

Letter 386b
Nuenen, late November 1884

Dear brother,

Thank you for your letter and the money.

Assuming what you say is true, namely that you have repeatedly started to write to me, but that you did not succeed in finishing the letter – well, I find myself in the same situation, for twice already I have thrown away what I had written into the fire, because I thought it either too bitter or too sad. What shall I say to you? Your letter sounds very correct, and has the tone of a good ministre des Beaux Arts.

But this does not alter the fact that it is not much use to me, and that I am not satisfied with it – and especially in your “later on, when you have expressed yourself more clearly, we shall perhaps find something in your present work, and then we shall not act as we do now...” I see only a fair promise – but in reality a ministerial fata morgana in the eyes of a fellow like me, who would rather find an outlet for his work in a more pedestrian way, provided that it is at the present moment.

There you are – if need be an outlet at the present moment, but preferably not with third-class dealers – and this is something I cannot demand of you, considering your position – que soit – but on the other hand you cannot demand of me that I resign myself to a ministerial fata morgana. After all, I am too practical for that!

Kindly appreciate that I call you a good minister – and you know well enough how damned bad the fellows elevated above solid ground are as a rule, so that I am only too happy to value a few bright spots even in the ministerial sphere. Which is not being intransigent, and which is really why I piss on the sanctuary of the intransigent fellows – which I do once in a while – on sanctuaries in general.

But to business – do you realise that at present my expenses amount to two guilders a day; take one guilder for models and one for canvas, colours, etc. – I cannot do it cheaper – I still have some bills to pay and – I have to go to Antwerp.

My situation here is a bit too tense, right now my life is not pleasant, and I do not find it easy to possess my soul in patience, as they say.

At home – even though there are no rows – they do not think the prospect of my staying here too long very cheerful. Which I can well understand.

And yet I cannot go away – either leaving completely or partly (by “partly” I mean keeping on my studio, which is my intention) – unless I go on making a lot of studies and find something new by way of security in Antwerp.

Be so kind as to take this into consideration. And if you should be willing to do your best on the financial side, so that things will be somewhat easier for me, I believe there will be a chance of keeping the peace in the future, though it will be far from real harmony.

Which I wish for myself as well as for others, this composure I mean. With regard to my work you say what is not there may turn up yet – and I say the same about the fata morgana in your saying “later on...we shall perhaps, etc.” – (see above).

At present – it is a fata morgana to me, and at all events I want to try Antwerp.

Goodbye, with a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent