



# Introducing LIZ ALTERMAN

## Navigating the Roller Coaster of Unemployment with Humour and Heart

Liz Alterman discusses the inspiration behind “Sad Sacked,” balancing comedy with serious themes, personal anecdotes, crafting suspense, and societal pressures in unemployment.

In a recent interview with Reader’s House Magazine, Alterman sheds light on the inspiration behind “Sad Sacked,” a poignant memoir delving into the challenges faced by families grappling with sudden job loss. Drawing from her own personal journey alongside her husband, Alterman offers a refreshingly honest narrative that navigates the tumultuous terrain of unemployment with humour and resilience.

At the heart of “Sad Sacked” lies a quest for authenticity amidst societal pressures to maintain appearances. Alterman candidly shares anecdotes that weave through the fabric of her storytelling, offering readers a glimpse into the raw emotions and absurdities that accompany the pursuit of livelihood in an unpredictable world.

With a deft hand, Alterman balances the comedic elements of her narrative with the weight of its underlying themes, crafting a tapestry of laughter and camaraderie that light the path

and introspection. She seamlessly intertwines personal experiences with societal expectations, resonating deeply with readers navigating similar suburban landscapes.

Readers of Alterman’s previous work, such as *The Perfect Neighborhood*, recognize her prowess in crafting suspenseful tales that grip the imagination. In the interview, Alterman provides insights into her approach to building tension and weaving unexpected twists, inviting readers on an exhilarating journey through the corridors of her narratives.

As Alterman candidly reflects on her writing process, she acknowledges the invaluable support of her family and fellow writers, underscoring the collaborative spirit that infuses her creative endeavours.

In *Sad Sacked* and beyond, Liz Alterman emerges as a beacon of resilience, reminding readers that even in the face of adversity, laughter and camaraderie can light the path

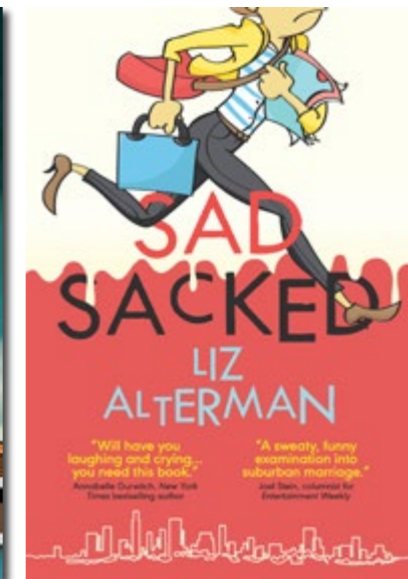
forward. Through her words, she invites us to embrace the complexities of the human experience with empathy and humour, forging connections that transcend the pages of her books.

**What inspired you to write *Sad Sacked* and delve into the challenges faced by families dealing with sudden unemployment?**

When my husband and I lost our jobs within six weeks of one another, we were in a state of shock and spent a lot of time asking, “How did we get here?”

We were in our forties, so we definitely couldn’t afford to retire. (Who can these days?)

As we embarked on our job hunt, I found plenty of content designed to help you spruce up your resume, craft your cover letter, and nail an interview, but I didn’t see much that honestly addressed the mental and emotional toll unemployment takes on you.



Dive into a world of suspense, laughter, and heart with Liz Alterman’s captivating trio: ‘The Perfect Neighborhood,’ ‘Sad Sacked’ and ‘The House on Cold Creek Lane.’

Liz Alterman’s candid narrative in “Sad Sacked” navigates unemployment with humor and authenticity, resonating deeply with readers’ experiences.

I wanted to read something that brought a bit of humor to the absurdity of it all—from the shock of discovering that companies had replaced health care benefits with bagel breakfasts to spotting a great opening on LinkedIn and realizing that though it was posted only 20 minutes earlier, 400 people had already applied.

I longed to hear someone say, “I lost my job and I’m up at 2 a.m. attempting to DoorDash a McFlurry to calm my nerves.”

In the book, I explore how unemployment is one of those things that you can’t fully grasp until you’ve lived through it. I also wanted to remove the shame that often comes with job loss because, really, it can happen to any of us at any time.

**Can you share any personal experiences or anecdotes that influenced the storyline or characters in your book?**

Absolutely! When I’d been out of work for about six months, I spotted an opening for a digital editor position at a major Manhattan museum. My neighbor just happened to work there so I asked if he’d put in a good word for me. He did, and weeks later I had an interview scheduled.

It took me about ninety minutes by car to get there. When I finally arrived, the interviewer had forgotten our appointment. Luckily, she was in the building so we went ahead with the interview, but it was after lunch and she could barely keep her

eyes open. It slowly dawned on me that she’d only brought me in as a favor to my neighbor. By the time I raced back to my car before my meter expired, I was ready to beat the dashboard with my bone-crushing heels in frustration.

Getting our hopes up only to be let down felt like a recurring theme in our unemployment journey. I knew there had to be other people on this roller coaster. I wanted to tell our story in the spirit of “misery shared is misery halved.”

**How do you balance the comedic elements with the serious themes of pressure and resilience in your writing?**

I often say humor is my drug of choice. Growing up, my mom routinely quoted Erma Bombeck, and this line really resonates with me, “If you can’t make it better, you can laugh at it.”

Similarly, Nora Ephron has this great bit of wisdom: “When you slip on a banana peel, people laugh at you. But when you tell people you slipped on a banana peel, it’s your laugh.”

I try to embrace these philosophies in my life and my writing.

**In *Sad Sacked*, you explore societal expectations and the pressure to maintain appearances. How do you think this resonates with readers, particularly those in similar suburban settings?**

When you live in an affluent

suburb, there’s an expectation that you’ll maintain a certain lifestyle. And yet a lot of people face financial (and other) challenges. The pressure to keep up can be exhausting and almost paralyzing.

Once I began confiding in friends and neighbors about our job losses, I was surprised by how many had gone through something similar. I hope that people who read *Sad Sacked* and have experienced unexpected unemployment feel less alone.

**Your previous work, *The Perfect Neighborhood*, received praise for its suspenseful storytelling. How do you approach crafting tension and twists in your narratives?**

I love to read thrillers and suspenseful stories—ones that you can’t put down no matter what else you’re supposed to be doing. I strive to provide that experience for readers. That said, I find it really challenging because, as the author, I know the ending. So I’m always worrying, “Is this too obvious?” or “Is this too obscure?” Striking that balance and trying to end chapters in ways that make readers say, “I know I should start dinner, but I’m just going to read one more chapter...” that’s my ultimate goal.

I’m also very fortunate to have a supportive family and a wonderful fellow writer friend who will read rough drafts for me and let me know what’s working and what’s falling flat. I’d be lost without them.