

## Pocket Full Of Game: An Interview with Deborah "Sexy" Cardona By: Michelle Cuttino

Author and Publisher, Deborah Cardona, better known by her ghetto pseudonym, "Sexy," began her writing career as an inmate of the torture chamber behind America's fake facade of justice. Sexy was born in New York City in 1965, and grew up in Spanish Harlem, where she was involved with gangs and drugs. She draws vivid novels from her past experiences and makes us feel what it means to be poor and proud, but generous; to be streetwise and full of bravado but frightened, too; to struggle to go straight; to dream. A mother of three sons, Sexy had her first novel published by Iuniverse in 2002. Shortly thereafter Teri Woods and Relentless Aaron both sought out her work for publishing. Today Sexy offers others in her once similar position the opportunity to be published by Deja Vu Publications. She was the owner of Deja Vu Book Lounge, which closed its door in Sept 2012 due to the changes that have occurred within the literary business. Sexy has released her 5th novel and now is the proud owner of Deja Vu Vibes ([www.dejavuvibes.org](http://www.dejavuvibes.org)) an adult novelty company.

Reinventing herself in her career has never been a problem for her – real hustlers never stop hustling. Deja Vu has become a household name and there is more to come. "Butterfly," the perfume line, will be released in 2013.

Sexy takes time out of her busy schedule to speak with Black Literature Magazine about her latest release, Pocket Full Of Game as well as her other ventures.

**Michelle:** You have a very checkered past, how did you turn that lifestyle around to become the woman you are today?

**Sexy:** Well, you already know I was incarcerated and while being incarcerated, I had to look at my surroundings and ask if this is what I really want for the rest of my life. I chose not to live that lifestyle. That's why I refused to be in that environment in my mind. My body was there, but my mind wasn't and that's when I started writing.

**Michelle:** Outside of Julie Ojeda Nin, Sofia Quintero aka Black Artemis and you, there aren't many other Latinas in the urban-lit game. What made you want to be a part of this genre with a latina twist?

**Sexy:** Well, I'm latina and I can only write what I know. I can't write from an African-American point of view because I'm not African American. Everything around me is latina. I live in Spanish Harlem. I go to the latino grocery stores, you know, the bodegas. I go to latino restaurants. I can only write what I know.

**Michelle:** With six novels under your belt, do you feel that you've brought a different kind of voice to the industry?

**Sexy:** I don't think it's different, I just think it's from a woman's point of view. All of my characters are very strong women. They're not weak, they're all street savvy. They all come from the streets. They all begin their journey on the streets of Spanish Harlem and in turn, they learn from their experiences and they change their lifestyles as well. So, it's just a different voice.

**Michelle:** Most African-American urban-lit authors write stories that pertain to them and those who share their same skin color. Do your books reflect your Latin-American heritage as well?

**Sexy:** Yes they do. Matter of fact, I was just discussing that with someone. Another author told me that I should put an African American female on my cover. I was offended because at the end of the day, I'm latina. I'm not representing an African American character, so why would I use someone that's African American on my cover? All my book covers have latinas on them. All my characters are latina. Even the male characters are latino.

**Michelle:** You just released your latest novel, *Pocket Full Of Game*. What is the book about and where did you come up with the idea for this story?

**Sexy:** The idea came from my husband and I. I tried to take his characteristics and my characteristics and put them together because we are both very much alike but different in a lot of ways. We're both Gemini's, he's June 12th and I'm June 14th, so I told him that I was going to write a story about us. About how we met, our characteristics, how strong we both are and it just went on from there. If you notice, the book starts off with a bang. I don't want to give too much of the book away, but their meeting was crazy. We didn't meet like that, but the story just turned out that way, because I started one way and then my mind just goes on its own and it went someplace else. Once I wrote out what happened in that first chapter, I was like ok, and I just kept going on from there. But yeah, the idea came up from when him and I were talking and I told him, "I'm going to write a book about you and I."

**Michelle:** How are the main characters, Porsche Garcia and Fresh, comparable to your own personalities? Please explain.

