

This article found at www.byreasonofpassion.com – July 2, 2008

Katí Amilsudhir: Psychic or Santera? An Interview by Aída L. Irizarry

Thank you for inviting me to speak to you, Ms. Amilsudhir, here in your home.

Please, Kati to my friends. And remember that my home is ... how would you say it?

...your home. I'll take you on it.

A good sense of humor goes a long way, yes? But let's get to it. You've met my Changó ... do tell me you did, Ms. Irizarry.

Aída, please.

You're my elder. My papa has taught me better, yes? But about the pamphlet I sent you ... oh tell me you read it. You must've, no?

And I found it fascinating. The ritual ... the beads ... about the white and red beads around your neck ... Do you wear them because Changó is your patron saint?

Yes, and no, he's not patron my saint. That's a Catholic belief, yes. But as for my Changó ... Ah, he's my protector ... a friend.

Elizabeth said to make sure I asked you about how you became a santera ... Actually, I asked her how I should approach it. I gather you were a Catholic?

She's a jewel, Elizabeth ... a pure angel, but ... I'm sorry, I get carried away when praising my good friends. People tell me that's a Cuban trait, yes?

That we're all the same under the skin ... yes, that we are.

Good. I like you already ... and ... yes, I was a Catholic Would you believe I even thought of becoming a nun? A Carmelite, of all things.

And what changed ... how you went from being a Christian--

Well ... You have an *abuela* ... alive ... dead ... you have a grandmother?

Dead ... many years ago ... Just you asking about her makes me teary-eye ... I'm sorry. We're veering off topic.

Good ... good. I heard *amor* ... love ... passion in your answer. You'll understand my story ... and some tale, no?

Back in Cuba, see, when I was ten, Abuela Hilda fell ill with fever. My papá, a doctor, tried everything to make her better. He even took her to specialists in Havana. Nothing worked. Then a colleague suggested he take Abuela Hilda to Doña Gregoria, a santera in Santiago.

How old was your grandmother?

Old enough to die ... but not for me ... she should've lived forever, but ...

Ah, yes, about the santera ... Doña Gregoria ... Even today I remember when took us to a wooden cabin at the campo ... how would you say it in English? Camp ...?

Country.

Well, she took us to this country of yours.

A candle flickered in the darkness. My Abuela Hilda lay unconscious on a cot. On an altar above abuela, sat Changó. His eyes were opened wide in delight. He was happy, no? And I ... Well, what was I to think? My abuela was dying. I was ten, and there's this Black god smiling down at us like if everything was okay ...

But nothing was okay ... nothing.

Ten years old ... You must've been scared.

Oh, yes, and then I saw the old santera lift a white pigeon in offering to the god. On her lips, I read a prayer in Yoruba, a language I didn't know then.

"Stop, I told her. Nothing can save Abuela Hilda."

"Doña Gregoria said to me: 'Lay the pigeon on the table, child. Spread its legs wide. If he doesn't fight you, he's chosen to die on your abuela's place'."

Oh, my goodness, how could you?

How could I? You loved your abuela ... would you have done it?

Yes.

And so you know how easy it was for me to place the bird on the table. He cooed once. His gaze didn't budge from mine I closed my eyes when Doña Gregoria lifted her blade high up in the air.

When I found the courage to look, the pigeon, blood, guts, and all, lay flat against my grandmother's neck. Seconds later, Abuela Hilda held me in her eyes.

Gruesome.

Gruesome ... ah, how wrong you are, yes? It was necessary ... You see, on that day, Isabel Maria Padilla Cáceres died and Ekilekatí Amilsudhir was born.

And that's why you decided to become a santera?

Right now the priest won't allow it.

But Elizabeth told me you were an initiate.

I want to be, yes, but ... you see I do something the priest is against: I control my mind at will.

Do you ... really?

I'm serious, eh? A hypnotist taught me to use the symbols of my faith to go into trance. I do not need an Orisha to possess me.

How interesting. What is it that you do ... control your mind ... but, exactly for what?

I can read the Akashic Records ... when I go into a trance ... I can ... You don't believe me, yes?

I'm not here to judge you. Please ... I'm interested ... what happens when you go into a trance?

I ... I can read your present, your future ...

How is that different from a Tarot reading?

Do you believe we've lived before ... you know ... reincarnation?

I've no opinion either way. Why do you ask ... you don't ... can you read a person's past lives?

Yes.

In the Akashic Records ...?

Yes, but of course. If you have time ... perhaps we can do it tonight—

Not today, perhaps another time.

Goodnight, Ms. Irizarry ... oh ... one more thing.

Yes?

I have something for your site ... on Santeria. Put up this article, yes?

I don't know ...

It'll bring you good luck. Promise.

Author's Note: Aída L. Irizarry, a New York based writer, is the author of *By Reason of Passion*, found at www.byreasonofpassion.com. At her site you can preview chapters of her novel, and download three complete chapters as well.

This interview, like the events in the novel, is a work of fiction. Although the healing scene in the novel is fictionalized, it is based in an actual healing. The "interview" was part of my character work for a chapter in *By Reason of Passion*. I hope you've enjoyed it. If you wish to reprint this article, please do so, but let me know so that I may include a link to your site as my way of saying, "Thank you."