

# LINDA CARDILLO

Stories of the search for connection and belonging

## My Writing Life

January 2022



Happy New Year!

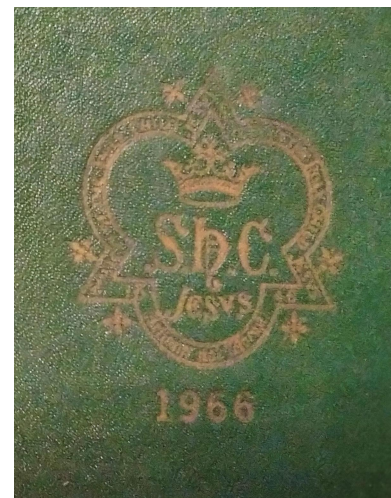
As we head into the deepest part of winter in New England, with its unpredictable weather (50 degree days followed by ice storms!) and limited opportunities for enjoying the company of others, I had a wonderful experience this week reconnecting with a group of high school friends via a Zoom meeting.

The meeting was the brainstorm of one woman who's had contact with each of us over the last few months and recognized our need to share with one another and support one another as we slog through another year of isolation. There is something powerful and affirming to be with women who have known each other since we were fourteen.

The gathering was reflective, looking back on each of our journeys over the last fifty-five years, but also reminiscent, as we brought up our youthful exploits and read aloud from our yearbook. There was a lot of wisdom expressed on the screen, as well as empathy and humor. The experiences we shared during those formative years have shaped us and connect us despite the diverse paths we've taken since we left.

I hope that you find connection in the coming year—with those from your past or with new friends with whom you can share a bond.

Be well.  
Linda



*My high school yearbook*

# Upcoming Online Event



**January 25  
6:00 – 7:00 p.m.**

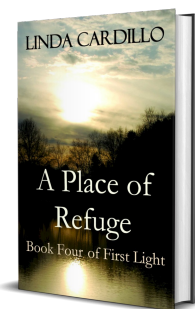
## **The First Light Series Zoom Presentation with the Wilbraham Public Library**

Please join me as I describe the origin story for my First Light series and how it developed from an idea for one book that evolved into several.

I'll also be offering a sneak peek at the next book in the series, *A Place of Refuge*.

To register for the Zoom link, please click [here](#).

## **A Place of Refuge Coming Soon in Spring 2022**



In 1971, a near-fatal automobile accident throws Izzy Monroe's life into upheaval after she survives with a brain injury that leaves her with impaired short-term memory. Unable to complete her doctorate at Harvard, she retreats to her childhood home on Chappaquiddick Island, adrift and despairing.

When her college roommate, Maria Bello, arrives for a visit, she confronts Izzy with a choice—sink deeper into numbing grief for her former self or find the courage to redefine who she is and what she wants for her life.

Accepting Maria's challenge, Izzy leaves the well-intentioned but suffocating concern of her family and takes a position at Portarello, a farm in Italy owned by Maria's grandfather, Raffaello Richetelli. She arrives exhausted and unsure of her decision, but begins to find purpose and even

some competence with her work on the land. Despite her growing comfort tending the garden and the animals, she remains disconnected from the others on the farm. She is consumed with hiding her impairment and is unwilling to risk forming bonds with anyone.

Daniel Richetelli, Maria's cousin and a young Jesuit priest in the midst of a deeply troubling crisis of faith, has been ordered to take a leave of absence and returns to his grandfather's farm to find the answers he seeks.

Both insomniacs, Izzy and Daniel encounter each other one night in the chapel of the 13th-century villa that serves as the center of Portarello. In the presence of something Izzy does not yet understand, she finds her barriers dissolving and reaches out to Daniel.

Izzy and Daniel realize they are both longing to heal themselves in a world that had once been filled with certainty and purpose; each of them recognizes in the other a soulmate and a lodestar.

Finding their way back to wholeness takes them on a journey, filled with missteps and revelations, that ultimately leads them to a new understanding of themselves and each other.

## Scenes that inspired a novel



I'm often asked where the ideas for my stories come from. Many times, it's a place that inspires me. Seven years ago

I had the opportunity to spend a few days at Tenuta di Spannocchia, a farm outside Siena, Italy, that became the model for Portarello—a landscape that was both evocative and mysterious. A few years later I returned to bask in its beauty and grandeur and history. I began writing Izzy's story at Spannocchia, sitting under this chestnut tree. I'd like to share with you a few of the images that became the seeds for many of the scenes in the novel.



### The altar in the chapel

I discovered the chapel quite by chance, just as Izzy does, and her encounter there with Daniel was the very first scene I wrote. I had no idea at the time who Daniel was, only that he was troubled and in need of connection.

### The vegetable garden

Izzy begins her work at Portarello in the garden. Each morning as I wrote, I watched it being tended. Its order and vibrancy seemed to me to be the perfect place for Izzy to begin discovering her strengths.



### A sow and her piglets

I spent a morning accompanying



### The view from my bedroom window

I often found myself at the window, watching a storm come pummeling across the hills or listening to the chatter of life outside. I placed Izzy at this window for a pivotal scene when she overhears a shattering conversation between Daniel and his sister, who manages the farm.

one of the young women working on the farm as she made her rounds checking on and feeding the passel of heritage pigs that are one of the main sources of the farm's income. In addition to observing and learning, I also found myself mesmerized by the activities of the pigs, from rambunctious adolescents scrambling to be the first at the trough to the serenity and resignation of this sow coping with her many hungry piglets. I transformed that experience into Izzy's—both her work and her reverie.



[Please Visit My Website](#)

Many thanks for your continued support of my writing and my warmest wishes for good health and joy in the new year!

### Linda Cardillo, Author

P.O. Box 298,  
Enfield, CT 06083  
(413) 567 3278

[Contact Me](#)

