

In the Shadow of A Badge



Lillie's Story

After more than nine years and as a result of her personal experiences at the Flight 93 crash site in Shanksville (PA), Lillie completed a 200-page book detailing a deeply spiritual event that took place at the site on 9/11. Entitled *In the Shadow of a Badge: A Memoir about Flight 93, a Field of Angels, and My Spiritual Homecoming*, the book reflects her story about the visitation of Angels during the first hours at the crash site.

It is a first-hand account of the spiritual experience Lillie encountered while serving in her professional capacity as the Community Outreach Specialist with the FBI (Pittsburgh Division). What she saw and heard is a personal interpretation of the events leading up to and following 9/11 and, in particular, the Flight 93 crash. The book also details her ongoing journey of personal healing and recovery from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) following her experiences that day.

Excerpts from the Book

CHAPTER 3 – A Field of Angels: Shanksville

As I looked across the immense space of the scene, I saw a shimmer of light by my left shoulder. The light flickered at first, playing against that of the sun. The light reminded me of my first trip to Ireland, when I had seen a large school of salmon swimming very close to the water's edge. The light of their scales had merged with that of the sun and sent brilliant crystal shimmers across my view. I remember that the light was mesmerizing, and many of us stood witness to it. It was an amazing moment for me.

On the field, the shimmer of light began to grow off to my left until it was almost blinding. I turned and looked at it more directly, and it began to evolve into a foggy white mist. The mist then began to move, swirling in patterns of spectacular white light. Then, before my eyes, the mist took shape. To my amazement, there at the left of the crash site stood what appeared to be a legion of angels.

There were hundreds of them, standing in columns—a field of angels, emerging from the realms of the mist. I recognized them as archangels, wings arched up toward the sky. Each of them appeared to be dressed in warrior garments, like a legion of Roman centurions from centuries past. They were standing vigil, gazing at the surrounding perimeter. The looks on their faces were intense yet gentle. Calming. They stood like soldiers guarding their ground in preparation for the next battle. They appeared ready to receive the next command from their leader. And they clearly had a leader—for he stood majestically in front of them all.

This archangel stood with confidence, radiance, and an aura of leadership. The saber in his hand angled toward the ground in resting mode. I knew instantly this had to be Michael, for in my Catholic upbringing the Archangel Michael had always been depicted as the warrior. He was also known as the guardian of law enforcement.

These celestial beings were so numerous that their features began to blend together. The pureness of their beauty—and the radiant light surrounding them—was overwhelming to me. Each was unique, and all were beautiful. I marveled at the image of these lovely creatures. They looked just as they were depicted in the frescoes Michelangelo painted in the Sistine Chapel some 500 years ago.

As I gazed at the angels, my mind slowed its pace. I paused at each new motion they made. With each movement, a detail was forever etched in my memory. It was as if there were a sketch artist inside my mind's eye preserving all the minute details with an indelible pen.

CHAPTER 6 – *A Mother's Agony*

The mother's demeanor instantly changed. I watched her carefully as her facial features became distorted. She rose from her chair and began to scream. The tears poured from her eyes. The extent of her agony was apparent to all. It could be heard in the tone of her voice and the pitch of the scream; it could be seen in her body language. She was distraught not only about losing her son but also about having no body to bury. There were no remains to place in the earth to which she could pay homage. She could not touch the face of her child one last time or whisper a final good-bye. Her little boy was gone, and there would be no final send-off, no ritualized ceremony to provide a blessing as his soul left its earthly domain.

I asked the interpreter if it was an appropriate gesture in Asian culture to console the grieving mother. I did not wish to add another insult to her already damaged heart. The translator indicated it was permissible to show emotion and concern. I stood up from the chair and reached for her. She fell into my arms and sobbed. We walked onto the outside patio and wept. As her tears merged with mine, I realized that no common language was necessary. Even though we did not speak the same tongue, we each instantly knew the other's heart. We shared a patois understood by all mothers. It is the language of love—the dance of life between a mother and her child. Her maternal heart synchronized with mine.

CHAPTER 12 – *A Reflection of Mary Magdalene*

All my life I had a special relationship with the two Mary's of the Bible—Mary the Mother of God, and Mary Magdalene. I had prayed to Mary our mother of perpetual help since the birth of my daughter. On the morning following her birth, my mom gave me my first prayer book honoring the Mother. From that moment on, I dedicated my heart to Mary and prayed to our lady on a daily basis. Since I built the grotto in my backyard, I've knelt in prayer to her every single day. Each day I bend down to bid her a good morning and a good night. As I open the blinds, I say to her statue, "Good morning, my beloved mother and friend."

These two Mary's, each with her unique lifestyle, shared the love of a man. One shared Jesus' life as his mother, and the other shared it as his devoted colleague and friend. One of them was pure and chaste and the other was free-spirited and worldly. As a woman, I reflect the traits of both. My inner soul reflects the purity of Mary's love for her son. Both of us welcomed a child into our lives at a young age. We share the knowledge of motherhood and its bond to the universal energy.

My humanity also reflects the imperfection of a woman. I was and still am a woman who has made mistakes in her life. Like Mary Magdalene, I, too, have experienced pain. I have reveled in the shadow of the admiration of men. I have made choices of which I am ashamed, choices that did not inspire me to become a better person. Yet post-9/11, I have chosen a new path—a path of self-forgiveness and enlightenment.

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