

December 2024

## Preparing for the Holidays



The first snow arrived a few days ago and I was happy to learn that my new hip was well-equipped to push some very wet white stuff off the driveway. After a fairly balmy and very dry November, our drought-stricken New England was grateful for the winter weather, despite the slushy mess.

All my children, their partners, their children, and a brand-new German Shepherd puppy will descend upon us over the next few weeks and I am both thrilled and deep into preparations.

The candles went in the windows on Thanksgiving—a New England tradition that dates back to Colonial times and is a sign of welcome and shelter to travelers. The wreaths are now hanging on either side of the front door. The mantel is draped in a pine garland with white fairy lights. Tonight, I'll begin hauling containers out of the basement filled with decorations, some as old as my childhood and others collected over the years. Each day throughout our neighborhood, new figures are appearing on front lawns—Santas driving tractors, a Grinch, a moose, snowmen, and elves, among many others. I can't wait to take my granddaughters on a walking tour.

I'm also planning menus and cooking ahead. I don't do the "Seven Fishes" on Christmas Eve as my mother and grandmother did. When our parents were alive, my husband and I and our children spent Christmas Eve with the German side of the family (his) and Christmas Day with the Italians (mine), and the foods we shared evolved over the years. Now, we have an eclectic buffet on Christmas Eve: shrimp cocktail; a salad of octopus dressed in olive oil, lemon juice, garlic and parsley; deviled eggs; breadsticks wrapped in bacon that's been dredged in brown sugar and chili powder; zucchini, artichoke and spinach pie baked with eggs and mozzarella; smoked salmon; my mother-in-law's German crescent cookies and my grandmother's lemon-and-orange flavored cookies with icing and colored sprinkles.

It is bringing me great joy this year to prepare for my family. My children lead busy lives in far-flung places and to have everyone together is a gift, far more precious than anything under the tree.

I hope your own holidays are filled with joy and the presence of those you love.

With warmest wishes,

Linda

## Final Call for Holiday Book Orders

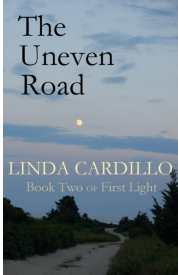
If you wish to order books for holiday giving, please place your requests by December 10. You can order and pay through this [link](#), and if you would like autographed copies, please [email me](#) with the name(s) you wish me to inscribe. The print editions of the following books are available.



Book One of First Light

Mae Keaney returns to Chappaquiddick Island, where she faces a devastating fire, bigotry, and illness; and ultimately learns to accept love.

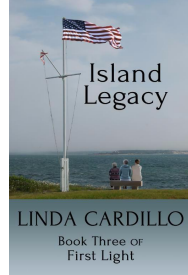
\$12.99



Book Two of First Light

The family saga continues with the coming-of-age story of Mae and Tobias's son, Josiah. A young man torn between his Irish and Native American identities seeks answers in the turbulent world of the 1960s.

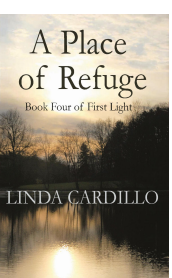
\$12.99



Book Three of First Light

The next generation copes with grief and a new understanding of the meaning of home.

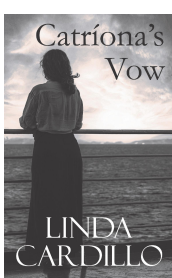
\$12.99



Book Four of First Light

In 1971, Mae and Tobias's daughter, Izzy, survives a nearly fatal automobile accident that leaves her with no short-term memory. To redefine herself, she leaves Chappaquiddick for a farm in Italy.

\$12.99



Prequel to First Light

Catriona Scannel must decide between the convent and the cause of Irish independence.

A novella

\$4.99



Street-smart Rose Dante, first-generation daughter of Italian immigrants, welcomes home her injured husband after World War II and rebuilds their lives around a restaurant in Boston.

\$12.99



Vittoria Colonna, a celebrated poet, encounters Michelangelo Buonarroti in turbulent 16th-century Italy and forms a profound bond with him that feeds their creativity and need for connection.

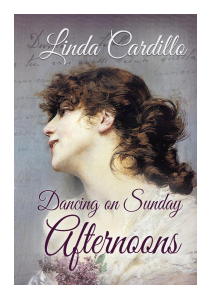
\$19.99



Costanza D'Avalos, a widow and the powerful chatelaine of the island of Ischia, is awakened to the power of art in her friendship with Leonardo da Vinci, and becomes the inspiration for one of the most iconic portraits in history.

A novella that is a prequel to *Love That Moves the Sun*

\$4.99



Giulia Fiorillo arrives from Southern Italy in a rough New York immigrant neighborhood at the beginning of the twentieth century. In America, she faces violence in the streets and in the family, shattering loss, and a love that shapes her entire life

\$12.99



When her father has a stroke, Marielle Hartmann must take over the management of her family's vineyards and struggles to save the winery in the midst of Cold-War Germany.

A novella

\$6.99

Saigon is about to fall as reporter Mel Ames discovers one last story to write—saving the children in orphanages via the Vietnam Babylift.

A novella

\$6.99

A family newly arrived in a foreign country learns to believe in the magic of Christmas.

An illustrated children's book

\$8.99

## Upcoming Events

**March 12, 2025**

6:00 p.m.

Author Talk

Longmeadow Adult Center  
211 Maple Road  
Longmeadow, Massachusetts

**June 3, 2025**

6:00 p.m.

Writers' Night Out

Forbes Library  
20 West Street  
Northampton, Massachusetts

## Contact me

if you would like me to visit with your book group or organization.

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