



with Author Rebecca Jean Downey

- **When and why did you begin writing?**

I was the geeky girl in elementary school who wrote everyone's poetry assignments. I began with poetry and moved on to short stories and then I discovered journalism in high school. I set my sights on becoming a newspaper reporter and went on to graduate from the Indiana University School of Journalism.

My first job as a cub reporter began a few days after commencement. I was assigned the court and police beat, and immediately became fascinated with the law. I was lucky to have the tutelage of two county district judges, who taught me a basic understanding of the law. I gained a reputation for covering the courts accurately, and garnered the respect of local police officers and attorneys, which in turn, gave me greater opportunities to write good stories.

- **What have you learned from your writing?**

I found the judiciary process an excellent pattern for sifting through the events of my own life, when seeking the truth. I also learned that while lady justice is blind, law enforcement officers in contrast see the world in black and white. In fact their cases in court and their very lives depend on their powers of observation and their success is gathering evidence. The skills and deductive reasoning required by law officers taught me to heighten my sense of awareness. I developed a third eye view, or contemplative sight, which I use in my writing and in ever day living.

- **What inspired you to write your first novel?**

My husband and I have been living in El Paso, Texas for more than 15 years and like other residents, we have had a ring side seat to the events in Mexico. My office at work used to face some of the neighborhoods of Ciudad Juárez. The border was just 400 yards away and I watched the people going to and from work and trying to find some normalcy amid the terror of the drug wars, which were decimating their city. At the time I began writing *The Middle Eye*, the violence was at its peak, and the death toll was so great the Juárez coroner could not keep up.

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Writing helped me cope with the travesty and the loss we all either witnessed or at the very least read about almost every day. Most of my friends knew someone who had died in the drug war, and we were all shaken by the kidnappings and extortions that accompanied the gun battles in the streets. Businesses were burned to the ground if they didn't pay for protection, and one in three houses were abandoned. If you could afford to leave town, you did. During my research for the book, I discovered that 20,000 children disappear each year in Mexico, and the kidnappers are rarely prosecuted. Half of these missing children are sold into slavery and are moved across the U.S. - Mexico border. One of my goals in writing this book is to make my readers aware of the rise in child-trafficking into the U.S. It's not just in Mumbai or Seoul.

- **How do you come up your titles?**

I have always liked the poetry of Mexican poet, Octavio Paz. He received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1990. His family was financially ruined during the Mexican Civil War and this profoundly influenced his writing. He often used surrealistic imagery to answer metaphysical questions. In his poem, *Between Going and Staying*, he writes about finding himself in the middle of an eye. This really resonated with me and I used a verse from this poem at the beginning of the book and aptly named my novel, ***The Middle Eye***. My protagonist, Penny Larkin, uses her supernatural skills as a psychic viewer, to find a little girl who has gone missing and presumed kidnapped from an El Paso park. In ***Devil Eye***, I was fascinated with the Red-Tailed Hawk, which hunts his prey along the U.S.-Mexico border. He flies back and forth over the border at will, never letting manmade lines of demarcation hold him back. Like the hawk, Mexican drug cartels move back and forth across the border, smuggling humans, drugs and guns.

- **What motivates your characters?**

The Middle Eye explores the human desire to love and be loved. The main characters demonstrate how the fear of losing control over their relationships and circumstances keep them from moving on with their lives. The book also examines how life-threatening situations, such as those occurring in Mexico, can force us to abandon our ethical or moral values just to survive. In ***Devil Eye***, I am concerned about the plight of young men who have little education or vocational training, and turn to crime as a meal ticket. This is one of the saddest situations now occurring on both sides of the U.S.-Mexico border. I want to bring to light the abuse of Mexico's women—thousands of which have been kidnapped and/or murdered in the last decade.

Most of these crimes have never been solved.