



And Only to Deceive

Tasha Alexander

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From gifted new writer Tasha Alexander comes a stunning novel of historical suspense set in Victorian England, meticulously researched and with a twisty plot that involves stolen antiquities, betrayal, and murder

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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. So when Emily's dashing husband 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 so cavalierly. His journals reveal him to have been a gentleman scholar and antiquities collector who, to her surprise, was deeply in love with his wife. Emily becomes fascinated with this new image of her dead husband and she immerses herself in all things ancient and begins to study Greek.

Emily's intellectual pursuits and her desire to learn more about Philip take her to the quiet corridors of the British Museum, one of her husband's favorite places. There, amid priceless ancient statues, she uncovers a dark, dangerous secret involving stolen artifacts from the Greco-Roman galleries. And to complicate matters, she's juggling two very prominent and wealthy suitors, one of whose intentions may go beyond the marrying kind. As she sets out to solve the crime, her search leads to more surprises about Philip and causes her to question the role in Victorian society to which she, as a woman, is relegated.

And Only to Deceive Details

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Download and Read Free Online And Only to Deceive Tasha Alexander

From Reader Review And Only to Deceive for online ebook

Khanh, first of her name, mother of bunnies says

"Don't fall in love with your dead husband, Kallista. It can bring you no joy."

There are few emotions more painful than regret, more specifically, the regret of finally realizing that you love someone, only after they've left--or after they've died. How horrible must it be to realize that you can't tell someone you love them. To come face to face with your own self-absorbance, your own youthful folly, your inability to see beyond yourself to a great love that could have been? A great love that never was.

This series features a great main character, interesting mysteries, all that good shit, but for me, **this book is memorable because it's one of the few that's ever made me cry.**

To give you an idea of the premise, this is about a very young widow, Lady Emily, in the late Victorian Era. She was married very young to a viscount, whom she didn't exactly love. She *liked him*, sure, but she didn't love him. He died young, when we initially meet Emily, she is already a widow. While not exactly a **merry widow**, Emily doesn't exactly mourn her late husband's death either.

She entered the marriage mainly to escape her overbearing mother. She was sad about her husband's death, but right now, Emily is just enjoying **her newfound freedom as a young widow.**

All is well and dandy, until she discovers **her late husband's diaries.** And man, were they a revelation.

Slowly, Emily begins to discover that, unlike her, **her husband was deeply in love with his wife.** Her indifference came to light in stark contrast to his reactions to her. An initial meeting, briefly brushed aside by Emily, was perceived by her husband to be a delight, a joy.

She saw her husband as rather dull. They shared few interests. She never bothered to find out more about him. Emily only learned about his hidden depths, far too late.

"I assumed him to be transparent, like most people I meet in society. Now instead I find that he was a scholar of sorts, a patron of museums, and a friend to artists. I thought he was a stupid hunter."

Philip saw in her a phantom of delight. He was madly in love. He was wildly happy with their marriage, in the brief time that they were married. Emily hardly noticed. She hardly cared. **She never knew.**

I thought I would go mad with desire when she presented that perfect ivory cheek for me to kiss. Had her blasted mother the courtesy to leave us alone for even a moment, I would have taken the opportunity to fully explore every inch of her rosebud lips. For that, I am afraid, I shall have to wait.

Call it the time of night, say that I was particularly susceptible and emotional, call it what you will, but I cried like a baby. It was 3 AM. I was going through some of my own relationship troubles, and this one passage made me sob. I put down my ebook, crawled underneath the covers, stifled my face with a pillow, and sobbed my heart out for a good 5 minutes. (It's still better than *Forbidden*, that book made me cry for at least 15.)

The incriminating passage?

I closed the book and placed it on the table beside me. For a moment it felt as if I had been reading a particularly satisfactory novel in which the heroine had won the love of her hero. But I was the heroine, and the hero was dead, dead before I had even the remotest interest in him. I started to cry, softly at first, then with all-consuming sobs that I could hardly control.

