

Patricia M. Muhammad
presents

The House of Marchesi

Interesting Facts:

The House of Marchesi is an 18th century historical romance novel set in the Milan, city-state. The protagonist is a young duchessa who is of age. She, unlike other maidens the author has written about, is not rebellious. Duchessa Lilliana is thrust from her excited horse and the trajectory of her life is forever altered.

1. Although this is the author's fourth historical romance novel, it is her second one set in an *Italia* city-state. It is also the first novel in which the author has written the protagonist with a form of amnesia. Though Italy as a nation-state did not exist during the 18th century, it is a country that the author has always wanted to travel to and visit.

Duchessa Lilliana is a well-abled young maiden who is experienced in riding horses. The horse from which she is thrown was actually a gift from her father Duca Emmanuele. The mild-mannered steed has now become the agent from which the duchessa becomes seemingly *lost* from the House of Montanari.

2. The author has ridden a horse not more than twice in her life. She has also ridden camels and considers their gallop a bit unstable. This despite her never experiencing an injury or fall from either. However, the likelihood of such an accident inspired her to write the duchessa's early circumstances with her horse as such.

When Duchessa Lilliana's absence from the Montanari estate is known throughout the manor, Duca Emmanuele is most worried. Though he is stoic, he is a doting father. The reader does not have a glimpse of their relationship through their interaction until the near end of the novel.

3. Though the author set *The House of Marchesi* during the 18th century, many men of the days of yore have been known for their strong presentation. The author intended to present the duca as he was outwardly but that his concern for his daughter's whereabouts and his search for her on the estate displayed his naturally soft side as it pertains to his daughter. This the author intentionally contrasted with the conniving Duchessa Rosetta, the maiden's mother. She had an affinity for blooms whose petals were soft, yet Lilliana's mother possessed a hardened and dubious lack of care towards her daughter—especially in these worrisome circumstances. The duchessa's absence/accident caused for both her father and mother to display their true nature and intentions towards her. For Emmanuele,

the reader can readily discern that his concern for his daughter's welfare was genuine. As for Rosetta, she had always been a selfish courtier and her intentions and ploy against her daughter was yet another unfortunate encounter that Lilliana's accident was able to circumvent.

After Duchessa Lilliana's fall from her horse, she opens her eyes as she now lies on the estate of another. She attempts to gather her thoughts as Duca Alessandro, a handsome courtier stands before her.

4. This is where the duchessa begins to understand that she lies at the threshold of a new beginning, even though she lacks her memory. The author meant for the duchessa and duca's meeting to be an epiphany for both of them. Duca Alessandro Marchesi easily recognizes what the hand of Providence has granted him. Lilliana is now under the protection and care of whose hands destiny has laid her into. The author hints at the adage that, as the duca and duchessa's courtship blossoms, the life of a woman changes when she marries and how she now must cling to her husband. For this is the house to which she now belongs.

After the duca directs his servants to carefully retrieve the duchessa and bring her into the House of Marchesi, he vows to care for her. He erroneously considers that as soon as he learns from which house Lilliana hails, it is there she must return. However, destiny intervenes. The Montanari maidservant discovers a plot against Duchessa Lilliana. She vows to find her and keep her safe. It is here that Duca Alessandro learns that Duchessa Lilliana was truly meant to be his. His care and devotion to her increases, especially now that he is aware of greater threat against his beloved.

5. The author created the scenario to demonstrate how unusual circumstances does not mean that true love does not exist, that it is oft-times this manner in which man and woman discover who they truly are to one another, despite the conspiracies and opposition set against them. This is not new in literature, from feuding families (Romeo and Juliet) to warring nations (17th century Europe), marriage between two pure hearts have often been the topic of dispute among the powerful and the envious.

As Duchessa Lilliana's recovers from her injuries, she sees that Duca Alessandro was her destiny. He became her heart. Duca Alessandro was patient. He watched her as she recuperated, helped her when she required it and watched over her with loving care. It brought him a natural joy to have this wonder of beauty brought before him and he now vowed that she would never slip from his embrace.

6. As Duca Alessandro maintains his patience, but understands his utter devotion to the duchessa, the author uses the Marchesi manor as the crutch by which Duchessa Lilliana gains a greater understanding. Objects within the home assist with her memory. This provides her with the necessary familiarity that eases her into her acceptance of the true affection that she has for the duca. The manor, though an inanimate object, becomes the place she no longer fears as strange. She is comfortable, just as she initially became comfortable with he who would become her betrothed. The author wrote the mansion as the extension in which

Lilliana would feel the warmth of protection, as she now often lied in the arms of Alessandro.

On more than one occasion, Duchessa Lilliana's charm bracelet becomes the focus of her discovery. The first time, her father has a lost charm that fell from his daughter's accident. He clings onto it for hope. On the second occasion, the Montanari maidservant finds Lilliana's other gold charm on her trek to locate her outside of the estate. She is able to finally locate the duchessa and through Duca Alessandro, return this charm to her.

