

My previous letter has become true: Frozen sorrow is eternal sorrow.

Everyone may know that I am going through it now that my dearest with whom I shared everything is no longer there.

**Below is my story about her that I spoke during a beautiful gathering in the Natural Burial Ground Landgoed Hoeve Ruth in Vlierden. Gert Oude Sogtoen played the piano and accompanied the famous tenor Mario Veltman who sang *Ave Maria* by Schubert and *Nessun Dorma* (no one may sleep) from Puccini's opera Turandot.**

My grandchildren Lieve and Teun, aged 14, spoke very beautifully about their grandmother, Deirdre my daughter and Brendan with their wonderful stories and finally myself as the last.

My story about Leonie follows below:

**DEAR LOVE MY HOUSE MY EVERYTHING  
NOTHING IS MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN LIVING WITH YOU - NEVER A  
DULL MOMENT**

Our life together started tumultuously. Wedding ringing on Saturday, October 3, 1970 in 't Kasteeltje' of Marie Thérèse Rompa, her parents. What was I doing, I was restless, walked up and down to the phone and back with a glass, I had a date with hockey girl Tineke, walked back when a certain Leonie was suddenly in my area. She told me that she had studied medicine and was about to leave for Tunisia to work somewhere in a deserted area. I said bluntly: ***'That's not going to happen'.*** ***"That's not going to happen?" she repeated. 'Why not, are you going to decide that for me? I'm my own boss.'*** No, you don't go after you go out with me and then you don't want to go to Tunisia anymore.' ***'What an arrogant ball you are'.*** 'Yes, but I'll say it very nicely anyway. You know what, I'll call you this week and we'll make a date.' Leonie worked in the hospital in Sittard, so I had to go there. And yes of course, she hasn't been to Tunisia anymore, yes much later on holiday with me. We knew immediately.

Which she immediately made clear to me and added: ***'Remember that I always want to work and not just a little: I want to work very hard.*** That is immediately clear. And, I said, I also have something to say. I am an art collector and I decide for myself whether I want to buy something, that's not up to you. It is not ordinary art, a beautiful picture on the wall, it must chafe and hurt. I am not Pijnenburg for nothing, for my German teacher even "Herr von Schmerzenburg".

After three months and some skirmishes, we got married where Herman Verbeek, specialist in training at the Elkerliek hospital, friend of Leonie's who was allowed to sleep in my flat in the Boerhaavelaan, answered the phone when my executive secretary passed on the correct information.

We were married on Monday, January 25, 1971, in the chapel of Our Lady of Binderen. My Heerom Harry Maas did the service, by his sister Greetje, my mother, invariably called Heerom. The chapel owes its name to Mary of Louvain who ended up in the swamp during the hunt and cried out: O God 'k bin-der in! *Now that my DEAREST has passed away, it feels to me like I have ended up in the same swamp.*

The party took place in the Hoefslag in Deurne, where the Hoedemakers family used to have a restaurant with mini golf and many upside down tiles with holes in them on a wooden extension where hundreds of birds flew in and out. In my mind, they flew along to guide us through life. The air was filled with chirping birds.

As a wedding gift we traveled directly to Paris by car, and we visited, among others: Notre Dame, Latin Quarter, Bastille, Montmartre, Louvre, Olympia with Charles Aznavour. We enjoyed it, we had that together. Art and culture as pleasure, comfort and lubricant for life. Alleluia!

In the summer of 1971 we made a long trip of 6 weeks to Spain and Morocco. On the return trip we were not allowed to leave Morocco because of the Russian flu and we had to quarantine for a week because Leonie was pregnant with Deirdre. Then we had a breakdown in Valencia. A speed demon grazed our car. The police had us admit our guilt because Spaniards were not insured. It helped that Leonie spoke good French.

*We are two pretty stubborn personalities and that clashed and clattered regularly.* Nientje always walked through the house at a great speed and I can still hear her heels tapping on the stone floor of our house, because yes we were energetic and immediately bought land in Deurne. Deurne, because all the schools were there, there was a station and is the capital of the Peel. Moreover, the land was cheap. A year later we sold our house to Wim Kuijpers and built on a much larger piece of land at the beginning of the real forest in the Walsberg.

You should know that Leonie, for me called Nientje or Nina Tabiietse, came from Kerkrade-West, a mining area. It was not natural for girls to study there. Her father, Pierre, insisted that she go to grammar school in order to make his own deep desire come true. She had to get high points, otherwise she would be told.

When she was three years old, she already knew that she wanted to be a doctor stimulated by a certain Pief, a miracle doctor in herbs who had fled in the First World War and was part of the family. He succeeded, both daughters Leonie and Bertine with her beautiful beauty salon and son Jacques have done well in their lives.

Leonie wanted to specialize, but the time was not ripe for it, she was told by male specialists: *'But girl, what are you going to do, you can never handle that with those long working days'*.

