

Letter 067  
Ramsgate, 31 May 1876

Dear Theo,

Bravo on going to Etten May 21, so happily four of the six children were at home. Father wrote to me at length how everything went on the day. Thanks also for your last letter.

Did I write to you about the storm I watched recently? The sea was yellowish, especially close to the shore. On the horizon a streak of light, and above it immensely large dark grey clouds, from which one could see the rain coming down in slanting streaks. The wind blew the dust from the little white path among the rocks into the sea and shook the hawthorn bushes in bloom and the wallflowers that grow on the rocks. To the right, fields of young green corn, and in the distance the town, which, with its towers, mills, slate roofs, Gothic-style houses and the harbor below, between two jetties sticking out into the sea, looked like the towns Albrecht Dürer used to etch.

I watched the sea last Sunday night as well. Everything was dark grey, but on the horizon the day was beginning to break. It was still very early and yet a skylark was already singing. And the nightingales in the gardens by the sea. In the distance, the light from the lighthouse, the guard ship, etc.

That same night I looked out of the window of my room at the roofs of the houses you can see from there, and at the tops of the elms, dark against the night sky. Above the roofs, a single star, but a beautiful, big, friendly one. And I thought of us all and I thought of my own years gone by and of our home, and these words and this sentiment sprang to my mind, 'Keep me from being a son who brings shame, give me Thy blessing, not because I deserve it, but for my Mother's sake. Thou art Love, cover all things. Without Thy constant blessing we succeed in nothing.'

Enclosed is a little drawing of the view from the school window through which the boys follow their parents with their eyes as they go back to the station after a visit. Many a one will never forget the view from that window.

You really ought to have seen it this week, when we had days of rain, especially at dusk when the lamps are lit and their light is reflected in the wet streets. On such days Mr. Stokes can sometimes be in a bad temper, and if the boys make more of a noise than he likes they occasionally have to go without their bread and tea in the evening. You ought to see them looking out of the window then, there is something so melancholy about it. They have so little apart from their meals to look forward to and to see them through from one day to the next.

I wish you could also see them going down the dark stairs and through the narrow passage to where they have their dinner. The sun does shine pleasantly in there. Another peculiar place is a room with a rotten floor where there are six basins in which they wash, and a dim light is all that reaches the washstand through the broken panes of the window. It is certainly quite a melancholy sight. I should like to spend, or to have spent, a winter with them, just to see what it is like.

The youngsters have made an oil stain on your little drawing, please forgive them.

Enclosed, a few lines for Uncle Jan. And now, good night. Should anyone ask after me, my greetings to them. Do you still visit Borchers from time to time? If you see him, remember me to him as well as to Willem Valkis and everybody at the Rooses'. A handshake in my thoughts from

Your loving Vincent