



And Only to Deceive

By Tasha Alexander
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Introduction

For Emily, accepting the proposal of Philip, the Viscount Ashton, was an easy way to escape her overbearing mother, who was set on a grand society match. But when Philip died on safari soon after their wedding, she felt little grief. After all, she barely knew him. Now, nearly two years later, she discovers that Philip was a far different man from the one she had married. His journals reveal him to have been a gentleman scholar and antiquities collector who, to her surprise, was deeply in love. Emily becomes fascinated with her dead husband, immerses herself in all things ancient, and begins to study Greek.

Emily's desire to learn more about Philip takes her to the quiet corridors of the British Museum. There, amid priceless ancient statues, she uncovers a dangerous secret involving stolen artifacts. As she sets out to solve the crime, her search leads to more surprises about her husband and causes her to

examine her role as a woman in Victorian society.

Questions for Discussion

1. How does the moral code of Victorian England impose itself on Emily's social life as a recently widowed young woman, and how does it impact her interactions with male and female acquaintances?
2. To what extent is Emily's marriage to Philip one of social convenience, and how does his early death affect her appreciation of his character?
3. What accounts for the complicated friendship that develops between Emily and Colin Hargreaves, and why might Emily be unwilling to trust Colin?
4. Why do you think the author chose to incorporate excerpts from Philip's journal into the body of the novel, and how would you describe the effect of these passages on you as a reader?
5. To what extent is physical beauty a kind of social currency for women in Victorian England?
6. Throughout the novel, Emily grows more interested in translations of Homer's *Iliad*. How would you characterize the significance of Emily's fascination with this epic poem to the novel as a whole?
7. Emily has never entirely bought into society's rules, yet it is only after her intellectual awakening that she begins to deliberately break them. How do her intellectual pursuits empower her?
8. Forgeries are not considered works of art, even if they appear identical to the original. What makes a work of art a masterpiece? Why do ancient copies "count" as art in the modern world?
9. Of the many mysterious and suspenseful moments in *And Only to Deceive* involving stolen antiquities, which was most exciting to you and why?
10. What does Emily's decision to defer her acceptance of Colin's proposal reveal about her feelings toward him and her attitudes about marriage in general?

About the Author

Tasha Alexander is a graduate of the University of Notre Dame. She lives with her family in Tennessee.