



Lizbeth Meredith

“My Daughters were Kidnapped and Taken to their Non-Custodial Father's Home Country of Greece” Lizbeth Meredith Shares Her Story of Victory and How She Got Her Daughters Back

Anu: Hello Listeners and welcome back to the “**Victim 2 Victor**” podcast. My name is Anu and I am your host. In this podcast episode, I have Lizbeth Meredith on my show. It's a writer's speaker, an online teacher based in Alaska, with a bachelor's degree in journalism and a master's degree in psychology. She has worked as a domestic violence advocate and child abuse investigator and retired from government service of two decades as a juvenile probation survivor with at-risk teens. In 1994, this first life turned upside down. She said goodbye to her four and six-year-old daughters for a visit with a noncustodial father, only to learn days later that they had been kidnapped and taken to their father's home country of Greece. At the age of 29, this person now faces a \$100,000 problem on \$10. And our budget, for the next two years, fueled by memories of her own child kidnapping, have traded in her small life for life more public, travelling to the White House and Greece. It was the generous community of Anchorage locals who became Lizbeth's makeshift family and one that was replicated by a growing number of Greeks and expats overseas who helped Lizbeth navigate the turbulent path leading her back to her daughter's.

Anu: Hello listeners, how are you?

Lizbeth Meredith: I am so terrific on you. Thank you for having me today. I've been looking forward to our conversation.

Anu: Oh, me too. Yes, absolutely. It's such an honor to have you on the show. Because I've read a lot about you, you're all over the internet because you have a story to tell. And that's why I just I'm so eager to have you on the show. So thank you so much.

Lizbeth Meredith: Thank you.

Anu: But you are you your prime example of someone who was once a victim and now you're a victor, sharing your story as a published author and speaker podcaster I think you're doing a wide variety of different, you know, arenas of

which we're so excited to hear about so tell us about yourself. So where you from and you know, your background, your family and history.

Lizbeth Meredith:

Oh, my goodness was it's just so fun to be here. Especially because you're so far away, like, connecting like we're in the same room. So that's terrific. But anyway, I am live right now I'm patching in from Anchorage, Alaska. Are you there?

Anu:

Yes.

Lizbeth Meredith:

Okay, good. But I definitely was born in Louisville, Kentucky. And so we lived in a tiny little town. In B springs, Kentucky, my family. I don't remember any of this. But I was born in the big hospital and local. But I remember is as a child, being in Alaska as a very small kid and thinking, this doesn't feel like home. And these can't be my people. Just a very judgmental kid. And we lived in a very chaotic household. But the truth is Alaska when I was small, did not feel like home. And I was a dark and a child with a whole bunch of blond headed beautiful little girls around me that were my sisters. And I just felt like something was really off.

Anu:

Yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith:

And I kind of vowed to myself when I was young, I'm going to do different, you know, we have a catacombs, lots of screaming, kids sort of disappearing. Marriages, divorce, marriage divorce, I'm going to do different when I grow up one day, I'll be a mother that my kids will never be subjected to divorce. Later on, I learned that the person who was kind of standing in as my father was not my father. And that I had been taken away abruptly kidnapped as a child so that my mother could not have to worry about the custody proceedings and things like that and just sort of disappeared with some of her kids, but not all of her kids. So just she kind of selected a select few and left some behind. And so I just thought that's not going to be my kids. My kids will never have a second parents. They're not going to be looking at the parent by lawyer. You know, they're going to have a different life than what I've had. And I think a lot of us think that when we're young, we think I'm going to do better. And then fast forward when I'm in my 20s I'm in a foreign car. I'm in Greece, looking for my own kidnapped daughters. I think what I didn't realize was that it takes a lot more than good intentions.

Anu:

Yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith:

To just create the future that we want to create.

Anu:

Yes.

Lizbeth Meredith:

So that is sort of my life in a nutshell, I married someone who sort of replicated my mother's control, and scariness. And you know, I met him and in nanoseconds, he seemed to fall in love with me. And I just was all about that. And so, I got married and had two beautiful little girls and thought that by the time their relationship became very volatile, that I would definitely leave and not subject them to that I would have to have a divorce, but I would definitely raise them in a safe home.

