

# Liz Lazarus Releases New Psychological Thriller Raising Awareness of Guardianship Abuse

*Inspired by Real Events, "Dawn Before Darkness" Arrives May 26*

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[/EINPresswire.com/](https://EINPresswire.com/) -- As conversations around elder care, conservatorships and guardianship abuse continue to grow nationwide, author Liz Lazarus is using fiction to shine a light on a frightening reality many families never see coming.

In her latest psychological thriller, "Dawn Before Darkness," published this week, Lazarus connects a suspenseful stalking plot with a real-world issue affecting aging families: the risk that guardianship and conservatorship proceedings can become a legal battleground.

Published by Mitchell Cove Publishing, the novel follows Dawn Smith, a veterinary technician in rural South Carolina, who ends a relationship after discovering her new boyfriend has lied to her. When he begins stalking and harassing her in increasingly invasive ways, Dawn seeks legal protection. But the threat soon expands beyond her own safety when he uses the guardianship and conservatorship system to target Dawn's vulnerable mother, forcing Dawn into a fight for control over her mother's wellbeing. The result is a thriller rooted not only in psychological tension, but in the terrifying plausibility of institutional manipulation.

The novel was inspired in part by Lazarus' own prolonged legal battle involving guardianship of her mother.

"We've all heard heart-wrenching stories about the court system taking children away from their parents, presumably because the adults were unfit in some way," Lazarus said. "What I didn't understand is that it's also possible for the system to take the oversight of aging parents away



"Dawn Before Darkness," the new psychological thriller by Liz Lazarus

from their adult children.”

Lazarus said her own experience revealed how difficult these cases can be for families.

“After a ten-year ordeal regarding guardianship of my mom, I saw firsthand how broken the system can be,” Lazarus said. “It’s important for families to know that this kind of thing can — and does — happen.”

While the novel is fiction, Lazarus uses the thriller form to explore issues around elder care, legal vulnerability, manipulation, stalking and the emotional cost of trying to protect a loved one when institutions built to protect the vulnerable fail.



Author Liz Lazarus

In addition to drawing from her own guardianship battle, Lazarus interviewed women who survived stalking and harassment in order to build the psychological profile of the novel’s antagonist. “I wanted to fictionalize stories that showed how helpless victims felt and how little could be done to really protect them,” she said. “Dozens of volunteers came forward. I ended up interviewing ten women and combined their accounts to create my super villain.”

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*Liz Lazarus*

Lazarus balances the novel’s themes with emotionally grounded relationships and vivid details from veterinary medicine, another major element of the story. The novel’s clinic scenes, involving neglected pets, emergency procedures and “compassion fatigue,” grew out of conversations with real veterinary technicians. “These professionals make difficult decisions every day. Animals are mirrors of our own humanity, and in the novel, Dawn’s decisions at work reflect her overall struggle, trying to do

the right thing, but coming up against limitations of what she can and cannot do for the animals under her care.”

Early reviews have noted the novel’s blend of suspense and social relevance. Midwest Book Review called “Dawn Before Darkness” an “immersive thriller” that is “replete with action,

discovery, challenge, and tests of one woman's strengths and convictions." Rick Black, Founder of CLEAR, Center for Estate Administration Reform, praised Lazarus' "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."

Terry Shepherd, author of The Jessica Ramirez Thrillers and host of In Conversation with Terry Shepherd, described the novel as depicting "a bureaucratic nightmare," in which "the antagonist does not strike with fists but with filings, motions, and insinuations," adding that the novel is "chilling precisely because it is so plausible."

"Dawn Before Darkness" is Lazarus' fourth novel, following "Free of Malice," "Plea for Justice" and "Shades of Silence." Her novels feature intelligent female protagonists confronting legal and emotional danger while navigating timely social issues.

"Dawn Before Darkness" is available beginning May 26, 2026. Learn more at [www.lizlazarus.com](http://www.lizlazarus.com).

#### ABOUT LIZ LAZARUS

Liz Lazarus writes fast-paced psychological thrillers featuring intelligent female protagonists confronting legal and emotional danger. She graduated from Georgia Tech with an engineering degree and earned an MBA from Northwestern's Kellogg Graduate School of Management. She has worked as an executive at General Electric's Healthcare division, as Managing Director at a consulting firm and as Head of Operations for a healthcare start-up. She was raised in Georgia and now splits her time between Atlanta, Georgia and Bozeman, Montana.

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