

BOLDFACERS Profiles Suzanne C. Dubus!

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To My Daughter Philanthropist

Dear Allegra,

There you are, standing next to me, a bold smile on your 8-year-old face. You love to act, beat me at tic-tac-toe and play with your cousins. You are fearless and innocent and happy, and I hope you always stay that way. I am writing this letter to tell you why.



We come from sturdy stock, you and me. Your grandfather, Andre Dubus, was a famous writer, famous not only for his gift with words but also because of his feisty spirit. He sang at the top of his lungs to Frank Sinatra, and he ranted just as loudly about politicians that were unfair to the poor. We sometimes said he was big in body but bigger than life, too!

One day, he was in a terrible car accident, and he lost both his legs. But from his wheelchair, he moved mountains. He helped young girls who were abused to learn how to read and write. He tried hard to not feel sorry for himself and to lead an important life through his books and his family, all with a twinkle in his eye.

I also have had my share of troubles. I knew a man before your father. He was not very nice to me, Allegra. He hurt me and he said mean things that made me feel terrible. I was scared to be with him, but more scared to leave him. But I did. And when I did, I felt better. And stronger. I wanted to help other women to stop being scared and sad. I wanted to teach them what I learned and what your grandfather learned—life is short and very uncertain.

Every day, you see me to go work at the Jeanne Geiger Crisis Center, in Newburyport, where I am the executive director. I help women, mothers, children and men who think they have nothing but who could have everything. I try to help them understand that they do not have to be hit or yelled at. I have wiped tears off the face of a single mom who is terrified to be alone, and held the hand of a little boy who wishes his dad was not so mad all the time. My job is to help those people find a job, a home, a lawyer or a doctor. Sometimes, my job is to just be a friend.

You may not understand everything in this letter right now, and that is okay. We can talk when you are older. All you need to know is how much I love you, how proud I am of you—and me—and of every woman, man and child who fights for a life filled with promise. May we all share a future as big as the smile on your face, my Allegra.

Love,
Mom