finks

This is number X11 in a series of GANTOB Pamphlets.

It was completed on 28 November 2023 using the restored and edited 26-year-old source material. Details (e.g. bus routes) may well have changed in the over quarter of a century since it was written.

GANTOB is a fictional creation herself, existing as part of The KLF Re-enactment Society (KLFRS) universe. She was keen to re-enact a pamphlet that almost certainly did not exist – the untitled Penkiln Burn pamphlet number 11, which going by chronology alone would have been expected to have been published in 1999. However, founder of Penkiln Burn (Bill Drummond) plays fast and loose with dates and numbers. This Curt Finks story seemed the perfect fit. A short story, by a fictional author, edited by another fictional writer, to fill a possible gap in the work of an artist with a sometimes slippery relationship with truth/ reality/ the past.

To find out more about GANTOB please visit gantob.blog, or search out my first book (Grapefruit Are Not The Only Bombs: 2023 re-enactment), published by GANTOB Books in an edition of 60, on 23 September 2023 (ISBN 978-1-3999-6729-7). If you want to play a part in my second book then check out gantob.blog/book (I can be flexible with deadlines up to ~ 10 December).

One copy of this pamphlet has been printed. It was sent to a GANTOB korrespondent on 28 November 2023.

This pamphlet is also available to download if you search very carefully in the post that ends part 2 of the gantob.blog.

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28 November 2023