

Interview for Asli Hashi

How long have you been writing?

On and off, I've been writing over 20 years with an eye to selling my work. I'm so very delighted that I didn't give up!

What advice do you have for aspiring writers?

Keep writing, keep submitting, keep persisting! Every piece you write – poetry, a short story, a script, a novel – is practice for the next piece you write. Write, submit, and keep writing and submitting until you succeed in selling!

Can you tell us a little bit about La Vida Vampire?

The story is about Cesca, a vampire who is buried in a silver wrapped coffin for over 200 years. She's discovered and freed during the restoration of a Victorian house, and during a time when vampires are not only "out" but are a protected species. Cesca dives into her second chance at afterlife, earning a job as a ghost tour guide, taking on-line classes, and making friends -- until she becomes a murder suspect. To clear her name, she must work with Deke Saber, a former vampire slayer, now a special crimes investigator.

What made you decide to write about vampires?

Actually, I had no intention of writing about vampires. Other authors were writing wonderful vampire books, and I didn't feel the need to jump in that pool. Then I misheard a line in a peanut butter commercial that referred – I thought – to a "Princess Vampire" video. The idea of a Princess Vampire bit me hard and wouldn't let go, and Cesca was conceived from there. But, since I love the paranormal in every flavor, it was a fit.

Your main character, Francesca "Cesca" Marinelli, loves surfing and can walk during the day. Knowing that, was it hard to change up the vampire lore and make it work for your novel?

It wasn't difficult to change traditional lore once I gave myself permission. I knew from the start that Cesca was psychic, and I knew she wasn't a traditional vampire. Letting her be a part day-walker was merely a part of that difference from the norm. Now the surfing? That was Cesca's idea, and it was too much fun not to do!

Are there any other paranormal creatures you'd like to explore?

You know, I'd love to do witches, Weres, faeries, merfolk - heck, about any paranormal character. I have a few ideas, but am looking for the right twist. Again, the authors who are writing fantasy and paranormal creatures are doing it brilliantly!

One of the places in *La Vida Vampire*, is St. Augustine. What made you decide to use this place?

The first and foremost reason for using St. Augustine as the primary setting for *La Vida Vampire* is that I now (finally!) live here. I know the location well, I'm immersed in the history, and the energy of the city is amazing! It's been a kick to hear from so many readers who've lived in or near here, or who know St. Augustine from having visited here. Or who are discovering St. Augustine from the book.

If you could meet your characters in real life, what would you say to Francesca?

(Laughing) The first thing I'd say is, Let's go surfin'! Then I'd probably ask her for a private ghost tour ... just for the fun of it!

And to Deke Saber?

Um, you mean after I wipe the drool from my chin? I'd ask him to teach me the Merengue!

What do you have planned for next?

The next book in the series, *Last Vampire Standing*, will be released in May 2009. In it, Jo-Jo the Jester escapes from his nest in Atlanta to beg Cesca and Saber to help him become a standup comic. Problem is that he brings trouble from his old nest.

Who are some of your favourite authors?

Favorite authors? How long do you have? Kelley Armstrong, Linda Wisdom, Lorraine Heath, Candace Havens, Julie Kenner, Yasmine Galenorn, Virginia Kantra, Jim Butcher, Robert B. Parker, Robert Crais, Jan Burke. The list goes on and on and on!

Final question. If you saw someone at the bookstore and they weren't sure if they wanted to pick up *La Vida Vampire*, what would you tell them so that they would buy it?

(Grinning.) At past book signings, when I say the book is set in St. Augustine, the oldest city in the US, most people will buy it on the spot. That's a wonderful endorsement in for the setting! I've also mentioned that the book is comedic mystery-romance with a non-biting vampire. If the prospective buyer likes comedy, great. If the buyer likes dark-edgy or another genre, I happily recommend other authors – and mention other comedic paranormal authors, too. I want to see a reader walk out of the bookstore with a book s/he will love, rather than with no book at all!