



Lone Star College—Montgomery, Winter 2014  
Photo by RYANNE McNEESE  
TheDarknessBeforeDawn.com

# ALICE CANGEMI

THE DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN - AUTHOR

Professor Alice Cangemi has published a novel about child-on-child sexual abuse titled, *The Darkness Before Dawn*. Cangemi, wrote this book to warn people of the prevalence and severity of child-on-child sexual abuse, she said. According to Psychology Professor Dr. Karen Buckman, a former social worker in child abuse, “this book is very relevant today.” Cangemi believes this story can prevent sexual abuse from ever happening. People will remember young Dawn’s trips to the shed, the simple ways in which they could have been prevented and the heartfelt love story of her healing, she said.

**P: Alice, I remember when you told me about your book trilogy. I was so touched by it, Do you know why?**

**A:** Yes, because you, just like me and way too many others, were also sexually abused as a child and never told. I believe seeing Dawn living with the aftermath of that horrible secret triggered old feelings that you had been trying to forget about and bury your whole life, just like I had.

**P: I have to ask, are these books part of your personal healing process?**

**A:** Yes, although I really didn’t know that at the time. My purpose was to bring awareness to prevent it from happening to others, surprisingly, it turned out to be very cathartic for me. As I wrote, I let go of the biggest secret of my life, and I could feel the weight lift off of me, both metaphorically and physically.

**P: Now, how could your books help other victims of sexual abuse?**

**A:** I think seeing Dawn’s innocence allows victims to finally realize that they were not willing participants just because they were too afraid and ashamed to tell. Children feel guilty for not telling, especially if it continues to happen, and that guilt stays with them into adulthood. Also, just

realizing that they are not alone and that a healthy enjoyment of sex, even after sexual abuse, is possible.

**P: How are these books of help for me and other parents out there?**

**A:** People are trying to protect their children, but they don’t know the dangers of a young boy in puberty. A young mother reading my book will never leave her young child to play unsupervised with, or to be watched by, a pubescent male. Seeing the dynamics of how easily it happens, shows how easily it can be prevented.

**P: Alice, thank you for this candid conversation. I sincerely hope that sexual assault victims/survivors find a healing path in your book trilogy.**

**A:** I really hope so too, Polin. It has become my life’s mission to save children from the pain and lingering shame of child-on-child sexual abuse. And in the process, I’ve found that survivors of child sexual abuse have found it very helpful in their own healing, myself included. What a gift!

■ POLIN JORDAN

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*Letting go of the secret is the most powerful step toward healing. Survivors of child-on-child sexual abuse need to talk about it to begin their own journey of healing, but even more importantly, to bring awareness to it so we can prevent it.*

— Alice Cangemi

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