

DEDICATION

by

ISABEL ALLENDE



Hello, my darling, this is Ethel, and I just wanted to call you to tell you how much I love you. Nothing else matters except how much I love you and to thank you for your big and generous heart. That's all I wanted to tell you and you don't have to call me back. I just needed to tell you that this morning. It's a quarter to ten and I just got back from a mile and a little over walk.

Ethel left this message for me a few hours before she passed away happily in her sleep on July 26, 2016. I have her voice in my phone and I listened to her often to remind me that if I was loved by this extraordinary woman, I should love myself a bit more. She was my friend, my accomplice, my funny, funky, crazy sister in her odd hats, colorful socks, and unique shoes. She was my mentor and my hero, as she was the mentor and hero of many, many people. She could make you laugh and move you to tears; she could mobilize a crowd as easily as she could force Scrooge to donate for one of her causes; nothing could stop her in her determination to help others.

I am sure that she died happily because that's the way she lived. She spent her life giving, helping, sharing, guiding others, always with a smile. I



photos of Isabel and Ethel taken by Lori Barra

met her shortly after she had lost her beloved husband and even then, while mourning, she radiated a sort of quiet but joyful energy. Others in these pages will refer to her services to the community and her work with children and immigrants, to the many ways in which she changed lives and inspired everybody around her, especially the privileged members of The Wisdom Trust, who now continue her legacy. I remember that once, talking about her legacy, a word that she didn't particularly like, she thought it was pretentious, - I suggested that it was time to rest, have fun and pass her torch. My torch is mine! I won't pass it. But I hope to light other torches with it, she replied.

I miss our dinners in her favorite restaurants, where she was treated like royalty because everybody in Marin County and beyond knew her. It couldn't be otherwise; she used to stop strangers in the street to bestow a compliment or ask a personal question. To a young woman: *Do you have a boyfriend? My nephew who lives in...* To a UPS delivery man: *I like your tattoo, is it a mermaid or a seal?* To a Dominican nun: *I am Jewish, but I love modern nuns that stand up to the Pope.* I miss our gossiping and plotting, our toasting with sauvignon blanc, and our evenings talking about the world as it is and the world that we wanted. I miss her so much! But in some mysterious way, Ethel is with me always. She belongs among my other beloved spirits.

— *Isabel Allende*