

Art Linkletter

"We Love You, Call Collect"

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This morning a letter was returned
Stamped, moved, no address
It was one I wrote you
A couple of weeks ago

And it is now in my desk with
Other letters unopened and returned
Marked, moved, no address

I write again because I must
I hope my words will
Find you somehow, somewhere
Wherever you are at this moment, my dear
God grant, you are not alone

I've read there are
Thousands just like you
Searching for something
They failed to find at home

The fact that one of these is my daughter
Brings all of them close to me

Your mother's here
Standing right behind me
She never could resist looking
Over my shoulder as I write

Your leaving has been
Very difficult for her
A father, they say
Worries about his son but
For his daughter he has dreams

Well, my first dream for you
Was sixteen years ago on that day
We brought you home from the hospital
As we stood over your crib
We knew you were something special

In your cry, with all your strength
You served notice on the world

That you were someone important

Then years later
In a moment of anger, you cried
But you don't understand
And I didn't

Why were we never able
To unlock your frustration
And talk it away
Was it because you were being
Crowded too closely with love

There can be harm now
I realize in doing too much
As well as danger
In doing too little

A time for holding on
And a time for letting go
Someday, you too will discover
How much courage letting go takes

Your generation asks to be left alone
They want it so that
Each may find his own thing
But where is this thing
For which you search
Is it found by rejecting your heritage

What you are and can become
Has deep roots in many people
Your parents, your grandparents
And in a long line before them
Something in each one
Has helped make you what you are

I spoke about dreams
Let me tell you of the dreams
Another had for you
He was your grandfather

When he was young
He too, left his home
In search of something
A world of opportunity
And freedom for his spirit

And in his way, for his time
He too, was trying to find
Where it's at

Somewhere we have
A picture of your grandfather
He wore a beard
And his hair was long
And there was a girl
With him in that snapshot
Who wore several strings of beads
And held a single flower in her hand
Beautiful people

Don't reject this heritage
I beg you
Start with it and you can
Build something fine and strong

I can see you smiling at this
Last bit of cornball philosophy
Coming from your square old dad
But think hard about what I've said

Come back
Come back before you're trapped
In a life that daily grows
More aimless and unreal

With all my heart
I wish I could promise you
A world of flowers, music and dance
But could I keep such a promise
I don't think so
No one could

But one promise I can fulfill
If you return
We three can reach each other
By talking and listening

And I mean the kind of listening
That is also tuned to silence
There've been many times when
I've failed to read your silence
For this failure, I am truly sorry

Mother has remained
Behind me as I write
A second ago
She gently touched my shoulder
As she moved away

I took this, a silent approval

Of what I've written
She's now sitting in her chair
With an open book in her lap
But I know she's not seeing the words

Her thoughts, her thoughts
Are far away somewhere with you
It's very quiet here, too quiet

I walked into your room last night
And the walls seemed to be asking
For the sound of your voice

As much as I am aching
For the feel of your embrace
So please come back to us
We love you, call collect

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