

My dear Theo and dear Jo,

I have just received the letter in which you say that the child is ill; I should greatly like to come and see you, and what holds me back is the thought that I should be even more powerless than you in the present state of anxiety. But I feel how dreadful it must be and I wish I could help you.

I am afraid of increasing the confusion by coming immediately. But I share your anxiety with all my heart. It is a great pity that M. Gachet's house is so encumbered with all sorts of things. But for that, I think that it would be a good plan to come and stay here – with him – with the little one, for a full month at least. I think that country air has an enormous effect. In this very street there are youngsters who were born in Paris and were really sickly – who, however, are doing well now. It would also be possible to come to the inn, it's true. So that you should not be too much alone, I should come to you myself for a week or fortnight. That would not increase the expenses.

As for the little one, really, I am beginning to fear that it will be necessary to give him fresh air and, even more, the little bustle of other children that a village has. I think Jo, too, who shares our anxieties and risks, ought to have a change of air in the country from time to time.

Rather a gloomy letter from Gauguin, he talks vaguely of definitely having decided on Madagascar, but so vaguely that you can see that he is only thinking of this because he really does not know what else to think of.

And carrying out the plan seems almost absurd to me.

Here are three sketches – one of a peasant woman, big yellow hat with a knot of sky-blue ribbons, very red face, rich blue blouse with orange spots, background of ears of wheat [JH 2054].

It is a size 30 canvas, but I'm afraid it's really a bit coarse [F 774, JH 2053]. Then the horizontal landscape with fields [JH 2039], like one of Michel's, but then the colour is soft green, yellow and green-blue [F 775, JH 2038]. Then the undergrowth around poplars [JH 2042], violet trunks running across the landscape, perpendicular like columns; the depths of the wood are blue and at the bottom of the big trunks, the grassy ground full of flowers, white, pink, yellow and green, long grass turning russet, and flowers [F 773, JH 2041].

The people at the inn here used to live in Paris, where they were constantly unwell, parents and children; here they never have anything wrong with them at all, especially the youngest one, who came when he was two months old, and then the mother had difficulty nursing him, whereas here everything came right almost at once. On the other hand, you work all day, and at present you probably hardly sleep. I honestly believe that Jo would have twice as much milk here, and that when she comes here, you will be able to do without cows, donkeys and other quadrupeds. And as for Jo – so that she should have some company in the daytime – well, she could stay right opposite old Gachet's house, perhaps you remember that there is an inn just across the way at the bottom of the hill?

What can I say about a future perhaps, perhaps, without the Boussods? ¹

That will be as it may, you have not spared yourself trouble for them, you have served them with exemplary loyalty at all times.

I myself am also trying to do as well as I can, but I will not conceal from you that I hardly dare count on always being in good health. And if my disease returns, you would forgive me. I still love art and life very much, but as for ever having a wife of my own, I have no great faith in that. I rather fear that toward say forty – or rather say nothing – I declare I know nothing, absolutely nothing as to what turn this may take. But I am writing to you at once because I think that you must not be unreasonably worried about the little one; if it's just that he's cutting teeth, well, to make the job easier for him, it would perhaps be possible to distract him with more here where there are children, and animals, and flowers, and fresh air. I shake your hand and Jo's in thought and a kiss for the little one.

Ever yours, Vincent

An Englishman, an Australian, named Walpole Brooke, will probably come to see you, he lives at 16 Rue de la Grande Chaumière – I told him that you would let him know when he could come to see the canvases that are at your place.

He will probably show you some of his studies, which are still rather smeary, but all the same he does observe nature. He has been here at Auvers for some months and we've sometimes gone out together. He was brought up in Japan, you would not know it to look at his painting – but that may come.

Thanks for the package of paints, for the 50-fr. note, and the article on the Independents.

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1. See letter T39; Theo had written that the child was ill; he also spoke of a plan to give up his job and set out on his own. So much was needed, and under the circumstances Vincent as well as Theo had to economize. Theo also wished in his letter that Vincent too might find a wife someday to share his life with him. A few days later Vincent himself came to see Theo and Jo in Paris.

[Sketches included in letter: Girl with Straw Hat, Sitting in the Wheat, JH 2054; Wheat Fields, JH 2039; Undergrowth with Two Figures, JH 2042]