

# YELLOW HEAT

(Vincent van Gogh in Arles)

by

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## CHARACTERS

VINCENT VAN GOGH

JOSEPH ROULIN—as painted by van Gogh

MME GINOUX—as painted by van Gogh

RACHEL—a prostitute, neither young nor attractive

PAUL GAUGUIN

## THE SET

The Yellow House Vincent van Gogh rented for his studio in Arles, France. At least a suggestion of two levels: downstairs the studio; upstairs one bedroom for Vincent and one bedroom for Paul Gauguin. The house would be best somewhat raked, somewhat askew. Downstage of the house a bit of street. Stage right of the house, Mme Ginoux's Café de la Gare, based on "The Night Café" of Vincent's painting: garish, discomfoting. Stage left of the house, the public garden: harmonious, comforting.

**ACT I**  
**Scene 1**

JOSEPH

*(Entering, speaking to the audience)* Welcome to Arles, a dirty, sleepy town in the South of France. Where you are is Place Lamartine, the public square—actually a triangle. I want to get everything just right.

Very long ago, Arles was an important town. But not now. There's not much to do here, not much to see. Nothing much happens here. No one who means much ever comes here.

*(As JOSEPH continues, VINCENT, humming or whistling a joyful tune, bustles on with a jumbled load of clothes. He hurries to the door of the yellow house, attempts to open it, fails, and sets down his load.)*

Especially right here—to the poor side of town, the north side. Here's the public...

*(VINCENT tries the door again, rattling the door noisily, and exits.)*

JOSEPH

I'll get to him in a bit. This is the public garden. Such as it is. Over there is the Café de la Gare. Over that way is the Rhone. I can walk out of the café at night and throw a stone—or a bottle—into the river. Or at least into the mud along the shore.

One day, a stranger out of the North came to Arles.

Vincent. This Yellow House will become his house.

*(VINCENT sets down his load and exits.)*

JOSEPH

*(Making a fresh attempt)* I first met Vincent in the fields over beyond the railroad station, quietly painting the melting snow. Now it's the beginning of May. Already the peach trees, the plum and cherry trees have dropped their blossoms. The hot, dusty mistral wind has knocked them from the trees. All of Arles is hot and dry and dusty.

If you'd look in that pile over there *(Indicates the pile Vincent brought in)* you'd find some paintings from the few days the blossoms were hanging on the trees. The blossoms were important to Vincent.

*(Offstage, RACHEL laughs smugly. MME GINOUX enters the café.)*

JOSEPH

That is Madame Ginoux. The Café de la Gare belongs to Monsieur and Madame Ginoux.

*(RACHEL saunters on.)*

RACHEL

What a gentleman! I go into the butcher shop, pick out something I want, shake my bottom furiously and yell about the prices, and he gives me what I want for almost free. For almost free and a pinch on the bottom. We have it worked out.

*(She enters the café and leisurely pours herself a glass of wine.)*

JOSEPH

That's Rachel. Until Vincent came, Rachel was our only source of excitement in Arles. *(JOSEPH enters the café.)* Madame.

MME GINOUX

Monsieur.

*(VINCENT, clutching paintings and a sketchbook, hurries on and crosses to the café.)*

VINCENT

Madame. Monsieur Vire said he would leave the key to the Yellow House with you.

MME GINOUX

Monsieur Vire will NOT leave the key until you patch the roof. And repair the rotten stair.

VINCENT

But I already rented that house—for fifteen francs per month!

MME GINOUX

Fifteen francs per month? That's giving you the house.

VINCENT

Paid in advance. With the last of my money!

MME GINOUX

I wouldn't rent you that house for fifty francs.

VINCENT

That house is my studio! But now I am out on the street! Where can I turn? To you. Only to you. You MUST rent me a room.

*(As the conversation continues, JOSEPH enters, pours himself a cup of coffee, and attempts to read a newspaper.)*

MME GINOUX

I do not rent to beggars. I charge one franc per night. No food included. No drinks included. I collect one week in advance.

VINCENT

Excellent. It's settled. My brother Theo will send me the money.

MME GINOUX

Did you hear me? Paid in advance. Seven francs.

VINCENT

I could climb easily over the rotten stair. But Monsieur Vire is right about the roof. It would not do to have the rain on my paintings. Ah, but what does that matter? I am living above your café now. Perhaps for a week, perhaps two. *(MME GINOUX glares. VINCENT empties his pockets searching for money.)* Would you care to hang one of my paintings on your wall in exchange for lodging?

MME GINOUX

Certainly not! Let me tell you plainly, Monsieur, I will not rent to you. You are not clean, you have no money.

VINCENT

Money, money, money! Always money to think about. How can I paint when I must always think about money?

MME GINOUX

I believe they're hiring diggers for the repairs on the canal.

RACHEL

Madame Franette needs a porter at the brothel.

VINCENT

I must paint. Every day. Otherwise... So I paint! Or I sketch. Until I receive more money from Theo for paints—and for food...oh yes, and for lodging, I haven't forgotten lodging—I am completely out of chrome yellow and cobalt blue—I sketch these days with a reed pen in my notebook. Here.

*(VINCENT sorts through his material, finds the notebook, and shows it to MME GINOUX and RACHEL who display no interest.)*

VINCENT

Look at that. Look! Look!

*(RACHEL laughs. VINCENT forces the notebook onto JOSEPH who gives it a courteous inspection.)*

VINCENT

There. There. Joseph. You see? I am a serious artist. Only a real artist can sketch a grain field like that. I use no pigments, but you can see the scarlet of the poppies. There. You see?

JOSEPH

*(To the audience)* I didn't see.

MME GINOUX

I saw no scarlet. Did you see scarlet, Joseph?

RACHEL

Scarlet? *(She laughs.)*

VINCENT

It is true, Madame. I did not come here to sketch. I could sketch as well in Paris. But I could not find the yellow sun, the chrome yellow sun in Paris. My studio must be **HERE**. **ABSOLUTELY**. Here the colors have the brilliance of the colors of Japan.

RACHEL

*(Laughing)* Japan?

*(VINCENT crosses to get his belongings—the room is settled in his mind.)*

JOSEPH

Painters, too, need a roof over their heads, Madame.

MME GINOUX

I am not in the business of charity.

*(JOSEPH produces a few coins.)*

VINCENT

*(Without noticing)* When I come back from a day of the labor of balancing these Southern colors under this sun I am utterly exhausted.

MME GINOUX

How soon will his house be ready?

JOSEPH

How long can a few shingles take?

VINCENT

So yes I do drink and smoke too much...

JOSEPH

And a board or two on the stairs.

VINCENT

...but I will pay you for every single drink, Madame.

*(MME GINOUX takes the coins from JOSEPH.)*

MME GINOUX

One week. One week only!

*(MME GINOUX starts off, but VINCENT stops her.)*

VINCENT

Madame, do you know what you are doing? You are enabling me—YOU, Madame, YOU are—to prepare the Studio for Artists in the South! Not for myself only, but for ALL needing artists. For, for, perhaps, in time, even Paul Gauguin!

*(JOSEPH helps VINCENT with his belongings as all exit through the café.)*

**Vincent's recorded voice: "I can do very well without God in my life and in my painting, but I cannot do without something which is greater than I, which is my life—the power to create."**

## Scene 2

*(Rainy daylight. The studio is almost bare of furniture, but now it is cluttered with painting equipment.)*

*VINCENT enters the studio, looks about with pride and satisfaction, then sets a painting aside carefully to dry and drops his gear in the middle of the studio. He collapses exhausted on a chair for a few moments and lights his pipe. Then he gets up, opens the shutters, and takes off old, wet, worn shoes. Tenderly, almost reverently, he arranges the shoes in various ways together in various places on the tile floor and finds the best arrangement where the best light is coming through the window. He sets a stretched canvas on his easel. He searches through his paint box.)*

VINCENT

Brown. Brown. Brown. And... *(Looks at the shoes)* cerulean blue.

*(VINCENT does not find the paints he wants; he charges to his bedroom and rummages through more paints. MME GINOUX walks briskly to the house. She knocks on the door. After a brief pause she enters the studio.)*

MME GINOUX

Vincent. *(No response)* Vincent.

VINCENT

*(Still in his room)* Good afternoon, Madame.

MME GINOUX

I've come for my money. *(No response)* And this time I'm staying right here until you pay me. In full.

*(She picks up the old shoes with distaste, sets them out the front door, and sits. VINCENT continues to rummage.)*

VINCENT

Brown. Brown. Brown. Raw sienna! That's it, raw sienna! Shadows of cerulean blue. Raw sienna. Cerulean blue.

*(Tubes of paint in hand, VINCENT charges back into the studio, triumphantly humming from Wagner's "The Ride of the Walkure.")*

VINCENT

Oh. Madame Ginoux. You're here. Did you bring a letter? From Monsieur Gauguin perhaps?



MME GINOUX

You've been sneaking off every morning before I can speak to you. You owe me three weeks' rent on my room.

VINCENT

Where are my shoes?

MME GINOUX

Filthy! I took care of them.

VINCENT

In the trash!

*(VINCENT charges out of the house past the shoes and around in back of the house. MME GINOUX closes the shutters firmly and sits. VINCENT returns immediately in very muddy socks.)*

VINCENT

Madame, where are...

*(He notices the shoes, picks them up and enters the studio, leaving muddy tracks across the floor. He sneezes and snuffles. He carefully arranges the shoes in place for painting, forcefully reopens the shutters, checks the light again on the shoes, and rearranges them to his satisfaction. He notices his socks, takes them off and throws them aside, then sets up behind the easel and starts to paint.)*

MME GINOUX

I'm not leaving until you pay me.

*(VINCENT sees the mud, takes off his hat and meticulously wipes the mud from around the shoes and puts his hat back on. He begins painting, meanwhile humming "The Ride of the Walkure" big in contrast to the evident smallness of his subject.)*

MME GINOUX

This is no way to keep house. *(No response)* People are talking about you, Vincent. And about me for letting you in my café. You're peculiar, they say. You come up to people wearing your filthy clothes and you say strange things to them. You're dangerous, they say. LISTEN to me! I'm trying to help you. Do you know how people treat strange ones like you? Do you? Put down that brush! *(No response. She tears a piece from one of VINCENT's blank canvases and attacks the footprints with the canvas.)* I don't know why I should be doing this. YOU should be doing this. *(She scrubs harder as VINCENT just stares at the shoes.)*

VINCENT

*(Finally, almost under his breath)* I am painting, Madame.

MME GINOUX

Painting shoes. Old, worthless shoes.

VINCENT

Patience Escalier.

MME GINOUX

What?

VINCENT

Patience Escalier. Patience Escalier. My painting about shoes is about Patience Escalier. When I am painting Patience Escalier's shoes I am painting Patience Escalier.

MME GINOUX

Who's Patience Escalier?

VINCENT

My peasant. MY man with a hoe.

MME GINOUX

Some old fool, no doubt.

VINCENT

Madame!

*(He notices her scrubbing the floor and immediately begins to study her.)*

MME GINOUX

And where are your boots?

VINCENT

I traded them to Monsieur Escalier.

MME GINOUX

Your boots were perfectly good! And look at these! What a fool!

VINCENT

For a pair of boots I got two paintings. Patience Escalier—my first real model in weeks—and his shoes. Two paintings for one pair of boots.

MME GINOUX

Paintings... for boots.

VINCENT

It should not be necessary, Madame. It WOULD not be necessary if you would permit me to paint you.

MME GINOUX

Oh no. Definitely not. People would see it and laugh at me.

VINCENT

Only the fools.

MME GINOUX

Then I suppose we're all fools.

VINCENT

Ah, perhaps...

*(She continues to scrub; he studies her. When the floor is clean, MME GINOUX wipes her hands and stands next to VINCENT to see the painting. <A projection of "A Pair of Shoes" F461 comes up.> Intense moment as they are aware of each other's closeness.)*

VINCENT

I would paint your portrait with respect, Madame Ginoux.

MME GINOUX

I would not care to look like a pair of old shoes.

VINCENT

Ah, well, do you think you could look so beautiful as that? The shoes are very good models. They sat very still while I was painting.

MME GINOUX

I would not be so good. I would have to breathe.

VINCENT

They did breathe too, of course. Especially the left shoe. And it wiggled a bit. I think it wanted to scratch.

MME GINOUX

I cannot be your model.

VINCENT

I'll pay you.

MME GINOUX

Pay me? Pay me my rent.

VINCENT

I can't. I have no money...just now. An artist MUST have models.

MME GINOUX

Shoes.

VINCENT

I prefer people.

MME GINOUX

You should paint Napoleon like other painters do.

MME GINOUX

Napoleon is dead.

MME GINOUX

But your shoes aren't dead?

VINCENT

Of course not. Look at them. *(Pause)* No, they don't breathe. Or eat. They're fine models. Fine...but not as fine as you would be.

*(Awkward moment)*

MME GINOUX

I came here for my rent.

*(MME GINOUX drops the canvas and exits. The painting of the shoes is now up full bright.)*

VINCENT

I will NEVER get enough real, live models. Nobody wants my paintings. I paint, paint, paint every day and Theo can't sell even one. I cost him too much money. I even cost HER money! *(His depression snaps into anger.)* Paul Gauguin will never come here. With no models. Pah! The Studio in the South! Pah!

*(He picks up a shoe, starts to throw it at the painting of the shoes, restrains himself. He sees the canvas MME GINOUX used as a rag.)*

VINCENT

My canvas!

*(He grabs the canvas rag and the shoes and runs groaning madly outside, through the public garden and offstage.)*

**Scene 3**

*(VINCENT and JOSEPH enter, drunk, sharing a bottle of wine and a chunk of bread, arm in arm, walking down the street.)*

VINCENT

You call this bread?

JOSEPH

That IS bread. Bread.

VINCENT

Ha! *(Chews and considers)* My stomach's sour. Foul. From eating in this town. The soup. And drinking the wine. The wine's poison. All acid. Smell my breath. *(He sticks his face in JOSEPH's face and expels his breath.)*

JOSEPH

Whew!

