**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH AUTHOR E. C. DISKIN**

1. **What drew you to write *Desperate Paths***?

Family secrets are at the heart of this story. It’s something I can relate to. I’ve come to understand that secrets are more common in families than I would have guessed when I was younger. I’ve learned that, usually, people who hold secrets tend to think that honesty would cause more damage than the lies—which, of course, flies in the face of what we all teach our own kids. “To tell or not to tell”… that was the question.

1. **The story has elements of sexual predatory behavior and racism. Were you influenced by #MeToo or #BlackLivesMatter issues when you were writing the story?**

Well, the seeds of the story had already begun by Summer, 2017, and I suppose the cultural phenomenon of #MeToo followed the Weinstein scandal later that fall, but as I wrote and re-wrote, it was definitely on my mind. And unfortunately, stories of predatory coaches, clergy, doctors, teachers, politicians…and on and on… are not new. But I wanted to give voice to a victim—to explore consent and culpability, collateral damage, and unforeseen consequences.

And as far as #BlackLivesMatter, of course the inequities of “justice” among our police and our courts, and in our lives, had to be explored.

1. **What was the biggest challenge in creating this story and these characters?**

When I began, my characters had simplistic labels and they were people unlike me or people I’ve known. So the challenge was to try and get inside their heads, to understand them, to empathize. Maybe it’s because our country feels so divided right now. We’re all judging each other based on sound bites and single positions or acts, but people are complex and damaged, and I wanted to go deep into some damaged people who I assumed I’d dislike and find our commonalities.

1. ***Desperate Paths* is set in a small fictional Southern Illinois town. Are you from this area? If not, what drew you to set the story there?**

I live in Illinois, but I’m just outside Chicago and because I wanted a rural setting, I needed to venture outside my area. I thought about heading further south, but once I discovered the Shawnee National Forest and the Garden of the Gods down near the Kentucky border, I was sold. I knew I had to set the story in that area and use that landscape for several of the scenes. The forest is so vast and beautiful and the whole area has such an interesting history. It was a fun black hole of research to fall into as I gathered information. But Eden, the actual town in my story, is fictional.

1. **Why did you set it in a fictional town?**

It’s not a terribly flattering portrayal and I wouldn’t have felt right about picking a town in that region and characterizing it in a certain way. I also wanted the freedom to construct my own facts—the population, demographics, the police force. I love realistic settings, and its fun when I hear from readers who are intimately familiar with the settings I choose, but I think that can still happen here if readers are at all familiar with the Midsouth or small towns, generally.

1. **Did you learn anything surprising while writing *Desperate Paths*?**

There was so much really. On a more superficial level, I learned about the Dominican Republic, the Mid-South, the topography of that region, the geologic history, the culture of gun ownership and gun-sports (since that is not something I was raised in). I learned about the vast abuse scandals within other Christian denominations—since it’s clear that these scandals aren’t limited to the Catholic Church. (I landed on Baptists because of their hard-lined abortion stance—though please don’t assume this story maligns all Baptists. Not at all.)

But on another level, I felt a surprisingly personal connection to the story and the characters. Even though I chose an area I wasn’t familiar with and people I didn’t know, I looked at my draft and realized that perhaps on an unconscious level, there was some personal experience compelling me to tell this story--(which I can’t share because…family secrets!)

1. **What scene did you enjoy writing the most?**

There were several scenes that easily held my focus, that I often read through tears because I became so connected with these characters, but the most nostalgic scene I wrote was probably chapter two, as my main character, Brooklyn, wanders the streets of New York City. I lived in NYC briefly in my early twenties as well, and I, like Brooklyn, was an aspiring artist, waiting tables. I know that life, living in the East Village, walking through Central Park, getting to know the street vendors. Reliving those days and memories through the writing of that scene made me want to take a trip back. It’s been too long.

1. **You were an attorney before you started writing novels. Do you think that your legal training influences your writing or your choices?**

I’m sure it does. With this story, one of the main issues one my characters has to come to terms with, is the meaning of justice. It’s something I’ve often thought about. I remember learning about jury nullification in law school—when juries disregard the evidence or lack of in order to get a result that feels just. As a lawyer, I don’t praise or defend that, but as a citizen, as a human, I can understand the desire to take matters into your own hands—especially when you see the system fail so often. I can certainly share in the frustration of how sometimes, following the letter of the law, can lead to terrible injustices in a given case.

1. **Looking at the books you’ve written, they seem to be very different kinds of stories, other than the fact that they are all thrillers and mysteries. Do you see a common thread?**

I do, actually. At the heart of each of them is a woman in crisis—usually regarding her identity. Maybe that’s me! (On some days, anyway.)

I’m usually drawn to a topic—like civil forfeiture or amnesia, or in this case, religion and intolerance and racism—that makes me want to write a story. I then think about who might be best to tell/live the stories I’m thinking about, and things take shape.

1. **What do you think readers will love most about *Desperate Paths*?**

I hope that they enjoy the journey of discovery along with Brooklyn, that they find the story difficult to put down, and that they are compelled to talk about and debate the decisions and actions of the characters.

1. **Was the ending planned from the beginning or did it evolve as you wrote it?**

I knew, in general, the trajectory of my characters. I knew some of the discoveries that would come, and I knew who would die. But the details of how it would happen was something that evolved through a lot of trial and error.

1. **What is the publication date and where can readers buy *Desperate Paths***?

March 19, 2019. It’ll be available on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com, of course, in paperback, e-book, and audio. But anyone who prefers their local brick and mortar, can go to there. If you don’t find it, you can order it.

1. **If readers have questions, can they reach you?**

Absolutely. I love connecting with readers through book clubs and events, social media, newsletters—whatever people want to use. I’m easy to find on social media or my website: [www.ecdiskin.com](http://www.ecdiskin.com) or search #ecdiskin on the major social media.