

Letter 529
Arles, c. 29 August 1888

My dear Theo,

I shall have to pay my rent on September 1, and if you could send the week's money the day you get your month's pay, I could pay the rent on time, then the outlay would be spread over two weeks. And if you could send the money on Sunday by letter or by a telegraph order, I should not be sorry to gain a day in this way.

I have two models this week: an Arlésienne and the old peasant. I am doing him this time against a background of vivid orange which, although it does not pretend to be the image of a red sunset, may nevertheless give a suggestion of one [F 444, JH 1563].

Unfortunately I am afraid that the little Arlésienne will not turn up for the rest of the picture. As a matter of fact, the last time she came, she asked me for all the money I had promised her for posing in advance, and as I made no objection to that, she has made off and I have not seen her again. But some day or other she is bound to come back; it would be a little too thick if she failed me altogether.

I am also working on a bunch of flowers, and a still life of an old pair of shoes [F 461, JH 1569].

I have heaps of ideas for my work, and if I go on with figure painting very industriously, I may possibly find more. But what's the use? Sometimes I feel too feeble to fight against existing circumstances, and I should have to be cleverer and richer and younger to win.

Fortunately for me, I do not hanker after victory any more, and all that I seek in painting is a way to make life bearable.

Still no reply from Russell. He can't have a penny just now.

I hope our sister has seen the Luxembourg again by now.

We have had two or three perfect days here, very hot and no wind. The grapes are beginning to ripen, but I hear that they will not be good.

I must work again today. I have qualms about the last days of this week, because of those models.

I am negotiating with some other people to pose for me. There is something always driving me on to do as many figure studies as ever I can.

In the future things may well be worse again, and then whatever comes, once I have made myself master of the figure, I think the work will seem deeper.

A handshake for you and our sister,

Ever yours, Vincent

Difficulties with models continue with exactly the same tenacity as the mistral here. It is not cheering.