

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE-United States, 2021-July 08— /ToStories/-Multi-genre fiction author Patricia M. Muhammad discusses her third historical romance novel, *Ardor's Prestige*.

According to Merriam-Webster's dictionary, to help means to " : to give assistance or support to", that is to further or provide a benefit for someone in need. Of course assistance is not always material, it may appear in a social form. Yet, the intent is do something of good that they may progress in their endeavour or find ease in their hardship. There are those who believe that they help others by conspiring to harm innocents. These hold steadfast to a warped ideology of their own creation. They harm more than one innocent even when their aim is towards an individual. Once in a while the purveyors of such actions may have a benevolent intent, but most seek to manipulate others as pieces of a social game board, not knowing who will be harmed most, and not caring for such—as long as it is not them. One may assume that the king's court is filled with such characters. They exist, however, everywhere. Courtiers, commoners, and criminals; the good and bad have interwoven themselves into the social fabric in nearly every aspect of daily life. In 18th century Venice, one duchessa and duca were the center of similar unscrupulous. Yet only one had the intent to see his offspring content. The others had no such altruistic desire for either he or his intended. They only wish to fulfill their incessant need of dominance and entertainment at the woeful, unfair and unjust detriment of others.

The story begins when a young maiden, Duchessa Anastasia departs from her one night and encounters another of the ennobled. He is distinguished, handsome and his rank is much higher than he initially discloses. Both are 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. Leandro vows to escort the duchessa to the safety of her home as their being out at such an hour and though newly acquainted to each other, appearing together seems nothing but fodder for idle talk waiting to spout from members of the king's court. Anastasia is fortunate that it is primarily the senior servant, Sienna, who secures her within the manor. The duchessa's devoted cavalier servente, Giorgio is curious as to his charge's antics. He is aware that she has encountered another aristocrat. Giorgio has feelings for the duchessa that are never reciprocated. Members of the House of d'Alessi decide to take holiday in another country. Anastasia stays behind in the manor but she will not be alone. The senior houseservant, Sienna, will keep close watch of the rebellious maiden. Aside from the other maidservants, she is keenly observed by her cavalier servente. He admires her. Giorgio possesses a deep affection for her. This has no bearing upon how she feels. Giorgio knows that it can never be. The duchessa has often and sternly reminded him of such. She views him as just another one of the servile adornments that her mother and father placed within the House of d'Alessi. One day in the marketplace, Giorgio hears of false rumours that have now spread regarding a maiden's alleged indiscretion with a higher-ranking courtier. He tracks the voices of the verbal offenders and pummels at least one of them. Giorgio believes that he has helped keep the name of The House of d'Alessi intact by physically defending Duchessa Anastasia. The strangers mock him when they realize that Giorgio, who is but another servant, yearns for the duchessa. 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 servant wraps a textile around her, Anastasia 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 cavalier servente 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. Leandro convinces his father, a high ranking patrician, of his affection for his dear Anastasia and of their genuine fondness for one another. Giorgio is eventually cleared. The season of Carnevale is at its peak. The king confronts Leandro, a high-ranking courtier, about his relationship with Duchessa Anastasia. He explains that his and the duchessa's feelings for one another are true and that the rumours circulating regarding their circumstance are but a false attack. Leandro's father is sincere and believes he is assisting his son by admonishing him for this courtship. The duchessa had yet to know of what Leandro's place was in the king's court. This is how he knew no barrier, except for the illusory ones that the envious ones sought to erect, had not existed between him and Anastasia. The king is hesitant, but eventually decides to trust Leandro and becomes amenable to the idea of his son and Duchessa Anastasia. He would not interfere, but rather support his son's relationship with the maiden. The night of the grand ball arrives. The ennobled use their masques to hide their indulgence and the smirks which hint at their wicked connivances against the innocents. The duchessa arrives at the grand ball and meets with her intended. While inside, the duchessa thought the masque was a splendid accessory to shield others from her bashful nature. Leandro convinces her to eventually remove her masque just as he did. They need not hide who they are to one another or to the patriciate. They venture to one of the gardens where she accepts his proposal. Another, younger servant who accompanied the duchessa seeks to inform her of what she has 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. Leandro was not a duca, but the prince. The king and queen stand proud of who their son has chosen for his bride. It is not until the day of their nuptials that Prince Leandro and Duchessa Anastasia learn who colluded with the murderer and framed Giorgio. Not even Anastasia suspected who it could be. Those involved will claim they only tried to assist Anastasia, but their aim was to harm, even one familiar to them and her intended. It was all for their self-aggrandizement and sport. In the end, those who connived such grave offenses are meted out their due punishment. Despite all of their evil machinations, envy and doubt, Leandro weds Duchessa Anastasia. They are now

Prince Leandro and Princess Anastasia. They now begin the next chapter of their lives, together and for eternity.

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

Amazon ASIN: B08HYK8589
Barnes & Noble: 2940164898397
Smashwords: 9781005616496
Tolino Media: 9783752117806
Thalia EAN: 9783752117806
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About the Author: Patricia M. Muhammad is a multi-genre fiction author who often incorporates interracial relationships and multi-racial characters as a part of her storylines. She has written 20 novels. Patricia is currently based in the United States.

Connect with Patricia:
Social Media: @pmmuhammadbooks
Press: permissionsp@gmail.com