Then the feminine started to itch. She wanted children and was immediately offered a job as a pediatrician at the GGD in Helmond.

It was a lot of work, I studied pedagogy in Tilburg on Fridays and Saturdays, teaching at school, Nientje went to the two-year youth health course, many museums, theaters, we ran past ourselves, we wanted to get everything out of life. Deirdre was born on January 24, 1972 and Brendan February 3, 1975.

I was happy with Leonie, an independent woman, gave me a lot of peace. While some of our husbands didn't like the fact that Leonie worked, even women who had studied. *'We sometimes come back when you have stopped working'*. Not so, so stay away. And when a crisis broke out in the 80s, we were told that it was a shame that we earned two salaries and that Nientje had to stop working to make room for a colleague.

In those days, a woman was far from being seen as a full-fledged human being. Professor F. Buytendijk wrote a book about women in the 1950s and his first sentence was: *THE starting point of this study has been that women are human beings.*

I remember that when a woman in education had a child she had to leave education. A woman was blessed with the three C's, fill them in yourself, it starts with Church and the other two I leave to your imagination, it is always good. Some time after that people said to me that I had done well by marrying a well-earned doctor. Oh well, people are only people.

There were sometimes fierce clashes between us, both of us very stubborn, usually over trivialities and later over the upbringing of the children and especially, to be honest, that of our Brendan.

We made many trips, visited almost all museums and churches in France, Italy, Germany. In every church Leonie lit a candle for Maria, otherwise it would not have been complete. Once a man came to stand next to us and said; *'Stop this nonsense immediately, you are being cheated and you are cheating the business too.'*

**When Deirdre was barely born she was already dragged along by the heat in Herculaneum and Pompeii. Leonie could have invented the route planner. She guided us through all the difficult streets in Naples with deafening screeching impatient honking. Usually she came with all kinds of maps on her lap and shouting Left - Right - Straight ahead. We were ahead of the snollebollekens. When we don't know something here at home we all shout Centre -Sud. Leonie's CENTRE SUD is etched in my body. Leonie kept the scrapbooks and wrote everything down, albeit crookedly, she liked that.**

**I studied hard, got my MO-B a year early and immediately got a job as a teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts on Cobbenhagenlaan in Tilburg.**

**Leonie studied natural medicine and was sometimes away for entire weekends and days for that study. Fortunately, we had fantastic help from Mrs. Koolen and later from Franca van de Putten. In between I painted the entire house, both inside and out. The children received what they call Bildung in German, music lessons, oboe, art education, hockey. Life was worth living, everything had to be made the most of.**

**Nientje brought me my love for the opera. We experienced 30 operas at the National Opera and Ballet in the Stopera in Amsterdam. We always made a party of it, stayed overnight in a nice hotel, the decor in which the operas were set was the best of the best and we were completely carried away by the story and the intense music.**

**Never to be forgotten my dearest Nientje. Thank you, thank you a hundred thousand times my dearest Nientje.**

**Teaching in Tilburg, my advisory work in Helmond and all sorts of other committees, the hobbies of the children, the untamed work ethic of Leonie required a balancing act of a trapeze artist. During holidays we regularly stayed away for 4 weeks, never too long in one place, the world had to be seen. And our works of art were exhibited all over the world: to name a few: New York, Los Angeles, Boston, Paris, Boymans, Groninger Museum and last year we made a trip together to Norway where a work by Rammellzee was exhibited in the Kunsthal in Oslo.**

**Then it also happened to me that I fell in love with a student, boy oh boy what a fuss. I am still grateful that it ultimately came to nothing. I could not and should not do that to her. *Your love for me has always been so convincing. I have to be honest and not just tell the nicest things.***

In 1986, miraculous things happened that turned our whole life upside down. It started with a student *Írene Henselmans* who said to me during a lesson: *'But Mr. Pijnenburg, you always go so deeply and emotionally into everything.'* You should read a book by *Etty Hillesum*.

I had never heard of the writer. Etty turned out to be a Jewish writer who was gassed in the Second World War.

I bought her diaries, started reading, don't ask me how or why but I had to cry at every line of hers, cry intensely, she became a part of me.

Leonie was completely carried away. *I didn't read but was read as Armando the artist said: 'I don't paint but am painted'.*

I had been suffering from intestinal problems for a long time, was so incredibly tired. I started to delve into esotericism, health, immediately stopped eating meat and miraculously after a week all problems were gone, never had any problems again. Leonie also suddenly looked at her profession differently and started studying and practicing acupuncture like a madman, I think for 8 years, in addition to Bach therapies. Nientje started an acupuncture practice. The house was renovated for it. During a visit we made to the clairvoyant *Netty Edelkoren* in Utrecht, she said: 'There is someone here who addresses you as *Muusje*.' Leonie was shocked. It was her father who always wrote her letters with 'Dearest *Muusje*'. The next day a bookcase fell over, the books all over the floor, one was completely open and yes with a lost letter that started with 'dearest *Muusje*'. Another clairvoyant, an Englishman who had been in a coma for 8 years, had woken up from it, looked at us and said 'You will be just fine, something beautiful will come between you'

Nientje started having health problems. It started during a visit to the *Stedelijk Museum* in 2009 when she suddenly felt unwell and developed a crooked mouth. Over the years, more complaints arose, two major heart operations, two broken hips and yet she continued her practice steadfastly and had time for her children and grandchildren.