Emily wasn't the only one sobbing her heart out that night.

Felicia says

I didn't enjoy this book as much as Deanna Raybourn's "Silent" series, but it was entertaining. I couldn't help but compare the two as the protagonists have very similar setup: Rich, widowed, Victorian era, mystery about husband's death. This book seemed to dance around the story quite a bit, went off on tangents and had frequent periods of stalling in the middle. I enjoyed it, and will read the next though, as the setting is very interesting.

Lizzy says

I've read all kind of books: there are those that made me cry, while with others I laughed; books that made me think and wonder or amuse me as I read them just for the kick of it. Tasha Alexander's And Only to Deceive made me reflect, for it was different from the average historical fiction books I read recently. That is evident from its first paragraph:

'Few people would look kindly on my reasons for marrying Philip; neither love nor money nor his title induced me to accept his proposal. Yet, as I look across the spans of the Aegean Sea filling the view from my villa's balcony, I cannot doubt that it was a surprisingly good decision.'

It is a book not only I enjoyed but lived along with the protagonist, as I could imagine myself sometimes in her place, even if Emily was a Victorian woman. I think it was the perfect time for her to exist, she married Philip in 1888, probably at the time when women's role started to change in Europe (the women's suffrage only became a national movement in 1872 in the UK, however, concrete results would only be seen after WWI).

After a slow start, I was conquered by Lady Emily's story. A widow just after her wedding trip, Emily slowly begins to discover and explore her identity. From the diary of her deceased husband, she not only notices the world of ancient Greece, classical antiquities but decides to learn Greek and take pleasure in Homer. She also falls in love with him! Her friend Cecile cautions her: *"Don't fall in love with your dead husband, Kallista. It can bring you no joy."* But she could not help herself.

In that, it was a unique and poignant story. Just to imagine you could have loved and been loved in return. Nonetheless, she enjoys being independent and won't give it up easily: *'...I still had no intention of marrying; I did not want to relinquish control of my life to anyone.'* To the utter consternation of her mother. She tries to conciliate society's conventions with her new impetus for more freedom. But Lady Emily is set on her new ways, and some occasions startle or even displeases her acquaintances (not only the men!).

Despite the fact that I usually dislike and avoid stories penned in the 'first-person,' here it felt right; probably because it's focused on one person and her road of self-discovery. Of course, there is some romance,

friendships, a mystery to be solved and briefly angst. I loved Emily's French friend Cecile, she is an essential character as she becomes Emily's best friend despite the age difference; and Colin Hargreaves, who was Philip's best friend, always sounds secretive but, from the beginning, I had the impression he was fascinated by her. However, their relationship is not always easy or without conflict. I enjoyed her ramblings about Homer, the *Illiad* and how she far preferred Hector to Achilles! But then Emily discovers that her opinion did not always coincide with Philip's:

'I armed myself with ...Philip's journal, resolved that a lively exchange of ideas about ancient Greece could be adequately replaced with reading my dear husband's thoughts on the subject. ...I sighted, flipping through pages until I came across a draft of an essay of sorts that he had written about the Iliad.

In it I found no mention of the things I loved about the poem: its humanity, its energy, the heroic ideals of its characters. Most unsettling to me was his excessive praise of Achilles. And in all pages of writing, Philip never once mentioned Hector, except as Achilles' enemy. How could he have overlooked Homer's most human character?

...As I sat there, I slowly began to realize that my own opinions were quite different from those of my husband.'

I also relished the atmosphere of the places she visits. Oh, how I love Paris and Santorini seems heavenly! But it was not a perfect novel if that exists. The rhythm is somewhat uneven, but probably a necessity of the plot. The secondary characters appear not fully explored, but could it be different since Emily tells the story and we get only her point of view? I'm curious to see how Ms. Alexander continues Lady Emily's tale in the next books of the series.

If you are a fan of historical fiction, but sometimes enjoy a new outlook in your books, read *And Only to Deceive* and enjoy!

