

A Conversation with Marcia “Denrique” Preudhomme

By Kim Rose

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I became a fan of Denrique Preudhomme’s because she was the first writer to inspire me to read through an entire collection of poetry. There was a truth in her words and a remarkable sense of multiplicity presented in *Reflections of Realism*, that immediately put her on my radar of ‘authors to watch.’

So with the recent release of her second book, *Stranger Than Fiction* – this time a provocative collection of short stories – I was eager to delve into Preudhomme’s world of fiction and explore what she deems ‘strange.’

Kim Rose: You’re a writer with a background in Architecture. Tell us about your journey to literature.

Denrique: As a child, I enjoyed being told stories and told those stories that were told to me to my friends. Then, I kept a journal. I wrote something new daily: a quote, a phrase, a poem. Eventually, I began to write short stories. I shared them with a few friends and realizing that they enjoyed my stories gave me the courage to share them with the world. Architecture is the discipline my parents carved for me, but writing is a fulfillment.

KR: You have a melodious accent that is hard to place, but you are originally from Trinidad. How do your roots influence your work?

Denrique: Ahhh, that’s easy. We (Trinidadians) are rich in folk tale. There are stories for every facet of life. I think as a writer I enjoy recreating those traditional folk tales and contemporizing them. Like, in *Stranger Than Fiction*, the story *The First New Moon* is an old superstitious tale about knowing who your true love really is before actually meeting him/her. Most of my stories have some sort of old Caribbean proverb indicative of the tale.

KR: Do you worry that there might be a sort of cultural ‘lost in translation’ effect in the way the American audience interprets your work?

Denrique: I don’t believe that there could be a cultural ‘lost in translation’ in my work. As a creative writer, my writing style transcends all boundaries.

KR: You were first published as a poet with your book *Reflections of Realism (ROR)*. In it you beautifully sculpt the complexities of love, from raw lust to powerful desires. Do you find poetry or fiction more expressive? Which is your first love?

Denrique: First of all, I was worried that folks would want more poetry from me and I wouldn’t be able to produce more. Poetry allows me to explore fantasies, those that are told to me, as well as my own. (Smile)

My poems are like short stories. I find that with poetry, you can say what the heck you want. But with fiction, you have to creatively and strategically control the story you’re telling, and that is always a challenge. I love a good challenge, but, I also love good poetry.

KR: ROR features the infamous *Desire* poems, which have become a favorite among audiences of your live performances. But readers might be surprised to know that you are a self-described conservative, former Catholic schoolgirl. So where do you hide these *Desires*...the poems that is?

Denrique: I think it's very much a part of me. Most people do not know this because I obviously don't exude *Desire*. I am a lady and a very respectful one, but that doesn't mean I don't have *desirous* thoughts. I love performing the infamous *Desire* because no one believes I even wrote the thing, far less have the *balls* to perform it. Everyone believes that my well-mannered, extremely respectful persona would not dare allow me to write or speak such erotica. And, I can only smile and say, "I don't see what the big deal is. Everyone has a little freak in them." (Wink)

KR: Your current title, *Stranger Than Fiction (STF)* is a very diverse collection of short stories that are all held together by one common thread: they all feature women who find themselves in crossroads in their various relationships. Why was that such an attractive perspective for you to explore?

Denrique: I have seen too many women in painful relationships. I have seen their endurances to cope, their struggles to escape and their fears to confront it all. I wanted *STF* to serve as a book of tales that would bring not only an awareness of the various situations women face in painful relationships, but as a guide to knowing how to avoid them.

KR: One issue you revisit in several of the stories is infidelity. As a writer you meet many people and hear many real stories. In your estimation is that one of the most pressing relationship issue?

Denrique: Absolutely! It's part of the reason why *Desperate Housewives* is such a big hit! Infidelity sells very well in Hollywood, but its common existence is crushing to just about every other person you meet.

KR: Readers like to assume that stories are at least partly autobiographical. Yet you maintain that your life is much too mundane to record and retell. Even so, with which character or story do you most identify?

Denrique: Well, I can be a stuffed-shirt and who wants to read about a stuffed-shirt...boring! However, I think the character I most identify with is Delaney from the story *Laura*. Despite her demanding career, Delaney devoted time to provide her friend Laura with moral support. That is pretty much, Denrique. I am known for being a very loyal friend.

KR: Do you have a favorite story, or is that like choosing a favorite child?

Denrique: My favorite tale is *The First New Moon* and it's quite obvious why. It's based on an old Trinidadian folk tale, which showcases our culture, superstitious belief, dialect and more.

KR: You've gotten a lot of feedback about the piece entitled *Grades of Black Women*. It's not really a short story, but it's among the most compelling and certainly most provocative inclusion. Where did it come from and what was your intent in writing it?

Denrique: My book focuses on women, particularly Black women, and as a Black woman, I am *so* familiar with the way we talk about each other. We are our worst critics! So, I thought it would be suited to include an essay on Black women in this collection.

KR: Some have argued that as a Caribbean woman you have no right to assess African-American women in such a way.

Denrique: When folks read *Grades of Black Women* very carefully they will see that I have not once singled out any particular *type* of Black women. I was very general in my delivery. And, as a matter of fact, I specifically indicated that this is what *we* as Black women say about each other. I wrote the essay, yes, but it's not *my* voice. It's the voice of critical Black women, be it African, Caribbean or African-American.

KR: What can fans of Denrique's work expect next?

Denrique: Well, my next book will be out before you know it. But, I have this thing about not revealing my titles until they are copyrighted. Therefore, I am going to have to keep my readers in suspense for a while. However, I will say just this... it is going to be like the infamous *Desire*...a must read! (Smile)



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