**Sexy:** Well Fresh is really my husband. That strong, determined, domineering, takes no shortcuts personality and things like that. And then Porsche is me. She's sensitive, doesn't want to be in the lifestyle but she has to do it because she has to make that money. Yes, that's him and I.

**Michelle:** Your imprint is Déjà Vu Publications. Is it a full-scale publishing house? Meaning, is the book cover design, editing and typesetting a part of the publication package, or do you outsource?

**Sexy:** I outsource. My designer and my editor are all part of my company, but they also have their own companies. I don't have an in-house editor, although I do, you know what I mean? Carla Dean is my editor. However, she has her own company and she has other clients. Deshawn Taylor is my designer, well one of my designers, because he's moved on to other things. So, Deshawn did all the covers. It's really like a package deal, if you want to look at it that way.

**Michelle:** Who are some of the authors you currently represent and are you looking to sign new authors at this time?

I'm not looking to sign any new authors, because I've already went through that and it was a really bad experience. In this industry, people think they are going to be the next Essence's best-selling author. They cannot be Essence's best-selling author because honestly, they're not doing that any more. They're not going to the bookstores anymore and asking, who's your best seller for this month or anything like that. All of that stuff has changed. Writers think that when a book is published, the publisher is the one who's supposed to do all the work. The publishers provide the source. We put the book out there, we put up the money, we finance the whole project, but you cannot sit and think that the publisher's the one who is going to push your book. You have to push your own book. It doesn't matter whom you sign with. You can sign with a small publishing house or you can sign with Cash Money Content, let's just say, but you're the one who still has to push your book out there. Publishers actually have outlets to get the book out to stores and through a third-party like Baker & Taylor and things like that. However, you're the one that has to promote it. You're the one that has to go to the book signings. You're the one who has to pass out those flyers. You know, you're the one who has to get the word out there. That's what happened to me. A lot of the authors that I had were very comfortable with just sitting down and not doing anything. So what I did is I let everyone go and started focusing on myself. Once that happened, I asked Erick S. Gray for a book and that's when *One Lyfe to Live* was born. It's only Erick and myself in my company now.

**Michelle:** Déjà Vu Book Lounge hosted its Grand Opening on July 1, 2011 in Harlem, New York. A little over a year later, we find that it has closed its doors. What caused the lounge to go out of business?

**Sexy:** Well the lounge didn't really go out of business. I decided to close its doors until I could do things the way I wanted to. I wanted it to be better. I wanted it more successful. At the time, I was making just the rent. There was nothing extra. If I'm working twelve hours a day and I can't provide something for my household, then

there's a problem. Digital has really, really interfered with the bookstores. People are going into the digital, the Ipad, the Kindle, the Nook so it's really hard to sell paperback nowadays. That's when I put in the sex toys at the second shop on Lexington Avenue. I said you know what, I'm going to make it an adult novelty store. I brought in the sex toys, I had the lounge area and I also had the books. My sex toys were doing better than the books. It was overriding the books. That became another problem, because now I have all these books and I'm stuck with them. It just became conflicting. And honestly, I kind of outgrew the store because I was getting discouraged with the books. I saw that nobody was buying books and I didn't have sales. It became really hard to get rid of a paperback. So I started watching and with the toys, the toys superceded the books. Plus, I started getting hired to go out and do the Passion Parties. I figured that if I have to go out and do Passion Parties then I don't have to pay rent, because basically, that's all that was happening. I was getting booked Thursday, Friday and Saturday for Passion Parties and that money I was making I had to bring into the store. So I came to the conclusion that the lounge was no longer a good business deal.

**Michelle:** You are now promoting your new website, [www.dejavuvibes.org](http://www.dejavuvibes.org), where one can purchase adult novelties as well as set up one of these Passion Parties. What all does the Passion Party entail?

**Sexy:** The Passion Party is a forty-five minute presentation on the sex toys. It's not a trashy presentation, unless you want it to be trashy, of course. I provide a whole package. I provide the forty-five minute presentation. I provide strippers or exotic dancers, because there are different types of dancers. I also have erotic poets that come out with me. It all depends on what the individual wants.

