

*Fiction Author Patricia M. Muhammad Discusses Carnevale and Her Third Historical Romance Novel, Ardor's Prestige.*

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-In 18<sup>th</sup> century Italy, cavalier serventes were a common part of the household Italia. They were typically not of the usual maidservants who busied themselves with the upkeep of the manor. They were assigned companions of the lady of an aristocratic house. One whom was to keep company and protect his charge. Other denotations have been attached to the history of their role, but as stated, this generally applies to them all. Unusual indeed may have been the instance for the matriarch of an esteemed house to assign a cavalier servente to their daughter for safekeeping, but possible. This, however, becomes the burden of the male servant to keep within the expectations of honourable duty of platonic companionship and guardian to his assigned maiden. An unmistakable boundary exists between the two. She will always be of ennobled status with a future grand awaiting her. He will remain in his servile state knowing that she is unattainable despite her beauty and how often he sees her. His presence is only to fulfill a duty, until her husband returns from matters dealing with the king's court. Though his interest in the courtier is undeniable, she informs him often that it is unrequited. The duchessa has no interest in him or the likes of those similar to his state. It is not only status, a manifestation of etiquette, arts and desire to thrive, she knows what has already been ordained for her. Prosperity has many forms, yet she cannot allow for herself to be pulled downward and into a path detrimental and not intended for her. For the maiden has already been destined to be with one who is properly suited for her. They match in intellect, wonder of the world beyond the king's court, and when they soon join together, will be a formidable force that will cause the awe of many. This is the story of one such duchessa, set in 18<sup>th</sup> century Venezia (Venice).

Ardor's Prestige begins with a young Duchessa Anastasia of the House of d'Alessi. She has recently become of age. Her family decides to take holiday in another country, yet Anastasia will not be alone. The senior houseservant will keep close watch of the rebellious maiden. Aside from the other maidservants, she is keenly observed by her cavalier servente. He admires and has a deep affection for her. However, he knows that it can never be. The duchessa has often reminded him of such, though he reminisces of how he became acquainted with her at a tender age. This has no bearing upon how she feels. She views him as just another one of the servile adornments that her mother and father placed within the House of d'Alessi. The duchessa has an encounter with a dashing nobleman one night after stealing away from the manor. They question one another, both hesitant to disclose much of their identities. They only state their second names, wondering about the motive of the other. Later on, Anastasia ponders her encounter with the patrician as he does the same. False rumours have spread regarding a maiden's indiscretion with a higher ranking courtier. One day in the marketplace, Giorgio hears of this and pummels the verbal offenders. They mock him when they realize that Giorgio yearns for the aristocrat. Even they know that his desire for her, though they know not Anastasia by name, is futile.

On another occasion, Anastasia leaves the mansion and walks along the open thoroughfare near the waterways. She senses someone watching her. The duchessa hopes it is Leandro, the aristocrat she encountered that one clear night. Anastasia slips into the estuary, in need of help. Giorgio appears. She is embarrassed and holds herself

for modesty sake. Though her servente wraps a textile around her, Anastasia still senses that Leandro is still near. She and her fellow ennobled encounter each other again and realize that they have been inevitably drawn to each other. She and the aristocrat begin a formal courtship. Leandro finds her with surprising quirks about her which only causes for him to further adore her. One day at the mansion, Duchessa Anastasia witnesses the royal guard seize her servante on the allegation of treason by order of the Crown. She looks to a fresco, hoping that its image could somehow hear her plea to save the humiliated Giorgio. He now stands before her in the grips of dutiful royal officers, too weak to defend himself. Duchessa Anastasia, however, does not allow for this incident to interfere with what has already been deemed for her. As time passes, the duchessa and the duca continue their courtship. Giorgio is eventually cleared. The season of Carnevale is at its peak. The ennobled use their masques to hide their indulgence. Yet the duchessa thought it splendid to shield others from her bashful nature. The duca convinces her to eventually remove her masque just as he. They remove themselves to one of the gardens where she accepts his proposal. Another, younger servant who accompanied the duchessa seeks to inform her of what she had learned of Giorgio's predicament. Capriana has an accident and injures herself. She is taken into a chamber and the host has the apothecarist administer a sedative. While she rests in the dark, away from the chatter and decadence, someone enters her room to murder her. Giorgio followed the culprit and intervenes. The esteemed Leandro orders the perpetrator seized. He and the duchessa seek to protect Capriana until the following day. Leandro reveals his status within the king's court to Anastasia. He was a much greater esteemed courtier than he initially revealed. It is not until the day of their nuptials that they learn who colluded with the murderer and framed Giorgio. Not even Anastasia suspected who it could be.

Ardor's Prestige is available for purchase as an ebook from these online retailers:

Amazon ASIN: B08KB34F57  
Barnes & Noble: 2940164274597  
Smashwords: 9781005676650  
Tolino Media: 9783752117707  
Thalia EAN: 9783752117707  
Kobo ISBN: 1230004259497  
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DriveThru Fiction: N/A  
Apple Books: N/A  
Lulu: N/A

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