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## Letter from Linda Grace Hoyer to John Updike, September 28, 1950

Linda Grace Hoyer

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September 28, 1950

Dear John:

It is one week since we sat in the hotel, looking ahead with uncounted fears. It is the end of Daddy's first month of teaching, the end of the battle in Korea, and one year since I enlisted in the Uzzell course. Perhaps there is good reason for the tendency to look back rather than forward because it seems to be natural to be frightened when we try to look ahead. And the freshman issue of the Harvard Crimson probably was meant to allay a bunch of fears in both the parents and the students.

Certainly it should have been a comfort to the mother of a poet because its staff certainly can write. And yet I am not comforted. The amount of "elbow rubbing" suggested on page ten makes me quite uncomfortable. That this should be my reaction, after all my berating of the homosexuals, annoys me, too. Does it prove that I'm just a typical mother after all: possessive, addled, and misguided? However, since I've always been willing to talk about my general ignorance in these matters and Barry Morley brought up the subject a whole week ago, I'll blunder on. When I went to Cornell the proportion of males to females was about what you are going to have in Cambridge, unless you follow the dismal suggestions about high school girls and nurses (which for you would suggest a pretty desperate state, I think). And, in my day, the socially ambitious (or is it sexually?) girls had to meet very definite requirements. Across the high fence of my naivete these expectations (on the part of the boys) seemed excessive and twenty-five years later I still think a little elbow rubbing goes a long way. I dare to mention this now because you have always been a highly competitive young man and I am proud of it. On a large college campus sex becomes one of the recognized fields for competition and there isn't anything parents can do about it. Nevertheless, I hope you will leave the fiercer aspects of dating to the less poetic boys.

By the way, how is Mr. Morley? I copied your letter for Mary, knowing she must be as anxious as we are to hear something about your first days at Harvard. If you haven't already dropped them a note, try to, addressing it to Jean. I'm afraid I've promised her that you would answer her letter.

When we told Elizabeth where you are, she said: "It makes the chills run down your back, doesn't it?" An amusing continuation of the page nine idea, wasn't it? And not too far from the truth at that. A parent manages to get pretty chilly when the evening closes in and she finds herself alone with her mongrels. The fact that you are going to the school of your own choice helps a lot. Cornell, I know, would be a bad place for poets. I'm sold on the Harvard Crimson. Or did you guess? Are you saving your copies or send them home when you've read them? How is your mail coming? And the work situation? I had that kind of trouble at Cornell and had to go to the libe to study. Tell us how it works out. As a last resort you can always apply for a single room. We'll be glad to pay the difference in price, if needed. Of course it's a compliment when people crowd your room, too. Love,

*mother*