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Letter from Linda Grace Hoyer to John Updike, February 21, 1951

Linda Grace Hoyer

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February 21, 1951

Dear John:

The wind blows from Harvard today and the house is dark. The fact that your letters have been both infrequent and evasive may have something to do with the gloom. But there is rain, too. In case you've lost your calendar, it is seven weeks since you were home, the day before your father's birthday (the one he was never going to reach), twenty-five days until you will be nineteen, twenty-eight days until spring, thirty-two days until Easter, and thirty-eight days until we will see you. And your grandmother is very much concerned about Kit's reaction to our plumbing fixtures. I'm much more concerned about hers. At any rate, it should be very pleasant to see a pair of young men. Or am I beginning to sound like Talulah? She really does her best to make old age funny. But I doubt if even she can do it. I listen, however, and hope each Sunday night.

The second hand clothes man put three treasures in the Buick the other evening: a camel's hair coat, a tweed top coat, and a suit by D'Ugo (or whatever) the tailor of Reading. Each of these lovelies was priced at five dollars and each was made of excellent material. The only catch was that each of them was worn out. And yet you came awfully close to getting a camel's hair coat.. I suppose you have out grown your gabardine coat. But I didn't know how you might feel about that kind of a coat. Even before the symbolism of the camel's hair coat was so neatly pointed up in Sunset Boulevard, I wasn't really sold on them, in spite of the way they feel. Nothing is more seductive (or more vulgar) than a camel's hair coat (unless Kit should happen to have one and then you must burn this letter at once). And as a post script to the coat story, it makes me very happy to add that Mr. Freed bought the camel's hair coat. Postscript #2: Dear Juan please deliver me from going to sleep under a stack of second hand clothes. I feel as though it might happen any day now.

Not that I have any prejudice against buying good second hand clothing. But the lesson I seem to have learned is that the person who can afford to get good clothing is very prone to become attached to them and wear them as long as they are fit to wear. That would be especially true in Reading, I think. Or shall we have a large assortment of old clothes on hand during the first week of April? (Don Quixote before the windmills had nothing on me when your father tries to persuade me to face "the facts".)

Don't smoke too much at the smoker. And send us a copy of the Lampoon (more recent than Christmas), and as many of the "facts" as you think we could bear.

Mottler