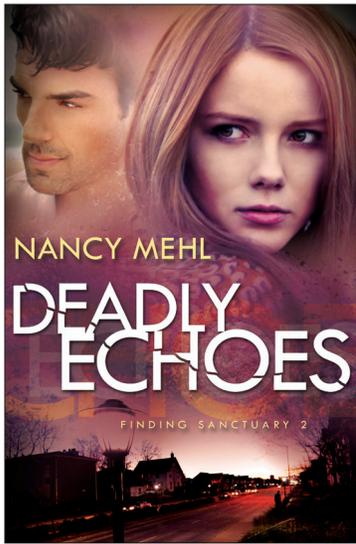




QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH NANCY MEHL



Deadly Echoes

FINDING SANCTUARY #2
by Nancy Mehl

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1. How would you describe *Deadly Echoes*?

Deadly Echoes is not just a story of suspense. It's also a story of healing. Sarah Miller's parents were brutally murdered when she was young. Eventually thrown into the foster care system, she is devastated again when her sister, Hannah, is adopted and she isn't. Sarah spends her life grieving for her parents and for her sister who has virtually disappeared. Sarah lives life convinced Hannah was adopted because she was prettier and smarter. These feelings of insecurity follow her, even after a kind woman offers Sarah a home when she ages out of the system, finally giving her a sense of safety and love. In *Deadly Echoes*, Sarah will not only have to fight for her own life and the life of Hannah's daughter, but she will come face-to-face with her own shattered sense of self worth and deep fear of abandonment.

2. Can you give us a brief explanation of the plot?

After a youth filled with tragedy and upheaval, Sarah Miller is finally able to settle down to a life in which all echoes of the past are silent at last. She happily calls Sanctuary her home and spends her days teaching at the local school.

Sarah's joy at her recent reunion with her sister, Hannah, and meeting the niece she didn't know existed is too soon interrupted when Deputy Sheriff Paul Gleason informs Sarah that her sister has been killed.

As she learns more about Hannah's death, the circumstances are eerily similar to their parents' murder. Sarah enlists Paul's help in digging deeper into the murders the police are dismissing as burglaries gone wrong. Paul's concern encourages Sarah's growing feelings for him, but as their investigation peels back the layers of lies almost twenty years old, they get close to uncovering the truth one person will do anything to hide—even if that means coming after the last remaining members of the Miller family.

3. Although your books are labeled Romantic Suspense, there is a strong mystery element in each one. Why is that?

I grew up on mystery. Nancy Drew, The Hardy Boys—any mystery book I could get my hands on. I love Sherlock Holmes and have read almost every book written by Agatha Christie. My heart is in mystery, particularly cozy mysteries, but I also love suspense. In suspense, the door is open to delve more deeply into a character's psyche. I'm a very character-driven writer. Using suspense to test a character's emotions and feelings through conflict gives me the opportunity to address subjects that wouldn't be appropriate in cozy mystery. I am very blessed to be working with a publisher that allows me to express my "mysterious side."

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4. A deputy sheriff is one of the main characters in *Deadly Echoes*. How did you do your research when creating him?

I am fortunate to have the help of a sheriff's deputy in Kansas who walks me through certain things. I've learned a lot from him. There have been plenty of times I've had to change a plot line because he's told me my premise didn't work. Reading about certain professions and people can help us in our research, but having a real person to bounce ideas off is invaluable. I always try to establish personal contacts when writing about subjects that require more information so my story will feel authentic.

5. Many of your books have strong spiritual themes. Why is that?

When I started writing fiction, my idea was to write for the secular crowd, hoping to impact them for Christ through my writing. But when I asked God what *He* wanted, He led me to Christian publishing. I began to understand that He wanted me to touch His people through the gift He'd given me. Jesus admonished Peter several times to "feed My sheep." God's heart is to see His people healed and whole. To learn how to trust Him for everything they need. Many times He uses inspirational fiction to bring words of encouragement and healing to readers. Jesus did this when he told parables—fictional stories created to prove a spiritual point. I always include spiritual themes in my books because I believe it's what I'm called to do. It's the reason I'm a writer. I've received many emails and letters from people who were touched by something I've written. I don't take credit for that. I always ask God to show me what He wants to say before I write a book, and I believe He answers those prayers. But I certainly do enjoy hearing the results! The reports bless me. I once got a letter from a teenager who had turned away from God, but because of something I'd written, she decided to rededicate her life to Christ. There is nothing more important to me than this. If I couldn't minister through my writing, I wouldn't want to write at all. However, I do also believe it's my job to write an entertaining and suspenseful story. I work hard to do that, as well.

6. What's next for you?

Later this year, the third book in my FINDING SANCTUARY series will release. *Darkness Rising* is very special to me. It brings back a character I wasn't finished with from a previous series. Sophie Wittenbauer was unloved and abused by her parents. After causing great harm in Kingdom, Kansas, she ran away. Now she is older, has educated herself, and is working for a newspaper. But her job isn't exciting, and she longs for a "big" story, something that will propel her into the job she really wants. When a man from the past tells her he knows the whereabouts of an infamous criminal who escaped justice, she sets out to Sanctuary, Missouri, to find him. Although she realizes this is the chance she's been waiting for, she almost turns back when she discovers Sanctuary is home to a group of Conservative Mennonites. Being raised in the Mennonite church, the similarities remind her of the terrible mistakes she made years ago. Besides dealing with memories that haunt her, she stumbles across someone she once knew. A man from Kingdom she'd once loved with all her heart. A man who only saw her as a wayward, dirty, uneducated child. He doesn't recognize her, but that gives Sophie little solace. She begins to wonder if uncovering the story that could change her future is too high a price to pay when she must face the terrifying ghosts of her past.