

Letter 432  
Nuenen, 12- 15 November 1885

Dear Theo,

Would it greatly amaze you – let's suppose those at home intend to move between March and May next – would it greatly amaze you if something happened to Mother before that time? Now and then this thought occurs to me when I go there. I have the impression that lately there has been a change. "Aging" is such a strange thing, and it is absolutely certain that there are many cases of a wife's not outliving her husband by long. The change I observed is that at times Mother's thoughts are more lucid, whereas during these last months there were long periods when they seemed more or less fuzzy – which is really not to be wondered at. For a time there was something overwrought in her, due to – at least so I imagine – the void around her and the feeling of loneliness.

Now it struck me that she has turned quite calm and collected – something resolute has taken the place of the worrying. Nothing more is to be seen.

I do not think it impossible that to her too death may come unexpectedly and softly, just as it came to Father, and for a similar reason. Seeing that I was struck by it – and because Wil, when I discussed it with her, told me that she had also observed that Mother was changing a great deal, and that it made her uneasy too – I am writing to let you know.

For the rest, however, one might say that Mother is looking particularly well. But there is something that makes me think of what I told you. I don't think it would be a bad idea at all if Mother made a few trips shortly, to Anna, to Amsterdam, to Cor – especially as she seems to be resolved on it and to long to see them all once more. But it might well be that she herself has a presentiment that at the same time it will be a leave-taking.

This month I had to pay my rent, and at the same time I gave notice that I shall leave my studio toward May. Its drawback is, as you know, that I am greatly handicapped by the neighbours, and I notice that people are still afraid of the priest, though perhaps he wouldn't meddle any further. But since there has been trouble once, the best thing is a radical change.

The last thing I painted is rather big; it's an old mill on the barren heath, a dark silhouette against an evening sky.

Now this is an uneasiness that I arrived at on my own, however, to such a degree that I feel obliged to inform you of it. But as Mother goes to see Van der Loo from time to time, we may expect him to warn us if there is anything to be warned of. But if it should be a passing similar to Father's, that is to say, sudden, it is equally possible that it will happen within a few days as within a few years. So – who can tell? If the lucidity and the calm persist, I personally expect a crisis after the trip, that is, within a short time – and dying without a struggle. But sometimes it happens that the mind gets a little clouded, then things drag on, and then it may still be necessary to struggle through much suffering and worry. Please think over whether I am not right in setting the two chances against each other: either an early death without suffering or the other thing.

Goodbye, with a handshake,

Ever yours, Vincent