

Letter 523
Arles, c. 18 August 1888

My dear Theo,

Many thanks for your kind letter, and the 100-fr. note enclosed.

And it's very good of you to promise the two of us, Gauguin and me, that you'll put us in the way to carrying out our combination.

I have just had a letter from Bernard, who went some days ago to join Gauguin, Laval and somebody else at Pont-Aven. It was a very decent letter, but not one syllable in it about Gauguin intending to join me, and not a syllable either about wanting me to come there. All the same it was a very friendly letter.

From Gauguin himself not a word for almost a month.

I myself think that Gauguin would rather try to fight his way through with his friends in the North, and if by good luck he sells one or more pictures, he may have other plans for himself than coming to join me.

But haven't I, with less desire than he for the struggle in Paris, the right to go my own way? Look here. As soon as you can, would you, not give, but lend me 300 francs in one lump sum for a year? Then, if I take it that at present you send me 250 francs a month, you will only send me 200 after this, until the 300, paid out at once, would be paid off.

Then I should buy two decent beds all complete at 100 francs each, and 100 franc's worth of other furniture.

That would mean that I could sleep at home, and could put up Gauguin or anybody else.

That would mean a gain of 300 francs a year, for I pay a franc a night to my landlord.

I should feel what it was like to have more of a fixed abode, and really, it is only on this condition that one can work.

This would not increase my expenses for the whole year, but it would provide me with some furniture and the possibility of making both ends meet.

Then whether Gauguin comes or not is his own business, and as soon as we are ready to have him, and his bed and room are there, we shall be keeping our promise.

I insist on this, the plan remains just as real and solid whether Gauguin comes or not, seeing that our object doesn't change – to deliver me and one of the comrades from this cancer that is gnawing at our work, this being forced to live in these ruinous inns without any profit to ourselves.

It is pure madness.

To be carefree, to hope that someday or another one will be free from want, what a dream! I should think myself very happy if I could work for a wage just sufficient to keep me in peace in my studio, all my life. Well, though I repeat once more that I don't much care whether I settle in Pont-Aven or in Arles, I intend to be immovable on this point – of having a fixed studio, and sleeping there and not at an inn.

If you are kind enough to enable Gauguin and myself to settle down like that, I only say that if we do not take this opportunity to escape from lodging-keepers, we are throwing all your money, and our means of resisting this besieging poverty, into the gutter.

On this my mind is quite made up, and I will not yield on that point.

Under the present conditions, though I am spending money, I haven't even what is necessary, and I do not feel I have strength enough left to go on like this for long. If Gauguin can find the same opportunity at Pont-Aven, it's all right; but I'll tell you this, once here and this expense over, the work would be done.

The sun here counts for a good deal. As it is, I am going to pieces and killing myself.

Well, I've said my say. I am not coming to Pont-Aven if I have to stay at the inn with the English and the people from the École des Beaux-Arts that you argue with every evening. It's a storm in a teacup.

With a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent