

LETTER TO THE SCARECROW, FROM KANSAS
for Doug Daily

My dear friend, I hope you are well. How long it's been:
Aunt Em dead these seven years, and me with the farm. I've
been putting up applesauce all week. Not a tree in the
orchard lifted a hand against me.

The neighbors don't come by much; they think I'm not
quite right. Who can blame them? I never go to church -
can't help thinking back of it all is just a man behind a
curtain. And I haven't married. Still, when the barn
burned down last summer, folks came for miles to raise a
new one. For them this land is so familiar, even its
calamities are predictable, almost safe. I know different.
A storm, a letter, a freak accident - and your whole life
is changed.

It's difficult to explain what I mean. A French trapper,
walking into the north country two hundred years ago,
would have come to a place where no river, mountain, or
town had been named by any white man. With everything so
new, how could he be lost? I know every acre here, every
dry goods store, but the Kansas I knew before you called to
me on that yellow road - I'll not find that again.

Lately, I worry whether you're alright - a fallen candle,
a torch flaring up in a draft. I think, "What if this
has happened without my knowing?" Then these flat fields
just go on and on. Your mute cousins stand with our corn.
My kin are scattered through Kansas and Missouri, just
as silent in their way. A while back there was a drought
three years running; soil sailed from the fields with
every wind. I thought the whole country was off to ask
the Wizard for a voice.

Tuesday we had a twister. The farm hands all made for the
storm cellar. I slipped away, and stood in the yard. I
had to hold my apron over my face from the wind. But
that funnel just skirted the north pasture and thrashed
on west. I know what I plan is dangerous. But I can
find no other way of coming home.

My warmest regards to the others. I think of them often.
But I miss you most of all. Watch for me. With love,
Dorothy.