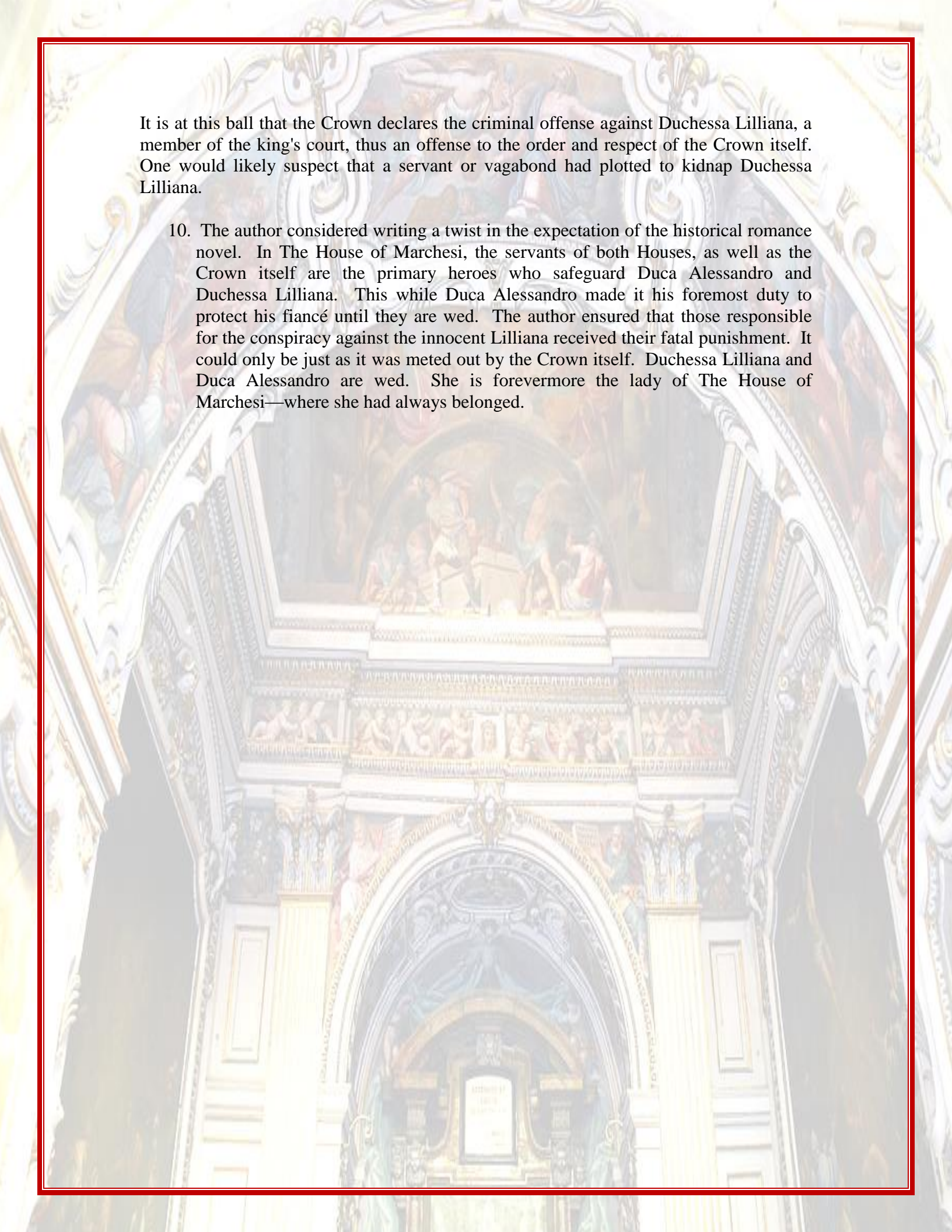
7. The author used Duchessa Lilliana's charm bracelet as an object to bridge the duchessa's whereabouts between the House of Montanari and the House of Marchesi. The author is aware of the traditional charm bracelet and how each charm has a specific meaning attached to it. For the duchessa, one charm had her initials and was in the shape of a horse, the very object that set her own an unexpected that destiny had intended for her. It is Duca Alessandro, the gentleman who would soon become her husband who handles her bracelet and places it in the empty spot where it is supposed to be affixed. Duchessa Lilliana's memory become more restored, yet she does not feel the affinity for the House of Montanari any longer, though she misses her father greatly.

In many historical romance novels, the protagonist is graceful though she may be cunning. She has tact though her words may appear amenable. The maiden may also be genuine and naïve, but she is set on a path of a pre-arranged marriage to keep with tradition.

8. The author wrote Duchessa Lilliana's accident as a means by which the reader may become acquainted with her through the reverse. In the beginning the reader does not know much about her habits, quirks or even what pleases her. Her attempt to recover her memory due to the accident becomes the gateway by which the reader becomes familiar with the protagonist. One of the first things she attempts to speak is her father's name. The reader is well aware of Duca Emmanuele's adoration of his daughter, but through Lilliana's attempt to speak, the reader can understand that she was closer to her father than her mother. Her accident may appear to be the outlier in which Duchessa Lilliana's lack of physical grace is excused. However, the maiden was a pragmatic person and what she lacked in this display, once she was able to articulate herself she was able to demonstrate that her breeding was that of high esteem. This is yet another avenue that the reader could become familiar with Lilliana.

The Crown holds a royal ball for all members of the king's court to attend. This is the final place where all will converge, whether he is servant or nobleman, of the House of Montanari or the House of Marchesi, or king or queen.

9. A regal soiree is a usual place of access for characters within the modernly written historical romance. The author has used such events before towards the end of her other historical romance novels in which the reader may witness the unraveling of the underlying mystery beyond the decadence, title and culture that are most familiar among the patricians of that time.



It is at this ball that the Crown declares the criminal offense against Duchessa Lilliana, a member of the king's court, thus an offense to the order and respect of the Crown itself. One would likely suspect that a servant or vagabond had plotted to kidnap Duchessa Lilliana.

10. The author considered writing a twist in the expectation of the historical romance novel. In *The House of Marchesi*, the servants of both Houses, as well as the Crown itself are the primary heroes who safeguard Duca Alessandro and Duchessa Lilliana. This while Duca Alessandro made it his foremost duty to protect his fiancé until they are wed. The author ensured that those responsible for the conspiracy against the innocent Lilliana received their fatal punishment. It could only be just as it was meted out by the Crown itself. Duchessa Lilliana and Duca Alessandro are wed. She is forevermore the lady of *The House of Marchesi*—where she had always belonged.