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Dascha Polanco – Hermosa just Beautiful

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(SEXEE) From nursing school to Netflix, your Orange is the New Black casting was like a very cool Cinderella story. What was the first thing you did after finding out you had

landed the role?

(Dascha Polanco) I walked out of my job, got on the phone with my manager, and just had a moment of tears. I was just taking it all in and talking about what was going to happen. It was my *first* big gig.

(SEXEE) With the full season release format and the amazingly complex characters and plot, **OITNB** is undeniably one of the coolest series we've seen in a while. The show swept the 2014 Emmys and is one of the most talked about in television the past two years. It's no surprise that everyone loves you and your character so much. What's the hardest part of quick success?

(Dascha Polanco) When you get success quickly, you become a public image. You have to be so cautious and sensor yourself so much because there are so many eyes on you. I think that's one of the things that I'm having the most difficulty with because my aura is very free. I believe in allowing people to live their lives how they choose to, so when I find that there are certain things that I can't do or say because somebody would have something negative to say about it, I have trouble with it. It's kind of a contradiction – everyone can see you but you have to be so covered. It's a paradox.

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(SEXEE) What have you had to sensor the most?

(Dascha Polanco) I think it's what I say, what I do, where I am, who I'm with. It's like walking on eggshells. It comes to a point though where you say, "You know what? I'm gonna stomp on these eggshells and I don't give two cares..." (Laughs!). I'm about to stomp all these eggshells, how about that? Can I live? (Laughs!)

(SEXEE) When you're not "behind bars" filming, what occupies your time?

(Dascha Polanco) I do a lot of charity work and try to use my voice to help others, but I'm also a parent so I spend a lot of time with my kids. I take care of my family and work to keep my culture alive. I still do my chores. My Saturday cleaning, washing my dishes, cleaning my bathroom... I love cleaning my bathroom! And I turn up! I like to go out and have a good time. It's about balance.

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(SEXEE) Speaking of going out, on the show you don't dress up – of course, being that your character is in prison and all. But whenever you step out in real life you turn on the glam. What are your go-to beauty must-haves for nights out?

(Dascha Polanco) I really love the fact that we don't dress up. I think it's important as an actor to embrace every role and what comes with it. You can't say you want to be an actor and not want to look crazy on camera. You're a prisoner! You have to look crazy! Aside from that, as Dascha, when I go out, I like to take coconut milk baths and use coconut oil on my face. It's my weekly weekend ritual. I love perfume, body shimmer, lotion, and having every little corner smelling good! It's very therapeutic for me. Smells take me back to certain memories and allow me to relax. And those memories also enhance my creativity. When I go out, I make sure that I smell good first, have nice natural-looking makeup, and soft hair by using Argon. Really, it's all about looking effortless and it's ultimately how you carry yourself. If you feel comfortable in some sneakers and sweats, then rock it!

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(SEXEE) Dayanara "Daya" Diaz, your OITNB character, is super feisty sometimes when it comes to speaking up against things that she doesn't believe in, like in situations with her mom. In what ways are you similar to her?

(Dascha Polanco) Yeah, the funny thing is that she tries so hard not to be like her mother, but the essence of her mother lives in her. Daya is a hopeless romantic and she believes in love. That's something that we share. She doesn't hold any grudges, she forgives very easily, and I think I do the same. When people see the character and then get to know me though, they say, "Oh, you're so different," but we are very similar in that way. Also, with her image, she has a little insecurity and an inner struggle that I'm working on currently.

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(SEXEE) Has always being in the public eye affected that inner struggle any?

(Dascha Polanco) It has affected me. When I get letters from fans, often little girls, saying, "Oh my God, you make me love myself more," it touches me. Growing up, I had those issues of self-image and not loving my body, thinking I was too fat and not being able to relate to anyone on TV. Now, to be honest, it's like two sides of it: I'm confident because I'm doing what I love and I'm getting great responses from people about my work. That motivates me to keep working on myself and to love myself more. But, at the same time, there are moments where the negativity gets to me. As humans, we're always affected by that one negative comment instead of the ten positive ones. It's funny because we're so conditioned to think about criticism that we don't focus on the beauty of things. It's more so our own insecurity. Luckily, I have a great team where, if I have a moment, I can go to them and they'll help me to brush it off.

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(SEXEE) If you were in Litchfield in real life and could only have three items from the commissary, what would they be and why?

