

Letter 302
Sunday night
The Hague, 22 July 1883

Dear brother,

It may be feverishness, or nerves, or something else, I don't know, but I don't feel well. Perhaps I am thinking more than is necessary about that expression in your letter concerning various things; I hope so. And I have an uneasy feeling I can't shake off, though I have tried to overcome it.

There isn't any reason for it, is there? If there is anything, then tell me straight out what kind of obstacles there are.

At all events, write too, by return of mail if possible, whether there is anything or not. I can't help it if there is no reason for it, but all at once I'm in the dumps. It may be a reaction from my overexerting myself.

At all events, write soon, boy; did you get the photographs? I'm going to take a long walk to try to shake it off. Adieu,

Yours sincerely, Vincent

In fact, I have no real friend but you, and when I am in low spirits, I always think of you. I only wish you were here, that we might again talk together about moving to the country.

Except for what I told you about, there is nothing the matter with me, and things are going well – but perhaps I am a little feverish or something – I feel miserable. I had to pay money right and left – landlord, painter, baker, grocer, shoemaker, heaven knows what – and only a little is left. But the worst is that after many such weeks, one feels one's resistance ebbing, and is overcome by a pervading feeling of weariness. If you can't send anything at once, brother, at all events try to write me by return of mail if possible. And as to the future, if there is some danger, tell it straight out, "homme avisé en vaut deux," it is better to know exactly what one has to fight against.

I have tried to work a little today, but suddenly I was overcome by a depression which I cannot exactly account for. At such moments one wishes one were made of iron, and regrets that one is only flesh and blood.

I had written you early this morning, but after I had mailed my letter, it suddenly seemed as if all my troubles crowded together to overwhelm me, and it became too much for me because I could no longer look clearly into the future. I can't put it any other way, and I can't understand why I shouldn't succeed in my work.

I have put all my heart into it, and, for a moment at least, that seemed to me a mistake.

But, boy, you know it yourself – what things in practical life must one devote one's strength and thought and energy to? One must take a chance and say, I will do a certain thing and carry it through. Well, then it may turn out wrong, and one may hit an impenetrable barrier when people do not care for it; but one needn't care after all, need one? I don't think one has to worry over it; but sometimes it becomes too hard, and one feels miserable against one's will.

And now I thought, I am sorry that I didn't fall ill and die in the Borinage that time, instead of taking up painting, for I am only a burden to you. And yet I cannot help it, for one must go through many phases to become a good painter, and what one makes in the meantime is not exactly bad if one tries one's utmost; but there ought to be people who see it in the light of its tendency and objective, and who do not ask the impossible.

Things are looking dark right now. If it were only for me, but there is the thought of the woman and the children, poor creatures whom one would keep safe, and feels responsible for.

The woman has been doing well recently.

I cannot talk about it with them, but for myself it became too much today. Work is the only remedy; if that does not help, one breaks down.

And you see the trouble is that the possibility of working depends on selling the work, for there are expenses – the more one works, the greater the expenses are (though the latter is not true in every respect). When one does not sell and has no other income, it is impossible to make the progress which would otherwise follow of its own accord.

The fact is, brother, that the general state of affairs oppressed me more than I could bear, and I am telling you my thoughts. I only wish you would come soon. And do write soon, for I need it. Of course there is nobody but you whom I can speak to about it, for it does not concern other people, and they have nothing to do with it.