

Patricia M. Muhammad  
presents

# *The House of Marchesi*

## Places:

Milan, this beautiful city-state of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was home to the most renowned painters throughout Europe. It housed many who fit throughout the socioeconomic spectrum. It also had its king's court. The courtiers varied in status and landownership, and boasted of their children and wealth. One family within the king's court had "lost" their daughter seemingly forever. The House of Montanari would never be the same, and neither would Duchessa Lilliana. On one clear day, the duchessa decided to ride her horse throughout the estate. She heard blasts. Her horse heard the same and reacted. He thrust her from its back and onto the property of another ennobled. The estate of the House of Montanari had become the catalyst for the duchessa to embark on an unexpected adventure. This would lead her away from what she thought would be her home to where she had meant to be all along. Her father, Duca Emmanuele, was a stoic aristocrat. He cared for his daughter deeply. Upon Duchessa Lilliana's absence from the property, he soon realized that Duchessa Rosetta did not. The Duca attempted to withhold his budding animosity in this regard and focus his efforts on recovering his daughter. Lilliana's mother cared not whether her daughter was injured or perhaps lost, because either way it had fallen into a plan she set in motion long before the duchessa's unfortunate accident. A Montanari servant, a lad, informs the duca that he has recovered the horse. Emmanuele goes to the horse stable. This is where Duchessa Lilliana's path had been set anew. He searches the area and the nearby grounds and discovers a gold charm. The duca understands the significance. The Montanari estate breathed hope that he could hold on to, just as he held Lilliana's jewel.

Duchessa Lilliana opens her eyes. She now lies on the estate of another. The maiden is injured. She is unable to see much of this place. What she focuses on is the beautiful gentleman who stands before her, ready to sweep her into his arms, but carefully. The lord of this House directs his servants to bring her inside the mansion. He vows to care for her with the intent to return her to her House. Yet only one of these can be true. Destiny ordained that it could only be the former. Duchessa Lilliana is to never live in the House of Montanari or be part of that estate's standing henceforth. She attempts to recover her memory, and with great embarrassment she is unsuccessful the first few times. Duca Alessandro respectfully stays at her side as she continues to recuperate. He sees only beauty and innocence. She sees a handsome countenance, a strong yet caring demeanor and eyes that seem to help alleviate her ache each time he looks upon her.


She soon is able to stand. Lilliana feels the same as Alessandro. He waits for her to display her inclination towards him. The duca can now hold her. Duchessa Lilliana no

longer possess fear of this place, this House of Marchesi, it has become the new and permanent fixture in her life. Duca Alessandro shall henceforth be foremost in her thoughts and actions.

The House of Montanari still has its order. It breathes its acknowledgment of the usual occupants, but it, just as the rest of its residents, notices Duchessa Lilliana's absence. A maidservant observes the woeful countenance of Duca Emmanuele. Noemi decides that she will spearhead the house's efforts to recover his daughter. She notices what the duca had earlier, that Duchessa Rosetta could barely care even less about her daughter's whereabouts. Noemi observes Rosetta one late evening. What she sees disturbs her. The maidservant believes that only she, the clandestine walls and the furnishings of this house had noticed. She could not withhold what she has learned. Another maidservant happens upon her, nearly frightening the secret forth from her lips. Noemi informs Gabriella. For now she is the only person she can trust. If what they have seen be true, then they must secure Duchessa Lilliana even sooner, and allow for the House of Montanari to be purged of the one tarnish that diminishes its honour. Noemi leaves this place and ventures from the estate. The maidservant discovers a gold charm that could only belong to Duchessa Lilliana. It is the second one she has lost. Even the pavement has labored to help secure the duchessa and provide some relief to those who genuinely cared about her. Noemi continues on her trek. She encounters a proud pomegranate vendor. The maidservant hopes that he has seen or heard something. He has. Pascal speaks with airs. Noemi nevertheless listens. She accepts his offer to ride on his donkey with cart to the area he believe where the duchessa fell. Noemi has now arrived at this new place. She encounters the Marchesi servant. He responds carefully and with suspicion. After ascertaining her sincere concern, the Montanari servant enters the Marchesi manor. She only desires to return the one charm to the duchessa and see that she is well. Duca Alessandro is even more suspicious than Rinaldi, however, when Lilliana recognizes the jewel, he becomes more amenable to her. The duca seeks to return the duchessa. This he has learned from Noemi would be a grave error. A conspiracy is afoot and it stems from the very house from which Duchessa Lilliana hails. Noemi confirms that what once appeared as a temporal refuge is the place where the duchessa shall henceforth be. Duca Alessandro and Duchessa Lilliana will have their joy, and she will always have him to protect her.

The House of Marchesi has an odd familiarity to it. Aside from Lilliana's natural inclination towards Alessandro, she looks about the mansion, with his help. In one instance she lies within his arms. As he cradles her she studies the embedded frescoes within the arched ceiling near the window. She remembers something similar. Clues lie all around the mansion. The House of Marchesi brings her the proper comfort she thought she would not have discovered given the circumstance. This house provides her further security that she requires from the evil machinations which seek to stretch forth their maniacal hands to execute a most heinous plot, kidnapping.

Noemi returns to the House of Montanari and informs Lilliana's father that the duchessa is well. She warns Emmanuele that it is best for him not to know of his daughter's whereabouts. He agrees, but only if this is temporal. The duca gives the maidservant a lavish and long string of pearls for her to give to Lilliana. He secured the necklace away



From her mother, Rosetta, who sought to steal it during her daughter's absence. Exchange continues between the servants of the House of Montanari and the House of Marchesi. The Crown has heard of the offense of the courtier against one of their own. The king and queen decide that they too will assist in securing Duchessa Lilliana *and* Duca Alessandro.

There is but one place left for them all to converge. It is at a soiree at the royal palace. The king and queen has secured evidence in the royal vault. Duchessa Lilliana and Duca Alessandro greet Duca Emmanuele among others. Though the duchessa had not known the specifics of what the other duchessa had plotted, her instincts had informed her to stay away from Duchessa Rosetta forever. They proved correct. The Crown has made announcement of the offenses that a handful of aristocrats have made against other members of the ennobled, and thus the Crown itself. They ask for Duchessa Lilliana and Duca Alessandro to stand with them on the platform. Lilliana is adorned with that very heirloom necklace Rosetta attempted to steal from her. The royal palace, a place that Duchessa Lilliana was not too familiar with had become the place where justice had been served on her behalf. It was this place that the duca and duchessa had now been wed.