

Q & A With Patricia M. Muhammad, Author of *Stolen Grace*, A Historical Romance Novel

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-United States, 2021-May-09 – /ToStories/-American fiction author Patricia M. Muhammad discusses her fourth historical romance novel, *Stolen Grace*.

1. What made you want to write historical fiction? What about that genre do you enjoy? I began writing my fiction novels with a focus on sci-fi/fantasy and crossover contemporary romance. Historical romance naturally became the genre I alternated in between books. I think it was initially curiosity because I hadn't read many historical romance novels written by contemporary authors.
2. Please tell us a bit about the setting of your novel, *Stolen Grace*. *Stolen Grace* is set in 18th century Versailles, France. Although Paris is eventually mentioned within the text, Versailles is the primary city where most events take place. Throughout the story, the reader witnesses the status, habits and even indulgence the courtiers partake of as they visit chateaus, restaurants, and Chateau Versailles, the royal palace. The setting of the Moreau chateau provides an imagery of what was the daily ritual for a duchess through Penelope's eyes and the interests of an ennobled through Armand's devotion to literature. The indulgence is the ability to spend as they choose, to receive invitation to the king's palace for a grand gathering reserved for the patriciate.
3. What lessons can be learned from your main characters? That when a man truly has affection for a woman, patience is natural. Penelope was quick-witted with Pierre. For a long while her primary focus was to keep the House of Moreau's name intact. Pierre could see through her veneer. His patience and his relentless pursuit of her, softened her exterior. It was not that Penelope was bad person. She was attempting to resolve a problem not caused by her and those who sought to besmirch the House of Moreau's name, and thus hers were plentiful. For a while she only thought she and her brother could trust Count Montegeau. Yet, Pierre was not only a courtier, he was a gentleman. He had no shame in his attraction to Penelope. The duke even found a slight humour in her stubbornness. They were both easily attracted to one another, which caused her to take caution. Yet true adoration cannot have caution. It permeates obstacles. It transcends space. Yet both the protagonist and her love interest needed to hold one another. It believes itself limitless because it cannot be a created thing. True affection cannot be forced. This is how Pierre knew Penelope was ordained for him. She could not resist what he already knew of their future. This adulation is the sweetest nectar harvested by the hands of destiny for two souls inclined to one another before the masses could take hold of either one. This is the sentiment I consider Pierre reflected in his pursuit of Penelope—and he was right to do so. They were wed.
4. What is one of your favorite passages from *Stolen Grace*? One of my favorite passages from *Stolen Grace* is where Pierre and Penelope are alone, sharing a romantic moment:

He began to move from one side to the other. “This is not a traditional dance Pierre.” He guided her to follow his motion, to follow her heart. She was falling into him.

“Follow the sound of what you hear between us.” His voice was mesmerizing, her right hand held onto him with desperation. What was he doing to her? She had to let go of all the physical pain, anticipated woes, and take pleasure at the moment he gifted her. He no longer moved. They both stood there, holding onto one another, silent. Pierre nor Penelope could hear the dishes being gathered, the maidservants performing their daily chores, or the butlers engaging in their usual duties; there they erected a barrier between themselves and encroaching reality. This was a soothing stillness within a quiet calm. There could be no interference; any sound crept away and found others to engage, no other aroma dared present itself to distract one from the other and no object that could forge a separation between the two made itself known. Neither Pierre nor Penelope would allow it. They grasped onto each other's body but secured something greater which was only to be allotted for these deserving souls. Penelope finally understood what Pierre had granted her and what she was now able to gift to him. She finally moved her hand along his shoulders, but this was the only movement she could make. They were locked, their minds, their essence plunging into each other's hearts, allowing the other to explore, comfort, and uphold the interior of man's transcendent design. Penelope and Pierre would never be able to gaze at one another in the same manner that they had before. They were now betrothed in an elevated state, one in which their worldly consummation would only verify.

He held her up and she held on. The realization of where they were resurfaced. She inhaled from what he emitted, his breaths taking her deeper and deeper; until...thirty minutes passed. They both began to open their eyes. Pierre finally stepped back from her, holding her right hand. “You are ready to start our day.”

This is one of my favorite passages because it displays the evolution of the natural relationship between Pierre and Penelope. She is vulnerable in his arms. The duke takes hold of her in his rightful place as her suitor and her future husband.

5. Penelope and Pierre seemed to have a long road ahead, but their relationship accelerated and appeared to be a flow of ease despite the distraction of the royal theft. Did you do this intentionally? I think their relationship naturally came to be. The conflict of the royal theft was the catalyst that introduced Penelope to Pierre. Yet it was their mutual attraction, their genuine affection that seemed to bypass time. She and he could nearly not be separated because she allowed what was intended for her in Pierre without resisting it. Once she did that, maybe it seemed that the relationship between Penelope and Pierre was the affectionate exhalation that readers could hope for.
6. Do you think that you will use France again as the setting for another historical romance novel that you may write in the future? It is a possibility. I try to diversify the European countries I use as the backdrop of the historical romance novels I write, keeping them solely within the 18th century. I have written two historical romance novels set two different cities in England, and two set in two

- distinct, Italian city-states, so it would not surprise me if one day I write second one set in France.
7. In some of your historical romance novels you use objects and settings to indicate triumph or a transformation. Do you think you achieved this in *Stolen Grace*? If so, how? The note that Penelope finds at the beginning of the story seems to be a misnomer. Yet she holds onto it dearly as the only clue to exonerate her brother's, Armand, name. It is throughout this trek she confides in the Moreau family friend, Count Montegeau and eventually accepts the help of Pierre—which she needed all along. Her focus shifts from this duty she is compelled to fulfill to acknowledging the duty and right to herself, that is to be content with the gentleman destined for her. For Armand, books are nearly his security blanket. He has plenty of maidens who take interest in him and despite his intellect, he seems to be caught in a festoon of a connivance against him, until the truth is revealed. Armand's story is nearly the antithesis of Penelope. I think it is due to Penelope's love affair and marriage evolved naturally for both she and Pierre, and this is what caused for them to be successful, that is their getting married.
 8. Do you find your stories are more plot driven or character driven? Please explain. I would say both, though in the past I would have said plot driven. I consider *Stolen Grace* to lean more towards being character driven. The quips, the vulnerability, the emotions, the resistance between and among different characters within the story makes the readers question the intentions of the characters, just as the characters do with one another.
 9. What was one of the most surprising things you learned in creating your books? How creative you can be as an author if you just write and that I am able to write in different genres. There are some who desire to write but are unable to. So to have the ability to do so is a gift to honor.
 10. What do you think makes a good story? Sincere characters. I even heard this advice from Neil Gaiman on video. To write as if the people are real even though they and the story is fictional. The goal and achievement is to make it plausible, all the while keeping the reader interested in what your imagination has rendered.
 11. What kind of heroes do you like? Genuine ones and those that may not be expected.
 12. How can readers best connect with you and learn more about your books? Readers can visit my website at <https://pmmuhammadbooks.webnode.com>. I am also on Twitter.

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