VINCENT

See? I need some soup.

*(The following speeches are almost entirely overlapping.)*

JOSEPH

Quit complaining! You're always hungry. Or the food's no good. I never heard anyone complain so much. You don't work, so you don't eat. It's simple.

VINCENT

Don't work! I was up working before you this morning. Long before you.

JOSEPH

No, you don't. I mean REAL work. Dabbing paint on canvas is not REAL work.

VINCENT

And I'll be working still while you're at home to dinner.

JOSEPH

I have EARNED my dinner.

VINCENT

And I suppose I haven't?

## JOSEPH

France is not a monarchy. No sir! We are a republic now; we have been a republic—of sorts, in our better times—for a century now; there are no idle aristocrats left to support a lot of idle artists—especially idle artists from foreign countries—to paint a lot of useless pretty pictures. The Revolution and Napoleon took care of that! If we work, we eat! Simple! Work: eat!

## VINCENT

PRETTY pictures? PRETTY! You think I just want to paint PRETTY pictures: I'm an ARTIST, damn it! And I can't even get a good bowl of soup. Or real wine. Or a chunk of REAL cheese. Just look here—the last teeth I have are wiggling in my jaw and ready to fall out. Here, look. Look at my teeth, damn it!

## JOSEPH

Alright. But keep your distance! (*He starts to look.*) Swallow your bread. (*He waits while VINCENT chews and swallows the bread.*) Here, drink some of this. (*VINCENT drinks, then JOSEPH looks.*) You need to visit a dentist.

## VINCENT

Perhaps I can paint his portrait for some new teeth. You think? Ha!

*(Finding that prospective deal hilarious, they start off.)*

## VINCENT

I have it all calculated. A man who lives fifty years and spends two thousand francs a year will spend one hundred thousand francs. At one hundred francs a painting, that's... How many paintings is that?

## JOSEPH

I think you must come to dinner at my house some day. It'll save you a franc or two. (*They break down in laughter.*) I'll speak to Madame Roulin about it. (*Beat*) Brush your teeth first.

*(JOSEPH exits offstage, leaving VINCENT beaming with joy. After a moment, he exits.)*

**Vincent's recorded voice: "What am I in the eyes of most people? A nonentity, an oddity, a disagreeable person—a little lower than the lowest. (*Beat*) But inside me there is still a calm pure harmony. (*Beat*) Music.**

**"I want people to say of my work, that man feels deeply. Despite my so-called coarseness—perhaps precisely because of it, I should one day like to show by my work what such an eccentric, such a nobody, has in his heart."**

#### Scene 4

*(Heavy wind. RACHEL walks on, working the street. VINCENT enters, exhausted, coughing, wiping his nose, but happy, carrying a new painting and painting equipment.)*

VINCENT

Rachel. Rachel, come here. Look at my house. One day, my own family of painters will work there. In the evening, one day, Paul Gauguin will go to one window, I will go to another, and we will look out on this public garden, with its weeping ash trees, its darkening cypresses, and its oleanders lifting blossoms of pink light out of the black shadows of the cypresses. And over all, the sun will radiate a soft citron yellow.

RACHEL

What?

VINCENT

Come here. I'll show you my new painting. Done today. In one day. In all the wind. Ten straight days of wind and I've still completed nine new paintings.

RACHEL

Alright. Show me.

VINCENT

In my house. I've had enough trouble with the dust already.

RACHEL

In your house?

VINCENT

Yes.

RACHEL

To see your picture. Why bother? Show me here.

VINCENT

Alright. But just a peek.

*(VINCENT lifts the protecting canvas slightly; RACHEL peeks in.)*

VINCENT

It's over toward the abbey.

No. RACHEL

(*Irritated*) Yes. VINCENT

Toward the abbey? RACHEL

Of course. In the evening. (*His anger triggers a coughing fit.*) VINCENT

Really? RACHEL

Of course! VINCENT

What's all that red over there? RACHEL

The factory roofs in the setting sun with the color heightened by the intensity of the mistral! VINCENT

The mistral? RACHEL

Look at the grain blowing in the wind, look at the smoke racing across the sky! Of course the mistral! (*More coughing*) VINCENT

Oh. (*Beat*) You haven't been to see me at Madame Franette's for a long time. RACHEL

No. I've been painting. VINCENT

What's the matter? No money? RACHEL

Of course no money. Never any money. VINCENT



RACHEL

None? (*She starts digging into his pockets.*) One franc. Two francs. Three. Not enough for Madame Franette and me. But enough for me. Times are hard. Let's go.

*(RACHEL ushers VINCENT into the studio. <Paul Gauguin's "Self-Portrait: Les Miserables" WC239 is hanging on a wall.> The wind stops.)*

RACHEL

Phew. It smells terrible in here.

VINCENT

Rachel! I haven't shown you. Look at that! Look at that!

RACHEL

Do you have some spoiled food in here? Fish? Cheese?

VINCENT

Look at that painting, damn you!

RACHEL

That? Who's that?

VINCENT

That's Paul Gauguin, the great artist! The future Master of this Studio. He's coming here. Here! As soon as I hear from him. That's his self-portrait!

RACHEL

The great artist painted that?

VINCENT

Yes!

RACHEL

Oh. (*Beat*) You need to clean up. Maybe put a little rose water in the corners.

VINCENT

Rachel! Would you pose for me? I could send your picture to Paul Gauguin.

RACHEL

What did you bring me in here for? I didn't come in here to "pose" for you. Let's get down to business.

*(VINCENT leads her to his bedroom. Cold light up in the bedroom which has only a pile of blankets for a bed.)*

RACHEL

You sleep here.

VINCENT

Sometimes.

RACHEL

Not very...you know, is it? Oh well. (*She primps for work.*) You're a nice, gentle man. Aren't you, really? And even handsome. With your strange red hair.

VINCENT

Yellow orange.

RACHEL

Do you always sleep alone?

VINCENT

Yes.

RACHEL

I guess it's because you're a painter.

VINCENT

(*Defensively*) I had a wife once. In Holland. Called her my wife. After a while she preferred...to return to prostitution.

RACHEL

No. She did that to a nice man like you? Here.

(*VINCENT clumsily helps RACHEL unbutton her dress; she drops it to the floor.*)

RACHEL

Come on.

VINCENT

Rachel, would you pose for me?

RACHEL

Oh no. If I ever pose, it'll be for a REAL painter. Now be quiet, and let's do what we're here for. (*She kicks off her shoes and plops onto the blankets.*) Come on.

VINCENT

My wife's name was Sien.

RACHEL

Damn it, Vincent, what are you waiting for?

VINCENT

Rachel, has any man ever...just held you?

*(RACHEL laughs nervously; her laugh turns to miserable sobbing. VINCENT puts his arms around her.)*

**Vincent's recorded voice: "I saw a very quiet and lovely thing the other day, a girl with coffee-tinted skin, ash-blond hair, gray eyes, a bodice of pale pink under which I could see her breasts, shapely, firm and small."**

*(Abruptly, RACHEL jerks away, throws down the coins, pulls on her dress and dashes out of the house.)*

### Scene 5

*(The studio is still largely bare except for more blank canvases and painting equipment and paintings drying on stretchers against the wall. VINCENT is in the studio. JOSEPH enters onto the street, carrying a bucket of yellow paint and a large paint brush.)*

JOSEPH

In September, Vincent's brother Theo inherited three hundred francs and sent them to Vincent. To pay off Madame Ginoux. And fix and furnish the house. So he could really move in. I don't believe in saints, of course, but I do wonder about Theo. *(To VINCENT)* Well, let's paint the house.

*(JOSEPH shows VINCENT the bucket of paint.)*

VINCENT

The yellow paint. Oh, just look at that. *(He becomes totally involved in admiring the paint.)*

JOSEPH

What about that wall?

VINCENT

I have some whitewash.

*(JOSEPH exits to the outside and begins to paint the house. VINCENT gets some whitewash and begins to whitewash the wall. JOSEPH starts singing "The Marseillaise" vigorously. VINCENT whitewashes gaily to the rhythm of JOSEPH's singing.)*

VINCENT

Joseph. Joseph! Sing louder. Sing to wake up the dead patriots. Sing to wake up Napoleon for Madame Ginoux. *(JOSEPH sings even more loudly.)* And paint louder! I can't hear you paint.

JOSEPH

It's this yellow, Vincent. The old yellow was bad enough. This yellow goes on the house loud even when I paint quiet.

*(VINCENT runs to the door.)*

VINCENT

That yellow is perfect. Put it on as bright as you can. Look how the sun is yellow, yellow with heat. Even the ground in the square is all yellow. The house too must be yellow. Paint it chrome yellow, paint it sulfur yellow, paint it with lemons, paint it with sunflowers, paint my house with the sun!

JOSEPH

I have a bucket of yellow paint. One bucket. I'll paint the house yellow. All over, loud yellow. Yellow, yellow, yellow.

VINCENT

*(Triumphantly) Yello-o-ow! (He returns to whitewashing.)*

JOSEPH

I'm glad you live in this house and not me.

VINCENT

Sing to me about the color of the house.

*(JOSEPH strikes up "The Marseillaise" again; VINCENT joins in. After a bit:)*

VINCENT

Joseph, come here!

JOSEPH

I'm busy. Busy painting the house. Yellow.

VINCENT

I have a bottle of absinthe.

JOSEPH

I'll be right there.

*(VINCENT sets down the whitewash and wipes his hands on his shirt. JOSEPH, liberally daubed with yellow paint, triumphantly marches into the studio.)*

JOSEPH

Where's the absinthe?

VINCENT

It turned to beer.

JOSEPH

Oh. What a pity.

VINCENT

When I'm a rich painter, I'll buy you absinthe.

JOSEPH

I won't live that long. Where's the beer?

VINCENT

My new table! Help me bring it in.

*(VINCENT and JOSEPH carry a table and two chairs into the studio.)*

VINCENT

This is the first table I've ever owned. Four people can eat, together, at this table. Say you and Madame Roulin and... Paul Gauguin and me. Later, perhaps, four artists all together—at this table.

JOSEPH

You whitewashed the chairs I see.

VINCENT

I painted them. *(He gets a bottle of beer and two glasses and sets up for their party.)*

JOSEPH

And you painted the absinthe and it turned to beer.

VINCENT

You may be right.

JOSEPH

Don't ever paint my absinthe again. You get the colors all wrong. This beer is a LITTLE bit yellow, which is alright, but if you paint it again, it might turn to white. I want my colors right. I want my beer beer color. I want my absinthe green—sickly pale green.

VINCENT

*(Raising his glass)* To the new father!

JOSEPH

To my new baby girl!

*(They drink.)*

VINCENT

I've been wanting to speak to you.

JOSEPH

Oh?

VINCENT

I want to paint your portrait.

JOSEPH

Oh?

VINCENT

Will you let me?

JOSEPH

Yes. Although you are not a very good painter.

VINCENT

Joseph!

JOSEPH

Look how the whitewash runs down the wall. You dab it on too thick. *(He demonstrates the proper whitewashing technique. You must use longer strokes. Longer strokes. See? Try it.*

VINCENT

Joseph. Joseph. No one has ever just said yes to me before. Just... "yes.."

JOSEPH

Oh? Why not?

VINCENT

They...

JOSEPH

Now use up all your white on that wall. I'll see what I can do about this beer.

*(VINCENT whitewashes the wall, experimenting with brush strokes as he works. JOSEPH pours a bit more beer and teases VINCENT with it. )*

JOSEPH

Longer strokes. That's very important. Longer strokes.

VINCENT

You aren't afraid people will laugh at you if I paint your portrait?

JOSEPH

No one ever laughs at Joseph Roulin. Otherwise, they get their mail late. *(He starts to leave.)*

VINCENT

Where are you going?

JOSEPH

*(Crossing toward the café)* To get my hat. If you paint me without my hat, people will think they can laugh at me.

VINCENT

I prefer your bare head.

*(MME GINOUX enters from the café.)*

JOSEPH

I prefer my hat. I'll return as soon as you use up all the white—on the wall. Don't drink our beer. Good morning, Madame.

*(JOSEPH exits past the café.)*

VINCENT

You'll hurry, won't you, Joseph?

*(MME GINOUX marches into the studio.)*

MME GINOUX

Good morning, Vincent.

VINCENT

Indeed. Indeed it is.

*(VINCENT goes to an incongruous hiding place, takes out money, and counts it into MME GINOUX's hand.)*

VINCENT

Five.

MME GINOUX

My my.

VINCENT

Ten.

MME GINOUX

My my.

VINCENT

Fifteen.



MME GINOUX

My.

VINCENT

There.

MME GINOUX

Fifteen? You owe me twenty-seven. Eleven for food and sixteen for wine and coffee.

VINCENT

Now I owe you...twelve.

MME GINOUX

You showed me a bank note yesterday! You said you'd cash it immediately and pay me in full!

VINCENT

Impossible. I was out of canvas.

MME GINOUX

Canvas! When you owe me money?

VINCENT

And dangerously low on paints. Completely out of cobalt blue.

MME GINOUX

You have paintings all over this place, paintings no one wants.

VINCENT

Theo wants them!

MME GINOUX

Pah!

VINCENT

I'm under obligation to send Theo paintings regularly. (*MME GINOUX glares at him.*)  
And I do, Madame. I'm a conscientious artist.

MME GINOUX

You're a mess. What did you eat today?

VINCENT

Coffee.

MME GINOUX

Coffee. Coffee again. How much?

VINCENT

Eight cups.

MME GINOUX

Eight cups!

VINCENT

I need it. For my work. And I ate bread.

MME GINOUX

Did you eat bread TODAY? (*VINCENT takes a crust from his pocket and gnaws on it.*)  
Dry. Look at you. Eating dry stale bread.

VINCENT

I like it better this way. It takes longer to chew. Especially with these rotten teeth. This way I don't have to eat so much.

MME GINOUX

You're getting old before your time. And ugly. A painter should not be ugly.

VINCENT

(*Exploding*) Good! Good! Very good! Let me get MORE ugly, more old, more vicious, more ill and poor and hungry. The hungrier I get, the more the sun fills me, flows out of me, flows onto my canvases!

MME GINOUX

Just look at yourself. Pale. Just look at your room. White. Like a sick room!

(*MME GINOUX exits. VINCENT paces around the room. He grabs the whitewash and throws it out the window.*)

VINCENT

She's right of course.

(*He charges outside and seconds later charges back in with a bucket of yellow paint with a large paint brush in it.*)

One crucial point of yellow. To bring the heat outside inside. Of course she's right. The yellow will transfer the sun to my paintings.

(*He slaps paint all over a chair until he has it covered. Meanwhile, MME GINOUX enters with a shallow wicker basket with seven oranges in it in one hand and a generous chunk of Roquefort cheese in the other.*)

MME GINOUX

Here. Now you owe me another three francs.

VINCENT

I'm busy.

*(MME GINOUX glowers at VINCENT as he paints the chair, singing "The Marseillaise" manically, using only the words "yellow" and "dud-da-dum" repeatedly.)*

MME GINOUX

Stop that. Stop that! Here, here's an orange.

VINCENT

I have no money.

*(MME GINOUX hands him the orange.)*

MME GINOUX

Eat this.

VINCENT

I have no time.

MME GINOUX

That's all you do have. Now eat!

*(VINCENT takes a bite out of the unpeeled orange and stuffs the orange into his pocket.)*

MME GINOUX

Oh my. Oh my.

VINCENT

*(Inspecting the chair)* That's better.

MME GINOUX

I suppose you mean to leave all that paint slopped on the floor?

VINCENT

On this beautiful ochre-red tile? The chair brings the sun inside to the pure, dark warmth of the earth of the tile. Not a spot on that floor!

*(He exits with the yellow paint, returns with rags, wipes the floor spotless, then throws the rags aside.)*

VINCENT

There. You see? Now all that heat will radiate out of my paintings. From the sun, to the chair, through the tile, through me, the heat, light, color, the sun again, the sun! Always back to the sun! This chair is a sunflower, is a sun blooming in the middle of our Studio!

MME GINOUX

Fine. Now eat your orange and cheese. And drink your beer.

VINCENT

Madame! Madame! That's what I can give you. (*He moves in on her.*) A painting of your oranges. Warm. And... (*He is almost timid to say it.*) You! To brighten your café! Or if you would only permit me to paint...you. Yourself! Your eyes—deep and distant. Your hair—black and deep as a vein of coal.

*(MME GINOUX brushes past him into open space. Long standoff. Then she takes a mismatched pair of slippers from her pocket and hands them toward him.)*

MME GINOUX

Don't worry. He won't miss the slippers. He loses them all the time. Then he throws the odd one in the back of the wardrobe. Then he buys new slippers. Soon he loses one of them. Sometimes both. I think I prefer him to lose both. Sometimes the dog chews them to pieces. Or sometimes he carries them off.

VINCENT

The dog?

MME GINOUX

What about the dog?

VINCENT

Sometimes the dog carries them off?

MME GINOUX

Of course. Did you think I meant Monsieur Ginoux?

VINCENT

No. (*VINCENT takes the slippers.*) Perhaps if you allowed your hair to tumble freely around your shoulders.

*(MME GINOUX lets down a strand of hair.)*

VINCENT

Really, Madame, I would paint you with...love.

*(JOSEPH, singing the Triumphal March from "Aida," bursts into the studio all cleaned up, looking splendid in a "postes" hat and a blue uniform with brass buttons. His beard is carefully combed.)*

MME GINOUX

You going to work? A parade?

JOSEPH

I am going to be the subject of Vincent's next painting.

MME GINOUX

You? You!

*(MME GINOUX escapes out of the studio.)*

VINCENT

*(Calling after her)* Perhaps tomorrow you might bring me some really strong soup.

JOSEPH

*(Plunking a small bottle of absinthe on the table)* If a true citizen offers another true citizen a small bottle of absinthe...

VINCENT

*(Exploding)* No! I don't drink absinthe any more. Never! Never!

JOSEPH

Alright. It's alright. *(JOSEPH pockets the absinthe and takes up the beer.)* Really.

VINCENT

I'm sorry, Joseph. I don't drink absinthe any more. Not since Paris. I found it...uh... My brain. You understand. I saw, heard...the wrong things. I-I-I-I couldn't work.

JOSEPH

It's alright, Vincent.

*(JOSEPH reaches for an orange.)*

VINCENT

No!

JOSEPH

An orange stands between an artist and his subject?

VINCENT

I need them all. Don't you see? The...six oranges barely fill the space and leave just enough of the texture of the wicker showing.

*(JOSEPH removes one orange and studies the basket.)*

JOSEPH

I'm not sure.

VINCENT

You may take my word on this; I'm a highly skilled professional artist.

JOSEPH

You sell your paintings?

VINCENT

Joseph!

JOSEPH

You actually sell them?

VINCENT

One of the best gallery managers in one of the finest galleries in Paris is handling my paintings.

*(JOSEPH looks skeptically at VINCENT.)*

VINCENT

Theodore van Gogh. *(Moment. VINCENT becomes very uncomfortable.)* My brother.

JOSEPH

Did you ever make any money from your paintings?

VINCENT

I receive periodical remittances to paint, and I account for every single expenditure.

JOSEPH

Remittances. From who?

VINCENT

My brother.

JOSEPH

Oh. From your brother.

VINCENT

Yes.

JOSEPH

Does your brother ever sell your paintings?

VINCENT

Someday he will sell them for hundreds—for thousands—no doubt. Like he will sell the works of all the other great new painters—like he already HAS sold the works of several of the others.

JOSEPH

For hundreds?

VINCENT

For...less than they're worth, it's true. But for enough that they can truly call themselves professional artists. (*Long awkward moment.*) Theo will sell my paintings too some day.

JOSEPH

I'm going to pose for you because you are my friend.

VINCENT

Oh!

JOSEPH

You are cracked, perhaps, with no doubt a false sense of your worth, but you are my friend.

VINCENT

Yes. (*Beat*) Thank you. (*Long moment*) But Joseph, as a professional artist, I'm bound by honor to pay you as my model.

JOSEPH

No. Certainly not. As your friend, I can never accept.

VINCENT

There's no way around it. I'm attracted to you as a subject very much because you are my friend, but I cannot presume upon that friendship. In this instance, you are not to think of yourself as my friend, but as a professional artist's professional model.

JOSEPH

No. (*Beat*) Well, suppose I just take this Roquefort.

VINCENT

Oh. (*JOSEPH breaks off a pinch of Roquefort and tastes it.*) Well, yes, I suppose so.

JOSEPH

It's very good Roquefort. Excellent. Care for a taste?

VINCENT

I was about to say that I don't have any money now, so I'll have to pay you later.

JOSEPH

*(Stuffing the Roquefort into his pocket)* Then it's settled. From one professional to another. *(He pours himself a glass of beer and moves to sit on the yellow chair.)*

VINCENT

No!

*(JOSEPH springs away from the chair. VINCENT touches a finger to the back of the chair and shows the fresh paint to JOSEPH. JOSEPH nods and puts the white chair next to the table; he sits and polishes his buttons with his sleeve.)*

VINCENT

You look so splendid in your bright blue uniform with the yellow buttons.

JOSEPH

Gold. Gold buttons. Brass actually.

VINCENT

I'll make them yellow. Bright sunflower yellow. *(JOSEPH reaches reflexively for an orange.)* Joseph!

JOSEPH

Surely, just one orange—out of six.

VINCENT

Impossible.

JOSEPH

Even for a professional model? For a friend.

VINCENT

Friendship is not the issue here. Art is. Look, my friend. *(He takes the orange from JOSEPH and sets it on the table.)* We have here an ordinary wicker basket. Right? *(JOSEPH shrugs.)* Wrong. Feel it. Feel the texture. *(JOSEPH feels the texture.)* No, you've got to really feel it. Then you have to SEE it the way it FEELS—not just the way it looks. Right? *(JOSEPH shrugs.)* But a particular quality of this basket is that the color is muted.

JOSEPH

Muted. Right.



VINCENT

Now, as an artist who is not slavishly bound to pictorial realism, I could freely change the color of the basket to give it a HEIGHTENED color. But, look at the oranges. You're attracted to the oranges, aren't you?

JOSEPH

Just one of them.

VINCENT

It's the color. (*JOSEPH looks dubious.*) Well then... (*He slams the shutters shut and launches into his lecture with ever-increasing intensity.*) Think of yourself as a coal miner working in the depths of the earth in Belgium. I've lived with these people, Joseph. I've been in their mines and I've lived in their houses. Everything is dark! Even when they come up from the mines, which are darker than the darkness of night, darker far than any night with no moon and no stars, their faces, their hands, their clothes, their hair, their bodies, their homes, their wives, their children, their entire lives are dark. Dark. Dark. Dark. Think what the color of these oranges in my painting will give them! I can give them the one infinitesimal spot of light in their lives, the one ray of sunshine! (*He flings open the shutters.*) I can give them the sun! And now look: the basket is elongated; it is of a certain size and proportion. Right?

JOSEPH

Right.

VINCENT

Right. < "*Basket With Oranges*" F395 begins to appear faintly on the projection panels, growing progressively to full brightness at the end of the speech.> If I have five oranges in it, I can arrange them like this...or like this...or this...or this...but any way I arrange them, there is not enough color—orange, orange, orange—to dominate the more subdued color of the basket. But with SIX oranges, I have exactly the right contrast of muted texture and dazzling globes of color! And notice that with SIX oranges I am free to group five of them together like this... this...or this, just look at them like THIS, Joseph!...and I can still set an extra orange aside a bit—but still in the basket—all by itself, drawing attention to the correspondence of roundness and orangeness—the color of orangeness. (*He has created "Basket With Oranges."*) It's like this chair, Joseph, gloriously colored with your yellow paint—

JOSEPH

The paint's wet!

VINCENT

Oh yes—the yellow paint on the chair brings the yellow from OUTSIDE of the house INSIDE—the heat of the sun becomes the color of the room by this one very spot, this spot of yellow that you created with your yellow paint.

JOSEPH

YOU painted the chair.

VINCENT

I know that. With YOUR paint, my friend. So, likewise, the fact that I have six oranges in this wicker basket enables me to group five of them together in a glorious mass of orange color and to set one orange by itself over to the left and, in a sense, by choosing the largest orange, closer to the viewer, to invite the viewer into the color. See? (*JOSEPH studies the oranges very carefully.*) Walk around them. You'll see. You'll see that they're arranged to be viewed from precisely a single vantage point. Go find it. Go! (*JOSEPH walks around the oranges.*) This is not sculpture, my friend, this is painting! Ah, if only Cezanne were here—what he would do with these oranges. Cezanne. Cezanne. The master! (*JOSEPH gets downstage of the oranges, studies them carefully, and begins to nod his head.*) You see? There. You see now, don't you?

JOSEPH

M-m-m-m...I believe so.

*(Exhausted, VINCENT sits. For quite a while, they nod their heads in harmony. Then VINCENT bolts up.)*

VINCENT

Now look.

*(VINCENT rotates the basket, again, causing JOSEPH to move next to him.)*

VINCENT

Beautiful, isn't it? Like a miracle.

*(VINCENT put his arm around JOSEPH's shoulders.)*

JOSEPH

I wouldn't mind putting that on my wall. No... No... That would be alright. If Augustine didn't object, of course. (*He looks at the oranges some more.*) So that's what it is to be a painter. You see things—oranges...other things—different.

*(VINCENT beams with satisfaction. JOSEPH studies the oranges for a long time.)*

JOSEPH

But wouldn't it be possible (*He removes the separated orange.*) to paint these oranges over here...and then to move one of them—you understand—to move one of the mass over to THIS position where you want the other orange all by itself...reaching the spot of orange color out to the viewer? Wouldn't that be possible? You see what I mean, don't you? I mean, just for the sake of argument, wouldn't it be possible?

VINCENT

Well...theoretically.

JOSEPH

I admit, of course, that this is the largest orange...so you'd have to paint the other orange larger than it really is.

VINCENT

I'd rather not have to...

JOSEPH

Wouldn't you suppose it would be possible if... Let's say that first I pose for you.

VINCENT

But you already...

JOSEPH

And then I get one of my boys—say Armand because he's older—to pose for you.

VINCENT

Oh. Well. Well yes.

JOSEPH

Then I'm sure Camille would pose. He always wants to do everything Armand does.

VINCENT

You. And Armand? AND Camille?

JOSEPH

And perhaps then Augustine?

VINCENT

Aug...Madame Roulin too?

JOSEPH

And the new baby. I think we could even include the baby. For one orange. All for one orange. Wouldn't you suppose then it would be possible to paint these oranges over here and then move one—any one you want—over here?

VINCENT

Yes. It would be possible. I could do that.

JOSEPH

That would still leave us all as professional models and you as a professional artist, wouldn't it?

VINCENT

Barely.

JOSEPH

Of course including the Roquefort. And the beer.

VINCENT

Of course. Of course.

JOSEPH

An orange could be segmented so each professional model received an equal share.

VINCENT

It would be lovely to be able to paint all your family.

*(JOSEPH puts his arm around VINCENT's shoulders.)*

JOSEPH

Then it's settled.

*(JOSEPH pockets an orange and sits at the table. VINCENT empties the basket into JOSEPH's lap.)*

JOSEPH

Oh no! Certainly not!

*(JOSEPH replaces the oranges from his lap into the basket and beams angelically as MME GINOUX storms on.)*

MME GINOUX

I've thrown all the rest of your trash out of my house.

VINCENT

My paintings!

MME GINOUX

I was careful with your so-called paintings. Your so-called clothes are in a heap with your other trash. I want everything out of my yard immediately.

VINCENT

I am busy, Madame.

MME GINOUX

Look at this place. Always a mess. *(She shuts the shutters.)* Do you really want people to see you living like this?

VINCENT

This is an artist's studio, Madame. (*He runs and throws the shutters open.*)

MME GINOUX

You're letting in the sun, the heat. (*She slams the shutters shut.*)

VINCENT

(*Overlap*) I need the light; yes, the sun. That sun has the brilliance of the sun of Japan!

MME GINOUX

Japan! How would you know?

(*VINCENT defiantly opens the shutters and hums the Triumphal March from "Aida."*)

MME GINOUX

You smell like a henhouse. When was the last time you took a bath? (*JOSEPH puts a hand on her to calm her down.*) And you! You smell like an old keg! (*To VINCENT*) Why on earth would you want to paint him?

VINCENT

Don't you dare attack my friend Joseph!

MME GINOUX

(*To JOSEPH*) What's that? (*To VINCENT*) Did you give him an orange?

(*MME GINOUX takes the orange from JOSEPH's pocket and slams it on the table.*)

VINCENT

Get out! Get out! We are trying to work!

MME GINOUX

(*To VINCENT*) I gave the oranges to you.

(*MME GINOUX exits with quiet dignity. Long, quiet moment.*)

JOSEPH

Madame Roulin asked me to invite you to join us for dinner. Tomorrow.

VINCENT

Oh? I'd love to. Thank her for me.

JOSEPH

Just with the family, of course. Simple meal. Needn't dress.

VINCENT

Thank you very much.

JOSEPH

Nothing special. She'll just add another plate.

VINCENT

Thank you. (Beat) Now sit at the table. I must have paintings, new paintings to impress Paul Gauguin. He's a formidable talent; he **MUST** respect my work.

JOSEPH

Ah, well then, we must get to work. (*He pockets the orange.*) For Paul...uh...

VINCENT

Gauguin. Paul Gauguin.

*(JOSEPH arranges himself at the table to be painted. VINCENT places his easel and prepares to paint.)*

VINCENT

Yes, the blue—the night. The yellow buttons—the stars. Even Paul Gauguin can't do a painting like I'll do of you. Try the arm up on the table. Wonderful. The other too. No. The other on the arm of the chair. And look toward me. Excellent, excellent. That's it, don't move. You must stay absolutely still.

*(He paints JOSEPH as "Portrait of Joseph Roulin F432 begins to come up.)*

**Vincent's recorded voice: "Here and there among my works there will be things which will last. But who will do figure painting as Claude Monet does landscape? That one will come. He will be a colorist such as never existed."**

VINCENT

Are you so proud, Joseph?

JOSEPH

Certainly. Should a man who has just become a father again after ten years not be proud? Should the Railroad Postal Superintendent, even in Arles, not be proud?

VINCENT

Joseph, do you know? Do you know what this means to me? Paul, the Studio. It's all my dreams! It's my whole life! (*JOSEPH squirms slightly.*) Hold still.

*(The portrait comes up brighter. JOSEPH turns his chair toward the audience so that we see him just as in the painting. VINCENT continues to paint. We see all the energy of his body flowing into his brush. Then JOSEPH shifts slightly.)*

VINCENT

Hold still, damn it!

*(The painting is up full bright. VINCENT finally relaxes. JOSEPH goes to look at the painting.)*

VINCENT

Yes, I can be proud of that painting.

JOSEPH

Doesn't look much like me though, does it?

VINCENT

Doesn't look like you? That's idiotic! That's...that's...just plain UNINFORMED! A painting... A painting...! *(Beat, as he collects himself.)* I'm sorry, my friend. I'm truly sorry. Let me explain.

JOSEPH

I just thought a portrait of a person...

VINCENT

A PAINTING, Joseph, not a portrait in the old-fashioned sense. It's not what you call a likeness, not an attempt to fool the eye and pretend that Joseph Roulin is there on the canvas...but for me, it renders your character...what's inside you...your living essence...as I feel it. Don't talk like that to Paul Gauguin. He'll inform you!

JOSEPH

This Paul. He was your...friend? In Paris?

VINCENT

He's... Theo is selling his paintings.

JOSEPH

So that's how you know him.

VINCENT

Oh no. No. I've met him SEVERAL times.

JOSEPH

And he'll help you. Help you to paint.

VINCENT

Of course! He'll understand my work—really appreciate it. He's an ARTIST.

JOSEPH

Well then... (*He takes a letter from his pocket and hands it to VINCENT.*) This is for you.

VINCENT

But today is Sunday.

JOSEPH

I put it in my pocket Thursday to bring to you special. Must have forgotten. Perhaps I should take it back for delivery tomorrow.

(*VINCENT, very excited, takes the letter.*)

VINCENT

From Paul Gauguin! (*Pounding the table*) Unconscionable laxness! This letter came Thursday! And you bring it to me today? Sunday?

JOSEPH

Yes, yes.

(*VINCENT opens the letter, reads frantically.*)

VINCENT

He's coming. He's coming here! (*He runs around the room, reading.*) To this very house. To this very room. The Studio for Artists in the South! Paul Gauguin! I need—I need—I need—chairs. And more color! Sunflowers! Sunflowers! (*He runs to the window and calls out.*) Madame Ginoux, I need sunflowers, dozens of sunflowers! We need to bring the sun blazing into this room; I'll cover the walls with sunflowers! (*To JOSEPH*) Chairs! (*He dashes to the window again and calls.*) Madame, your old chairs. I need all your old café chairs. Madame!

JOSEPH

(*Edging in beside VINCENT at the window*) Allow me, Vincent. (*Calling out*) Madame Ginoux, as you are well aware, the great artist Paul Gaulaine...

VINCENT

Gauguin. Gauguin.

JOSEPH

Paul Gauguin is coming to the Studio in the South. The Studio will need your old café chairs to accommodate all the artists.

MME GINOUX

(*Out in back*) Chairs? Now you want chairs, do you?



JOSEPH

Yes, Madame, chairs.

MME GINOUX

I'm not in the business of giving away chairs.

JOSEPH

Selling, Madame.

MME GINOUX

To beggars?

JOSEPH

To Vincent.

MME GINOUX

Hah!

JOSEPH

He'll pay. You have my word.

MME GINOUX

There's a dozen chairs.

VINCENT

We'll take them all.

JOSEPH

We'll take them all. (*To VINCENT*) Go. Go. (*VINCENT runs out.*) Don't worry. He'll pay, or I'll make good. (*Laughing*) You can keep my painting as security.

(*VINCENT runs back to JOSEPH.*)

VINCENT

The sunflowers first. (*He calls out the window.*) Madame, I must have sunflowers!

JOSEPH

I'll take care of that. Augustine has all the sunflowers you'll ever need.

VINCENT

Bless you, Joseph.

(*VINCENT runs out. JOSEPH takes one last look at his portrait and exits. VINCENT re-enters with two chairs which he runs up to Gauguin's room. He sets the chairs to face the upstage wall.*)

VINCENT

Bernard. Laval.

*(He starts out of the room, then back in.)*

VINCENT

No. No.

*(He grabs the chairs and takes them to face Gauguin's self-portrait in the studio. He exits, returns with two more chairs which he also places facing Gauguin's self-portrait.)*

Pissarro. Sisley.

*(He exits, returns with two more chairs. Each time he places the chairs he gets increasingly excited and frequently re-arranges.)*

Signac. Seurat.

*(He exits, returns with two more chairs.)*

Cezanne. Toulouse-Lautrec.

*(He exits, returns with two more chairs.)*

Manet. Monet.

*(He exits, returns with two more chairs. He stops, looks lovingly at the Yellow House, raises the chairs above his head and yells in exultation.)*

My studio!

*(He enters the studio and places one chair against the upstage wall and puts Gauguin's self-portrait on it.)*

And...at last...Paul Gauguin.

*(He puts the last chair next to Gauguin's chair.)*

And van Gogh.

*(JOSEPH enters with a massive armload of sunflowers and three vases.)*

VINCENT

Upstairs. Into his room.

*(They go to Gauguin's room. VINCENT arranges the sunflowers in the vases. He duplicates the paintings "Three Sunflowers in a Vase" F453 and on either side of it "Sunflowers" F454 and "Sunflowers" F 456 as the corresponding paintings come up huge on the walls in Gauguin's room. JOSEPH exits quietly. MME GINOUX enters carrying an armload of sunflowers and walks to Gauguin's room. She stands looking at the sunflower paintings.)*

MME GINOUX

I thought you wanted sunflowers.

VINCENT

Yes. Always.

MME GINOUX

Here.

*(Neither one moves. Both are looking at the painting.)*

VINCENT

Thank you.

MME GINOUX

They do look...

VINCENT

Like light through stain-glass windows in a church?

MME GINOUX

Almost alive. They look almost as pretty as live sunflowers.

*(They continue to look at the paintings.)*

VINCENT

Madame Ginoux, do you love your husband?

*(MME GINOUX shrugs. The sunflowers glow at their brightest. Brief moment, then MME GINOUX exits quietly.)*

## Scene 6

*(VINCENT enters downstage, carrying painting equipment and a hat with candles set around the brim. He sets up facing the audience, lights the candles on his hat, and starts to paint. <Behind him appears “Starry Night on the Rhone” F474.> For a long time, we see VINCENT alone, painting. Finally, RACHEL enters, followed shortly by JOSEPH, who remains at the edge of the stage.)*

RACHEL

Vincent, you're so... *(She laughs and runs over to him.)* Come with me; this night is made for love. We'll go to the café for a few drinks and then to the brothel. *(She grabs ahold of his painting hand.)*

VINCENT

*(Screaming)* Beast! Whore! I'm working! I'm painting!

*(His intensity makes her fall back. He throws a paintbrush at her and she retreats. He resumes painting immediately.)*

RACHEL

I can paint as good as that! I can smear my ass all over your painting and paint as good as that. *(She yells offstage.)* Come watch the Crazy Dutchman. Madame Ginoux, come watch.

*(MME GINOUX appears at an edge of the stage.)*

Everybody. Come watch the Crazy Dutchman paint. *(She laughs derisively.)*

JOSEPH

The loafers poured out of the cafés...they gathered around in a large half circle in the darkness in back of Vincent. Laughing. Murmuring. Shouting insults. There's the painter. Ha, ha, ha, the painter. There's the crazy Dutch painter. *(Beat)* And me—still standing there in the shadows of the crowd.

*(MME GINOUX exits. JOSEPH walks slowly toward VINCENT.)*

JOSEPH

Vincent. You've painted enough today.

*(VINCENT does not answer.)*

RACHEL

Careful, Joseph. He bites. *(She laughs.)*

JOSEPH

Let's go into the studio. You can finish painting there.

VINCENT

Can't you see, Joseph, the sky tonight is so beautiful—the blue so deep; the water is royal blue.

JOSEPH

People are laughing at you.

VINCENT

The ground is mauve. It is, Joseph, in my eyes it is. Look. I'll help you see it as I do.

RACHEL

There, There! Come see!

JOSEPH

Couldn't you paint tomorrow under the sun?

VINCENT

The reflections on the water are russet-gold.

RACHEL

What's he saying, Joseph? What's the Crazy Dutchman saying?

JOSEPH

Damn it! Damn it, all of you! Can't you treat this man like a human being? Go home!

*(RACHEL laughs again and exits. Her derisive laugh is amplified throughout the theater. JOSEPH hovers over VINCENT, shielding him. The laughter fades.)*

JOSEPH

Vincent, your sky...your sky is such a deep...deep blue...and your stars shine...so bright. Vincent! In MY painting my uniform is deep blue too. Almost as deep blue as this sky. And my buttons shine bright gold!

*(JOSEPH beams with a fierce pride. Complete darkness except for "Starry Night on the Rhone" and candles on VINCENT's hat. VINCENT puts off his hat on his chair. Moment. JOSEPH picks up the hat and blows out the candles. JOSEPH and VINCENT exit. VINCENT returns immediately for one last look at the stars.)*

**Vincent's recorded voice: "I am not so very eccentric; a Greek statue, a peasant by Millet, a Dutch portrait, a nude woman by Courbet or Degas, those calm modeled perfections interest me enormously. A complete thing, a perfection, renders the infinite tangible to us; and the enjoyment of a beautiful thing, like the moment when a man enters a woman, is a moment...of infinity."**

*(VINCENT exits the stage.)*

### Scene 7

*(Just before dawn. < "Starry Night" dissolves into "Café Terrace at Night" F467.> RACHEL crosses, working the street. PAUL enters, sits in the café, and smokes. MME GINOUX enters and serves him absinthe and water. MME GINOUX exits. RACHEL enters the café. "Café Terrace at Night" fades, leaving only a dull light on the café.)*

RACHEL

Good evening, Monsieur. *(PAUL nods a greeting.)* Care to buy a tired girl a drink? *(PAUL signals acquiescence. RACHEL pours herself absinthe and water.)* Like me to sit with you? *(PAUL slides out a chair for her.)* Oh! A real gentleman. But out very late. *(RACHEL toys with her glass.)* You're new here, aren't you? *(RACHEL toys with his hand.)* I have the feeling you're from someplace way far away.

PAUL

I'm certainly not from Arles.

RACHEL

But somehow, I think I know you.

PAUL

Martinique perhaps. Panama. You're my long lost bride from Peru.

RACHEL

*(Laughing gaily)* I'm afraid not, Monsieur. But I have been to Marseille. Down by the docks? *(PAUL laughs.)* Then you've been in Arles before. *(PAUL shakes his head no. RACHEL slides quickly away from him.)* That painting! On the Crazy Dutchman's wall. That's who you are! You're a Dutchman too.

PAUL

I, a DUTCHMAN?

RACHEL

I know it.

PAUL

I, a cold, logical, beer-drinking Dutchman? Hardly.

RACHEL

You're the painter. I KNOW you're the painter.