Lynn says

This one was a complete impulse buy. I picked it up because the jacket copy promised "a cauldron of intrigue, scandal, and danger" set in the British Museum and said it would be the result "had Jane Austen written The Da Vinci Code."

What hyperbole. It was none of those things. But it was a delightful, little, romantic Victorian cozy mystery. If anything, it reminded me of the Amelia Peabody mysteries - except instead of tracking down Egyptian artifacts in the field, the heroine of this novel tracks down stolen museum pieces relating to her late husband's obsession with ancient Greek art.

This is supposed to be the first in a series. I'm hoping the author will let the promising romance from this book continue on throughout the rest and that she won't introduce a new love interest every book.

Melissa says

This book started out very promising. As historical fiction, the author gets it right - enough detail for interest but not so much to bog down the story. She does not take too many liberties with the time period or setting.

As a "novel of suspense" it is an engaging story... not really a page turner but enough suspense to keep me anxious to read on.

Where this book suffers most is with its heroine, Lady Emily Ashton. She is a young widow, a social station which makes her believe herself to be more worldly than she really is, which of course drives much of the conflict in the novel. I won't hold this character flaw against her, but the result of it in the novel is a sort of whiny nascent feminism and a rebelliousness that seems designed to make the character have more appeal to a modern audience.

As the book progresses, the formulaic plot wears a bit thin, and by the end it seems clear the author is setting us up for a series of novels featuring a plucky heroine, willing to defy society's conventions in search of adventure and her own sense of self-fulfillment. Of course she is independently wealthy as well and, as a widow, holds a station in society which allows her more freedom than many women. In the "back story" section at the end of the book, the author even admits that she made her character a widow for precisely that reason. This is a song I've heard many times before, and I was disappointed to find this the direction Ms Alexander is headed.

Despite these flaws I did enjoy the book, but because of them I am not likely to seek out further adventures of Lady Emily Ashton.

Lisa Kay says

★★★★☆ I enjoyed this historical mystery very much and will definitely continue with the series. I'm glad I did this as a "buddy read," as we were able to "dig" for clues together – making it all that more enjoyable. It connects with the *Iliad* and Greek artifacts in an engaging way, turning this novel into sophisticated fun for the mystery or suspense fan, with a touch of romance that is strictly "one foot on the floor." Pictures pertaining to the book, that I found helpful, are below.

Some of the artists and art work.

calyx-krater shaped Greek vase (Musée du Louvre - 500 B.C.)

Pierre-Auguste Renoir's painting of *On the Terrace* (1881)

Praxiteles' statue of *Hermes and the Infant Dionysus* (4th century BC)

Hotel Le Meurice, Paris - Called "The Hotel of Kings" - founded in 1815.

Pont Neuf (the oldest standing bridge across the river Seine in Paris, France) at Sunset.

Daru Staircase with the winged Nike Victory of Samothrace, Denon wing, Louvre Museum.

[image error]

From Wiki: *The Winged Victory of Samothrace, also called the Nike of Samothrace, is a 2nd century BC marble sculpture of the Greek goddess Nike (Victory). Since 1884, it has been prominently displayed at the Louvre and is one of the most celebrated sculptures in the world.*

Santorini - or officially Thira (Greek: Θήρα [ˈθira]), is an island in the southern Aegean Sea.

Magdalena aka A Bookaholic Swede says

Sometimes, a book just doesn't work for me no matter how much I want to enjoy it. And Only to Deceive have everything that I should like, interesting characters, a mystery and a tragic love story. However, somewhere along the way the story just lost my interest and unfortunately I never found it as interesting as it was, in the beginning, to read.

So, what went wrong? Why did this book not appeal to me? I think the biggest problem for me was that the plot, Emily's hunt for the truth about Philips involvement in the forgery of art, or rather the whole forgery plot was so simple to figure out that it took away the enjoyment to read the book. Since this book is bit old now and several new books have been published was it easy to cross one person of the list as suspects and that made the list of people that could be involved pretty small. And, a book that started off interesting just lost its spark along the way.

