

Letter 036a

[Letter from Theo, on the other half of which is Vincent's reply]
The Hague, 7 September 1875

Dear Vincent,

Last spring Weehuizen died. I thought you knew. He died very suddenly after a few days' illness. He died in hospital with nobody present. I greatly regretted that I was not with him. I had been on familiar terms with him of late. He had read Michelet's *L'Amour* and often talked about it to me, and he loved nature so much and sought the still sadness in it. Last Sunday I heard a beautiful sermon. Jesus wept.

Thank you for the lithographs and the book by Michel you promised me; I am very curious to see them. I have taken your letter to the Borchers. They seem to be good people, and I hope to see more of them. Today we received the novelties, including that engraving after Rembrandt. It looks fine, the figure of Jesus especially is beautiful, and the whole is noble. Adieu, good luck.
Yours affectionately, Theo

The frames for the engravings for Mother's birthday cost 4 guilders apiece.

[Reply]

Paris, 8 September 1875

Dear Theo,

You didn't expect to get this letter back, did you?

No, my lad, that's not the way to look at it. Certainly Weehuizen's death is sad, but sad in another way than you say.

Keep your eyes open, and try to be strong and brave. Are you sure that Michelet's book was the right one for him?

Theo, I want to make a suggestion that may perhaps surprise you. Do not read Michelet any longer or any other book but the Bible till we meet again at Christmas, and do as I told you: go out in the evening often, dropping in on Van Stockum, Borchers and the like. I don't think you will regret it; you will feel much freer once you start this regimen.

Beware of the words I underlined in your letter. There is still a sadness, certainly, thank God, but I do not know whether we are entitled to it yet. You notice I say we: I, no more than you.

The other day Pa wrote me, "Sadness does no harm, but makes us see things with a holier eye." This is the true "still sadness," the pure gold, but we have not got as far as that, not by a long shot. Let us hope and pray we may get there, and believe me always

Your loving brother, Vincent

I have got a little bit further than you, and I see already that, alas, the maxim "La jeunesse et l'adolescence ne sont que vanité" [Youth and adolescence are nothing but vanity] is nearly all true. So keep heart, old fellow, I shake your hand warmly.