

Letter 569
Arles, 7 January 1889

My dear Theo,

I hope it will not amaze you too much that though I wrote you a letter this morning, I add a few lines the same evening.

For there were several days when I could not write, but you see clearly that this is over now.

I have written a note to Mother and Wil and addressed it to our sister, with the sole intention of setting their minds at rest in case you have said anything about my having been ill.

Just tell them on your part that I have been a bit beat, the way I used to be in the past, when I had that venereal trouble in The Hague, and that I got myself looked after in the hospital. Only that it is not worth mentioning since I have completely recovered, and that I was only in the aforesaid hospital for a few days. In this way your information will square with the note which I have made them swallow at home in Holland. And by so doing, it will be very difficult for them to get into a stew about it. I hope you will think this stratagem innocent enough.

Also you will see by this that I have not yet forgotten how to jest once in a while.

I am going to set to work again tomorrow. I shall begin by doing one or two still lifes so as to get back into the habit of painting. Roulin has been splendid to me, and I dare say that he will remain a lasting friend. I shall have need enough of that still, for he knows the country well.

We had our dinner together today.

If ever you want to make the house surgeon Rey very happy, this is what would please him hugely. He has heard of a picture by Rembrandt, the "Anatomy Lesson." I told him that we would get him the engraving after it for his study.

As soon as I feel somewhat up to it, I hope to do his portrait. Last Sunday I met another doctor, who knows his Delacroix and Puvis de Chavannes at least theoretically, and who is very curious about impressionism. I think I can hope to become better acquainted with him.

I think that that engraving of the "Anatomy Lesson" is stocked by François Buffa & Sons, and that the net price should be from 12 to 15 francs. We had better have it framed here to save the cost of transportation. I assure you that some days at the hospital were very interesting, and perhaps it is from the sick that one learns how to live.

I hope I have just had simply an artist's fit, and then a lot of fever after very considerable loss of blood, as an artery was severed; but my appetite came back at once, my digestion is all right and my blood recovers from day to day, and in the same way serenity returns to my brain day by day. So please quite deliberately forget your unhappy journey and my illness.

You see that I am doing what you asked, and writing you what I feel and think. On your part follow this meeting with the Bongers up quietly. I hope it will continue as a lasting friendship, and that perhaps it will be even more.

If I stay here, it is because for the moment I might not be able to transplant myself. After some time we can go over the pros and cons of the situation and figure things out again.

With a good handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent