

My friend and brand new paranormal author, Nancy Haddock, and I are sitting at the Crescent Beach Café in St. Augustine, Florida. It's early evening and we're watching the waves from the Atlantic slap against the beach while we sip our coladas. Mine is the standard piña colada with all the pineapple and coconut, Nancy prefers a Kahula colada. I'm here to chat with Nancy about her first book, **LA VIDA VAMPIRE**.

Nancy, it's a thrill for me to be her with you to talk about **LA VIDA VAMPIRE**.

It's a delight to be hanging out with you, Suz. Cheers!

I know you've been writing a long time before you got "the call". How long was it? And how did you keep your motivation going?

How long was it? If that's not a straight line, I don't know what is!

Okay, seriously, I was a member of RWA for 23 years and some odd days before I got The Call. However, I'd been working on novels for several years when I learned about RWA and joined. Now, before I switched to novels, I wrote two children's picture books with a wonderful partner, and wrote teleplays. Nothing sold, but the hope was alive. I think that sums it up for motivation, too. No matter what the set backs, the hope remained alive.

I remember how excited all of your friends were to hear you'd gotten "the call". (Lots of screaming occurred in various states!) The Bandits love "Call" stories. Can you tell us yours?

Sure! It shows what a dork I can be!

I had pitched **LA VIDA VAMPIRE** to Cindy Hwang at the Dreamin' in Dallas conference in 2006, and decided to follow up on the submission in late January 2007. I phoned (because what's the worse that can happen, right?), and spoke with Cindy's assistant, Leis Pederson. Leis confirmed the submission was there, but also invited me to resubmit. I did, and after the fact, a friend told me Leis was beginning to take a few authors of her own and that she was from Texas.

So, I put the submission issue aside, and was working along on another project when the phone rang on February 21st at about 11:30 a.m. I answered without checking the caller ID and heard, "Hi, Nancy. This is Leis Pederson of Berkley."

DORK ALERT 1: I replied with something like, "Well, hi, Leis. I hear you're a Texas girl. Whereabouts are you

from?" We did about five minutes on Texas, and maybe the worse dork part is that I didn't yet suspect why she was calling.

The lovely Leis then switched the subject to ask if I had an agent. I told her I didn't yet, why?

DORK ALERT 2: WHY? Did I think she was taking a poll?

Leis then said, "We want to make you an offer."

Houston, we have brain ignition. Amazement, excitement, the joy of "at last," and even a touch of disbelief zipped through me in a matter of triple-time heartbeats. But, baby, I hadn't been a member of RWA forever 20 years for nothin'. My business voice kicked right in, told me to sit down and take the information, and celebrate later. When Leis came to the end of the offer, I thanked her, and told her I'd like to contact an agent before I gave her a final answer. I then asked, "Since you've made The Call, does that mean you'll be my editor?" The answer: Yes.

Well, then I screamed a little -- though I tried to hold the cordless unit far enough away from my mouth so as not to deafen ... my new editor.

There were so very many times I thought I'd never hear that phrase come out of my mouth. I still pinch myself now and then!

(Grinning at Nancy), One of the perks we get doing these interviews is we get to read the books before everyone else. **LA VIDA VAMPIRE** was a great story. It's set in St. Augustine, Florida. What made you want to use this setting?

Everything! St. Augustine was simply the natural and logical place to set **LA VIDA**, because I knew right away that the main the character was a native of the city. Plus, the city in all its facets inspires me, and has since I first visited here in 1989. That's not to say I won't write stories in another setting, but here I'm surrounded by over 400 years of history, a wide variety of architecture, the arts, and the beaches - not to mention surfers! St. Augustine is my corner of paradise.

**LA VIDA** is a witty, sassy story in first person, (not my usually cup of tea, but you so sold me on it, but I already told you that). Tell us about it!

First, thank you for the high compliment! I'm tickled you enjoyed the first person point of view!

**LA VIDA VAMPIRE** is the story of Francesca Marinelli (Cesca), a vampire who was born and raised in St. Augustine, then

buried for more than 200 years. By the time she's unearthed, everything has changed -- and vampires are a protected species. Cesca she vows to make her new afterlife as normal as possible and is succeeding, until a vampire-hating stalker, a shape-shifter, and a killer bring chaos and death. Suddenly Cesca is a murder suspect, and is forced to team up with vampire slayer Deke Saber to solve the case. Along the way, Cesca must embrace her vamp powers. If she doesn't, she could be the next victim.

(Taking another long drink of my colada), Cesca isn't your typical vampire. What quirks did you give her, and why?

You know, Cesca pretty much gave herself the quirks, then I figured out how to use them. For instance, she'd always been a part day-walker and loved the beach and ocean. It was a natural that she'd learn to surf. Her reluctance to use her vamp powers stems from her not wanting to be woo-woo vampiric, so she learns to drive rather than using vamp speed. Now her quirk about blood? That came out of the blue, but was a perfect thread in the story.

OMG then there's the hero. (fanning myself here). What makes him tick, and any particular movie star you had in mind when you wrote about him?

Deke Saber slays the monsters who prey on the innocent. It's that simple, and it's not. He's ready to believe the worst of any vampire, and yet Cesca scrambles his radar. She so unvampish, so innocent and trusting, it makes Saber nuts. There are things I haven't revealed about Saber yet, but he is delicious! (grins) As for having a star in mind when I wrote him, I didn't. I had a catalog picture, and Saber grew while I stared at the cutout and played "What if."

Besides being a vampire book, there's another paranormal element in this book? (We exchange a conspiratorial wink.) Care to fill us in?

Grins, Suz! Yes, there is an element of magick with an old wizard, and with two magical shape-shifters (as opposed to lycanthropes). Both were born when a spell the wizard cast long-ago went haywire. One of the shifters is Cesca's long-lost friend, Triton, and the other becomes her protector.

Not to give anything away, do you think there will be more books with Cesca and Saber or just more books with the vampire/magick theme in it?

The second book in the series follows Cesca and Saber as they unravel a new mystery and battle a new -- or not so new -- evil. It will probably be released in Spring 2009, and I hope there will be more to follow, of course. The magick

element also continues, and I see it building in successive books in the series. I hope there are more books, anyway. I have a blast with these characters!

(Nancy and I finish off our drinks and as we signal the waiter to bring us another she leans back and eyes me with a sly smile.)

Let me ask your readers something. What attracts you to books with continuing characters, and what turns you off about them?

Nancy has a fun website at <http://nancyhaddock.com/>, where you can play, "Where's Cesca" for a prize package. She also has a signed copy of **LA VIDA VAMPIRE** for one lucky commentor on today's blog.