

My dear Theo,

You will probably be back in Paris at the moment when this letter arrives. I wish you and your wife a great deal of happiness. Thank you very much for your kind letter and for the 100-franc note it contained.

Out of the 65 francs which I owe, I have paid only 25 francs to my landlord, having had to pay three months' rent in advance for a room which I shan't be living in, but where I have sent my furniture, and having besides had expenses of 10 francs or so for moving, etc.

Then as my clothes were not in too brilliant a condition and I had to have something new to go out in the street in, I got a suit for 35 francs and spent 4 francs on six pairs of socks. So out of the note I have only a few francs left, and at the end of the month I must pay the landlord again, though he might be kept waiting for a few days. I settled my bill at the hospital today, and there is still almost enough for the rest of the month out of the money I still have on deposit. At the end of the month I should like to go to the hospital in St. Rémy, or another institution of this kind, of which M. Salles has told me. Forgive me if I don't go into details and argue the pros and cons of such a step.

Talking about it would be mental torture.

It will be enough, I hope, if I tell you that I feel quite unable to take a new studio and to stay there alone – here in Arles or elsewhere, for the moment it is all the same; I have tried to make up my mind to begin again, but at the moment it's not possible.

I should be afraid of losing the power to work, which is coming back to me now, by forcing myself and by having all the other responsibilities of a studio on my shoulders besides.

And temporarily I wish to remain shut up as much for my own peace of mind as for other people's. What comforts me a little is that I am beginning to consider madness as a disease like any other and accept the thing as such, whereas during the crises themselves I thought that everything I imagined was real. Anyway, the fact is that I do not want to think or talk about it. You'll spare me any explanations, but I ask you and Messrs. Salles and Rey to arrange things so that I can go there as a resident boarder at the end of this month or the beginning of May.

Beginning again that painter's life I have been living, isolated in the studio so often, and without any other means of distraction than going to a café or a restaurant with all the neighbors criticizing, etc., I can't face it: going to live with another person, say another artist – difficult, very difficult – it's taking too much responsibility on oneself. I dare not even think of it.

So let's try it three months to begin with, and afterward we shall see. Now one's board ought to be about 80 francs, and I shall do a little painting and drawing without putting such frenzy into it as a year ago. Do not be grieved at all this. Certainly these last days were sad, with all the moving, taking away all my furniture, packing up the canvases that are going to you, but the thing I felt saddest about was that you had given me all these things with such brotherly love, and that for so many years you were always the one who supported me, and then to be obliged to come back and tell you this sorry tale – but it's difficult to express it as I felt it. The goodness you have shown me is not lost, because you had it and it remains for you; even if the material results should be nil, it remains for you all the more; but I can't say it as I felt it. Meanwhile you do understand that if alcohol has undoubtedly been one of the great causes of my madness, then it came on very slowly and will go away slowly too, assuming it does go, of course. Or the same thing if it comes from smoking. But I should only hope that it – this recovery [probably a word has been omitted here] the frightful superstition of some people on the subject of alcohol, so that they prevail upon themselves never to drink or smoke.

We are already ordered not to lie or steal, etc., and not to commit other crimes great or small and it would become too complicated if it was absolutely indispensable to have nothing but virtues in the society in which we are very undeniably planted, whether it be good or bad.

I assure you that during those queer days when many things seem odd to me because my brain is agitated, through it all I don't dislike old Pangloss.

But you would do me a service by discussing the question frankly with M. Salles and M. Rey.

I should think that with an allowance of 75 francs or so a month there must be a way of interning me so that should have everything I need.

Then, if it is possible, I'd very much like to be able to go out in the daytime and draw or paint outside. Seeing that I go out every day now here, and think that this could continue.

Paying more, I warn you, would make me less happy. The company of other patients, you understand, is not at all disagreeable to me; on the contrary, it distracts me.

Ordinary food suits me quite well, especially if they gave me a little more wine there, as they do here usually a half-liter instead of a quarter for in stance.

But a private room – it remains to be seen what the arrangements of an institution like that would be. Mind you Rey is overburdened with work, overburdened. If he writes to you, or M. Salles, better do exactly what they say.

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After all we must take our share, my boy, of the diseases of our time – in a way it is only fair after all that, having lived some years in comparatively good health, we should have our share sooner or later. As for me, you know well enough that I should not exactly have chosen madness if I had had a choice, but once you have an affliction of that sort, you can't catch it again. And there'll perhaps be the consolation of being able to go on working a bit at painting.

How will you manage not to speak too well or too ill of Paris and many other things to your wife? Do you feel in advance that you will be quite capable of keeping exactly the golden mean all the time and from all points of view?

I shake your hand in thought. I do not know if I shall write very, very often because not all my days are clear enough for me to write fairly logically. All your kindness to me seemed greater than ever to me today. I can't put the way I feel it in words, but I assure you that this kindness has been pure gold, and if you do not see any results from it, my dear brother, don't fret about it; your own goodness abides. Only transfer this affection to your wife as much as possible. And if we correspond somewhat less, you will see that if she is what I think her, she will comfort you. That is what I hope.

Rey is a very nice fellow, a tremendous worker, always on the job. What men the modern doctors are! If you see Gauguin or write to him, remember me to him.

I shall be very glad to hear any news you can give me of our mother and sister, and if they are well; tell them to look upon this affair of mine – I mean it – as nothing to be inordinately distressed about, because I may be comparatively unfortunate, but after all, in spite of that, I may still have some almost normal years before me. It is a disease like any other, and now almost everyone we know among our friends has something the matter with him. So is it worth talking about? I am sorry to give trouble to M. Salles, and Rey, and above all to you too, but what is one to do? My head isn't steady enough to begin again as before – then the important thing is not to cause any more scenes in public, and naturally, being a little calmer now, I distinctly feel that I was mentally and physically in an unhealthy condition. And then people have been kind, those I remember, and as for the others, after all I caused some uneasiness, and if I had been in a normal condition, things would never have happened the way they did.

Goodbye, write when you can.

Ever yours, Vincent