

Letter 558
Arles, 28 October 1888

My dear Theo,

About falling ill, I have already told you that I did not think I should, but I'd have fallen ill if my expenditure had continued.

For I was terribly uneasy lest I should be forcing you to make an effort beyond your strength. On the one hand I thought that I could not do better than carry through the thing we had begun when persuading Gauguin to join us, and on the other, as you may know from experience, when one is furnishing or settling down, it is a lot more difficult than one thinks. Now I hope to breathe easily at last, since we have all had a tremendous stroke of luck in your being able to sell a picture for Gauguin. One way or another, all three of us, he and you and I, can pull ourselves together enough to realize what we have done.

Do not be afraid that I shall be worried about money. Now Gauguin has come, the object is for the moment attained. With the two of us sharing expenses, we shan't spend more for two than it has cost one to live alone.

He can even save money in proportion to his selling. It will help him, say in a year, to settle in Martinique, which he otherwise could not save enough money for.

You will have my work and also a picture from him every month. And I shall do just as much work without having so much trouble – so many expenses. Even a long time ago I thought that the combination we have just made would be good policy. The house is getting on very well indeed, and is becoming not only comfortable but an artist's house too.

So have no fear for me, nor for yourself either.

Indeed, I was horribly worried about you, for if Gauguin had not come to the same conclusion about it, I should have caused you pretty heavy expenses for nothing. But Gauguin is astonishing as a man, he does not let himself get out of hand, and he will wait here very quietly, working hard, for the right moment to take a great step forward. He needs rest as much as I do. With the money he has just earned, he certainly could have treated himself to a rest cure in Brittany just as well, but as things are now, he is sure of being able to wait without getting fatally into debt once more. Together we shall not spend more than 250 fr. a month. And we shall spend much less on paint, since we are going to make it ourselves. So on your part, don't be uneasy about us, and have a breathing spell too, you need it badly.

On my part I just want to tell you that I ask only to go on at an average rate of 150 a month (and the same for Gauguin). In any case that reduces my personal expenses. While his pictures are sure to go up.

After that, if you keep my pictures for yourself, either in Paris or here, I should so much rather be able to say bluntly that you prefer to keep my work for ourselves and not sell it than join in the scuffle for money just now. Honestly. Besides, if what I am doing should be good, then we shall lose nothing in the money line, for it will mature quietly, like wine in the cellar. In another way it is only right that I should take some trouble to make a painting such that even from the financial point of view it is better that it should be on my canvas than in the tubes.

Now, in conclusion, I venture to hope that in six months Gauguin and you and I will all see that we have founded a little studio which will last, and which will remain an outpost or a way station, necessary or at least useful to all who want to see the South.

I shake your hand firmly.

Ever yours, Vincent

I do not yet know what Gauguin thinks of my decorations in general, I only know that there are already some studies which he really likes, like the sower, the sunflowers, and the bedroom.

And as for the whole, I do not in the least know myself yet, because I need some more canvases of the other seasons. Gauguin has already very nearly found his Arlésienne, and I wish I had got that far, but for my part it is the landscape that comes to me, and I find it varied enough. So after all my modest work is going on as usual.

I venture to think that you will like the new "Sower." [F 494, JH 1617

I am writing in haste; we have loads of work to do. He and I intend to make a tour of the brothels pretty often, so as to study them.