PAUL

I am the painter.

RACHEL

I don't like painters.

PAUL

I'm also a sculptor, a sailor, a savage Inca from Peru, and a slightly deposed descendent of the grandees of old Spain.

RACHEL

I don't like Spaniards.

PAUL

A sadly fallen people. Sadly lacking in their former passion. You know all about passion, don't you?

RACHEL

Of course.

PAUL

Of course you do.

*(PAUL gestures to her. She moves closer.)*

RACHEL

Would you like to join me at the house of Madame Franette?

PAUL

It would be my pleasure.

RACHEL

I'm sure it would.

PAUL

Some day.

RACHEL

Oh. Tomorrow? I'll look for you there tomorrow.

*(PAUL takes out a large sketchpad and begins to sketch her. RACHEL puts her hand over the sketch.)*

RACHEL

Do you want to paint my picture?

PAUL

As the Virgin Mother perhaps. *(RACHEL giggles.)* Or Eve in the Garden. Eve would be better I think.

RACHEL

Me? Eve? *(She laughs embarrassed.)*

PAUL

Do you think you're virginally innocent enough? Or deeply depraved enough to interest me? Do you, Eve?

RACHEL

Rachel.

PAUL

Rachel. Do you?

RACHEL

I don't know. *(She becomes uncomfortable.)* Do you like it here?

PAUL

No. *(He takes out a pocket knife.)* This café depresses me. Now sit still.

RACHEL

Yes, Monsieur.

*(PAUL slowly rips a sheet from the sketchpad. He starts to make a few deft slashes and a few lines on the paper.)*

RACHEL

If you're here to see the Dutchman, his house is right around the corner.

PAUL

I know.

*(Moment of silence as he works with his knife.)*

RACHEL

He'd be very glad to see you. I know he would.

PAUL

You wouldn't have me disturb him, would you? At this hour?

RACHEL

I'd be glad to pose for you, Monsieur...?

Tomorrow?

Can I go home now, Monsieur?



*(PAUL has created a mask of "Human Misery" WC304. He puts it over RACHEL's face and grabs her hands and forces her to hold the mask to her face.)*

PAUL

Now hold that there!

RACHEL

Monsieur...

PAUL

You interest me more with my mask on. *(He forces her into a different position.)* Your mask! Keep it on!

RACHEL

Yes, Monsieur.

PAUL

Now go to your table. I prefer to contemplate you from afar.

RACHEL

Yes, Monsieur.

*(RACHEL moves to the other table. PAUL smokes, while RACHEL sits petrified with fear. Fade to black on the café. In the yellow house, VINCENT lights a candle and carries it to Paul's self-portrait to study the painting. Moment with only the candle illuminating the portrait and VINCENT's face. Then VINCENT snuffs out the candle with his fingers.)*

INTERMISSION

**ACT II****Scene 1**

*(The first hints of dawn. VINCENT is in bed. His room and the studio are a jumble of clothes, painting equipment, faded flowers, etc., mostly on the floor. Paul's room is spotless. PAUL, in the café, picks up all his gear, walks to the yellow house and knocks on the door. VINCENT throws a light blanket around himself, runs down and opens the door.)*

VINCENT

*(Quiet awe)* Paul Gauguin.

PAUL

Good morning, Vincent.

VINCENT

Paul. Paul Gauguin. You've come. I've got to... *(He turns to enter the house. Turns back toward PAUL.)* When did you come?

PAUL

I'm here now.

VINCENT

Yes. Yes! You're here now. You're here to be... *(He runs into the studio, gets a paintbrush, wraps it in a sheet of sketchpaper, returns and presents it to PAUL.)* To be the Master of the Studio for Artists in the South.

PAUL

Ah, yes.

VINCENT

You'll love it here, Paul. Come in. Come in!

*(They enter the studio. VINCENT turns on the gas lighting—a new addition.)*

PAUL

So this is it. Your Studio in the South.

VINCENT

OURS. Yes, ours. OUR Studio now.

*(VINCENT rushes to PAUL and kisses him on both cheeks.)*

PAUL

Why so cluttered?

*(VINCENT sorts frantically through a pile, finds a slipper and a shoe and puts them on.)*

VINCENT

I've been...busy.

PAUL

Good pure colors. The white walls and the red tile.

VINCENT

Yes! I've arranged the whole Studio for you. And for the other artists to come. The Studio in the South. Do you like it?

PAUL

We'll have to get rid of the clutter.

VINCENT

Yes. I've been meaning to. Your room is upstairs.

*(PAUL sees his self-portrait on the wall, studies it. VINCENT frantically searches through more clutter, finds pants and a shirt, puts them on, and drops his blanket to the floor.)*

PAUL

That face has the tropics in it.

VINCENT

Impressive. Yes, really impressive.

PAUL

The sunburned face of a sailor.

VINCENT

Exactly—the sailor artist.

*(PAUL blocks off the mouth on the portrait with his hand.)*

PAUL

The eyes are good. *(Chuckles)* A bandit. Could use more Martinique.

VINCENT

The world needs more sailor artists. Coal miner artists. Peasant artists.

*(PAUL blocks off the sketch of Bernard.)*

PAUL

A crucifix here. Yes, a crucifix. A granite, Breton crucifix.

*(He stands off, transfixed by his own painting. Then he turns abruptly and takes out Vincent's "Self-Portrait" ascribed "A mon ami Paul Gauguin" F476 and hands it to VINCENT.)*

VINCENT

Oh. I'm glad you brought it back.

*(VINCENT hangs his self-portrait next to Paul's. For a very long time PAUL studies the two portraits.)*

PAUL

Vincent van Gogh, as he sees himself.

VINCENT

Yes, the Japanese quality, the simple worshiper of Buddha.

PAUL

I've grown fond of that painting—the deep-set frenzy behind the eyes.

*(Slight, awkward moment. PAUL returns to viewing his own painting. VINCENT joins in. The first rays of dawn strike the house.)*

VINCENT

You'll like it here, Paul. You'll stay a long time?

PAUL

Ah, the Studio in the South. Perhaps.

VINCENT

The sun.

PAUL

It's not the tropics.

VINCENT

No, but the sun...

PAUL

We'll have to see.

*(They both look at Paul's painting for a while.)*

VINCENT

Paul, there's no gaiety in that face. That Prussian blue, it makes your face look wooden. See there? The pinks against the malachite? See? See? (*PAUL bristles. VINCENT notices.*) You'll be happy here...as I am.

*(PAUL looks at VINCENT, then laughs and claps his hand on VINCENT's shoulder.)*

PAUL

You're a good fellow, Vincent.

*(VINCENT leads PAUL into his own room.)*

VINCENT

This is MY room.

PAUL

Um.

VINCENT

It's a bit cluttered just now.

PAUL

Could be very comfortable. An artist's room.

VINCENT

Yes! Just right for me.

*(VINCENT ushers PAUL into Paul's room. Lights up in the room: meticulous, colorful, with three large sunflower paintings on the wall. Perhaps a vase of fresh flowers. PAUL laughs.)*

PAUL

You arranged all this for me?

VINCENT

Yes. For you, Paul. Do you like it?

PAUL

Very nice. Yes. Very nice.

VINCENT

The sunflowers. They're all new.

PAUL

Yes.

VINCENT

Do you like them?

PAUL

Of course. Splendid.

VINCENT

I knew you'd like them. There's been nobody here to appreciate my work. Nobody.

PAUL

*(Long pause as he looks around. Then he sets down his gear.)* Now...let's look at Vincent van Gogh's sunflowers. *(He studies the paintings for a long time; VINCENT stands by in tormented anticipation.)* You painted them here. In the Studio in the South.

VINCENT

Yes.

PAUL

The sunflowers of Vincent van Gogh. *(Finally, he begins to nod.)* Yes. Marvelous. Even better than Claude's sunflowers.

VINCENT

But better than Claude Monet's. Oh no. *(Beat)* But maybe someday.

PAUL

Better. Now. *(Long moment)* Luminous. You found that color here.

VINCENT

YES!

PAUL

*(Long pause, then)* I can work here. Yes. *(Sudden burst)* I brought everything we need—almost. *(PAUL produces a bottle of red wine.)*

VINCENT

Ah-hah! We have wine—and the sun. The southern sun.

PAUL

Get us glasses.

*(VINCENT runs to his bedroom, finds two glasses someplace, wipes them out and returns. PAUL pours.)*

PAUL

To the Studio...

VINCENT

Wait! Wait! You stand in your window. I'll stand in mine.

*(VINCENT runs with his glass of wine to his bedroom window. PAUL looks out his own window.)*

VINCENT

Look, Paul, that's the public garden outside our windows. I've painted it. For you. I'll show you. *(He raises his glass.)* Now. Overlooking the public garden. With the morning sun just now filtering through the trees.

PAUL

Well, this appears to be a serious toast.

VINCENT

Yes! Yes!

*(PAUL produces a bottle of absinthe.)*

PAUL

Absinthe.

VINCENT

I don't drink absinthe any more, Paul. I can't.

*(PAUL drinks off his red wine, pours himself a straight absinthe.)*

PAUL

I can. *(He raises his glass.)* To the Studio for Artists in the South.

*(The light strikes the disparate red and green in the two glasses.)*

VINCENT

To the southern sun! To the splendors in front of us every day in the garden.

PAUL

To your sunflowers.

VINCENT

To the oleanders, the cypresses. To the wonders of Arles: the bridges, the fields, the clothing of the people. To the people...

PAUL

To the women. *(He laughs derisively.)*

VINCENT

To you and me and all the other artists in our Studio!

PAUL

A toast! *(They drink.)* What do you have to eat?

VINCENT

Some bread. Your wine. Coffee. Down in the studio.

PAUL

Good. Let's go. I have cheese.

*(VINCENT goes to the studio, searches through his painting equipment, finds a package of herrings, and bread. PAUL takes a carefully wrapped package of cheese from his bags and joins VINCENT in the studio. PAUL cleans the table and sets it where it is hit by the morning sun through the window; he arranges the food on the table, smells the herrings and throws them out. VINCENT awaits anxiously.)*

PAUL

Alright now. We can't work with the studio a mess. And we're not going to eat like this.

VINCENT

You're right. I know that, Paul.

PAUL

Get your clothes out of here. I'll straighten the studio.

VINCENT

You're absolutely right.

*(VINCENT snatches up his clothes, takes them in a bundle to his room and dumps them on the bed. He grabs all the clothes and other objects strewn all around the room and stuffs everything under the bed. He finds a partial bottle of wine.)*

VINCENT

I found more wine.

*(Meanwhile, PAUL begins the job of straightening the studio. He selects a green chair for himself <"Gauguin's Chair" F499>, tries it out, and stacks all the others neatly aside. He takes a mirror from the floor and hangs it on the upstage wall. He starts on the painting equipment. VINCENT bounds into the studio.)*



PAUL

You have to get a bigger painting box. Do you know you have three half-used tubes of cobalt blue in here?

VINCENT

Cobalt blue?

*(VINCENT takes the tubes from PAUL and studies them quizzically. PAUL picks up some brushes off the window sill, throws out some faded flowers, and puts the brushes into the vase. VINCENT jams the tubes into the box, pushes down the lid, and stands expectantly. Then he gets his yellow chair from the stack and sets it next to the table.)*

PAUL

Alright, let's eat. I have to keep up my strength. Have to eat.

*(They eat ravenously.)*

VINCENT

Yes, yes. I must also. To preserve my health. Art is found only in the healthy. Only. Believe me, I'm learning that here.

PAUL

I had damn little money in Brittany. Lived on nothing. Missed too many meals.

VINCENT

Oh, I know. I know.

PAUL

We've got to get organized. Get some scheme to sell our work.

VINCENT

Theo's trying. He's really trying.

PAUL

Do you have any money?

VINCENT

Some. A little.

PAUL

Alright. You need a big box for your paints. We need a little box for our money. A cigar box—fine. We'll divide our box into compartments: so much for paints and canvas, so much for rent, so much for food, wine, tobacco, and so much for...rehabilitation—for hygienic excursions with the ladies at night. Eh? Eh?

VINCENT

Yes. Yes. All planned out. That way we can live on less. Theo won't have to send us so much.

PAUL

Proper planning. Right. That means more excursions. Eh?

VINCENT

Right.

PAUL

No man can live without his excursions among the ladies. Certainly no artist can work without them. Eh, Vincent? (*VINCENT laughs.*) Absolutely necessary for our work. That's the advantage of proper planning.

VINCENT

You're so right, Paul. Proper planning.

PAUL

With a note on top of the box. Every time we take out even a single centime, we mark it down.

VINCENT

Good. Right. And we'll send complete accounts to Theo.

PAUL

(*Raising his glass*) Here's to living like proper artists. We're not Sunday painters, Vincent; we're PROFESSIONALS.

**Vincent's recorded voice: "How does one become mediocre? By compromising and making concessions. Painting is a faith; it imposes the duty to disregard public opinion. In painting, one conquers by perseverance, not by making concessions"**

**Scene 2**

*(A rainy afternoon. VINCENT and PAUL are in the studio. JOSEPH enters onto the street.)*

JOSEPH

Monsieur Gauguin was... Well, Vincent needed a friend who could appreciate his painting. We all knew that. So we were happy for him. Especially Madame Ginoux. Now Vincent would stay out of her hair. At least that's what she SAID. *(He stands, looking toward the house.)*

VINCENT

Paul, I know a vineyard that now that winter is coming on still holds all summer's stored-up sun. A red vineyard, red like wine. In the distance it turns to yellow. Then the sky green with the yellow sun. And after a rain like this, the earth violet, sparkling with yellow in the yellow setting sun. And here and there among the vines, small blue and violet women, tiny figures, vulnerable, bending over, picking up the grapes.

PAUL

Paint it.

VINCENT

I'll take you there.

PAUL

Paint it now.

VINCENT

But the color.

PAUL

You know the color now.

VINCENT

But brighter when I SEE it—there, before my eyes.