Anu:

Yeah absolutely.

Lizbeth Meredith: And what I didn't realize was sometimes when you leave abuse and you get stronger, that only promotes more retribution. And so for years after I left my abusive husband, he took the our daughters that he didn't often visit and disappeared out of the country as a final retaliatory act to me.

Anu: Oh Goodness.

Lizbeth Meredith: I know.

Anu: So he was actually from Greece. Right.

Lizbeth Meredith: Yes. Exactly. He was a US citizen when I met him. But he was he was actually from Greece.

Anu: Bye. Oh, wow. Oh, my goodness. So what was your first reaction? I mean, how did you find out?

Lizbeth Meredith: You know, I, we had been apart for four years. That's so unusual. And child kidnappings. I've learned that normally that kind of thing happens, right after you leave, or you know, sooner, but maybe before you were thinking about leaving, but if it happens, it doesn't happen four years later. So when I went to pick up the kids, and they weren't at the daycare, at first, it was just annoying and kind of a bad feeling in my stomach. But even an hour or two later, I knew that the unthinkable happened. And so it was horrifying. But it was even harder to get local police to take it seriously. And so you know, but it was back in the day. They weren't trying to do anything wrong. We just in Anchorage, Alaska, we're not dealing with a whole lot of international parental kidnappings. And so when I call the police what they thought was I was just a histrionic, you know, sort of like, why are you making such a big deal of this man? He's their father. Let him have extra time with his kids. Why don't check.

Anu: Yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith: And so it took a while for them to kind of jump on board. But it was truly horrifying. Because I chose to leave him my kids were in jeopardy is how that felt.

Anu: Really? Yeah. After four years as well, I mean, yeah, it just, it doesn't mean anything, just how long people can actually hold a grudge for, you know, if they don't get healed. And so did you feel that was the case with him? I mean, did he not have his own healing process that he went through?

Lizbeth Meredith: I think that's such a good point. And you I think we suspect that people will just get over it. And yet, I think I was one of those classic cases where he first put me on a pedestal when we very first met. Yeah. And then after that, you know, there's only one way to go when someone wants to marry you or be with you constantly. When you first met and everything you do is perfect. You can only fall downhill. Yeah. And once I left him, it felt like such a betrayal to him. Like he thought I was the person who would never leave, I would tolerate anything. He wants to send me. I picked you because I knew you'd been abused. Yeah, I chose you. Wow. And well, that was very honest, that was very insightful, but now diabolical. And so he didn't choose to go on a healing path because frankly, he didn't think there was anything wrong with him. I was the

one with the problem. And so yeah, he did not do anything to heal. He just kept doing that sort of like trying to scare me back to him and then trying to romance me back to him for several years.

Anu: Do you feel that he had a condition like you know, we have this lot of socio sociopathic tendencies, that, you know, a lot of these behavior characteristics kind of relate to.

Lizbeth Meredith: Right, it's so interesting, because, you know, after I even when he kidnapped my daughters, I was already working as a domestic violence advocate. And so I was working with, you know, abused women at the time that he took the girls and back then we didn't really focus so much. It's a changed world in working with abusive relationships because now people are very open about saying, oh, he's a narcissist, or this person is a psychopath. Sociopath. And typically, I would say, those are like, labels that that mental health professionals used to use. But I would have to say if I'm looking at it now, when I looked through the symptom cluster, I would I would say, and it wasn't specific to his family at a very nice family. But he does demonstrate it did and does demonstrate narcissistic tendencies, and very likely couldn't fall on that continuum of antisocial personality. He did not have remorse that was true remorse. He had remorse for being held accountable. He had remorse for feeling consequences of his behavior. He had no remorse toward what his behavior caused other people.

Anu: Interesting. And that, again, is a common trait when they lack empathy.

Lizbeth Meredith: Yes.

Anu: Sure. And it's everybody else's fault. And everyone that a victim.

Lizbeth Meredith: Yeah.

Anu: You know, everyone else is a culprit. Wow.

Lizbeth Meredith: So agree. I so agree. It. I just listened to a wonderful audio book about a young woman going through a relationship breakup, but she went into great detail about being a narcissist and the different phases in a narcissist relationship. And I thought this really did apply. You know, that was very interesting. And those applied.

Anu: Yeah. And so what happened after that, then, with your kids?

Lizbeth Meredith: Well, you know, I was making very little money at the domestic violence advocate. So I was like, right at the poverty level, and was told in 19, this happened in 1994, that this would be a \$100,000 problem.

Anu: Wow.

Lizbeth Meredith: So I knew it was much greater than I could do alone. Not that anyone ever needs to go through something like abuse alone, because that's, that's the worst thing. But I was so fortunate and that I was in a very caring community. And I worked at a place where they were already dealing with domestic violence victims and the aftermath of some victims choosing to leave. And then remember, and back in our day in America, sports star Nicole Brown since well, Shoji, Simpsons wife was murdered. And suddenly, everyone started talking about domestic abuse.

Anu: Oh.

Lizbeth Meredith: And I bring this up because my mind happened. And then that happened. And suddenly, those two things sort of fused in people's minds. And so the community really rallied to help. What can we do? How can we help solve this? You know, do you need? Do we need to throw a fundraiser? Do you need frequent flyer miles? What is it that you need, because you've got to be able to get and reunite with your daughters? So I was really surrounded by a lot of people who understood how serious it was, and who were incredibly generous.

Anu: And this isn't Alaska.

Lizbeth Meredith: It's in Alaska. And I will also say that when I went to Greece, what people told me I went twice to find my kids. The first time I went, people told me Greek people told me, hey, you know, Greek stand up for one another. Don't expect any help.

Anu: Yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith: Don't go down there and make a bus. Don't look like somebody who's being disrespectful. I couldn't have found more amazing people. And it may be a testimony to how unlikable my children's father is. But people were willing to roll up their sleeves and help. And I met some incredible, dear people that to this day are my friends who are part of my life. So I was very fortunate that I think there was an instinctive universal appeal about a mother and her children being separated, that people wanted to help. And it was beautiful. In the midst of that tragedy. It was amazing.

Anu: Did you fly out to Greece? And was there a court hearing?

Lizbeth Meredith: We had court hearing after court hearing? I could barely hear you.

Anu: Okay Oops, can you hear me now?

Lizbeth Meredith: Yes, I had, of course, I had so many court hearings. I felt like but I really didn't. I had the first time I went to Greece, we had a private investigator to try to locate the children. And so I had, you know, I had custody of the children in the United States. The Greek court said they would recognize and enforce that custody order. And then unfortunately, by accident, someone and the American government tipped off my former husband. And so he took the kids further into hiding. So the first trip was a failure. The second trip, I went back a year later. And of course, by that time, we're really losing ground and we had court hearings. Got a different investigator. And in the end, I ended up being arrested over there. So, you know, I don't want to give too many details because they know we're at a time crunch. But it was seriously scary. I knew it was so scary to be somewhere where you don't necessarily speak the language fluently, looking for your kids. And then next thing, you know, you're like, doors are closing around you in trouble. So it was not easy. And if it weren't for the help of people across the globe, my kids and I would not be together.

Anu: And then finally, you've got together with the help of the courts, right with Yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith: There you are, with the help of the courts?

Anu: Yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith: I would say no. Eventually, we had a wonderful court hearing. Fantastic. It could not have been better, then we had to wait and wait and wait for the court decision. It was only later, let me tell you that I learned that my smart former husband had hired a lawyer whose own spouse supervised all the judges in the district.

Anu: Business.

Lizbeth Meredith: So it shouldn't be a great surprise that I lost custody of my children, that the Greek courts reversed their earlier decision and said pony up your children.

Anu; Oh, my goodness.

Lizbeth Meredith: Yes. So that was the help I got from the courts.

Anu: Okay. Cover up option, right?

Lizbeth Meredith: Yes.

Anu: They generally are, aren't they? And...

Lizbeth Meredith: It is. It was a very, very stressful time. I will say this, that when I came home finally with my children, and had been more than two years since they've been gone, they didn't speak English. When I first when we first reunited, they were not English speakers.

Anu: How many years? Are they there?