**Michelle:** You are also involved in another new endeavor with Crystal Glacier Water. What sets this water apart from all the rest and how did you get involved with this project?

**Sexy:** With this project, a friend of mine gave me one of the bottles since he was distributing them throughout different states. I was working on my perfume line and was looking for a bottle to attract people to my perfume line. I now had this Crystal Glacier Water bottle sitting on my bureau and I turned off the light and thought wouldn't it be amazing if I can get a bottle for my perfume that lights up. I then started researching the company and when I started reading everything about this company and the water itself, I found out that the water is healing water. The electrolytes are very high the pH balance is very high. Cancer patients are drinking this water. When I finally opened the bottle and I tasted it, it was something I never tasted before. So I contacted the owner of the company and I told him about myself and I said I'm really interested in the water and honestly, I was really interested in the bottles, because they glow. That's how I got into it. He and I became friends, he introduced me to other

people who can help me with my perfume bottle and in turn I got into the business of distributing the water, and it's going really good.

**Michelle:** What do you think is the key to marketing and promotion in the urban-lit genre and in business in general?

**Sexy:** I can't really answer that because I do so much. Basically, I just get out there. I have my business cards. I talk to everybody and even if they don't want to talk to me, I still give them a business card. I'm always online. I'm always promoting. I go to different events and promote myself. I think it's just a matter of getting out there and networking with other people. If you're sitting behind the desk all day, or the computer, you're only going to reach a few people. Take Facebook for example. It has changed a lot. If you notice if you post something, and on the bottom left-hand side it will tell say thirty-two people saw your post. Meanwhile, you have over five thousand friends. So your posts are not really getting to where they need to be. Not everyone is seeing it. You have to go out there. You have to promote yourself. You have to build your brand. You have to build your name. You know, that's what I've been doing for the last six years and so far, so good.

**Michelle:** Finally, what advice can you give to the new and/or up and coming author about the urban lit game and finding ones position within it?

**Sexy:** I don't know because I'm still trying to learn that myself. I'm going to be honest, with each project I learn something new. With an up and coming author, I just say, get your editing together. Make your book cover the most outstanding book cover you can get. Market yourself until you can't market yourself anymore. One thing for sure two things for certain, right now with digital being on demand, I say do not print a lot of books, because you're going to get stuck with them. Focus more on the digital side of the business. If you make business cards, put the little Nook and Kindle logo on them. Let people know that this is a digital ebook. because now with printing, honestly, I got stuck with boxes of books. I have thousands of books in storage that I can't get rid of. And I'm not going to devalue my work by selling them for two dollars. I can't do that. They will sit there and collect dust until the digital phase goes away or I don't know, but my suggestion, my main advice is do not print a lot of books. Print fifty to one hundred for your book signings and your events but don't print thousands of books like we used to do.

### **Book Synopsis:**

Porsche Garcia is a female hustla who has it all; money, beauty, and respect in the slums of Spanish Harlem. She has earned it all by faithfully respecting the laws and codes of the dope game, and by being loyal to those around her while also protecting her

position with the viciousness of a Pit bull whenever need be. Porsche is more than satisfied with her life until a chance encounter with a stick up kid named Fresh opens her world to a life of guns and ski masks. A possible newfound love offers her more money than even a seasoned hustler like herself can resist. The combination of Porsche's beauty and Fresh's talents as a stick up kid seems like a match made in Heaven. The two of them, along with Fresh's crew, show no mercy as they rob high level drug dealers around Spanish Harlem and do their part in running up New York City's murder rate. Success seems to be in the palm of their hands until one bad decision drastically changes one of their lives forever and puts both partners against each other. Friends become enemies, love becomes jealousy, and loyalty becomes a thing of the past. With Fresh and Porsche now on opposite sides of the playing field and Karma's revenge beginning to catch up, the both of them are forced to learn a lesson which only one of them will survive... In life you can only go but so far with just a Pocket Full Of Game!!!