Letter from Linda Grace Hoyer to John Updike, October 23, 1950

Linda Grace Hoyer

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Dear John:

The letter and card came together on a very wet day and I read the letter to grandpa and Grammy with considerable consternation. The uneasiness that you report in so many of your letters is hard for me to understand. I was uneasy in college because I always had a guilt complex about my failure to study. But why, with your work habits and high school record, should you be so worried? I just don't understand it. Do you think it is the psoriasis? Or are you more competitive than you should be? Or have you promised Nancie that you will graduate magna cum laude? Or are you kidding me? I just can't understand it.

Then, after we had digested your letter and decided to give Dean Leighton a big piece of the Plowville mind, we found your card with the good news. Your father took it to school this morning to show to Miss Showalter and the Schracks. I think he is very proud of having a son in Harvard College even though he still goes into an occasional tirade about the uselessness of the liberal arts education. My own reaction to the card was a complete and sudden optimism about everything. So, deciding to make apple sauce (which I despise making), I took the dogs into the orchard with me and allowed Chipper to drag his leash while I picked apples. One minute he was there eating grass; the next minute he was gone. Knowing how easily that leash fastens itself to things, I was worried and spent the rest of the day in a state over the dogs who finally returned about eight last night without the four dollars worth of leash, collar, and license friend Chipper was wearing. A thorough scouring of Kennel's woods might find it but I'm almost as busy as you are right now.
Tonight is our first night as evangelists and I'm pretty excited about that. I'm still pulling weeds in the strawberry patch, making apple sauce and canning pears, and trying to get a good first chapter for Dear Juan. Well, there is some comfort to me to know that Christopher writes like I do. I hope he'll never find himself stuck between two badly trained dogs and a kettle full of apple sauce.

Since that's where I am at this very moment, I'll say goodbye for now. Thanks for the letters. Almost as good as the ninety-two in English literature was the knowing that you have sense enough to go to the clinic for help when you feel sick. I never was quite sure you would. Keep up the good work and don't forget that the old Saracen is a tough man to beat. Your tendency to worry probably is a part of your inheritance from the Saracen branch of your family tree though and a useful thing if you really want to get something out of Harvard.

Love,

P.S. Some one was telling Daddy yesterday about your message to the senior class, the photographer to be specific (at Strunk's). He thinks that is really nice, mature, and probably not really written by you. Daddy of course set him straight.