



A Poisoned Season

By Tasha Alexander
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Introduction

London's social season is in full swing, and Victorian aristocracy is atwitter over a certain gentleman who claims to be the direct descendant of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. Adding to their fascination with all things French, an audacious cat burglar is systematically stealing valuable items that once belonged to the ill-fated queen.

But things take a dark turn. The owner of one of the pilfered treasures is found murdered after the theft is reported in the newspapers, and the mysterious thief develops a twisted obsession with Lady Emily Ashton. It takes all of Lady Emily's wit and perseverance to unmask her stalker and ferret out the murderer, while faced with a brewing scandal that threatens both her reputation and her romance with the dashing Colin Hargreaves.

Questions for Discussion

1. How is the modern perception of the Victorian era as full of innocent young ladies at odds with the fact that girls were pressured to marry young and grow up quickly?
2. Do you think Emily made the right decision concerning her pregnant maid? Is this a situation where it's acceptable to lie?
3. Why are the ladies in London so willing to accept Charles Berry? How does a class system foster an environment where a man of such dubious character can rise to such high standing, and why is society willing to stand for it?
4. Do you believe that a person has an obligation to carry on responsibilities taken on by earlier generations of his family? Did the true *Dauphin's* protector have the choice to walk away?
5. Victorian women had very little independence handed to them. Do you think that, because they had to fight for it, they appreciated it more and made better use of the freedom they earned than their modern counterparts?
6. How do you feel about Lady Bromley assisting Emily? Does it soften your feelings for her or make you view her as more manipulative than ever? Given the society she lives in, a place where women had few options, have her actions in general been in best interest of her daughter?
7. What do you think about Emily's decision at the end of the book? Do you think she's agreeing to something that will lead to enormous compromises in her independence? How enlightened can a Victorian man truly be?

Author Bio

Tasha Alexander is a graduate of Notre Dame, where she signed on as an English major in order to have a legitimate excuse for spending all her time reading. Following graduation, she played nomad for several years, eventually settling with her family in Tennessee. When not reading, she can be found hard at work on her next book featuring Lady Emily Ashton.