Lizbeth Meredith: Two years, two years, and they were little bitty girls. So when we came home, and they just said they received a hero's welcome. What I didn't expect was the heavy lifting happens in the healing. All the other stuff was easy. This decade was going to be really hard. And it was, you know, and I was not necessarily the best at it. I knew I really struggled to parent traumatize children. But they are amazing humans. They are.

Anu: They do them How old are they now?

Lizbeth Meredith: They are 32 and 33.

Anu: Oh, my goodness.

Lizbeth Meredith: And they both have college degrees, which I'm so proud of because often single soul supporting parents, that's not the case when you raise children. And they both have lots of scar tissue that would be the first to say that it's a part of their lives, where the youngest did hit her health very hard.

Anu: Okay.

Lizbeth Meredith: For my oldest daughter more mental health. It's very, very, very traumatic. It was and so I'm not going to say well, that went great, you know, happily ever after. On the other hand, there are amazing people. And they do a lot in their community, and they just are strong and resilient. And I think for your listeners, just reminding people, it's amazing what a person can go through, but no one needs to do it alone.

Anu: Yeah, I think that's a very important, you know, topic of discussion for everybody is support is essential. And community support, I think, you know, more so than ever, it's the biggest cure for depression and mental health, it's to have a supportive community around you. And it's been scientifically

proven as well, you know, the stats are there that, you know, without a community around you, you know, isolation is the biggest cause of death. Right? Right.

Lizbeth Meredith: So, you know, this last year was really hard on abuse survivors, you know, that was really difficult, and I can't imagine, but I will say that wherever people, whatever someone's going through, there's someone else who's been there or who will be there that was willing to listen, even if the virtual if the support is online, even support is in a Facebook group. It's still connecting with others, and I just would encourage, I was not a superhero never have been but with support, and then I went to therapy sometimes went to peer support groups.

Anu: Okay.

Lizbeth Meredith: I have no shyness about getting help when I need it. And you know, unpacking because I think it's easy to keep these stories inside us. And they fester. If we're not careful, and we don't unpack them, they those are the things that are going to kill us. But if we generously we can share and unpack some of these things. It can be a great asset.

Anu: Can absolutely yeah, and I think talking therapy, you know people just don't even realize the power of just talking Communicating, you know, just expressing emotions and just tragedies that you know that one has gone through. I mean, I'm sure your daughter's six. How old were they? When they were in Greece?

Lizbeth Meredith: They were four and six by their cuteness. Oh my, Wow, those ages. Those ages in a child's life, I remember at the time even thinking, I hope I find them before they have permanent teeth. And that was like, such a thing for me was like, I just don't want them to get so old. You know, but it was tragic. It was tragic. But then it was so exciting to have them do.

Anu: Because Do you reckon they do they remember much do they have any flashbacks?

Lizbeth Meredith: Yes.

Anu: Okay, so would you say it's PTSD that they might have now?

Lizbeth Meredith: Yes.

Anu: Okay.

Lizbeth Meredith: I mean, they both go to therapy. However, I will say that even as they've gotten older, my oldest daughter in particular, she told me of a memory. Just about a month ago, she told me something. I never heard anything like it. But she's just starting to as it feels safer. Share some of those stories. And she doesn't always share them with me because I can't fix them. I'm not a therapist. But it's amazing. Yeah, they have strong memories of that time. And don't get me wrong, they have some good memories of because Greece is a lovely place. And I will say this that if you if your children are taken to a country that is that in general, likes children, so much better. So much better, right? And Greeks love children. It's a wonderful culture with great food and great people.

Anu: Yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith: And so even some of the strangers that had to help them when their dad would take off for a few days at a time take off. They were six years old. They're by themselves. No babysitter.

Anu: Yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith: And you know, in Greece, you can lock yourself out the door as a small child and not be molested. Very likely.

Anu: Yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith: So you know, they have some very great memories about Greece and horrible memories about being in hiding.

Anu: Yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith: Living in hiding. So imagine COVID for a year and imagine being small children. And doing that for two years. But then you have the shame being told you can't tell anyone. Oh, no talks. Don't talk to anyone.

Anu: Yeah, and I think the worst has been away from them, Mama.

Lizbeth Meredith: Yes. Yes.

