

# My Writing Life

August 2006

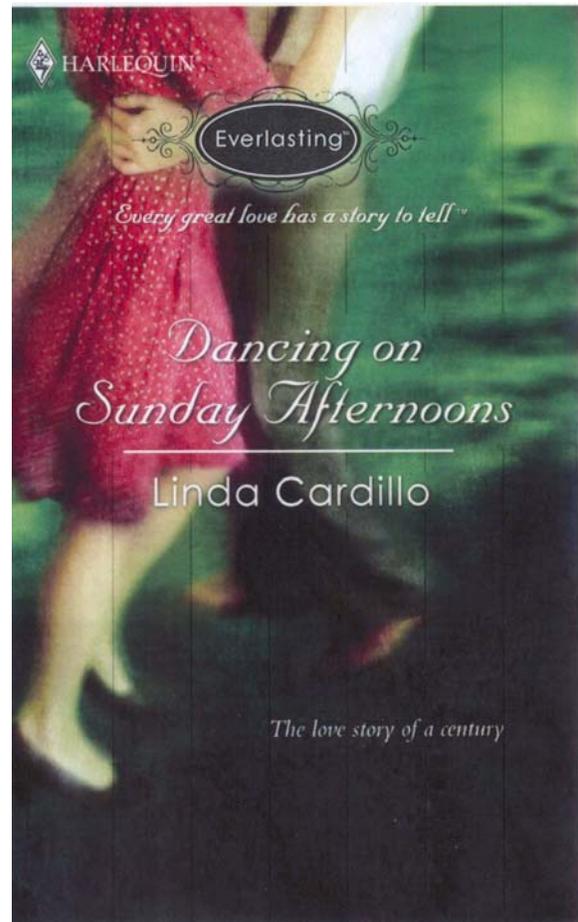
Dear Friends,

For many of you, this letter will be an update on the progress in the making of my novel, *Dancing on Sunday Afternoons*. For some of you, it will be the first news you've received from me on this extraordinary development in my life. I hope to keep you all informed, curious and eager to rush out in February 2007 when this "fourth child" finally hits the bookshelves at a bookstore, Target, supermarket, or airport kiosk near you. If you want the scoop on a year (or more!) in the life of a book, then come along for the ride.

It's been a year of exhilaration, tight deadlines and enormous growth since I got the call last August that Paula Eykelhof at Harlequin wanted to buy my manuscript. I remember vividly standing on a dock overlooking Newburyport, Massachusetts as fireworks exploded across the water and Denise Marcil, the head of the agency that represents me, advised me to take the plunge with Harlequin.

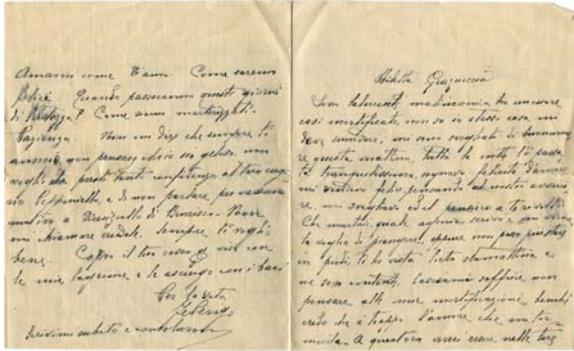
"Their mission is to dominate women's literature," she told me. "Trust them."

And that is what I did. Within a few weeks, I had a signed contract and was furiously turning out new chapters to add to the original manuscript. By December, I had finished the writing, created a new title—*Dancing on Sunday Afternoons*—for what some of you will remember as *The Palace of Dreams*, and come up with a concept for the cover that the art department at Harlequin interpreted beautifully.



After a fall of coming home every night from work and writing for several hours, I finally had a quiet month or two. I managed to put up the Christmas tree, send out the cards and buy the gifts. After the New Year, I went back to writing my second book—*The Inner Room*—which I had interrupted to do the revisions for *Dancing*. I was even able to get away for an intense writing weekend thanks to my incredibly generous friend Sharon Wright—thank you, Sharon!—who offered her in-laws' beachfront haven in Magnolia, Massachusetts, where we wrote for hours during the day, read and critiqued in the evening and left the rest of our lives behind to feed that hungry part of us that simply has to write.

The quiet of the winter soon gave way to my initiation into what happens after you turn in the



manuscript. The short answer is—a lot. Paula, my editor, sent her first round of suggested revisions—basically, more new material. The work led me down an entirely new path with the manuscript, delving into more research on what was happening in the world at the time the central part of the novel is set (1900-1920) and discovering new threads that enriched my characters. The role of Italian intellectuals in the American labor movement, the Lawrence mill strike and the exodus of the children of the mill workers to sympathetic families in New York, the impact of World War I, especially on young boys coming of age in 1918, all found an intensely personal place in the lives of Giulia Fiorillo and her two husbands, Paolo Serafini and Salvatore D’Orazio.

In addition, with Paula’s encouragement, the letters of my grandparents, which had been the seeds that originally inspired the story, took on a pivotal role in the unfolding of the novel.

I spent two months crafting new material, often turning things around in a few days from the moment I would get a message from Paula saying “Why don’t you try this...” followed immediately by, “And can you do it by Monday?” Once her editorial assistant had entered the new work, the manuscript arrived back on my desk to review. In July, I got the manuscript again, this time for minor corrections. I thought that was the last step, but two days ago a package arrived from the printer with galley. I think I have read and reread the material so many times that I can recite it from memory.

One thing, however, has stayed with me throughout the work of the past year. I am passionate about this story.

And I believe that it is better—deeper, richer, more textured—as a result of Paula’s insight and guiding hand.

Writing is not all that I’ve been doing in anticipation of the book’s publication. I’ve prepared a bio for the sales force (about to descend upon Borders and Barnes & Noble). Because I’m writing as Linda Cardillo, I’ve registered [www.lindacardillo.com](http://www.lindacardillo.com) as my domain name. By the time you read this, my new web pages should be up, complete with a synopsis and an excerpt from *Dancing*, a short piece from *The Inner Room*, my bio and a list of the cities I hope to visit on my book tour. Please stop by and let me know what you think!

I gave my first book talk in June as the guest speaker at the annual meeting of the Storrs Library in Longmeadow. The audience was warmly receptive and asked a lot of questions! I’ll extend my reach beyond my hometown when the book comes out in February 2007, and that is why I am reaching out now to each of you.

If you have reading friends, if you or someone you know is a member of a book club or women’s club or Red Hat Society or teaches English, if you have an independent bookstore in your town—I’d be very grateful if you would spread the word.

I’d be delighted to speak to your club or group or class, or schedule a reading at a local bookstore to which you bring along a group of friends to listen and, if they like what they hear, buy a book or two! **Word of mouth is a powerful tool in the success of a book, and if you are willing, I’d love to have your help.**

Yesterday a FedEx package arrived for me. Inside was the first bound copy of *Dancing on Sunday Afternoons*. The awe I felt as I held it in my hands and saw my name and my words on every page is indescribable.

Let me hear from you! Please write to me at [Linda@lindacardillo.com](mailto:Linda@lindacardillo.com).