

no: 36

23 May 1941

Kitty B,

A few minutes ago, I saw something and now I have been torn out of some kind of dream and feel like I am neither here nor there. Do you know what I saw? The May issue of the NEW LINE (Neue Linie) booklet! Why could it not be the fashion? Two swallows carrying field mail in their beaks – much blue and red.

I love the title page (Is it good? In reality?). I hope the Moder (*no reference found for “die Moder” ... “der Moder” would be “mold”. Maybe “Mode”, which means “fashion”?*) will soon cross over the high mountains. Since I paid for English watercolor paper and the company cash box has not reimbursed me yet, I have to be extremely careful about what I spend, otherwise I would have bought the booklet, right away. I worked very well today, and I am slowly getting back into the gouache technique. Since Sunday – today is Thursday – I have painted 18 pieces, 10 of which I will certainly be able to use. I am sad that you can't see them. I would love to hear what you would say. I wonder how August will like them? A line of cars like this is not pretty – it messes up the landscape. I am using the desired motives as excuse for the different moods of the landscapes. For example, I painted a debris site in Marissa in fine evening colors – where only a lonely Greek sits with a lemon-yellow hat – on a thin-legged chair in front of thing-legged table with a bottle on it. His suit is completely black, the way the southerners like it. My motivation? On one plank I painted our road sign. (In Belgrade, I had to produce 20, I already wrote you that).

Then I painted how our convoy stops in a suburb of Slaoniki and is surrounded by street vendors. The color atmosphere was eerily alive.

*(translator's note: the above section is identical to a letter translated during the last project. The cut-off sentence at the bottom of the page continues on the next page in a different way than it did during the last project:*

*Old: “The color atmosphere was eerie and ... (next page) would fit this place well, mainly in a visual sense.”*

*New: “The color atmosphere was eerily ... (next page) alive.”*

*I believe the new version is the correct one. There must have been an additional page between the sentence that ends in “eerily” and the sentence that starts with “Fit this place well”).*

*(this must be the page that was missing last time)*

Everything threw very thin dark shadows; the contrasts were stark. In the background one sees an old woman, who is grazing her goat. On the left, in the front, the head of an old shepherd.

In the last two days, I haven't spoken 10 words with my comrades. I'm sitting in my "studio" and work. That is nice. One cannot feel more alone than among comrades who one hasn't chosen oneself.

I had my laundry cleaned and am able to wash myself, daily. Washing is like a church service. The bedbugs haven't bitten me, yet. Only once such a hussy sat artistically on a watercolor painting — then it had to die.

Currently I am munching on peanuts in a pub where I am the only soldier — and I am drinking a light red wine. The walls are ocher and a few unmotivated wooden planks have been painted in stark right blue. On one of the walls hangs a gouache painting in a black frame: 3 dead Greek fish — August could have painted that. It makes me happy to look at it from time to time.

I finish up around 5 to 6 pm, every day, (I get up at 7 am) and then I shave and do the great washing — because at that peculiar time, nobody else uses the water line on the corridor. Then I stroll through the city and sometimes say "Hello Buschi, is this house not laughably narrow-chested?" or "Kitty, this evening we'll go to the movies — let's look at the photos at the entrance!" and in the well-known Birder-fashion I end up in a tavern. Every day, around 9:30 (*am or pm*), I drink my mocca in a small café near "my" hotel.

Just now I wanted a (3?) glass wine (the glasses are very small and barely hold 1/8 liters), but the innkeeper won't give it to me. So, scarcity here, as well.

Now I wander "homeward." Apparently, Crete has not been occupied, yet.

I wonder what you are doing right now? Maybe you are at (?)uzzi's? Hearty greetings to