

Patricia M. Muhammad
presents

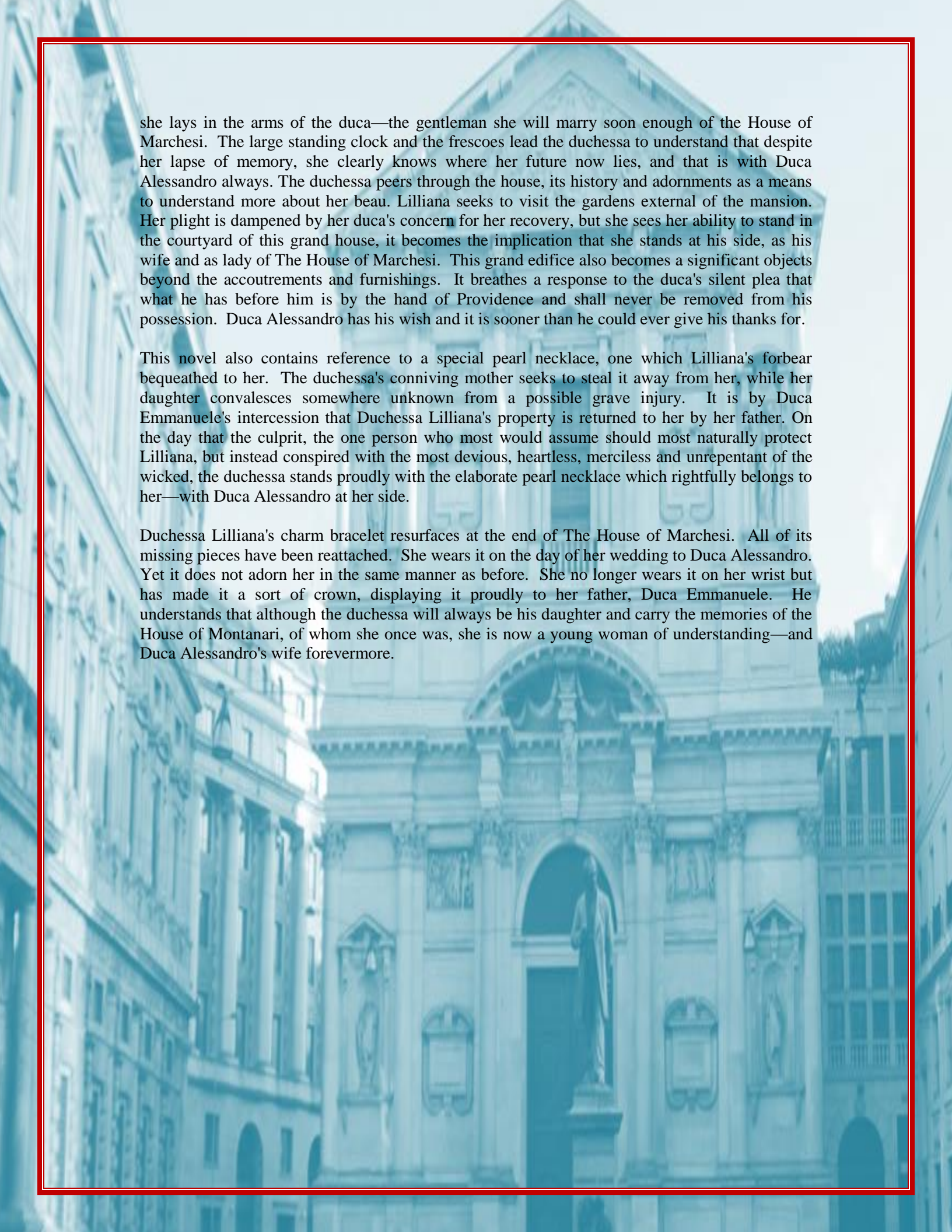
The House of Marchesi

Special Objects:

Special objects in historical romance fiction should be no surprise for the avid reader. The elite of Europe experienced decadence in the manner of food, dress and jewels and some had encouraged a heightened appreciation and greater development of the arts. Yet, precious jewels are not necessarily most revered for their obvious value. Passed along to family members, they hold a different importance, sentiment. This sentiment may be in the guise of a memory that could bring a heartfelt smile upon one's face. Perhaps it is the catapult for one person to perform or refrain from an act. The beauty of these jewels may be revered for far more than calculable worth in another way as well. To inherit or be gifted any of these jewels is to understand the mere representation of what the recipient may mean to the giver. The receiver acknowledges the innate value of the object, but its external implication, that the one who grants perceive a greater value to that precious one is what elevates the inanimate to an appreciation for the beauty of the intangible. The House of Marchesi contains a few objects in which memory, a representation of good versus the wicked. For the holder of the object to hold steadfast to its meaning is to pull two worlds together, one unknown to the yet to be discovered; one from the past and the future two kindred souls endeavour to consummate with the most genuine of intentions.

