

Patricia M. Muhammad
presents

Hidden Valor

Special Objects

Hidden Valor is a historical romance novel set in 18th century, London, England. Duchess Arabella leaves the House of Wellington and begins journey she had not anticipated. She only wanted to enter the king's court, to present herself in her own right. Yet the duchess had only recently become of age. She was inexperienced. The courtier had not known the duplicitous nature of many of her fellow ennobled; nor could she anticipate that murder would take place on this very day. Several of them. The king and queen orders all present on the royal grounds sequestered, including her. Duchess Arabella now finds herself in the company of Duke Everett. Handsome, dashing and armed with much patience he became soon aware he would need in his interaction with the duchess. During their confinement to the royal grounds, candles and chandeliers become the fore of a few scenes.

Duchess Arabella looks to the chandelier above in her newly assigned bedchambers in the royal palace as she takes a bath. She personifies the crystals as harbouring her plea to be released. The duchess ventured, then feared. One of the large crystals break loose and clash onto the floor. Arabella is even more afraid, but the duke would soon alleviate her trepidation. He comforts her. The duke speaks kindly to her. He is a gentleman. Despite what the chandeliers have caused the duchess to unwittingly associate with them, Duke Everett is able to use candles to soothe her. One night she wishes not to be alone. After she and the duke discover the shared space in between their side doors, he invites her to his bedchambers which are speckled with several candles. They sit on the floor atop of a blanket. The candles provide a soothing ambience. It encourages his guest to relax, if only but a little. Duke Everett questions her and listens with full presence. The candles become the alighted witness to their budding relationship. The light from their wicks reflect the shadows that sit lifeless in the background, waiting for their hosts to issue their next command of motion.

After Duke Everett and Duchess Arabella discovers a lower level, beneath their assigned chambers, candles become the guide down the winding steps. As the flicker burns, the wax melts, warning them that their time to remain diminishes soon. The candle also allows them to see above. The duke notices the faint moulding embedded in the ceiling. It is one of the last reminders of the previous ruling Crown. As Duke Everett holds the candle, he also notices what seems to be a false wall. It too is embossed with some sort of décor. The duke and duchess had only intended for the lower level to be their refuge

while they are confined within the royal palace walls. Yet it has also become the forgotten chambers that remind them that they were placed there for a reason. Duchess Arabella does not see much significance in the beautiful etchings until Duke Everett prompts her. The candle still burns. The bigger the puddle of wax, the sooner the courtiers must return above. The light of the flame is almost extinguished, yet both have been enlightened to an understanding as why the murders may have occurred. They and the Crown now seek to understand who are causing them.

The chandelier that hung in Duchess Arabella's temporal chambers resurfaces as Duke Everett contemplates the scheme. He informs his fiancé that those chambers were originally intended for him. That shard was likely set to maim or even possibly kill the duke. It was the hanging weapon that heard Arabella's silent fear. Yet by Grace neither she nor Everett were hurt. Duke Everett informs the king and queen of his discovery. They accompany him and the duchess with royal guards to the abandoned lower level. Once again, a candle provides the necessary light for them all to witness. The guard nearest to their Graces holds it towards the moulding. They are able to see the family crest of the prior royal family. Motive for the murders have now been established.