Anu: My maternal instinct. It's like when the most important beings are children, right? Bias do anything. Children Come on.

Lizbeth Meredith: And dads can be irreplaceable. It is always sad that I never remarried because they always wanted a good dad, the role of a dad can never be underestimated. But the role of a bad parents also can never be underestimated. So yeah.

Anu: So when were you today? What are you doing the show?

Lizbeth Meredith: I am so happy to tell you that I enjoyed really powerful work for that reason, it also helped in my healing journey. So for me, I first started as a domestic violence advocate after my first degree, then I got a graduate degree in psychology. And I went to work as a child abuse investigator and then later for 20 years as a juvenile probation supervisor. So I just retired now, I had written the book before then write pieces of me, which is options for television, and we will see if it happens within the next month or so we'll know more if it goes into production this year. But we'll see. We'll see. You know, those things can always go sideways. But that's very exciting.

Anu: Yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith: Um, so I wrote the book. And now it's fun because I get to define my life a little more. I'm in the process right now, of moving to Tennessee. And so it's the first time I've selected to be away from my children, but they're in their 30s. And it's time it's time for me to grow up and they're doing great. It's me who thinks they need me they're fine. So I love podcasting. And I very much enjoy writing and do speaking gigs and starting to do some coaching for midlife women who are needing help making it through some of those different transitions, whether it's empty nesting, or a divorce or just trying to find themselves on the top 10 of their priority list.

Anu: Yeah. Wow. And so what what's the name of your book?

Lizbeth Meredith: So it is called pieces of me rescuing my kidnapped daughters.

Anu: Yes. So they again listeners you can find it all over Google. If you want to Google up in Lizbeth Marilyn, you will see her all over they're famous that she is and now she will be on TV and we will see you on TV.

Lizbeth Meredith: I love when you whenever you hear there is a true story that people because there's something weird genetically, why As humans teach us to be a little more on the negative side, Oh, hi, I'm so lucky that I just had this awful, awful life, because people love to share it. Like the best marketing ever is to have an awful life. But no, it's great. I worry future books won't be as exciting.

Anu: That's the same in my story. And also Polish customer and it's a shame. It's so we're creating such beauty out of such tragedy. And.

Lizbeth Meredith: That is fun, though, that is good to create beauty is also good. And you're to laugh about things, too. I mean, I think that's a part of the healing journey is to find humor where you can so.

Anu: Absolutely yeah, it is. And I think it's a big signal that, you know, if we're, you know, were healed or we're colour near healed, when you can actually create humor out of it, because I know, but then I there's no way it was fair. Yes. You know, I was like, No, company. This has happened to me. I was such a victim. Mentality. So yeah.

Lizbeth Meredith: You're doing beautifully.

Anu: Oh, thank you. So you.

Lizbeth Meredith: Thank you.

Anu: It's been such an honor to have you on my show. Thank you so much. You're amazing.

Lizbeth Meredith: I have so loved it. Thank you very much for having me.

Anu: It's just great energy. And I can't wait to see more of you out there. So thriving, keep flourishing. Keep creating.

Lizbeth Meredith: Thank you. I will and you as well. I really appreciate your podcast. I've been listening. So thank you.

Anu: Thank you so much. Brilliant. Oh, so there you go. Listeners that was Lizbeth. Meredith, I will add all her details on my description on the podcast, where you can connect with her and look up her book and details of her. And again, it's been such an honor to have such an amazing Victor on my show, and I look forward to the next show with you guys. Thank you Lizbeth.

Lizbeth Meredith: Thank you.

CLOSING: And while this episode comes to an end, do you may want to check out my book of **“Victim 2 Victor”**, now available on audio and where I have shared my journey of evolving through self-help and a determination to cast off my damaging past. My goal is to reach out to fellow survivors of abuse and provide hope and motivation in their lives. I hope that I can help victors transform their lives and achieve amelioration in the process of discovering their true self. I also have a 12 week self-development plan which is absolutely free and it aims to guide you on your journey to recovery. You can find the link in the description below. Please like this podcast and tag or share it with somebody whom you know is going through a similar situation and may need help. I will be back with another podcast soon. Until then take care and stay empowered.

