

Q & A with Patricia M. Muhammad, Author of The House of Marchesi

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-United States, 2021-April-30 – /ToStories/-Multi-genre fiction author Patricia M. Muhammad discusses her fifth historical romance novel, The House of Marchesi.

1. What are the tools of the trade? A good writing space. It doesn't have to be a desk, just some place you are comfortable. Then I would say pens, notebook paper and a charged up laptop. Of course and a clear mind ready to write.
2. What comes first, the plot or characters? I think for nearly all of the genres I have written in, it is the characters. From there I branch out to create more characters and develop the plot.
3. What do you hope your readers take away from this book? That despite the circumstances of the duca and duchessa's first encounter, destiny always wins—especially when it involves two genuine hearts.
4. Your story is set in Milan. Why did you choose that as the setting for your book? When I first set out to write historical fiction, I attempted to avoid the common themes usually associated with this genre, that is Regency or Victorian England. After writing two books in 18th century England, one set in Liverpool and the other in London, I branched out to neighboring European countries to pull from other historical experiences. By the time I reached my fifth historical romance novel, The House of Marchesi, I had already written about one Italian city state. So after writing Ardor's Prestige which is set in Venice, I naturally chose Milan. Due to the geography, these two city states have much in common, vineyards, olives, gated estates and the like. On a broader scale, these city-states and other European countries influenced one another in terms of dress and culture during the 18th century. Thus, I still had some familiar factors to incorporate into The House of Marchesi.
5. What were the key challenges you faced when writing this book? I think compared to most of the other historical romance novels I have written I developed a few more characters beside the main ones. The servants in both the House of Montanari and the House of Marchesi play key roles in ensuring that Duchessa Lilliana was secured from harm and that she and Duca Alessandro would have the future ordained for them. At times I wrote them to be in the fore of the developing plot. As I continued writing, I thought to counter the heaviness of the duchessa's ailment due to the horse accident by creating a character who does not belong to either house. He is serious about his trade, but the reader will find humour in his mannerisms. He too becomes an unlikely hero of sorts. This I thought was probably the most obvious deviation of how I have written most of my other historical romance novels. The valiance and bravery of the duke is obvious and pivotal in protecting the maiden. Although Duca Alessandro is very much this in his direct interaction with the duchessa, in the wider scheme he warranted protection as well. This is where the servants initially took the helm without either of the lords'(of each manor) knowledge.

6. Was the writing process different and what challenges did you face writing in the historical romance genre? This question overlaps with the previous one. I incline to focus on the characters, so I would say that the challenges I face is creating an environment which reflects the architecture, art and etiquette of aristocrats Italia during the 18th century. I researched dances that members of the king's court would likely perform. As some dances were common among different European countries, others may have been altered or refined by another country so they could make it distinctly of their culture. I also recall researching frescoes and that they were often painted within the archways and columns in grand estates. I use this as a reference point for Duchessa Lilliana to regain her memory since the accident.
7. What is one of your favorite excerpts from your book? I would say there are times when the duchessa and duca are so enthralled with one another but have yet to wed. This is one of those scenes:

“Will my duchessa set her eyes upon me?” She nodded her head up and down slowly, but had yet to open them. “Please, duchessa?” The maiden looked at him. Her hands fell to just inside of either of the duca's shoulders. Yet, she could not face him fully. This was not necessary. He gently nudged her. She was bashful. The duca waited. She then slightly turned towards him. The duchessa could feel his breaths sweep across her soft chin. He waited for her. She turned further. “Duchessa.” When he spoke, his lips made contact with hers. She did not pull away. Their lips became gently engrossed. Lilliana's breathing became unstable. She could feel the duca smile for a moment. “We have all the moments here we shall desire.” He could wait no longer. He kissed her passionately while she held onto him. Lilliana's ankle was not even an afterthought. Duca Alessandro held her at her waist. Though she kept her arms around the signor, they felt weak. She knew what was happening, this unfamiliar and sweet passion was overtaking her. The duca did not rush. He could not soar through what each had the right, the honour to explore. His hands pulled her even closer. Neither had appetites for food any longer. All of which they required to nourish their hearts circulated between them and within their warm embrace. The rumbling fire could not claim honour for this heated affection that Lilliana and Alessandro expressed. This was a matter of genuine grace, longing and the two kindred which destiny proclaimed an eternal and *exclusive* entanglement for only they to relish, uplift and present before the world. The duca felt the duchessa strengthen in her reach for him. He pressed his body against her to calm her, but she resisted. This was new for Duchessa Lilliana, beautiful even. She desired not for one moment to interrupt the continuous exchange between them. The duca felt her heaving. His mind wandered only to maintain his sanity. To no avail. What ignited between Duchessa Lilliana and Duca Alessandro was soon to engulf them if they did not take care. He moved his face away from hers. Lilliana felt disappointed. He raised her to his lap sideways, still embracing her. She grabbed onto the upper portion of his shirt and turned her face to his exposed neck. The duca attempted a little space between he and the duchessa. He had not sufficient time. Lilliana had already begun to peck him along the side of his strong neck. He whispered her name, “Lilliana...” She refused what the tone of his calling implied. Neither could have enough of one another—and neither could have all of each other for now.

8. If you had to describe the character Duca Alessandro in only a few words, what would those words be? A handsome and protective gentleman with gray eyes set only to gaze upon Duchessa Lilliana.

9. What would you say is your most interesting writing quirk? Simulating my presence in a scenario or dialogue between the characters.
10. Are you on social media and can your readers interact with you? Yes. I am on Twitter and Pinterest, though I use Twitter more often.