I did find Emily's newfound love for Philip tragic and sweet, but alas even that went a bit boring after a while. She discovered new things about him and she realized that the man she married was a different man than she had imagined and suddenly she fell in love with him. With the problem that he is dead. Like the forgery part that also lost its spark after a while.

However, I do want to continue with the series. I did like Emily enough to want to read more about her. I just hope the stories in the rest of the books are better and that the mysteries will be much more interesting to read about. Also, I'm not really that fond of Colin, and I hope that I will grow to like him.

Bibliophile says

And Only to Deceive is billed as a novel of suspense set in the 1880s (though mostly I'm in suspense as to whether the heroine will do some other wildly anachronistic thing!) Emily Ashton marries Philip Ashton solely to escape her mother's nagging; he dies in a hunting accident shortly after their marriage and its only after his death that she realizes he was a man of hidden depths, which she begins to explore. There's a mystery involving forgeries and stolen antiquities from Greece and a budding romance with Philip's best friend, but mostly we follow Emily on her rounds through various European cities.

Since I found this in the laundry room of my building and didn't spend any money on it, I feel a little bad being quite as harsh as I am, but ... This book really had very little to recommend it - the plot was not particularly interesting; the characterization was poor - I couldn't keep some of the characters differentiated

because they seemed so similar to others; and the writing (especially the dialogue) was mediocre.

First of all, I find it completely unbelievable that Emily hasn't even got a passing acquaintance with the myths enshrined in the *Iliad* - Bulfinch's mythology came out in the mid-1850s and this story is supposedly taking place in the 1880s. So I'm expected to believe that someone who is characterized as very bright is completely ignorant of the story of Helen of Troy? That's a bit much! Of course, I find it equally implausible that her deceased husband was so in love with her as we are told he was! She doesn't seem any more interesting - at least at first - than any other woman whom Philip encounters!

Moreover, Alexander falls into the standard trap of historical fiction which is that she plops characters who think and feel exactly like 21st century people into the nineteenth century with a few descriptions of clothes so that we know they're really in the nineteenth century. But there's nothing Emily does or says that sounds remotely like she was raised in the 1880s - and even more bizarrely, the only people who seemed perturbed by her unconventionality are her mother and some fussy older lady friends of her mothers. Moreover, I see no evidence of Emily's vaunted intelligence - she actually seems quite remarkably thick about people, though she is apparently so beautiful that everyone around her falls madly in love with her.

Lastly, there's the anachronistic language. At one point, one of the servants tells Emily that everyone below stairs was "rooting for" her in a conflict with her family. Now, first of all, I highly doubt that any kind of trained staff would have been that forward with their mistress; and secondly, "rooting for" something is totally anachronistic if they mean "cheering for" Emily. Has Ms. Alexander ever *read* a 19th century novel? (This was just one egregious example - there are many others!)

I won't be reading any more of what is apparently a series!

Heather *Awkward Queen and Unicorn Twin* says

[go to Africa, (hide spoiler)]

Angie says

I must confess. I feel a little bad about my relationship with Lady Emily Ashton. I came across her adventures in the wake of Lady Julia Grey's escapades and I fear I won't be able to do Emily justice, that she will always be overshadowed by Julia. And, um, Brisbane. Do not mistake me. I like Colin Hargreaves very much. He is a delight and I hope Emily never throws him over. But he's not....well. He's not Brisbane. There. I've said it. We can move on. If you haven't guessed by now, **AND ONLY TO DECEIVE** is the first in Tasha Alexander's series of Victorian mysteries featuring Lady Emily Ashton. A series that has a fair bit in common with Deanna Raybourn's Julia Grey novels.

