

My dear friend,

Thank you for your letter, and for what it contained. It saddens me to think that even successful paintings do not cover their costs.

I was touched by what you wrote about the family. "They are fairly well but even so it's sad to see them." Twelve years ago one would have sworn that, come what may, the family would always get on and do well. It would give Mother much pleasure if your marriage came off; and you also ought not to stay single for the sake of your health and business. As for me I feel the desire for marriage and children dwindling and now and then I'm rather depressed that I should be like that as I approach 35, when I ought to be feeling quite the opposite. And sometimes I blame it all on this rotten painting. It was Richepin who said somewhere: the love of art is the undoing of true love. I think that's absolutely right, but on the other hand true love makes one weary of art. And although I already feel old and broken, I can still be amorous enough at times to feel less passionate about painting. One must have ambition to succeed, and ambition seems to me absurd. I wish above all I were less of a burden to you – and that needn't be impossible from now on, for I hope to make such progress that you'll be able to show what I do in full confidence without compromising yourself. And then I'll retire somewhere down south and get away from the sight of so many painters who fill me with disgust as human beings.

You can be sure of one thing – I shan't be trying to do any more work for the Tambourin. Anyway, I think it's about to change hands, and I most certainly won't raise any objections to that. As for la Segatori, that is quite a different matter. I still feel affection for her and I hope that she, too, still feels some for me. But at the moment she is in a difficult situation, she is neither a free agent nor mistress in her own house, on top of which she's in pain and unwell. Although I wouldn't say so openly – I'm convinced she's had an abortion (unless, that is, she did have a miscarriage) – anyway, in her case I don't hold it against her.

She'll be better in about two months' time, I hope, and then she may well be grateful to me for not having bothered her. Mind you, once she's well again, if she refuses in cold blood to return what is mine, or does me down in any way, I shan't pull my punches – but it won't come to that. After all, I know her well enough to trust her still. And mind you, if she does manage to hang on to her establishment, then from a business point of view I shouldn't blame her for choosing to fleece rather than be fleeced. If that means she has to tread on my toes a bit – all right – she can get on with it. When I saw her last, she didn't tread all over my heart, which she would have done had she been as nasty as people say.

I saw Tanguy yesterday and he has put a canvas I've just done in the window. I've done four since you left and I've got a big one under way. I realize that these big, long canvases are hard to sell, but later on people will see that there's fresh air and good humour in them. The whole lot would do well as decoration for a dining room or a country house. And if you were to fall properly in love and were to get married, then it doesn't seem impossible to me that you might manage to acquire a country house like so many other art dealers. If one lives well, one spends more, but also gains more ground, and perhaps nowadays one does better looking rich than looking hard up. It's better to enjoy life than to do away with oneself.

Regards to all at home.

Ever yours,  
Vincent