

**Patricia M. Muhammad
presents**

Stolen Grace

Special Objects

Stolen Grace begins with Penelope, the older sister within the established House of Moreau of the 18th century king's court in Versailles, France searching for a paper with one clue she believes will exonerate her brother. This slip of paper is special to the extent that the hint has any veracity to it and will clear the name of Armand, and generally the House of Moreau. The subject of the mystery is another object. It is the king's favourite jewel. Someone who with this intimate knowledge and as well as access to the king's court, and the inner chambers of the royal palace stole it during the presentation of the princess. The crime appeared to be a personal attack against the king. The jewel becomes the key to establishing motive. An object of precious beauty for members of the king's court now in all of its facets, reflects the ugly intent of at least one high-ranking member. Some of the gentry quickly hurl accusations against Armand Moreau. The house from which he hails is an easy target. The House of Moreau is of Creole origin. However, due to the royal lineage combined with that of France's, the Crown easily recognized it as part of the French ennobled. Yet, this was not sufficient for quite a few. Their prejudicial opinions had no bearing on what had been established through the annals of French law over the centuries; nor did they have any authority to alter it.

Armand Moreau, Penelope's younger brother, had always sought refuge in. He is an amateur philosopher of sorts. He is a bit carefree in his view of his world. This frustrates his sister Penelope who believes she must convince her brother the gravity of the accusations levied against him. Armand seeks solace in the wisdom of dead men. Their transcendent conjecture allows for him to see beyond even the current chaos set before his feet. Yet he even knows that the books he reads for enlightenment or leisure are insufficient to counter the allegations as a practical matter. Penelope's brother must rely on his sister and Count Montegeau and keep himself as inconspicuous as possible until the matter is resolved. Until then, he has a few maidens who have a keen interest in him, but for now his books are likely his closest companions.

Throughout all of this chaos, Penelope Moreau and Pierre LeMercier still advance their courtship. Pierre escorts Penelope to the Opera House de Versailles. The interior of the structure is beautiful and elaborate. The Greek-inspired murals of the dome ceiling along with the chandeliers provide an atmosphere separate from their current worry. The arts have opened a pathway into a temporal refuge. Despite her awe and being impressed by the performers, she notices a courtier. Somehow the maiden is associated with her

brother. Pierre pulls Penelope's attention to return to him—and the purpose of their outing. The opera house is encapsulates them from further worry until it is time for them to depart.

The jewel, the initial subject of Stolen Grace reveals two matters as the thief is revealed during the grand ball. It is the manifestation of the thief's envy. The king's jewel also holds the hidden truth of the secret heir to it. Yet the greatest scandal falls upon the offender and not the Crown. Several of the ennobled assumed that death was imminent for the thief. Instead, the criminal was confined and sentenced. The offender would forever hear the merriment, joy and excitement of those who had much to celebrate. This included Penelope and Pierre who were to be wed at the royal palace.

