Letter from Linda Grace Hoyer to John Updike, October 13, 1950

Linda Grace Hoyer

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Daddy had his pocket picked of the checkbook he was going to send you. Use these checks as though they were numbers 1-5 of new book and when you get new book send first five checks to me. Add 25 to your balance as of today, October 13.

October 13, 1950

Dear John: (No such word, do not use.)

Esconced once more behind Roget's Thesaurus and Prescott's History of the Reign of Ferdinand and Isabella, I have a sun-washed view of John Updike, at the ages of five and seventeen, two slightly wilted dahlias, and a Wertz bill marked paid. So, the work that carried you to Cambridge has been paid at last and the nice man can get busy with the new rattle we have on the left side in front.

Today, I made my first trip into Shillington alone to have a tooth filled. My driving was fair, except for the way I still shovel gasoline when I have to start on a grade. Daddy is attending some kind of convention in Reading and will return on the bus shortly for supper and a speedy ride to the Muhlenberg game at Albright. The good man had three teeth pulled this week and still looks a little shaken. But you know Daddy, the game with Mr. Charles J. H. must go on.

Speaking of shock, this note is intended to prepare you for Different's arrival. It certainly was different than I expected it to be. Poets seem to be made of much sterner stuff than they used to be when daffodils and toy dogs could inspire a classic. Of course Lilith's poets probably are hand-picked for durability. Their unfailing contemplation of man's madness disturbed me. But when I got to the article on how (exactly) to survive when all your friends have been destroyed, I felt just like my father's explanations of Isaiah used to make me feel. I mentioned this article jestingly to Dr. Light, hoping that he would laugh with me. But he owns a copy of the "standard" book on how best to meet the other fellow's doom and live to tell about it. So, I feel more antiquated than ever. If you hadn't reassured me of man's ultimate maturity in your commencement speech, I should feel completely shaken. But you, my child, have given me hope. We are on the verge of maturity and a better life. May you always believe it.