

# My Writing Life

January 2009

Dear Friends,

*My warmest wishes to you and your family for a health, happy and peaceful new year.*

I'm spending a quiet Saturday afternoon pulling together the threads of my writing life after the richness of the holidays—the family, the food, the traditions sustained or newly established. But more about that later in the newsletter. Right now, I want to tell you about my new book.

## *A Daughter's Journey/ A Writer's Inspiration*

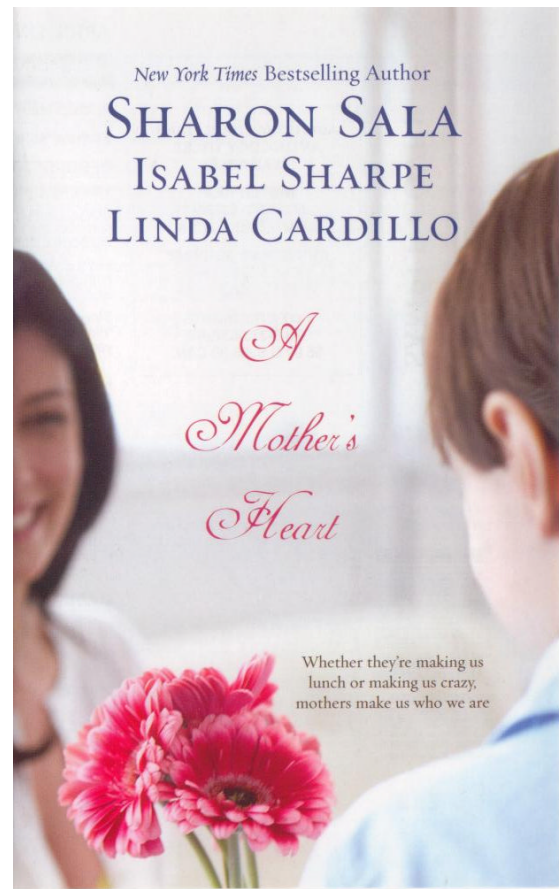
The confluence of two memorable encounters became the seeds for my latest work of fiction.

On the last Sunday of 2007 I was leafing through *The New York Times Magazine*, an issue of obituaries of both notable and obscure individuals who had passed away during the year. My page-turning came to a standstill at a striking black-and-white photograph of a young woman journalist taken decades before in Vietnam. The image conveyed both toughness and vulnerability in her eyes as, notebook in hand, she listened intently to a soldier. I tore out the photo and placed it in the folder where I store the bits and pieces of possible story ideas—snippets of dialogue overheard as I ride the train; fragments of dreams remembered and recorded in the early hours of the morning; and, more than anything else, photographs that stop me in my tracks.

Nearly two years before that, I was seated at a dinner next to a couple who shared with me a story about one of their eight adopted children, now a young man, whom they had adopted as a result of the Vietnam “Babylift.”

When Harlequin invited me to participate in an anthology with a Mother's Day theme, I saw connections between the haunting photograph and the Vietnamese children affected by the chaos of war and created the story of an unlikely mother thrust unexpectedly into the role.

The story, called A DAUGHTER'S JOURNEY, opens in the spring of 1975 as Saigon is about to fall. Mel Ames, a young journalist, responds to the plea of Anh, a Vietnamese bar girl who had once saved her life, to find a way to get Anh's baby daughter, Tien, out of the country. When she realizes the plight of the thousands of orphans in the country, Mel writes an article that sparks an international effort to airlift the children to safety. As Saigon descends into despair, Mel faces losses from her own childhood and adopts Anh's daughter as her own.



ISBN-13: 978-0-373-83731-1  
Available April 2009

Many years later, Mel and Tien return to Vietnam to find Anh. During their search, Mel encounters Phil Coughlin, the ex-Marine physician who had cared for the orphans of Saigon and whom Mel had once found both challenging and compelling. The voyage back to Vietnam is not only Tien's quest, but also a journey of discovery for Mel—about her daughter and what she needs; about Phil and what he has given up in his life to serve a humanitarian cause; and about herself and what she is willing to risk to heal the mistakes of the past.

**I hope you'll look for the anthology, A MOTHER'S HEART, just in time for Mother's Day!**

# Making Memories

This holiday season between Thanksgiving and the feast of Epiphany has been filled with both longstanding traditions and gatherings that reconnected my far-flung extended family.

One of the most precious took place on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. My cousin Lisa on my mother's side is researching our family history, gathering documents and stories from our aunts and uncles—now in their 80s, 90s and 100s!—about our grandparents and great-grandparents. That Saturday she decided to bring her lively and vibrant 82-year-old parents, my Uncle Neal (the baby of the family) and Aunt Cathy, on a visit to our 94-year-old Aunt Kay. Her teenaged daughter, her sister and her sister's daughter all came along. Because Aunt Kay and *her* daughter, my cousin Kathy (are you keeping all this straight?), live a few hours away from me, I decided to join everyone for the visit, since we don't get to see each other often. As expected, when I arrived in late morning everyone was sitting at the kitchen table.

Coffee and tea were brewing, a platter of homemade banana bread was being passed around, and photos were being handed from one relative to another as the stories behind the photos were being related. Over the course of the day more cousins and their children arrived, three different kinds of quiche emerged from the oven, a huge salad bowl piled with baby lettuce, apples, goat cheese and nuts was tossed, and wine was poured into waiting glasses. At one point I took a moment to count the heads. Eighteen of us, spread over four generations ranging in age from 13 months to 94 years, filled that house on that winter Saturday afternoon with laughter and memories and love.

One month later, we were together again, seated in a church and listening to Lisa give the eulogy for her father. Uncle Neal had died tragically of complications after an automobile accident. Lisa spoke eloquently about how much she had learned about her father in the week since his death from everyone he “belonged to.” And she also shared with us how important it was to take time, as we had on that wonderful Saturday in November, to be with those we love.

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## Upcoming Appearances



### **March 27-28**

Let Your Imagination Take Flight  
New England Chapter  
Romance Writers of America Conference  
Sheraton Tara Hotel  
Framingham, Massachusetts

### **April 20**

International Women's Club  
Springfield, Massachusetts

### **April 26**

Ladies Philoptochos Society  
St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral  
Springfield, Massachusetts

### **May 13**

Fosterians  
Foster Memorial Church  
Springfield, Massachusetts

### **July 15**

“Readers for Life” Charity Book Signing  
Romance Writers of America National Conference  
Marriott Wardman Park Hotel  
Washington, DC

**More to come! Please check [www.lindacardillo.com](http://www.lindacardillo.com) for updates.**