Emily, like Julia, is made a young and rather sudden widow at the start of the story. The thing is, she never much cared for poor, dead Philip. He was simply a way of escaping her overbearing mother. To the cynical Emily, he represented the lesser of all the evils courting her. After his death, however, Emily is shocked to discover her husband was wildly, irrevocably in love with her and she had no idea. Through his journals, letters, and stories told by his closest friends, she comes to know and love her late husband. As she embarks on a study of ancient Greek language and sculpture (in memory of Philip who was something of an aficionado), Emily becomes involved in a ring of forgeries leading back to Philip and his friends. It seems

she has a few more things left to learn about the man she married.

The best thing about AND ONLY TO DECEIVE is the wonderful immersion in all things Greek. I was instantly taken back to my history of civ classes and what a wonderful experience I had reading The Iliad for the first time. Emily, too, had the good sense to prefer Hector to Achilles. I thoroughly enjoyed watching Emily fall in love with her husband and struggle with the fact of coming to know him secondhand and all too late. I loved the way she embraced the life of the scholar as a tribute to him and how she tried to move on despite the ever-constricting mourning requirements imposed on all sides. Unfortunately, her loyal love for her husband soon becomes a bit ridiculous as it is clear he is dead and was not, perhaps, the capital fellow his friends made him out to be. Emily also suffers a few TSTL moments with regards to the merits of her two suitors as well as her endeavors to unmask the villain. As a result, I grew a bit impatient on the whole. Not enough to deter me from the next installment, as I did enjoy many things about this light and charming mystery. Here's hoping things pick up a bit in the next one.

Kaesa says

This book? It was not my thing.

It was certainly *readable* enough -- nice and popcorny and fun -- but the thing about popcorn reading is that suspension of disbelief with regard to anachronisms kind of relies on a certain kind of lightheartedness, at least for me.

So when the narrator started going on and on about how she was now Free From The Bounds Of Society, my disbelief went crashing to the ground. Sure, I wouldn't want to have lived back then, but I feel like there's a way to do this kind of thing a little more subtly, whereas the narrator acts kind of like a stereotypical teenager, rebelling for the sake of rebelling. She goes around shouting "HA, LOOK AT ME, I AM DRINKING PORT, HOW DARING!" apparently without experiencing any of the doubt or worries of a woman experiencing a sudden feminist awakening in a profoundly patriarchal society.

We are also given to understand that she did not have much of an interest in obtaining a wealthy husband before her marriage, and that her overwhelming passion for ancient Greek literature and art developed only after her husband's death. Both of these I could easily believe. But what on earth were her interests *before* her engagement? Before her husband's death? There's some mention of Silly Novel-Reading, which is of course something I enjoy too, but that's really it. Most of what we know about is what Emily *isn't* interested in: Society, girly things, her husband, etc. It all seems very hollow. So I was just not sold on her character at all, neither in her interactions with society nor her hobbies and interests.

And then there's her husband. He goes on and on about how beautiful his wife is, yet she fails to notice anything about his interests or life until he is dead? And she finds this incredibly romantic of him? No. No, if I found out someone I barely knew, who barely knew me, was madly in love with me, I would be a little freaked out. Even if it was my husband. His love of Emily's "innocence" was, though period-appropriate, very creepy to me, and it made it much, much harder to sympathize with her as she fell for him.

And now I am going to get very petty: I feel like for all the book talks about the Iliad as if it is a BIG IMPORTANT THING, it was treated very shallowly in the text. Now, I am more of an Odyssey fan, and love Greek mythology generally, so I was kind of disappointed that Emily apparently doesn't realize there is more to Classical Greek literature than the Iliad (or even Homer) but the book's characters seem to reduce the Iliad to Team Achilles versus Team Hector, which is kind of horribly simplistic, to me, and was yet another obstacle to me liking any of the characters in this book.

Nan says

As the novel opens, Lady Emily Ashton is horrified. She's a recent (and young) widow, and her period of half-mourning is not yet over. She's entered the stage where it's acceptable to participate in limited social events, and her mother plans to use these occasions to relaunch Emily into the marriage market. Emily had chosen to marry her husband to get away from her mother's matchmaking; apparently, even her status as a widow is not enough to protect her from her mother, now.