As the reader walks into 18th century Milan, a beautiful young maiden appears. She is an avid rider of equestrians, yet on this one day which would define her future, Duchessa Lilliana is thrusted from her steed. She loses her memory—and her way to what she thought was her home. Yet what is lost shall be rediscovered. Lilliana finds herself on the estate of and in the arms of Duca Alessandro. Duca Emmanuele searches for his daughter and discovers a familiar gold charm embedded in the fur of the runaway horse. This object, this precious jewel links his hope with his recovering daughter in the manor thus far unknown. Yet he is not the only one who finds a charm. Noemi, the Montanari houseservant accepts this object as her clue that she is to locate Duchessa Lilliana herself. Two similar objects, both belonging to Lilliana, one of hope, the other as the gateway for another to take upon herself a practical action. Both gold charms are precious beyond its rare metal characteristic. They are both part of a whole gift Duca Emmanuele gave to Duchessa Lilliana.

Though Duca Alessandro notices Duchessa Lilliana's bracelet early on as he cares for her, he does not detect the relevance of it being a bridge from the question he hoped she would ask—from what House does she hail. Noemi's diligent efforts are not for naught when she is able to discover Duchessa Lilliana's location at the House of Montanari. She is able to give the duchessa one of her missing charms through the duca who is wholeheartedly protective of her. This gold charm, in the shape of an equine suddenly gives Lilliana a part of her memory as she remembers what caused the accident, her horse throwing her due to its startled reaction to a blast. Yet is it not only jewels that are significant in this storyline. Duca Alessandro's patience with the duchessa, allowing for her to examine and discover the house that he is lord over, the one in which she will become the lady of soon enough, assists her with her memory. The duchessa sees a clock. It reminds her of chambers in the House of Montanari. Her memory is still blurred, yet she sees the hands of the timepiece clearly. This is also a link between the house she was once a part of, as



she lays in the arms of the duca—the gentleman she will marry soon enough of the House of Marchesi. The large standing clock and the frescoes lead the duchessa to understand that despite her lapse of memory, she clearly knows where her future now lies, and that is with Duca Alessandro always. The duchessa peers through the house, its history and adornments as a means to understand more about her beau. Lilliana seeks to visit the gardens external of the mansion. Her plight is dampened by her duca's concern for her recovery, but she sees her ability to stand in the courtyard of this grand house, it becomes the implication that she stands at his side, as his wife and as lady of The House of Marchesi. This grand edifice also becomes a significant objects beyond the accoutrements and furnishings. It breathes a response to the duca's silent plea that what he has before him is by the hand of Providence and shall never be removed from his possession. Duca Alessandro has his wish and it is sooner than he could ever give his thanks for.

This novel also contains reference to a special pearl necklace, one which Lilliana's forbear bequeathed to her. The duchessa's conniving mother seeks to steal it away from her, while her daughter convalesces somewhere unknown from a possible grave injury. It is by Duca Emmanuele's intercession that Duchessa Lilliana's property is returned to her by her father. On the day that the culprit, the one person who most would assume should most naturally protect Lilliana, but instead conspired with the most devious, heartless, merciless and unrepentant of the wicked, the duchessa stands proudly with the elaborate pearl necklace which rightfully belongs to her—with Duca Alessandro at her side.

Duchessa Lilliana's charm bracelet resurfaces at the end of The House of Marchesi. All of its missing pieces have been reattached. She wears it on the day of her wedding to Duca Alessandro. Yet it does not adorn her in the same manner as before. She no longer wears it on her wrist but has made it a sort of crown, displaying it proudly to her father, Duca Emmanuele. He understands that although the duchessa will always be his daughter and carry the memories of the House of Montanari, of whom she once was, she is now a young woman of understanding—and Duca Alessandro's wife forevermore.