PAUL

I haven't even been there, and I see it. The colors.

VINCENT

The yellows.

PAUL

The REDS.

VINCENT

Of course.

PAUL

And now this is it: PRIMARILY the strong lines.

VINCENT

Strong lines. Alright.

PAUL

The art, my dear fellow painter, is in the lines: a round mass of grapes and leaves and the black flowing figures of the bending women—

VINCENT

Yes.

PAUL

In the costumes of Brittany perhaps—

VINCENT

Brittany—

PAUL

The lines of their capes—and in front, her strong arms leaning on her knees, her strong hands propping up her face—

VINCENT

Yes!

PAUL

Her face a sullen mask, the eternal woman—Human Misery.

*(PAUL takes out the paper mask of Human Misery and sticks it up by the mirror.)*

VINCENT

That? That—misery?

PAUL

Human Misery. Exactly, Human Misery.

VINCENT

Oh no! I've seen human misery—REAL human misery, in Belgium, in the black faces and figures of coal miners.

PAUL

That to your coal miners! The deepest human misery is in the mind!

VINCENT

*(Uninterrupted)* Mankind needs color to give hope to poor miserable creatures. It's our duty to paint the VIBRANCE of nature. We are all so in NEED of gaiety and happiness, of hope and...love!

PAUL

Hah! Love!

*(JOSEPH enters the studio.)*

JOSEPH

Good morning, Vincent. Monsieur.

VINCENT

Joseph! *(He points ecstatically to PAUL.)* Have some wine.

JOSEPH

Ah! Monsieur Gauguin.

*(JOSEPH looks around the room for a glass.)*

VINCENT

I want my paintings to comfort people as wine is comforting—as music is comforting. Always, Paul, I want to see color—color, color, color...and paint it...for people.

PAUL

Your saintliness is touching. But you go about it all wrong. Forget your grubby miners. Art is an abstraction—DREAM. Take from nature through your dream. Think less of God's nature and more of your creation which will come from your dream.

*(JOSEPH finds a glass and wipes it out. He goes to Vincent's bedroom to find a chair.)*

VINCENT

From my...well, yes...

PAUL

The only way to rise up to God is by doing LIKE God—creating! Forget sainthood, my dear fellow artist—sainthood is not for artists—we must strive to be no less than God!

VINCENT

But...but, Paul...

PAUL

No less than God!

VINCENT

Well, yes... Yes. That IS our act of worship. Yes.

*(PAUL walks over to his self-portrait. JOSEPH returns with a chair, sets it at the table, and sits.)*

PAUL

You think when I painted this portrait I had to see my face? You think I walked up to the mirror...and looked at the face...and painted it?

VINCENT

I suppose so. Yes, in the mirror. I do.

PAUL

Sketches, yes. To learn the lines. To study the subject! As many and as long as necessary. But then the painting—from imagination, from memory, from dream! That's what gives it strength. Memory. Imagination. Dream! That's what makes it art!

*(PAUL goes back to the table and sits with almost serene satisfaction. VINCENT bursts forth.)*

VINCENT

When I am ready—and I am ready so often these days—I set my easel in the sun. Or if the mistral wind is blowing strong, I pound stakes into the ground and lash my frame to them. And on my knees in the wind I paint the colors I see. The colors I see before me. From the sun! And I know I've taken my whole life to prepare for that painting. So I paint it in an hour.

PAUL

In an hour!

VINCENT

Often, yes! My greatest paintings in an hour!

PAUL

There's a better way to work, my friend.

VINCENT

*(Furious)* I know how to paint!

PAUL

There's a BETTER way.

VINCENT

A better way? A better way yet?

PAUL

I'll teach you.

VINCENT

A...better way, you say. *(Pause)* Alright then. An even better way. Yes. You are such a master! You...the head of the Studio for Artists in the South. Our dream, Paul.

PAUL

Let's paint.

VINCENT

Yes. The herrings.

PAUL

No.

*(JOSEPH moves into a pose at the table.)*

VINCENT

Books.

JOSEPH

If you gentlemen would like...

VINCENT

Please, Joseph, we're working.

PAUL

Each other.

VINCENT

Yes!

*(PAUL laughs, sets up his easel.)*

PAUL

Always the artists having to pose for each other.

VINCENT

*(Laughs)* Always the same.

PAUL

Cheap models.

VINCENT

And this time the artists painting the artists painting.

*(Laughing, VINCENT squares off behind his easel. JOSEPH bolts up and walks out—unnoticed. VINCENT and PAUL spend a lot of time viewing each other.)*

PAUL

Wait. I want to paint you painting sunflowers.

VINCENT

Aha! Yes. Vincent van Gogh painting sunflowers. Yes. Yes.

*(PAUL sets sunflowers on the table and moves the table to in front of VINCENT.)*

VINCENT

*(Triumphantly)* Ha. You'll be SEEING me while you paint.

PAUL

No. *(He sits in his chair beside the easel.)* I'll study you. Make a few mental notes. *(For a long time, PAUL stares at VINCENT, making him very uneasy. VINCENT manages to start to paint.)* When you're out in the fields, then I'll paint you.

VINCENT

Oh.

PAUL

Memory. Imagination. Dream.

*(PAUL exits. VINCENT, seeing Paul's empty chair, puts a lighted candle on the chair and paints his picture of it. < Van Gogh's "Gauguin's Chair" F499 comes up.> VINCENT lights his pipe and paints enthusiastically as the lights fade.)*

**Vincent's recorded voice: "The change I am going to try to make in my painting is to do more figures. Figures are the only thing in painting that excite me to the depths of my soul—and make me feel the infinite more than anything else."**



**Scene 3**

*(An early morning rain is lifting. PAUL is in the studio, painting. JOSEPH is outside, staring at the house. RACHEL enters on the street, bundled, shivering.)*

RACHEL

Good morning, Joseph.

JOSEPH

Go home.

RACHEL

I need to make some money. Nobody comes to the house in all this rain. If they do, they don't ask for me.

JOSEPH

The rain is nearly over. Go home and get dry.

RACHEL

Madame says I can't stay if I don't bring in some customers.

JOSEPH

*(Hands her a few francs)* Give this to her. Tell her...you got it from Vincent.

RACHEL

Hah! Thanks.

*(MME GINOUX enters, loaded with groceries.)*

JOSEPH

Madame.

MME GINOUX

Good morning, Monsieur. *(To RACHEL)* You STILL out here? *(RACHEL shrugs.)* Come along; I'll make you some hot tea. *(To JOSEPH)* You on your way to your friend's?

JOSEPH

No.

*(JOSEPH exits. MME GINOUX leads RACHEL off to the café. VINCENT enters through the garden with a finished canvas and calls into the house.)*

VINCENT

Paul. Paul, the rain is over.

*(VINCENT bursts into the studio and places a painting against the wall to dry.)*

VINCENT

The light in the fields is so striking! Oh. May I see?

PAUL

*(Covering his painting)* I want to take my time with this. But I've finished the mask. You can see it. *(He holds up a wood mask of Human Misery next to his face.)* Human Misery. One of the few really interesting people. Eve. The Virgin Mother. Christ. Satan. And me. *(He laughs. VINCENT glances toward PAUL's easel.)* And you; yes, and the painter, Vincent van Gogh—the painter of sunflowers. Now, what did you say?

VINCENT

The late sunlight is falling on the soft, wet fields. Violet now, with strips of green. The peasants are hard at work, sowing for the spring.

PAUL

I'll get my sketchpad.

*(They gather their painting equipment and exit.)*

**Scene 4**

*(VINCENT and PAUL enter downstage. Strong wind.)*

VINCENT

Look at that! Look at that! The sower. And the sky!

*(Chortling gaily, VINCENT pounds stakes into the ground, lashes his easel to them and starts to paint. <Projection of "The Sower" F450 starts to come up.>)*

VINCENT

The texture of the ground. Texture. Purple! Against the the the green...GREEN sky. The man the sower right here. I'll put him...in front! And behind his head...in the green and let me see, yellow-green and pink sky...behind the sower's head... The sun. Almost a halo. Almost.

PAUL

This is what you brought me out in this wind to paint?

VINCENT

What a scene! And us working together. Right out here where we can actually SEE it.

PAUL

Dismally flat land. And that peasant is hopeless; no imagination whatsoever in his outfit.

VINCENT

Paul, really look at him! He's a SOWER. I can paint him, Millet's sower, MY sower—

PAUL

Millet? Millet! That sentimentalist!

VINCENT

How dare you! Millet's the master! The painter of peasants. Peasants working!

PAUL

Or Monticelli. *(Snidely)* The COLORIST. Another master. Hah!

VINCENT

Monticelli saw the SUN and saw LOVE and GAIETY.

PAUL

That crackpot!

VINCENT

Cracked, cracked—perhaps.

PAUL

Your master. And you won't even hear of Degas!

VINCENT

Degas is...Degas is... He paints INSIDE. Pretty pictures. Wait! No! No! No! We're not going to fight about Degas.

PAUL

He's buying one of my paintings; I'm sure Theo told you that.

VINCENT

He's right to do so, of course. He's just... Never mind. We're not going to fight over Degas. What we need to do now is just open our eyes here, here, right here and really LOOK. There's a sower; I can do him in brilliant color. WE can.

PAUL

No one can paint in this wind.

VINCENT

I paint in the wind all the time! I'm a painter!

PAUL

*(Overlap)* If it isn't rain in this country, it's wind. I'm going back to the house. *(He snaps his sketchpad shut.)* Monticelli, the master!

VINCENT

*(Overlap)* To the house! You didn't even sleep in the house last night.

PAUL

It's none of your business where I sleep!

VINCENT

*(Overlap)* Do you ever think of your wife? Your children?

PAUL

Yes. I think of MY CHILDREN often. EMIL. ALINE. CLOVIS. JEAN. POLA. I think of my children often.

*(PAUL starts to exit. VINCENT yells after him.)*

VINCENT

Aren't you a man? Aren't they YOUR children?

PAUL

You rotten bastard.

VINCENT

Go then! Go! If you can't be a man—like that MAN over there—can't see that sower and all this...all this color and human and act like a man and a painter, just go! Go! Go!

PAUL

I'm going. Right back to Paris where I belong. *(He starts to walk off, stops abruptly.)*  
And YOU. Learn to be a real painter. A real MAN. Get a woman. If you're able.

*(PAUL starts off again; JOSEPH enters and blocks his path. There is a standoff.)*

PAUL

Are you blocking my path?

VINCENT

No. No-o-o! Wait! Don't go! Paul, you can't go! You're the Master of the Studio! I was wrong. I'll make everything right for you. We won't fight any more. We won't. *(PAUL walks around JOSEPH and exits. VINCENT starts to run after PAUL, then returns to his easel.)* Not over Degas. Not over Monticelli. Not over Millet. We WON'T fight. We WON'T!

*(VINCENT starts again to run after PAUL, then stops, dizzy. He stands a while, returns to his easel, and stands, still dizzy.)*

**Vincent's recorded voice: "The doctors will tell us that not only Moses, Mahomet, Christ and Luther were mad, but Frans Hals, Rembrandt, Delacroiz. Ah—that's a serious matter. One might ask these doctors: where then are the sane people?"**

*(JOSEPH finally crosses to VINCENT.)*

JOSEPH

Are you all right?

VINCENT

Joseph?

JOSEPH

Here. I'll take you home. Augustine has a fish chowder on the stove. Marcelle is taking her nap. It'll be quiet.

*(They exit as "The Sower" comes up full bright.)*

### Scene 5

*(Rainy morning. JOSEPH enters. In the studio, VINCENT is completing his "Dance Hall" F547. He is gently humming a waltz. In the café, with too much smoke in the air, too many emptied absinthe bottles on a table, PAUL and RACHEL are drinking. She is caressing him. MME GINOUX is seated at her table, dressed as in "L'Arlesienne: Madame Ginoux" F488. PAUL rises suddenly, RACHEL clings to him, and they exit to outside. Then PAUL stops.)*

#### JOSEPH

Finally, in December, Vincent spent more time at MY house. Painting. Painting Armand twice. Painting Camille once. Painting Augustine. Another of me. And another of Augustine with the baby. I wish you could have seen how he would sit—for hours—and stare at the baby—watching baby Marcelle with eyes like...like he was starving.

*(PAUL rises suddenly. RACHEL clings to him, and they exit to the outside. Then PAUL stops suddenly.)*

#### PAUL

No. We need one more drink. Just one more little absinthe.

*(RACHEL giggles as they return to the café. JOSEPH watches them, then follows them into the café.)*

#### MME GINOUX

Rachel, go to the brothel. I keep a respectable café.

#### PAUL

The ladies who frequent your respectable café, Madame, are almost its only attraction.

#### JOSEPH

You USED to keep a respectable café, Madame. Shopkeepers, whores, night-travelling businessmen, postal workers, thieves. But lately you've been letting anyone come in.

#### PAUL

*(Laughing)* Painters.

#### RACHEL

*(Laughing)* Painters and whores.

#### VINCENT

*(In the studio)* Imagination and memory. I can do it!

#### JOSEPH

Oh, some painters are all right. I even let one of them in my home. Comes over to paint. Armand. Camille. Baby Marcelle. Augustine.

RACHEL

*(Overlap)* Vincent? He'd have painted me too—if I'd let him.

PAUL

I remind you, Monsieur Postman, that your wife has come to the Studio...where I painted her.

JOSEPH

Once.

RACHEL

She's a lump. Not very interesting for a REAL painter, is she?

MME GINOUX

*(To RACHEL)* Behave yourself if you expect to stay in here!

*(VINCENT takes his painting from the easel and heads with it toward the café.)*

PAUL

ALL ladies have attractions. Monsieur's wife has...fecundity. The ladies here, in the all-night café, have their own special attractions...

MME GINOUX

*(Simmering)* Just you watch yourself.

*(PAUL lifts RACHEL onto his lap.)*

PAUL

Rachel, your chief attraction is availability. And you, Madame, the attraction that underlies your APPARENT inaccessibility is your...

