

Q & A With Multi-Genre Author Patricia M. Muhammad (The House of Marchesi)

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-United States, 2021-June 11— /ToStories/-American fiction author Patricia M. Muhammad discusses her historical romance novel, The House of Marchesi.

Q. Can you provide us a brief description of your book, The House of Marchesi?

A. Sure. The House of Marchesi is an historical romance novel set in 18th century Milan. The story centers around a duchessa, Lilliana who is thrust from her horse while riding it on the House of Montanari's estate. The horse gallops away from the property with the duchessa in tow after it is startled. This causes her to be thrown into the estate of the grounds of an esteemed nobleman, Duca Alessandro. Other than securing her and ensuring that she is well, the primary conflict is where did she originate from and whether she should ever return to that House. In the end, she and who would become her fiancé, both agree that their future is with one another. When she easily accepts this, she declares to her love interest that she is now the lady of the House of Marchesi—this even before they are wed. So she answers the question herself, with the same one Duca Alessandro had silently declared within his own mind.

Q. The House of Marchesi's protagonist is talented with a specific musical instrument. What about that specialty interests you?

A. Duchessa Lilliana is skilled in the viola. This was one of the objects that I used to anchor her while she was a guest at the House of Marchesi in order to pull her closer to her memories which kept eluding her. Though I do not have an interest in viola, there was a time, several years ago, where I was interested in playing the violin. I bought one, took some lessons and did not spend enough time to learn much of it. So that is probably where I got the idea from.

Q. The setting of The House of Marchesi adds much to the texture of the story. Can you tell us about why you chose to set the story there?

A. This is the second novel that I have set in an Italian city-state. I always wanted to travel and visit some of the main cities of modern Italy because of its rich architecture, waterways and historical art. Aside from this, I enjoy nature and for many of the 18th century ennobled, orchards and vineyards were commonplace—these are other aspects of the Italian landscape I would like to visit first hand as well.

Q. What part of the book did you have the hardest time writing?

A. I could probably think of a specific scene, but as a whole there were two mysteries and both were related to one another. I realized as I was writing the novel that I had to make both separate, though the same characters are involved. At some point I had to make each of the mysteries converge as the story neared the resolution of the conflict. The first mystery was to watch how both Duchessa Lilliana and Duca Alessandro unravel who the duchessa was, primarily by learning from which house she hailed. Yet, within this, Lilliana was discovering who she was beyond the reference as daughter of Duca Emmanuele, beyond the expectations of a maiden who had become of age, and to the extent of what sort of young lady with genuine intent towards her newfound beau she would be once she

accepted what had been ordained for both her and Alessandro. The second mystery of course was who or why someone was plotting against the duchessa. Her accident was an unrelated circumstance that benefitted her while most were oblivious to the brewing connivance against the innocent maiden. Since her accident, the House of Marchesi—at least to the extent of its servants, became pivotal in resolving this.

Q. What is your favorite passage from *The House of Marchesi*?

A. “You may not consider it true, but I remain awake,” the duchessa said. She lightly tapped Alessandro with the back of her left hand. When he moved his head again, she reached for the underside of his face with the tips of her fingers. Lilliana examined the frescoes again, gazing at the familiar clock. Duca Alessandro looked at the platters set with chargeours and plates. If she were to stay awake, he was to have her eat. He kissed her lightly atop of her head. She angled her face towards his as she balanced upwards. The duchessa smiled. She tickled his face to come closer. Lilliana pecked him on his chin. They both laughed at her awkward position. She then sat up, easing Alessandro's efforts. Her foot still ached, but it bothered her less while she was in the duca's embrace. She pressed her hand palm-side and flat against the window, then quickly retracted it. It was cold. The still of the night air captured the glass and breathed its icy winds against it. The duca held her quivering hand and rubbed it a few times. Her hands were so soft that even as he comforted her, he discovered solace with hers. He then felt her tremble. It was not only her hand that was cold. Without warning, Duca Alessandro busied himself with kindling the wood. It began to glow with a few flickers. He waved at the woodpile with the stoker. The flames began to increase. The duca switched to the iron poker to turn over a couple of wood pieces. He had now completely ignited the fire. The duchessa was surprised by his handiwork. Alessandro felt her observing him from his left side. The affection which increased between them had become fully immersed within their hearts. She reached out her left hand to him. He tossed the instrument and waited a few moments. The fire was set.

“We must have you eat a bit more, mio bella.” He presented to her the options under the different toppers and tilted the chargeours which he held in his opposite hand.