Her husband died when on a safari, and after one of his companions visits to offer his condolences, she becomes curious about the man she had married but had barely known. Her curiosity leads her to the British Museum and to the study of Greek artifacts. Emily never knew that her husband was an avid scholar and collector of antiquities; she had thought his only hobby was the rather repellent hunting.

As Emily digs deeper into her husband's life, she learns that he loved her dearly, and she comes to love him as well. She also finds herself in danger from his secrets . . . and those that fear she may uncover them.

I liked this book for about the first half. That section of the novel deals with Emily's desire to educate herself and understand her new identity. After that point, when the mystery kicks in, the book lost my interest. I could see the number of places where Emily was making bad decisions, and it annoyed me. Instead of making her a flawed character (and therefore interesting), her bad decisions seemed designed only to move the plot forward.

Also, does every man in the empire think that she's the most beautiful woman he's ever seen?

Emily says

While in Borders, I picked up Tasha Alexander's *And Only to Deceive*. I quickly was drawn into the opening chapters: Alexander's given her heroine, Emily Ashton, a wry, crisp tone that is enchanting. In that sitting, I could see the mystery part of the book approaching, but was much more interested in Ashton's intellectual awakening as she found herself suddenly in a position of increased social power and financial independence. At home that evening, I kept regretting not buying it and wanting to continue reading it.

After getting a library copy and finishing it, my reaction is mixed. On one hand, the main characters are well drawn, the literary references delightful (the reference to Mary Elizabeth Braddon's *Lady Audley's Secret* serves as an effective plot device), fun visits to great museums, and I'll probably read the rest of the series. However, the mystery isn't that mysterious. While it's a nice twist on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (what if Lizzy married Darcy without falling in love with him and then he died suddenly) in a Victorian setting (ever fertile ground for any mystery), there's also an unacknowledged debt to Stephanie Barron. If you've read any of her *Jane Austen Mysteries*, you'll note the uncanny resemblance of one of Alexander's characters to one of Barron's: not only are they similar, but their character arc moves in almost exactly the same manner. I only recently read Barron's first book, *Jane and the Unpleasantness at Scargrave Manner*, so maybe that's why it was so fresh in my mind. Barron sets up a more plausible scenario for a mystery series and she's more adept at the genre. I kept wishing Alexander's novel would stay more in line with Ashton's journey of self-discovery, which is her strong suit, and drop the rather predictable mystery.

Jacob Proffitt says

This was a fun and an unexpectedly touching story featuring a woman who falls in love with her husband after he is dead. That central feature lends the book more weight, more poignancy, more engagement than it probably deserves. Not that Emily isn't engaging on her own. I particularly like her growing intellectual interests and determination to educate herself in areas that catch her attention. Attending lectures at university and hiring tutors for ancient language and art lessons just fit her so well and made sense as she pursues her husband's interests as she gets to know the man she had been married to for so short a time.

But the central plot/mystery was only barely serviceable and the villains didn't really cohere very well and it wasn't that hard to tell who everybody was and what their motivations were. This left Emily a little boringly predictable in pursuit of an investigation that was boringly predictable.

So I was charmed, but I wonder if the series can maintain the interest (view spoiler)

I waffled a bit on the rating. I foresee problems and have to acknowledge that this book has weaknesses that would normally put it in a firm, though hopeful, three-star rating. But the exploration of a relationship built on regret for what might have been was poignant and deeply engaging and very well done. I hope Alexander lives up to that promise and that she improves the elements that felt a little flat... Not least because she won't have the Emily's relationship with Philip to exploit any longer.

Twiggy Strauss says

Was looking to add on to my love of Ann Perry/Elizabeth Peters Victorian mysteries. This, by first time author Tasha Alexander, was like a romance novel without the good romance parts. The "mystery" was lacking, solved within a few chapters. Characters were inconsistent, and our heroine was very flat for me.
