

LIZ LAZARUS

DAWN BEFORE DARKNESS

a novel BY LIZ LAZARUS

Filled with juicy and surprising twists, Liz Lazarus' riveting thriller is based on her own harrowing experience battling for the guardianship of her 88-year-old mother.

In *DAWN BEFORE DARKNESS* (out May 26, 2026; Mitchell Cove Publishing), Liz Lazarus delivers her fourth and most compelling novel, a psychological thriller that reveals the treachery of a ruthless stalker, the alarming failure of the legal system and the unthinkable battle a daughter must face to protect her family.

Dawn Smith, a veterinarian tech living in rural South Carolina, catches her boyfriend in a series of lies and abruptly ends the relationship. Rather than accepting the break-up, he begins to stalk and harass her, forcing Dawn to seek a restraining order. Undeterred, he launches a deeply personal attack—suing for guardianship and conservatorship of Dawn's infirm mother. In court, he manipulates the truth using evidence that he planted while the couple were still dating. And just when Dawn thinks things can't get any worse, she is faced with an impossible choice: rekindle the relationship or lose her mother forever.

DAWN BEFORE DARKNESS, Lazarus' sharpest and most surprising work yet, is a satisfying yet unsettling thrill ride that reveals the dark side of the legal system we all live in—and often struggle under—while blending the worlds of veterinary medicine, guardianships, conservatorships, probate court, and the dangers and risks of loving someone.

“Liz Lazarus is an extraordinary author who effortlessly immerses readers into her narratives with profound realism and depth. Her storytelling prowess is matched by a rare talent for meticulous research, seamlessly blending suspense with enlightening insights. Once you start, you won't want to put her books down.”

—Diane Nix, Knox Bridge Book Club

“Liz Lazarus tells a compelling story that captures the reader's attention throughout. As someone who knows the horrors of the probate system, I applaud Liz's accurate depiction of how easily the elderly can be trapped and how helpless their family can feel as they fight to protect a loved one.”

—Rick Black, Founder of CLEAR, Center for Estate Administration Reform

To schedule an interview contact:
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www.dawnbeforedarkness.com

Ask LIZ LAZARUS

- **DAWN BEFORE DARKNESS**, your latest thriller, is inspired by your real-life, terrifying experience regarding the guardianship of your mother. Tell us what events led to the conception of this novel.
- These days, we're surrounded by scams. From financial scams to relationship scams, and now, as portrayed in your book, the scam of taking a parent away from their grown child. Tell us about the feelings you had when you first learned what was happening to your mother. What advice can you offer to the many of us living with this potential disaster?
- Your book features a complex relationship between a mother and a daughter. What do you hope readers will take away from these characters and the way they treat each other?
- **DAWN BEFORE DARKNESS** is filled with memorable, realistic stories of what happens in a veterinarian's office. How were you able to write about this environment so authentically?
- You've led a fascinating life, from living in Paris to getting your pilot's certificate to even producing music. How have these various vocations and passions influenced your writing?
- Writing is not your first career. You worked for General Electric's Healthcare division, were a Managing Director at a consulting firm, and now lead operations for a healthcare start-up. When do you find time to write?
- Would you work full-time as a writer if given the opportunity, or do you like the variety?
- You often use real-life events in your books, as is the case with **DAWN BEFORE DARKNESS**. In what ways does writing fiction benefit from an author's real-life experiences —especially in the case of writing legal thrillers?
- What does **DAWN BEFORE DARKNESS** say about the justice system? Which systemic issues concern you the most, and how can the average person be aware of potential disasters looming over their own life?
- What's your favorite thing about putting together a twisty, fast-paced thriller like this? What's the hardest part of the narrative puzzle to figure out? What advice do you have for writers interested in this genre?
- How has your writing evolved over the course of four novels? Do you see yourself breaking into any new genres, or is crime fiction where you're happiest for now?
- Are you currently working on a new book? Can you tell us anything about it?



About the Author

Liz Lazarus graduated from The Georgia Institute of Technology with an engineering degree and from Northwestern's Kellogg Graduate School of Management with an MBA. She went on to lead a successful career as an executive at General Electric's Healthcare division. Later, she joined a leading consulting firm as Managing Director and is currently Head of Operations for a healthcare start-up.

DAWN BEFORE DARKNESS is her fourth novel, following *FREE OF MALICE*, *PLEA FOR JUSTICE*, and *SHADES OF SILENCE*. She was raised in Georgia and now splits her time between Atlanta, Georgia and Bozeman, Montana.

Learn more at www.lizlazarus.com

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BEHIND-THE-SCENES EXCLUSIVE

The Inspiration and True Story Behind DAWN BEFORE DARKNESS

We've all heard stories about the court system taking children away from their parents, presumably because the adults were unfit guardians. It's equally possible for the legal system to take aging parents from their perfectly competent adult children. I know—it happened to my family.

My 88-year-old mom had been diagnosed with mild dementia. After suffering from a bout of pneumonia, she was moved from Assisted Living to Skilled Nursing. Not long after, a family member had Mom sign Financial and Health Care Powers of Attorney and commit all of her assets to an irrevocable Trust without my knowledge. The documents named this relative as primary representative and Trustee with her husband named as the alternate. I knew this was not aligned with my mom's wishes.

When I challenged the validity of the documents, I was sued by this relative for guardianship and conservatorship of my mom. The judge ruled that due to the 'discord' within the family, Mom would be put under the control of a court-appointed third-party guardian.

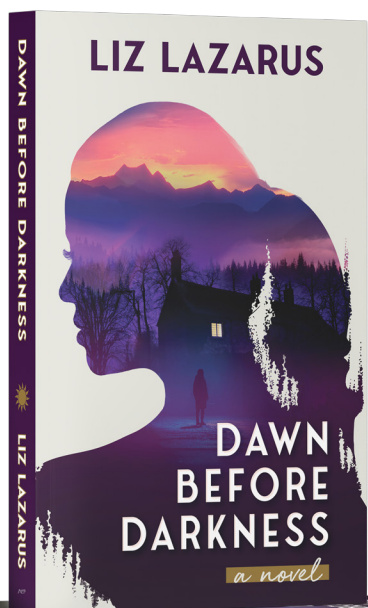
Over the next few years, on this guardian's watch, my mom was both neglected and permanently injured. I learned that the only qualification needed to be a guardian was appointment by a judge. This woman had no formal training, credentials or medical background, and there was no oversight of the fees she could charge to my mom's Trust.

I spent ten years and thousands of my own dollars to convince the court that I would be a better guardian for my mom. Meanwhile, her quality of life hung in the balance and continued to decline. It took a change of attorney, a change of venue and a new judge to make this happen. Legally, family members are supposed to have priority for guardianship if they are responsible and capable, even if there is supposed 'discord.'

I never realized how easily Mom could be taken from me. I also didn't understand that her care (or lack thereof) could be delegated to such an unqualified stranger, and that I would be powerless to change the situation without a costly and lengthy legal battle.

There are pending lawsuits in South Carolina where judges, lawyers and guardians are accused of unlawfully working together to take elderly people away from their families. Not only do they control the person's freedom, but they are also alleged to deplete the person's assets. I lived it firsthand, which is what compelled me to write this novel.

Although I was able to successfully become my mom's guardian, there are many families who are still fighting this broken system—and others who lack the resources for this kind of battle. *DAWN BEFORE DARKNESS* is fiction, but what happens to the main character and her mom is all too real.



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