Q. What are the essential characteristics of a hero you can root for?

A. I think it depends on how you define a hero. In historic romance there is the trope of the courtier in all his valiance having all the answers, wherewithal, resources or ability to combat an opposing or evil force that is the cause of the main conflict. In *The House of Marchesi*, I see two different sorts of heroes. Considering the traits I just mentioned, much of the heroism lies with the dutiful servants of the House of Montanari and the House of Marchesi. They work together piecing what they have learned and knowing when and whom to disclose to in order to protect both Duca Alessandro and Duchessa Lilliana from danger. They have no swords. None seem equipped to fight in a dual or usher a small army. What they have are their devotion in service, honor for their respective houses to upkeep and the ability to maneuver among the aristocrats and even towards the end, the king's court itself, though it is clear that they are servants. Then there is Duca Alessandro, the

duchessa's love interest. He is naturally protective of who has been gifted to him by Providence and in the beginning seems to be conflicted. He had never known what had naturally grown to be a beautiful and rarely experienced affection for Duchessa Lilliana. Just as Lilliana, Alessandro easily becomes accepting of it. Yes, it was new, but the adoration shared between the two was too profound for either to deny. With this increasing realization, he continues to care for her. The duca helps nurse her to health, all the while being a gentleman in the process. His ability to do this, and to allow his trusted servants to assist in keeping them both safe is another type of hero. The other sort of hero I would define is one who has survived a painful accident. A person who is resilient despite their unusual circumstances, but is able to (although difficult) to maintain who they are while progressing towards a goal or success due to them. So in this instance I speak of Duchessa Lilliana who was thrown from a horse. She lies within the esteemed home of a stranger. She has the will to recuperate from her physical injuries and to remember who she is. The duchessa understands that now she is away from her home, this was her destiny and while she tries to improve her physical health, she now must rely on her inner strength for what was the beginning of her new relationship. I wrote her circumstances to clarify to the reader that she was of sound mind when she accepted her ordained relationship and consequential marriage with Duca Leandro. It is not simply survival which makes her a heroine, but her ability to stand tall and stand beside her fiancé, proud of what they found in each other and now being ready to consummate it.

Q. How did you come up with the title?

A. This was difficult. I usually try to limit my historical romance novel to two words. I was unable to think of any phrase that could encapsulate what I had written. So I decided to choose the name of the royal house that the protagonist would become the permanent member of. I thought that would give a hint as to what would eventually become of Duchessa Lilliana.

Q. What are common traps for aspiring writers?

A. I think one common trap for aspiring writers is that you will doubt your ability to write and will become worn from the process. It is exciting to have the story and ideas in your head, but it is daunting to relay them, the nuances of your character and dialogue onto paper.

Q. If you could tell your younger writing self anything, what would it be?

A. I would say for only a few years ago that I should have known already that I would do more than my initially set goals—and I have.

Q. What does literary success look like to you?

A. I think literary success for me is a combination of things: a) to write what you enjoy, b) to share your stories with others that perhaps you can offer them some escapism from the turmoil of the world or at least distract them for a moment with laughter, c) to know that your imagination is what causes you to exceed limitations that people, society or circumstance may try to dictate for you, d) of course to be able to make a sustainable living from doing something that you enjoy.

Q. What difference do you see between a writer and an author?

A. A writer is someone who simply writes. They may not write stories or necessarily create something of their own volition. An author can be of fiction or non-fiction, but usually they have taken serious steps to create a book that through their genuine efforts would hopefully garner a respectable reputation for the craft; and of course they are published.

Q. What is your favorite genre to read?

A. My favorite genre to read is sci-fi/fantasy and magical realism.

R. What's your favorite writing snack or drink?

A. Coffee, lattes, cappuccinos.

Q. What do you think is the best way to improve writing skills?

A. To not only to keep writing, to listen to other authors who are open about their own difficulties in producing a script and to not inhibit your imagination for whatever fear you may assume.

The House of Marchesi is currently available for purchase as an ebook from these online retailers:

Amazon ASIN: B08VGSWDSH

Barnes & Noble: 2940162505693

Smashwords: 9781005567330

Tolino Media: 9783752132892

Thalia EAN: 9783752132892

Kobo ISBN: 9781005567330

Google Play: GGKEY:4K2HUAB6KAH

Apple Books: N/A

DriveThru Fiction: N/A

Lulu: N/A

About the Author: Patricia M. Muhammad is an American multi-genre fiction author of crossover contemporary romance/science fiction, science fiction/fantasy, mystery/detective and historical romance genres. She has written 20 novels. Patricia is currently based in the United States.

Connect with Patricia:

Social media: @pmmuhammadbooks

Press: permissionsp@gmail.com