

Letter 166
The Hague, 29 December 1881
Thursday evening

Dear Theo,

Thanks for your letter and the enclosed. I was in Etten again when I received it; as I told you, I had arranged this with Mauve. But now you see I am back again in The Hague. On Christmas Day I had a violent scene with Father, and it went so far that Father told me I had better leave the house. Well, he said it so decidedly that I actually left the same day.

The real reason was that I did not go to church, and also that if going to church was compulsory and if I was forced to go, I certainly should never go again out of courtesy, as I had done rather regularly all the time I was in Etten. But oh, in truth there was much more at the back of it all, including the whole story of what happened this summer between Kee and me.

I do not remember ever having been in such a rage in my life. I frankly said that I thought their whole system of religion horrible, and just because I had gone too deeply into those questions during a miserable period in my life, I did not want to think of them any more, and must keep clear of them as of something fatal.

Was I too angry, too violent? Maybe – but even so, it is settled now, once and for all.

I went back to Mauve and said, “Listen, Mauve, I cannot stay in Etten any longer, and I must go and live somewhere else, preferably here.”

Well, Mauve said, “Then stay.”

And so I have rented a studio here, that is, a room and an alcove which can be arranged for the purpose, cheap enough, on the outskirts of the town, in Schenkweg, ten minutes from Mauve. Father said if I wanted money, he would lend it to me if necessary, but this is impossible now, I must be quite independent of Father. How? I do not know yet, but Mauve will help me if necessary, and I hope and believe you will too, and of course I will work and try as hard as I can to earn something.

I am in for it now, and the die is cast. At an inconvenient moment, but how can it be helped?

I must have some simple furniture, and besides, all my expenses for drawing and painting materials will increase.

I must also try to dress somewhat better.

It is a risky affair, a question of sink or swim. But someday I should have had to set myself up, so what shall I say? It has happened sooner than I expected. As to the relation between Father and me, that will not be redressed so very easily. The difference in our views and opinions is too great. It will be a hard pull for me; the tide rises high, almost to the lips, and perhaps higher still – how can I know? But I will fight my battle, and sell my life dearly, and try to win and get the best of it.

January 1 I shall move into the new studio. I will take the simplest furniture, a wooden table and a few chairs. I would be satisfied with a blanket on the floor instead of a bed. But Mauve wants me to get a bed, and will lend me the money if necessary.

As you can imagine, I have a great many cares and worries. But still it gives me a feeling of satisfaction to have gone so far that I cannot go back again; and though the path may be difficult, I now see it clearly before me.

Of course I must ask you, Theo, if you will occasionally send me what you can spare without inconveniencing yourself. And send it to me rather than give it to others, for if it is possible, we must not get Mauve mixed up in the financial affairs. His helping me with advice in art matters is already of such enormous value. But he insists on my buying, for instance, a bed and a few pieces of furniture. He says, I will lend you the money if necessary. And according to him I must dress somewhat better and not try to skimp too much.

I will soon write you at greater length. I will not consider it a misfortune that things have gone so far; on the contrary, notwithstanding all kinds of emotions, I feel a certain calm. There is safety in the midst of danger. What would life be if we hadn't courage to attempt anything?

I have been walking around everywhere to find that studio, in town as well as in Scheveningen.

Scheveningen is terribly expensive. This studio costs only 7 guilders a month – it's the furniture that makes it so expensive. But once one has a house of one's own, it is a good possession and gives one a more solid footing. The light comes from the south, but the window is large and high, and I think the room will look very pleasant after a while. You can imagine that I feel quite animated. How will my work be a year from now? If I could only express what I feel! Well, Mauve understands all this, and he will give me as much

technical advice as he can – the things which fill my head and my heart must be expressed in drawings or pictures.

Mauve himself is very busy with a large picture of a fishing smack drawn as far as the dunes by horses. I think it delightful to be in The Hague, and I find so many beautiful things here, I must try to express something of it. Adieu, boy, a handshake in thought and write soon, believe me,
Yours sincerely, Vincent

Kind regards from Mauve and Jet.

I have a little money left, but how long will it last? I must stay at the inn until January 1. Address your letters, A. Mauve, Uileboomen 198. I go there almost every day.