

Dark Faerie Tales Interview – Sunday September 18, 2011

DFT: Could you start things off by telling us a little about your Oldest City Vampire Series?

The series stars Francesca Marinelli (Cesca), who was born and raised in the nation's Oldest City, St. Augustine, FL. She was turned in 1800, subsequently buried in a silver-chained coffin as a punishment, and was forgotten when the townspeople slaughtered the vampire nest and the humans they enslaved. Over two hundred years later, Cesca is discovered under a Victorian house that's being renovated. The owner, Maggie, frees and befriends Cesca, and becomes her mentor and roommate. A part day-walker, Cesca works to catch up to the 21st century, gets a job as a ghost tour guide, and learns to surf.

DFT: Always the Vampire is the third book in your Oldest City Vampire series. For readers new to the series, can you give us a quick overview of the previous books in the series?

In *La Vida Vampire*, Cesca is suspected of killing a tourist. To clear her name, she must team up with Deke Saber, a Vampire Protection Agency supernatural crimes investigator who challenges her to embrace her vamp powers. In *Last Vampire Standing*, a former court jester who wants to be a standup comic asks Cesca for refuge and help. When the head of the Daytona Beach vampire nest is murdered, Cesca and Saber discover that Jo-Jo may have key information to the crime.

DFT: Can the books function as a stand alone or do we need to read the series from the beginning?

Although I catch the reader up on past action, the series is best read from the beginning. That's been a comment by reviewers who didn't read the first two books. I have to agree. I always want to start a series with the first book!

DFT: Does plotting become easier or more challenging the further along into a series you get?

Wow, excellent question! In some ways it's easier because I know what challenges (more or less) my characters need to next face in their growth – individually and as a couple. In some ways, the plotting is more difficult because the new and recurring secondary characters need their own goals, motivations, and conflicts to coordinate with those of my characters.

DFT: How do you maintain a story arc through the course of a series while still delivering a conflict and resolution in each book?

With a lot of luck? Seriously, I start with what life lesson a character needs to learn. That becomes the overall series arc. In Cesca's case, she would always downplay her vamp powers if she could, so the series arc and her overall character arc both involve embracing her powers. The conflicts in each book must give her an opportunity to grow, so I dole out her challenges. For instance, in *Last Vampire Standing*, Cesca learns to fly ... sort of. She has to accept this new-to-her aspect of power.

DFT: Can you tell us a little about the main characters in Always the Vampire?

Cesca and Saber are still the main characters, but Cesca's first love, Triton is a strong secondary character this time instead of being behind the scenes. Triton is a human-to-dolphin shifter who has moved back to St. Augustine in search of a mate. Cosmil and Pandora, a wizard and shape shifting panther respectively, were in the first two books, and Cosmil is a strong secondary character this time.

DFT: In your series, Cesca prefers to use a synthetic substance called Starbloods. What can you tell us about this flavorful beverage?

Starbloods comes in various flavors paralleling popular coffee and energy drinks. Cesca's favorite is caramel macchiato because it has the best aftertaste.

DFT: If you could describe your main characters with only 3 words, what would they be?

Cesca – determined, loyal, sassy

Saber – protective, decisive, honorable

DFT: Can you tell us a little about the Old Coast Ghost Tours?

Old Coast Ghost Tours is a fictional company that offers walking tours of St. Augustine's ghost sites. It's modeled – more or less – after one of the ghost tour companies in town. (We have several such companies!) In reality, tour guides must be licensed by the city and conform to regulations. In fiction, Cesca must do the same.

DFT: Tell us something about your research process and the choices you make when creating the story.

If I know I need particular information in my planning stages, I read, make calls, and revisit sites as needed. I always post a map or two of St. Augustine on a story board along with pamphlets from any sites that figure in the story. Many times, however, something will pop up that I didn't expect. At one point in the last book I needed particular details about "the fort" – aka the Castillo de San Marcos. This is a national monument run by the National Park Service, and I ended up talking to several rangers over about 5 days to get all the information I wanted. In my short story for the just-released paranormal anthology, *Entangled*, I talked with several gentlemen at the historical society library. Since I adore the energy and ambiance of historic Old Town St. Augustine, doing research isn't a hardship!

DFT: Do you have a long-term plan or goal for this story universe? What happens after book 3, *Always the Vampire*?

I'd originally envisioned 5-7 books in the series, so I know what happens after *Always The Vampire*. However, I'm not sure the series will continue. Publishers are struggling in this economy as much as the rest of us are, and author contracts are driven by author sales.

DFT: How important is it to 'play by the rules' you've established for your series when the world is paranormal?

Sticking to the rules of my story universe is paramount. I can switch things up to a point if I can give a darned good reason and can make it believable. My critique partners let me know when then buy it, and when they don't.

DFT: Who is your favorite character in this book, and why?

I have to say Cesca. She can be so sarcastic yet she's very caring. Now if you'd asked me about *Last Vampire Standing*, I'd say Jo-Jo was my favorite. He cracked me up!

DFT: Do you have a favorite scene or line from *Always the Vampire*?

I have a few favs, but one involves Cesca helping get Triton into the ocean on her surfboard after he's been severely beaten.

DFT: What is your favorite part of writing this series?

I simply have enormous fun with the characters. I know them, and yet things will pop out of their mouths that surprise me. I also love the setting and St. Augustine has become a secondary character itself.

DFT: What other projects are you working on that you would like to tell us about?

The big project is a done deal, and I'm so excited about it! I wrote a short story for the paranormal e-book anthology, *Entangled* – and 100% of the proceeds go to the Breast Cancer Research Foundation (BCRF). The eleven authors who make up **Authors4TheCure** include award-winning and New York Times bestselling authors, as well as two breast cancer survivors. Lori Brighton, Michelle Diener, Cynthia Eden, Jennifer Estep, Misty Evans, Liz Kreger, Dale Mayer, Michelle Miles, Edie Ramer, and I contributed short stories to the effort, and Allison Brennan contributed a novella. Stacia Kane provided the foreword and the book's formatting and cover art were also donated to the project. For the bargain price of only \$2.99, *Entangled* is available in e-formats at Amazon, B&N, Smashwords, and All Romance eBooks.

My story in *Entangled*, "Medium Rare," features a psychotherapist to the haunted and a paranormal investigator who stop butting heads long enough to save the ghosts of St. Augustine from destruction. I'm working on this concept as a series, and am also working on a spinoff of the Cesca books.

DFT: If you could be any supernatural creature, which one would you be and why?

I'm laughing now because I change my mind about this. Being a faerie appeals, but so does being a dragon. I'd even be a ghost if I could be temporarily solid. Then again, I need to be something that can still eat dark chocolate. Ideas, anyone?

Seriously, tell me what kind of supe you'd see being addicted to dark chocolate. Or ask a question! Leave a comment to be eligible for a copy of the charity anthology *Entangled*. Remember this is an e-book only, but it is available in all formats!

Angela, thank you so much for hosting me! You're great fun and I wish you all continued success!

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