

My dear Theo and dear Jo,

Under ordinary circumstances I should certainly have hoped for a line from you these first few days.

But considering how things have happened – honestly – I think that Theo, Jo and the little one are a little on edge and are worn out – and besides, I myself am also far from having reached any kind of tranquillity.

Often, very often I think of my little nephew – is he well? Jo, believe me – if ever you happen, as I hope, to have more children – don't get them in the city, have your confinement in the country and stay there until the child is three or four months old. At present it seems to me that while the child is still only six months old, your milk is already drying up, already – like Theo – you are too tired. I do not at all mean to say exhausted, by anyway worries are looming too large, and are too numerous, and you are sowing among thorns.

That is why I would have you consider not going back to Holland this year; the journey is always very, very expensive, and it never does any good. Yes, it will surely delight Mother, who will like to see the little one – but she will understand, and will prefer the well-being of the little one to the pleasure of seeing him.

Besides, she would lose nothing, she will see him later. But – without daring to say that this is enough – however it may be, it is certainly preferable that father, mother and child should take a month of absolute rest in the country. On the other hand, I very much fear that I too was distressed, and I think it strange that I do not in the least know under what conditions I left – if it is at 150 francs a month paid in three installments, as before. Theo fixed nothing and so to begin with I left in confusion. Would there be a way of seeing each other again more calmly? I hope so, but I fear that the journey to Holland will be the last straw for all of us.

I always foresee that the child will suffer later on for being brought up in the city. Does Jo think this exaggerated? I hope so, but anyway I think that one ought to be cautious all the same.

And I say what I think, because you quite understand that I take an interest in my little nephew and am anxious for his well-being: since you were good enough to call him after me, I should like him to have a soul less unquiet than mine, which is foundering.

Now about Dr. Gachet. I went to see him the day before yesterday, I did not find him in.

Just now I am very well, I am working hard, have painted studies and two drawings.

You will see a drawing of an old vineyard with the figure of a peasant woman. I intend to make a big canvas of it.

I think that we must not count on Dr. Gachet at all. First of all, he is sicker than I am, I think, or shall we say just as much, so that's that. Now when one blind man leads another blind man, don't they both fall into the ditch?

I don't know what to say. Certainly my last attack, which was terrible, was in a large measure due to the influence of the other patients, and then the prison was crushing me, and old Peyron didn't pay the slightest attention to it, leaving me to vegetate with the rest, all deeply tainted.

I can get a lodging, three small rooms at 150 fr. a year. That, if I find nothing better, and I hope to find a better one, is in any case preferable to the bedbug infested hole at Tanguy's, and besides, I should find a shelter for myself and could retouch the canvases that need it. So that the pictures will be less ruined, and by keeping them in good condition, there will be a greater chance of getting some profit out of them. For – I don't speak of my own – but the canvases by Bernard, Prévost, Russell, Guillaumin and Jeannin were going to ruin there, it is no place for them.

Now canvases like these – again I do not speak of my own – are merchandise which has kept and keeps a certain value, and neglecting it is one of the causes of our mutual penury.

But I will still do what I can so that all will go well.

It is certain, I think, that we are all of us thinking of the little one, and that Jo must say what she wishes. Theo, like myself, will, I believe, agree to her opinion. For myself, I can only say at the moment that I think we all need rest – I feel exhausted. So much for me – I feel that this is the lot which I accept and which will not change.

But one more reason, putting aside all ambition, we can live together for years without ruining each other. You see that with the canvases which are still at St. Rémy, there are at least eight with the four here, I am trying not to lose my skill. It is the absolute truth, however, that it is difficult to acquire a certain facility in production, and by ceasing to work, I shall lose it more quickly and more easily than the pains it has cost to acquire it. And the prospect grows darker, I see no happy future at all.

Write me by return mail if you haven't already written, and good handshakes for both in thought. I wish there were a possibility of seeing each other again soon with more collected minds.

Vincent