I got prostate cancer at 70 and with that my sexual drive completely decreased, but for me it meant a process to complete dedication to my Nientje. I discovered that tenderness, touch, love without ulterior motives is of much greater value. That is how our love started to blossom.

*It was not until her 75th birthday that Leonie decided to stop working, with a heavy heart.*

She had to use a rollator, that she could no longer drive a car, losing her independence was the worst thing that could happen to her. I became a caregiver, I did it with a lot of love, our love grew and grew. In our garden, in the border, there is a red rose that has withstood the test of time. There are large thorns on the stem, which have pricked us badly in our lives, but there is also space between the thorns, time for reflection and enjoying together.

Above blooms the flame-red rose. Yes, together we have almost achieved perfect love. I have cared for her with all my soul, dressing and undressing her, showering her, going to the toilet with her every night, massaging her painful ankles and legs with Jambes Légères, while caressing and scratching her back, which she liked so much. In bed I crawled so close to her that we almost became one person, I kissed her dozens of times in a row every night and whispered and called out "Nientje I love you so much, you are my pride and joy, my stubborn sweetest little thunder, you have done everything with 150%, your love for me was always there and also for your children and grandchildren unconditionally. Yes Pijntje she whispered then, she could hardly speak anymore because of shortness of breath, *'I love you, you are the sweetest man, you will go high into heaven'*. Yes Pijntje, yes Nientje, yes Pijntje.

The rollator was no problem for me, I put Nientje on the seat and we drove to the movies and through museum spaces. Halfway through November a few days to Oudenaarde and to Ghent where we experienced beautiful days.

Leonie was not afraid of death, I have given up so much she kept saying, my entire independence is lost, I hope I go before you. Her shortness of breath was very bad and she had already been in hospital twice to drain fluid. The hospital had declared her treatment untreatable.

Recently she was still in the Elkerliek hospital to try to drain fluid. In the morning at half past seven my phone rang, I was shocked and thought it would be bad news. *But no, it was Nientje herself, who told me that she was going to take control again, that she was dressed in bed and wanted to leave immediately.*

Half a year ago, Nientje had ordered tickets for the Fledermaus by Johann Strauss Jr. in the National Opera House 'De Stopera' in Amsterdam.

We left for Amsterdam, Leonie could sleep well in my car. In the hotel she went to sleep again before dinner and the next day a taxi took us to the front door of the Stopera. It was a beautiful Fledermaus operetta, which lasted three hours. It was actually a sad operetta, completely brought to our time by the director Barry Kosky.

**A bacchanal almost Venetian party of orgies, dance, song, adultery, deceit and cunning. Man in all his weaknesses, the last party of man before he perishes in an orgy.**



Last photo in De Stopera front of funeral card



Leonie 10-2-1944-31-12-2024

**We enjoyed ourselves but Leonie got a lot of stimuli she said. The same taxi driver came to pick us up. In the hall we met Marieke Smit, the wife of our deceased friend Herman Verbeek.**

**She was restless all night in the hotel, and I went to the toilet with her several times. The next morning she only ate a fraction of a croissant while she can otherwise enjoy a rich breakfast. The return trip went well and she had enjoyed the operetta, she whispered, although she had had a lot of stimulation.**

**Almost home she didn't want to go to our dearest daughter Deirdre and then I know she really didn't feel well. We went to bed early. The next day was the last day of the year. The children came, except Brendan who lives in Turkey. She toasted with half a glass of champagne and said it was the worst New Year's Eve of her life. While the children went home she said she wanted to go to bed, it was only 7 o'clock. I said, but then I'll come with you and we'll try to watch TV upstairs. I'm so glad I went upstairs with her. I crawled up to her with my clothes on, she got more and more difficult, I cried (she said don't be so dramatic), her mouths were closed and I called that everyone should come. Everyone was there for her last moments. Our dear granddaughter came to lie next to me close to Leonie.**

**Her last words were No, no, no, no, as if she was called by a voice. Then it stopped.**

***My dearest, dearest Nientje is no longer here. How I will miss you my very best and dearest. My heart bleeds.***

**I would like to thank my children Brendan and his wife Semiramis and especially my dear very best daughter Deirdre and her daughter Lieve and Teun and Alex who have been a tremendous support to me.**

**See two photos below.**





At the grave, the song by Beppie Kraft was played and sung **'Tech bin zoe verleeft'** and everyone sang and swayed along around the grave.