(Dascha Polanco) Hmmmm... ChapStick, you can use that to moisturize so many things! I'd probably have scents, anything scented, for relaxation. Probably not perfume. I don't know if that's allowed. Maybe I should ask that (Laughs!).

(SEXEE) Well, hopefully, you'll never really need to know.

(Dascha Polanco) I know right! Let me just say that I'm not jail material and I'm not planning to find out (Laughs!). But, I'll ask for character study purposes only. Then, as my third item, I'd have some sour candy. I *love* sour stuff!

(SEXEE) We love you as Daya, with her unique relationship with John Bennett, but we can't wait to see you starring in your own project. If you could do a movie or TV show and work with anyone you wanted, who would be your hunky male lead?

(Dascha Polanco) Oooh, girl! I love this! I think Idris Elba, Michael B. Jordan, Dave Franco, or RJ Mitte from Breaking Bad would be my hunk!

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(SEXEE) We're going to have to put that out in the universe so it comes true. The best part about OITNB being released in full seasons is that we can literally knock out the whole season at once. I watched the last season in less than 24 hours. What are your favorite shows to marathon watch?

(Dascha Polanco) Walking Dead, Breaking Bad, House of Cards, Being Human, and you know what I *just* discovered and I loved? Joan Rivers' documentary. And she made me cry so much. I really liked it and it motivated me a lot. She had a good work ethic.

(SEXEE) You were born in the Dominican Republic but also grew up in Brooklyn and in Miami – two extremely diverse parts of the world. What about all these places contributed to who you are today?

(Dascha Polanco) Brooklyn contributed to my fearlessness, my boldness, my go-getter mentality – hustling to get it done is very Brooklyn. And Miami contributed to my femininity. When I first moved there, girls were just used to wearing heels, even to school, so it contributed

to that. It also gave me a lot of southern hospitality and being able to embrace people that may not be able to accept you as much. I learned to be able to deal with them anyway. Both “Polars” – I call it, being bi-polar since its north and south – have assisted with being able to become a chameleon in many situations, adapting to my surroundings.

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(SEXEE) There are so many attributes that make women SEXEE and you’re definitely at the top of our list. In your opinion, what makes a woman exude sheer sexiness?

(Dascha Polanco) Thank you for that. I like it when people call me SEXEE (Laughs!). You know what I’ve learned? Women base their attractiveness on the male response. We focus so much on how our love interests respond to us, but men really don’t pay attention to detail. It’s more about how you carry yourself. You’re able to exude this energy. That’s what happens to me. I transform when I get ready to go out. That’s what SEXEE is: a nice scent, a nice personality, how you carry yourself, and how you react to others. You could be beautiful but if you treat others with disrespect, look down on people, have no substance in what you say, that to me is blah! You’re not SEXEE at all! People that don’t know me may look at me physically to describe my sexiness, but people that truly know me see my personality more. I’m about my brain. I’m not a dummy. I show love, and I respect everyone whether they are cleaning the toilets or directing the film. I embrace, I don’t dismiss individuals, and I think that’s what attracts people to me.

(SEXEE) Similarly, what puts a guy at the top of your SEXEE list?

(Dascha Polanco) I *love* this question, too, girl! What makes a guy SEXEE is being independent, being fearless and not being afraid to show a little romance, being confident but not arrogant. You know what really attracts me to a man though, besides the physical? A man that can enjoy a woman because she’s a woman? They can just enjoy *her*, celebrating *her* and who *she* is. Damn, can I get an amen!?!

(SEXEE) Amen, girl!

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(SEXEE) So after each long day as a career girl, you have two little people at home waiting for you. What is it like being a mommy on the move and what's your biggest mom secret?

(Dascha Polanco) My time with my kids is way more flexible now than it was when I was working a nine-to-five. I'm able to take my son to school every day. I cook for them every day, I spend more time with them. What makes it special for me is that they see mommy is doing what she loves. I come home and I'm happy. My mood isn't affecting them. My biggest mom secret is teaching my kids how to love what they do and who they are. Also, to have a balance. Have *me* time and have mom time. Don't lose yourself.

(SEXEE) Not only were you in nursing school, but you have a bachelor's degree in psychology and a ton of other academic interests, including chemistry. In your opinion, what's the formula for a happy life?

(Dascha Polanco) The formula for a happy life is this: choose what you want to do, give to others as you want to be given, love thyself, and be free.

Dascha ALMA Award Winner IIII

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