

Patricia M. Muhammad  
presents

# Ardor & Prestige

Getting to Know Some of the Characters:

Duchessa Anastasia Francesca Milana Fiorentina d'Alessi is a young maiden who recently become of age. She is the eldest of three children. The duchessa has wide brown eyes, an aquiline keened nose set nearly perfectly in the middle of her face. Anastasia has dark black hair which she often keeps pinned in the most traditional styles. Her delicate chin is balanced, neither round and sharp. She had noticeably high cheekbones which any potential gentleman caller would appreciate. The duchessa maintains her appearance in the latest Venetian style of dress, opting for gowns and mantus that compliment her petite frame, small waist and feet. Anastasia displays her strength when the circumstance beckons for it. She is obstinate, intelligent and has a whimsical side to her that she conceals, especially in front of her mother, Giorgina and father, Pasquale. When she meets the ennobled Leandro, he considers her sprightly and strong. She often speaks with a soft voice. Duchessa Anastasia has a deep appreciation of art, especially for oil paintings. The courtier also has an astute awareness of human nature, including her own. Seldom does she rebel against protocol or her mother or father's wishes, though in some ways she is still naive. When she exhibits such behaviour it is quite noticeable, especially to the dedicated servants of the House of d'Alessi.



Giorgio is Duchessa Anastasia's *cavalier servente*, but not in the most traditional sense. Some would perceive him as the assigned playmate and helper of the young Anastasia, and as she grew, his status had never changed within the House of d'Alessi and foremost in the eyes of his charge. Giorgio was an orphan when another d'Alessi houseservant brought him under her tutelage to serve. He lived in abject poverty and appeared disheveled and unkempt when Sienna first encountered him. His origins are later revealed when he recalls his unpleasant childhood circumstances as he sits before an investigator of the Council of Ten. He is devoted to his service to the d'Alessi house. However, his inability to control his unrequited feelings for the duchessa causes him great angst as well as bouts of animosity between them. He is strong-willed and perhaps more stubborn than Anastasia. Giorgio also has an unbridled temper. He usually exhibits this characteristic when, in his mind, he is protecting Duchessa Anastasia.

Leandro Emiliano Innocenzio Giacento Vitali possesses a very high status within the king's court and beyond. He veils this secret from most that he encounters, yet there are many who know who he is. They vowed to assist in concealing his status. Leandro and Anastasia both obscure portions of their identity when they have their chance encounter with one another. Soon after they quell their initial curiosities towards one another, they reveal their birth names and are able to begin a formal courtship. Leandro is tall, muscular, and a statuesque presence. The courtier also has grayish verdant eyes which sit just below his thick eyebrows and adequately above his pale pink lips that only slightly upturns when he smiles. His handsome countenance sits upon a sturdy neck that anchors his finely tailored garments. Anastasia immediately notices the brawn of his chest and the deep timbre of his voice. Even when Leandro speaks to her in a softened tone, it does not inhibit the impact upon its primary recipient, Duchessa Anastasia. He possesses a refined understanding of both dance and art. However, he is defiant, though respectful towards his outranking father. This primarily due to his affection and unwavering defense of the courtier whose heart was already his. Leandro acknowledged the hand of Providence though he is not necessarily religious. He had no other alternative to understand what had been gifted to him in the form of Duchessa Anastasia.



Leandro's father has great royal power and uses it and his paternal authority to question and admonish his son. He challenges Leandro on his intentions with the rumoured maiden. This higher ranking patrician is very protective of his only son while Leandro does not understand. He has Leandro followed and waits for his son to disclose his perchance meeting in the depths of the night in a town square while both believed no one was watching. The courtier believes his father only seeks to berate him to win a verbal exchange. It is not until Leandro is steadfast in his position concerning the duchessa that his father acquiesces. He surprisingly becomes an ally in Leandro's planned future with the duchessa and helps him secure it.

Edmondo is the proclaimed loyal servant of Signor Leandro. The servant can be curt with others. He shields parts of his personality unless circumstances warrants it. Edmondo is physically strong and cunning. He exhibits concern for his master's indisputable adoration for Duchessa Anastasia. Leandro considers Edmondo's worry which he observes is tinged with a subtle disrespect for the maiden ordained for him. Leandro's servant, however, has another motive for his concern of his lord's relationship with the duchessa. Yet he, Anastasia nor her *cavalier servente* had not known of Edmondo's connection with Giorgio when he was an orphaned boy.





Sienna is a senior maidservant in the House of d'Alessi. She is Duchessa Anastasia's continued irritation within the manor. However, the houseservant is efficient, diligent and devoted to the house she serves and each member of it. The duchessa notices Sienna's inconsistent behaviour towards her. In one instance she is encouraging and supportive and in others she is disagreeable and all too ready to admonish the duchessa. She can be encouraging, but her leniency does not extend to Giorgio, whom she knows has great affection towards the duchessa. However, Sienna considers it her duty to watch over the duchessa despite her recently coming of age as her mother and father with their other two children in tow had taken an extended leave of absence. She and Giorgio dispute what is in the best interest of their charge regarding her general safety and her destined relationship with the esteemed nobleman, Leandro.

Capriana is a younger maidservant within the House of d'Alessi. She is sensitive, but has an inner strength she pulls from when necessary. Capriana is also timid but dedicated to serving the members of the d'Alessi household. Her concern for the duchessa's well-being as well as other members of the d'Alessi family is genuine as she offers to help Duchessa Anastasia prepare for the grand royal soiree as well as the eventual wedding between the duchessa and Signor Leandro.