MME GINOUX

Don't do that. Don't!

*(MME GINOUX retreats offstage. PAUL laughs. RACHEL laughs and hugs PAUL. VINCENT enters the café.)*

VINCENT

Paul, I want you to see this. Done all from memory—and imagination!

PAUL

Well...Vincent. Hello.

*(PAUL gives RACHEL a big kiss, which she returns. VINCENT thrusts his painting out toward PAUL with trembling hands. PAUL turns back to RACHEL and kisses her again. VINCENT screams something inarticulate, runs out of the café and into the studio. RACHEL laughs. In the studio VINCENT grabs a stack of chairs, runs to Paul's bedroom, and throws them on the bed.)*

JOSEPH

You're supposed to be his friend. You're the foulest human being I've ever seen. And, Monsieur the Master, you painted my wife with colors copied from Vincent.

PAUL

Rachel, off. *(PAUL dumps RACHEL off his lap.)* I have a woman to paint, a Breton woman. *(To JOSEPH)* And you. You know nothing about art! Nothing!

*(VINCENT storms back and forth carrying chairs to Paul's bed. PAUL crosses to the house. JOSEPH and RACHEL exit the café. PAUL charges into his room.)*

PAUL

Damn it! What are you doing?

*(VINCENT throws the last stack of chairs on PAUL's bed.)*

VINCENT

You call yourself a painter? Ha!

*(PAUL grabs a pile of chairs and throws them out the window. He throws a second pile of chairs out the window, and MME GINOUX yells from outside.)*

MME GINOUX

Vincent! Vincent! Don't be a madman!

*(PAUL throws the rest of the chairs out the window as VINCENT stands, too angry to speak.)*

MME GINOUX

Vincent!

PAUL

Now I can get to work. Now, I can PAINT.

*(PAUL strolls down to the studio. MME GINOUX charges into the studio carrying one chair and a piece of another.)*

MME GINOUX

Vincent! *(VINCENT storms from the bedroom into the studio.)* You've gone completely crazy! Now everyone will know it!



PAUL

(*To MME GINOUX*) You're magnificent. Magnificent.

MME GINOUX

Those are my good old chairs. Smashed all over the yard!

VINCENT

(*Nearly inaudibly*) Madame...

PAUL

Madame, I threw out the chairs. In a moment of artistic frenzy. It was wrong of me. My apologies, Madame.

MME GINOUX

Artists! Artistic frenzy! Artistic clap-trap!

PAUL

Vincent, have you never painted this marvelous creature?

MME GINOUX

I should say not!

PAUL

We must.

MME GINOUX

Paint me? Oh no—never!

*(PAUL puts his arm around MME GINOUX to lead her to a downstage position; she breaks away immediately. She stares at PAUL as an adversary. PAUL stands back and studies her with genuine admiration. He takes the broken piece of chair from her. She holds the whole chair as a shield. He slowly eases her downstage. Meanwhile, VINCENT is frozen between anger and desire.)*

PAUL

If you will permit me, Madame. You will be such a marvelous model.

MME GINOUX

Pah!

*(PAUL gently removes the chair from MME GINOUX's grip and places it downstage.)*

PAUL

I assure you, Madame, my brush will do you honor.

*(As MME GINOUX slowly calms down, PAUL seats her downstage on the chair she brought in. He steps back to study her. He takes the table over in front of her and arranges her at it, propping her face on her left arm. He steps back and studies her.)*

PAUL

Magnificent. *(He steps behind his easel.)* Magnificent. What a magnificent woman. *(He removes the painting of Vincent from the easel, leans it facing toward a wall, sets a large sketchpad on the easel and starts to sketch. <Projection of Gauguin's sketch "L'Arlesienne: Madame Ginoux" begins to appear.>)* My woman of Arles.

*(VINCENT stares entranced at PAUL's work.)*

VINCENT

Coming alive... From the first few lines... As my work springs to life before me... But for me she is more... But still so...

PAUL

What?

VINCENT

So...

PAUL

Who is so?

VINCENT

Your...Madame Ginoux.

PAUL

Yes. Mine.

VINCENT

So...accessible.

Madame Ginoux, I MUST...

*(Long moment. PAUL continues to paint. VINCENT is wound up to the point of snapping.)*

VINCENT

Madame, I MUST paint you.

PAUL

Do, Madame. Vincent will also render you with honor.

*(Long moment)*

MME GINOUX

Alright, Vincent. You may.

*(VINCENT springs to his easel. <A projection of van Gogh's "L'Arlesienne: Madame Ginoux" with the books, F488 begins to appear. As the scene progresses, the two portraits become more visible.> While posing, MME GINOUX remains absolutely still. VINCENT paints—like one obsessed—radiating intense energy but never moving from behind his easel. PAUL, on the other hand, moves about the room to view her better and even touches her to make a slight adjustment.)*

PAUL

Your shoulders are rather stiff, Madame. Allow me.

*(PAUL runs his hands sensually across her shoulders, touches her hair and loosens and softens it just a bit, then saunters back to his easel. Both men work. After sketching for a while, PAUL walks over to check on VINCENT's painting.)*

PAUL

Ah, Madame, you are marvelous. Wait till you see what Vincent is doing with you. Books on the table, one very bright red. And you, a reader with far-away, romantic eyes. What books are you reading, Madame? *(No response)* What books is she reading, Vincent?

VINCENT

We will see.

PAUL

But when, Vincent?

VINCENT

Someday.

PAUL

When?

VINCENT

Someday I said!

PAUL

I am not so patient as you.

VINCENT

We will see when we can see into her eyes.

PAUL

*(Returning to his easel)* MY woman...is a woman of the night, with slothful, sensual eyes...with a loose, luxuriant mouth. I have known such mouths in the steaming back streets of Martinique, Madame. The mouth of a woman who knows sin. And yours, Vincent?

VINCENT

Small, tight lips. My woman knows loneliness.

*(They continue to paint for a while. PAUL whistles "Aupres de ma Blonde" off key for several bars, then goes to check on VINCENT's portrait again.)*

PAUL

Someday, Madame, these portraits will hang side by side in the Museum of the Louvre in Paris.

*(MME GINOUX laughs—her only movement during the sitting.)*

PAUL

Believe me. Someday they will. *(PAUL pours two glasses of wine and hands one to VINCENT.)* To the Louvre. *(PAUL drinks; VINCENT, totally involved in his painting, sets his glass down.)* Your woman has such sharp angles and excessive surfaces. Your curve to the table makes her even sharper. Come, let me show you something.

VINCENT

Later. I'm at work.

*(VINCENT lights his pipe and starts to smoke very heavily while still painting. PAUL watches over VINCENT's shoulder as VINCENT works.)*

PAUL

You work too fast.

VINCENT

You look too fast.

PAUL

You slap your colors on. Here...

VINCENT

Later I said! When I'm through!

PAUL

No! While we're working side by side. (*PAUL moves to pull VINCENT over to his easel. VINCENT pushes PAUL aside and returns savagely to painting. PAUL takes his sketch and shoves it before VINCENT's face.*) See how my shadings resonate with the muted tones of night?

VINCENT

(*Shoving PAUL's sketch aside*) Can't you see? I paint with light. I—I— Colors! My paintings give comfort, like music. Like sunlight. Through color! Color! Color!

PAUL

(*With complete control*) Ah, but look. Through lines I reflect the sensuality of the real woman. (*He walks over to MME GINOUX and draws the lines with his hand on her face and torso.*) Here is the music; here is the deep, throaty song of this woman.

VINCENT

Don't, Paul.

PAUL

Through the slow, deliberate rhythms of the lines, I capture the inner rhythm of the woman—her inner harmony.

VINCENT

Stop it, Paul.

PAUL

Through lines I capture the musical chords of the woman's absolute serenity. (*MME GINOUX snatches PAUL's arm away. PAUL chuckles.*) You are in harmony with the night, my dear. I'll paint you in the brothel of the Night Café. A bottle of absinthe before you.

VINCENT

No!

PAUL

The whore in the Louvre.

(*MME GINOUX bolts up, tipping over her chair.*)

VINCENT

Madame! (*He moves to comfort her.*)

MME GINOUX

(*To VINCENT*) Don't touch me!

*(She runs out. PAUL laughs. VINCENT starts for PAUL but stops himself. PAUL, whistling casually, picks up the overturned chair. Then he puts his sketch in VINCENT's hands.)*

PAUL

If I'm not right, tear it up.

*(PAUL saunters out after MME GINOUX. VINCENT studies the portrait with great agitation. He screams after PAUL.)*

VINCENT

She isn't like that! Can't you see! She is...we are all...you, me, ALL of us...there's sunshine in our eyes!

*(Lights dim. VINCENT exits to his bedroom and throws himself on the bed.)*

**Vincent's recorded voice: "We must not judge God from this world; it's just a study that didn't come off. What do you do with a study that has gone wrong? If you are fond of the artist, you do not find much to criticize—you hold your tongue. But you have a right to ask for something better."**

### Scene 6

*(Late at night. The gas light is on in the studio. JOSEPH is sitting in Gauguin's chair with a bottle of wine nearby; he is fidgeting with a rope. VINCENT is facing toward him, painting at his easel. He is slightly drunk. "La Berceuse" F508 is started on the canvas. PAUL and RACHEL are sleeping in Paul's bed.)*

VINCENT

Hold the rope still.

*(JOSEPH flips the rope a bit and lets it lie still.)*

VINCENT

That's not how it was.

*(JOSEPH moves the rope to a different position.)*

VINCENT

Damn it, Joseph!

*(VINCENT goes to JOSEPH, folds JOSEPH's hands in his lap and lets the rope drape to the floor.)*

VINCENT

Now hold still. *(He returns to his painting.)* I'm just trying to decide what to do with the hands. And the chair. Then we'll quit for the night.

JOSEPH

I don't like sitting in this chair.

VINCENT

Paul won't mind.

JOSEPH

I mind.

VINCENT

I'm not painting you. I'm painting Augustine.

JOSEPH

That's the point!

VINCENT

Rocking the cradle. Then, when she can come to the Studio, I'll complete her painting.

JOSEPH

Not in this chair!

VINCENT

The painting's for you. When you're transferred to Marseilles.

JOSEPH

How can they do that? Transferring me and not giving me any more money? So I have to leave my family here. In Arles!

VINCENT

I thought you might like the painting to take with you.

JOSEPH

I can't believe it.

VINCENT

It might give you some comfort.

JOSEPH

The painting? Take it with me?

VINCENT

Yes.

JOSEPH

Certainly I'll take it with me. (*VINCENT beams.*) I should say I will! Couldn't we change chairs?

VINCENT

No.

JOSEPH

Why?

VINCENT

I'm the artist.

*(JOSEPH lets the rope drop.)*

VINCENT

Alright, damn it. That's enough for tonight. Go home to bed.

*(JOSEPH gets up, taking the bottle of wine with him, and exits to the outside. He looks up to the sky and then calls back to VINCENT.)*



Vincent! JOSEPH

*(VINCENT goes to the door.)*

The stars are out. JOSEPH

*(Long moment as VINCENT looks up to the stars.)*

I thought you'd like to see them. JOSEPH

Yes. Yes! VINCENT

We might walk down by the river. See the lights on the water. Finish the bottle of wine. JOSEPH

*(Long moment of hesitation)* No. VINCENT

Oh. JOSEPH

I'll get Paul to go out with me. To paint the stars. VINCENT

Oh. Well then... *(Long pause)* Good night. JOSEPH

*(JOSEPH takes a long drink from the bottle and starts off.)*

*(Calling after JOSEPH)* Thank you, my friend. VINCENT

Yes. You're welcome. JOSEPH

*(VINCENT becomes totally involved in the stars.)*

What a night! VINCENT

*(JOSEPH watches him for a long time. Finally:)*

JOSEPH

Good night. (*He exits.*)

VINCENT

You holy, holy stars. As holy as innocent Marcelle Roulin. As holy as her mother. Stars as holy as old Patience Escalier. Stars as holy as I would be if I could be...or as holy as Paul could be—Paul, the creator, creator of such wonder.

*(VINCENT runs to his room, grabs his hat, which has candles around the brim, grabs some more candles, enters PAUL's room, grabs PAUL's hat, and approaches PAUL.)*

VINCENT

*(Hushed)* Paul. *(No response)* Paul.

PAUL

*(Coldly sober)* What's the matter with you?

VINCENT

The stars. We must paint the stars. I can show you how to paint the holy stars.

PAUL

You can't show me anything.

VINCENT

The stars are swirling through God's night.

PAUL

Are you crazy? Night is for sleeping—or for bedding women. Day is for painting. Daylight! Colors! Sun!

VINCENT

Every star, every single star in the heavens is a glorious, golden sun. What LIFE there is out there! Look, I'll arrange your hat. To light our canvases while we paint.

*(PAUL swipes at his hat and the candles, knocking them to the floor.)*

VINCENT

Paul! The stars. *(He shakes PAUL.)* The stars! The stars! The stars!

*(PAUL bounces out of bed. VINCENT starts to attack PAUL, but PAUL grabs him and restrains him.)*

VINCENT

We have to paint the stars.

PAUL

*(Laughing)* I know what you need. Rachel, wake up. *(He shakes RACHEL.)* Wake up, damn it.

RACHEL

*(In an absinthe stupor)* Hm-m?

PAUL

*(Shaking her)* Wake up.

*(PAUL pulls RACHEL from bed, shakes her vigorously, and helps her dress.)*

RACHEL

Oh. Wake up?

VINCENT

Look out the window, Paul. There's a painting in the stars of astonishing beauty. Right this moment. Even better than I did before. Holier.

PAUL

*(To VINCENT)* We'll fix you. A good honest drunk and a night of whoring. Organize your life to work properly, Vincent. *(To RACHEL)* Here, take this ten francs, go to the café, and get all the absinthe you can. Go.

