



Tasha Alexander

And Only to Deceive
ISBN13: 9780061148446

Q: How did you first conceive of the plot involving Lady Emily Ashton and stolen antiquities from the British Museum in *And Only to Deceive*?

A: From the beginning, I had in my head an image of a woman standing on the cliff path on Santorini, and I knew that I wanted to open the novel with her looking out over the Aegean Sea. Of course, an image does not a plot make, so I started to put together a list of things that I've always found fascinating: ancient Greek art, forgeries, the British Museum, Victorian England. Once I started to ask myself questions about how these could all connect, the plot began to form itself.

Q: Emily's travels take her from England to France to Greece. Were you able to incorporate any field research on these countries in the process of writing your book?

A: I've lived in London twice, and absolutely adore the city. It's sophisticated and majestic and rich with history. Paris and Greece are both places I've vacationed, although not specifically with the intention of researching this book. But one of the lovely things about being an author is that you're always absorbing the world around you; eventually it will all show up in a novel.

Q: You have observed that creating characters is one of the best parts of writing. Of the many characters in *And Only to Deceive*, which were your favorites to create and why?

A: Cécile du Lac is my favorite. She's such fun—says all the things you wish you could think of in the heat of the moment and doesn't care a bit about what people think of her. She's strong, compassionate, and knows exactly what she wants. Writing her is like kicking off tight shoes—no rules to consider.

Q: Emily doesn't quite accept or refuse Colin Hargreaves' proposal at the end of the novel. To what extent did you envision Emily as a radical woman in her Victorian era?

A: Emily is far from being a typical Victorian woman, but I didn't want to make her too radical. The truth is, someone who was brought up in such sheltered circumstances would be unlikely to turn suddenly against everything she knows. I wanted her to rebel, but in small steps. In this first book, she's intellectually enlightened. In the sequel, she has to come to terms with a society she finds extremely limiting. Eventually, we'll see her become more socially aware as she befriends people outside of her class.

Q: You have written a sequel to *And Only to Deceive*. Can readers expect to find Emily uncovering more mysteries in the world of artifacts and antiquities?

A: In *A Poisoned Season*, Emily is still very much concerned with antiquities. But the mystery she must solve begins with a burglary at Berkley Square and anonymous notes written in ancient Greek. London's social season is in full swing, and all of society is buzzing about a gentleman who claims to be a direct descendent of Marie Antoinette and Louis XIV. But he's not the only topic of wagging tongues. No one can stop talking about an audacious cat burglar who has been making off with precious items that once belonged to the ill-fated queen.

The gossip turns serious when the owner of one of the pilfered treasures is murdered, and the thief becomes obsessed with Emily. It takes all of her wit and perseverance to unmask her stalker and ferret out the murderer, uncovering secrets buried since the French Revolution as a brewing scandal threatens everything she holds dear.