



11-5-1950

## Letter from Linda Grace Hoyer to John Updike, November 5, 1950

Linda Grace Hoyer

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November 5, 1950

Dear John:

We get a little more belligerent, I think, when we haven't heard from you for a few days. So, it was very smart of you to think of air mail.

It is good to know that Christopher is the perfect roommate, matching illness for illness. But I'm really concerned for you both. Your operation must have been gruesome. You had a small obtrusion when you were a baby. But what turned it into a hemorrhoid? Congestion in that part of one's anatomy can be caused by heavy lifting, strenuous bicycling, constipation, and sitting on a cake of ice. Are you guilty of any or all of these things? To change the subject slightly, there is an extract being taken from the cortex of the adrenal gland (says Dr. Fishbein) that remedies psoriasis, asthma, and the tendency to be infected. The catch is that it has been used too short a time to be predictable and should be used only in hospitals where the patient's heart reactions can be checked. Yet, if you can get enough rest in the meantime to keep your heart well, there may come a day when you can take injections for some of your discomforts. Anyway, I'm sure you would do well to sleep more. I was never very firm about your sleeping habits for several reasons that seemed sufficient: (1). I didn't want to sell you the idea that your health was poor. (2). As long as you were at home I knew you could go to bed for as long as it took to catch up on rest. (3). I don't have enough character to be firm about anything. But you have. And if you want to survive Harvard, don't you think you'd better sleep from twelve to eight? After all, a degree from Harvard isn't worth all these red eyes, hemorrhoids, and endless misery. Yes, I'm sold on Harvard, too. But not that sold. If you haven't time to sleep, something is being overdone and if you have time to sleep and don't use it, you're not nearly as smart as Miss Wolfson and I thought you were. Good luck. You don't have to get as sleepy as the rest of us, just eight hours worth.

We all tried the coat at Whitner's: your father, your mother, and the salesman who strutted down the aisle like Hollywood's idea of a Prussian officer. However, you may return it and we'll get a larger size if you think it should be bigger to accommodate extra pounds and sloppy tweed jackets. The lining is pile and the collar is nylon instead of mouton. It is longer than you wanted it but the color of the shorter one was the kind of gray that has to be cleaned every week. If you really feel overdone in this length, I should think you could get a tailor to shorten it. All the short coats at Whitner's were hideous and our credit is creaking everywhere else.

Congratulations on the math grade. That's wonderful. Could the southern boy who got all the problems be the one who was awarded twenty three thousand dollars worth of scholarships and chose Harvard? He was from Memphis, I think, and had a fairly common English name. What was it? No less famous a person could have beaten our son.

Well, we're half way to Christmas and I'm glad. It is a tough life, as you say. And, as I say, a little less tough when you've had enough sleep.

P.S. Coat should get them this week, <sup>love, Mother</sup> red blue slacks at cleaners and.