*(PAUL pushes RACHEL; she drifts out of the house, goes to the café, and slumps at a table. PAUL gets dressed.)*

PAUL

In the morning, you'll feel as fresh as a bull calf. And if the damn rain doesn't coop us up again, we'll go out painting together. Now come.

*(PAUL practically drags VINCENT into the studio.)*

VINCENT

*(While being dragged)* Come to the window. We have to paint the stars, Paul. Paul. No. No. Paul. No!

*(PAUL forces VINCENT to sit at the studio table. VINCENT sets his hat down squarely on the table and lights the candles as PAUL gets partly emptied bottles of wine and absinthe and three glasses.)*

VINCENT

Alright, Paul, just a couple of quick drinks and then we'll go out and paint the stars together. Alright?

*(PAUL sits and pours a couple of glasses of absinthe. VINCENT shoves his aside and pours himself a glass of wine.)*

VINCENT

Alright then. Alright. We'll have a party—a quick party.

PAUL

Certainly. We'll have a party.

*(RACHEL gathers bottles and begins to work her way toward the studio.)*

VINCENT

Do you know? This is the first party at this table. Ever. But someday, just think, our friend Bernard could be sitting right here. *(VINCENT lifts his glass.)* To the Studio in the South. Under the Southern skies. *(He gulps his wine.)*

PAUL

My friend, the South of France is not the tropics. Forget your little Studio.

VINCENT

Paul!

PAUL

Martinique. *(He drinks his toast of absinthe.)* You should live in Martinique, as I did. In the paradise of a Negro hut. Truly, paradise. *(He shoves VINCENT's absinthe glass toward him.)* Below is the sea, bordered by coconut palms; above are fruit trees—mangos, papayas, guavas.

VINCENT

You don't understand, Paul! *(He refills his glass with wine.)*

PAUL

The people here are pallid. Unpicturesque, like Rachel—or your foolish friend Joseph, or Madame de le Café. In Martinique—

VINCENT

To the Studio, Paul. *(He downs his wine.)*

PAUL

women of every color from cream to ebony stroll about all day to the rhythms of creole songs and musical chatter. Nature is at its richest, the climate is warm, the winds blow soft and cool off the ocean.

VINCENT

The Studio. The Studio...OUR Studio...here...for all needing artists.

*(RACHEL enters the studio, drops the bottles onto the table, and sits.)*

PAUL

You'll have trouble remaining so holy and virtuous in Martinique, my friend. *(VINCENT starts interjecting a slow, tormented, rhythmic "No. No. No." RACHEL moves bottles around the candles, causing swirls of red and green to shine through the bottles onto their faces and throughout the café.)* One day on a forest path, a pretty coffee-colored lady of sixteen handed me a ripe guava that was split open and squeezed at one end. *(As VINCENT continues to interject "No," he begins to rock in pain from side to side; tears stream down his cheeks.)* Go to Martinique; she'll offer you the guava. With your orange hair she'll find you irresistibly appealing. But do not eat the guava if you cherish your virtue in the tropics, my friend. She'll have crushed the fruit against her breast... and you'll be forever in her control. *(PAUL laughs a bit.)* Or so they say in Martinique.

RACHEL

I don't think you're talking about me.

*(RACHEL pours absinthe over the candles on VINCENT's hat, dousing the flames; she lines up glasses and slops wine into them, overflowing onto the table.)*

VINCENT

*(Through his tears)* But the stars, Paul.

PAUL

Lovelier far than here.

VINCENT

But not the sun. The sun warms us all. Everywhere.

PAUL

Hotter in Martinique. Brighter. Clearer. I'd take you there, Vincent. You look, you really look, at nature and people. And you THINK while you paint. You ARE a REAL painter. *(Beat)* But I find I can't live with you. Can't work properly around you.

VINCENT

But you have. You do!

PAUL

So YOU go to Martinique. I'm going to Paris. Tomorrow.

VINCENT

You DO work! Here in ARLES—in our Studio.

PAUL

And then I think I'll go to Madagascar—or Tahiti. Yes, Tahiti. (*RACHEL fills VINCENT's empty wine glass with absinthe and shoves it toward VINCENT; he takes it in his hands.*) In a native hut of wood and clay—with a thatched roof...with a cow, hens, and fruit...a woman of my own, that's compulsory—a woman, a model... (*RACHEL drops a bottle, takes another, gets up, grabs the mask of Human Misery and puts it on high on her forehead, and wanders out of the studio and exits through the café.*) In Tahiti, without any expenses at all, I can invite a select group of friends. All artists, CONGENIAL artists. To live free with me. To create art. REAL art. MY family of artists. MY Studio. MY Studio in the Tropics.

(*VINCENT lifts up the wine glass of absinthe.*)

VINCENT

Paul, Paul, a REAL toast. If I drink it, you'll stay here, won't you? You'll stay? (*Long moment as he prepares to drink.*) To the Studio in the South!

(*VINCENT gulps down the absinthe and pours more absinthe for himself and PAUL. PAUL holds up his glass.*)

PAUL

To the Studio in the Tropics.

(*PAUL drinks. VINCENT flings his glass at PAUL and collapses, sobbing hysterically. PAUL goes to his room and begins methodically to pack all his belongings. VINCENT, in a stupor, looks about.*)

VINCENT

Paul. I have to find Paul.

(*He manages to get to his feet and out onto the street.*)

VINCENT

Paul. Paul. Paul... (*He looks up at the stars.*) The stars. Holy, holy stars. Paul's in bed. Of course. Safe at home in bed. (*He staggers toward the house and calls toward Paul's room.*) The stars, Paul. Do you see the stars?

(*VINCENT staggers into the studio and begins to rummage frantically through his painting box. PAUL enters the studio with all his belongings. RACHEL wanders back into the café, sits in an isolated chair and slumps forward, causing the mask of Human Misery to stare out toward the audience.*)

VINCENT

Paul. You aren't...? Paul, don't leave!

PAUL

You still dream of the Studio for Artists in the South.

VINCENT

Yes. Certainly. You can find peace to work here.

PAUL

There is no peace with you, Vincent. None. None. None. None. None. Here, you should see this before I go.

*(PAUL uncovers his “Van Gogh Painting Sunflowers” WC296 and shows it to VINCENT. VINCENT studies the portrait a very long time.)*

VINCENT

It’s me all right.

*(PAUL nods. VINCENT approaches the painting and studies it again.)*

VINCENT

It’s me gone mad. *(PAUL nods.)* Mad.

*(PAUL hangs the painting on the studio wall, jams VINCENT up in front of it, picks up his belongings, and exits out onto the street.)*

VINCENT

My face like a wood mask. *(Moment)* You saw no sunshine in my eyes.

*(VINCENT stares at the painting for a while longer, then runs to attack PAUL. PAUL hears VINCENT approaching, whirls around and stops him with a look.)*

VINCENT

You CAN’T kill the Studio. You CAN’T.

PAUL

There IS no Studio. There never was.

*(PAUL turns and exits. VINCENT watches PAUL go, then screams:)*

VINCENT

NO-O-O!

*(All lights to black except for one white spot on VINCENT. A throbbing, distorted version of his scream echoes continuously throughout the theater. VINCENT runs back into the studio, stares at Paul’s painting of him, then at his reflection in the mirror. By now the throbbing scream is loud. VINCENT clasps his hands over his ears; the sound increases in volume; he looks again at the mirror. As the*

*sound crescendos to a huge climax, he grabs a razor and slices off the bottom of his left ear. The scream stops immediately, though an insistent low throbbing continues throughout the theater. VINCENT drops the piece of ear and razor as blood streams down his neck, some landing on the floor. He tears a strip from blank canvas and wraps it as a bandage around his head <As in “Self-Portrait With Bandaged Ear and Pipe” F529.> He picks up the piece of ear, wipes it meticulously on his shirt, tears a sheet out of a sketchpad, wraps the piece of ear carefully in the paper, and exits out onto the street. He looks about, then crosses into the café. He hands RACHEL the package. Momentary pause as she unwraps it. She utters a low hysterical cry and runs off. VINCENT crosses back to the yellow house, makes his way to his bed and collapses. The throbbing fades to silence. The light fades to black, with the last fading image being Paul’s painting of Vincent.)*

**Vincent’s recorded voice: “My own work, well, I am risking my life for it, and my reason has half foundered because of it. That’s all right. We can still choose our side; we can still act, I think, with humanity.”**



**Scene 7**

*(Lights up on a gray, wintery day. JOSEPH is heard singing a cheery French peasant song offstage. VINCENT is barely audible singing along with him. As they enter, JOSEPH stops singing; VINCENT continues weakly for a few notes. VINCENT has the famous bandage over his ear. They stare at the yellow house for a few moments.)*

VINCENT  
Come along.

JOSEPH  
Are you SURE you're ready?

VINCENT  
It's something I have to do.

JOSEPH  
Well yes. But there's no hurry. We could just sit here for a while. Then stroll around a bit—if you feel strong enough. After a while we could go back to the hospital—and come back tomorrow.

VINCENT  
Is there blood on the paintings?

JOSEPH  
No. Really. They're all right.

VINCENT  
On the tile.

JOSEPH  
There was. A lot of it. You could have bled to death.

VINCENT  
It was the only studio I ever had.

JOSEPH  
Don't worry. Augustine and I cleaned it all up. And straightened a bit.

VINCENT  
The paintings are all right?

JOSEPH  
Yes. They're fine.

## VINCENT

Well then...

*(They enter the studio. "Van Gogh Painting Sunflowers" and the mirror are gone. Vincent's paintings are up for display on every inch of wall, on the chairs, on the table. Among the paintings displayed are:*

*"Portrait of Joseph Roulin" F433  
 "Portrait of Patience Escalier" F444  
 "The Sower" F450  
 "Sunflowers" F454  
 "Sunflowers" F456  
 "A Pair of Shoes" F461  
 "The Night Café" F463  
 "The Yellow House" F464  
 "Van Gogh's Bedroom" F482  
 "Portrait of Armand Roulin" F493  
 "L'Arlesienne: Madame Ginoux" F488  
 "Van Gogh's Chair" F498  
 "Gauguin's Chair" F499.*

*Most prominently placed, on the easel ready to be painted, is "La Berceuse"—still unfinished. VINCENT moves from one painting to another—slowly at first, and then hurriedly, as if he were greeting old friends. Finally, he steps back to take them all in.)*

## VINCENT

You...and Augustine...arranged them all for me.

## JOSEPH

I think I like the paintings of the people best. Armand. Patience. Augustine. Me.

## VINCENT

No one wants them, Joseph. I can't sell a painting.

## JOSEPH

All those bright colors.

## VINCENT

Theo has piles of my paintings under his bed. In his cupboard. Behind his chairs.

## JOSEPH

Really beautiful together.

VINCENT

Every day I painted. But no one wants my work. *(He picks up the painting of Joseph.)*  
Joseph, could a madman have done that?

JOSEPH

No. I think you saw, really saw...me. And really painted me.

VINCENT

Then...you think my life hasn't been a waste. Don't you?

JOSEPH

I think you may even have done some real work.

VINCENT

Really?

JOSEPH

Almost like being a Railroad Postal Superintendent.

VINCENT

Alright then, I am NOT done painting. A canvas I have covered IS worth more than a blank canvas.

JOSEPH

*(Indicating the unfinished "La Berceuse")* I thought perhaps...

VINCENT

Yes! For you! I'll finish Augustine rocking the cradle.

JOSEPH

I rather hoped you would. Uh...for me to keep?

VINCENT

Of course.

JOSEPH

Thank you, Vincent.

VINCENT

You really want it, don't you?

JOSEPH

Yes. I think I'll need it.

*(VINCENT beams, takes up his palette and brush and goes to the easel. The lights start to fade on the studio.)*

VINCENT

I'll paint her in green. A field of green around her—her skirt a field of green.

(<"La Berceuse"—completed—comes up big.>)

JOSEPH

As my postal jacket was the evening sky.

VINCENT

Yes!

JOSEPH

Her face is rather orange. *(Beat)* Makes her look more...round than she really is. *(Beat)* Rather comfortable though. *(Beat)* Comforting.

VINCENT

A picture such as a fisherman in the stormy waters off of Iceland...

JOSEPH

or a postman in a room off in Marseilles...

VINCENT

would imagine of his wife on shore.

JOSEPH

or his wife back home in Arles, with the baby—while he's in a dark, grey room—all by himself.

VINCENT

A picture that—had I a wife...like yours—would comfort me when I must leave this, my Studio in the South.

*(JOSEPH steps aside and watches VINCENT. Projections of "Sunflowers" come up on either side of "La Berceuse.")*

JOSEPH

All those flowers around her.

**Vincent's recorded voice: "To get up heat enough to melt that gold, those flower tones, it isn't everybody who can do it."**

JOSEPH

Makes her seem...special.

VINCENT

I want to paint ordinary men and women with something of the eternal, something I can paint by the radiance of my colorings.

JOSEPH

Alone, in my small room, I missed my family terribly.

*(VINCENT hands the painting to JOSEPH. JOSEPH, nearly breaking down, takes it.)*

JOSEPH

But Vincent's painting of Augustine was a great comfort to me.

**Vincent's recorded voice: "I want to express hope by some star, the eagerness of a soul by an evening radiance."**

*(JOSEPH turns back briefly.)*

JOSEPH

Thank you... Vincent... my friend.

*(JOSEPH exits. <The projections segue into stars as "Starry Night" comes up.>)*

VINCENT

Yes. I do paint with enough color...

so that my work will glow...

*(<"Starry Night" up full bright.>)*

**Vincent's recorded voice: "so that my work will glow...through the deep dark evenings of lonely people..."**

*(Light fades out on VINCENT as he exits.)*

**Vincent's recorded voice: "after I am gone."**

*(<Surrounded by projections of "Starry Night," van Gogh's last "Self-Portrait" F627 comes up—glows full bright—holds for a few moments—then everything fades to black.>)*

-The End-