

Synopsis ~ A Heart Revealed
Regency Romance
100,000 words
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AMBER MARIE STERLINGTON is a “diamond of the first water,” everyone says so and who’s going to argue with the *ton*? Certainly not Amber, or her mother, COUNTESS MARCHENT. Amber’s auburn hair and snapping green eyes help her stand out from her milquetoast competitors; green girls mincing their way through the fripperies of the London season. Amber enjoys having half a dozen suitors dangling after her but knows exactly what she wants in a husband: fortune, title, and security. Love, in Amber’s mind, is superfluous at best. So caught up is Amber in the flirting, fashion, and entertainment that she doesn’t notice more hair left behind in her boar’s hair brush at the end of each day. She doesn’t note the increase of auburn strands on her pillow each morning either and blames her imperfect hairstyles on her abigail until a new maid, SUZANNE, helps Amber realize that she is losing her hair.

Horrified, Amber, and then her mother, begin a campaign to find a cure, trying everything from medicinal teas that send Amber running for the chamber pot to ointments that burn her scalp. Amber is forced to pull further away from society even as her need for a match becomes desperate. In fear that she will lose the attention she’s worked so hard to procure, a wig is deemed Amber’s only hope to rejoin the season and, specifically, attend a ball thrown at Carlton House. Unwilling to return to Amber’s shadow, her younger sister, DARRA, creates a scene that sends Amber’s wig into the middle of the ballroom, revealing to the most elite members of the *ton* the remnants of what had once been Amber’s crowning glory.

The humiliation of Amber Sterlington becomes the latest *on dit* in London and Amber flees to a family cottage in Yorkshire with Suzanne, assured her mother will follow. When her mother’s attention turns to Darra’s upcoming wedding instead, Amber finds herself abandoned

and heartsick; struggling to make peace with the loss of her identity while realizing that her ugliness extends far beyond what she sees in the mirror. By the time the last of her hair, eyebrows, and eyelashes disappear completely, she is without hope.

When THOMAS RICHARDS—the third son of a Squire—asks for use of the cottage library, which holds records he needs to secure his independence, Amber is drawn to him. When he invites her to meet him face to face, she does not refuse him. Amber uses a cap, low lighting, and face paints, found amid an odd assortment of items left by the prior occupant of the cottage, to disguise her missing brows and lashes. So long as she keeps her true identity a secret, Amber feels secure in his company as she is starved for someone to talk to and, for the first time in her life, listen to as well. When Thomas steals a kiss that sets her heart on fire, she realizes that she has to end things before he has the chance to reject her—something she is unsure she could survive. Amber leaves the cottage to make an appearance at her sister's wedding ball before securing a new life of isolation with the bittersweet memory of his kiss to sustain her.

To her surprise, Thomas appears at Darra's ball and explains that he has known who she was from the beginning due to her spurring his budding attentions in London. He played along with her ruse at the cottage because he was fascinated in the transformation from an entitled darling of society to a young woman of character. He sees more beauty in her now than ever before and has fallen in love. Upon realizing Thomas's sincerity, there is only one thing left for Amber to do—reveal her true self to the *ton* and accept a future she thought lost.

As she waltzes beneath the horrified glare of the society she once adored, Amber stands as proof of the fact that that fortune can not buy kindness, title does not win respect, security is not found in position, and the greatest glory Amber could hope for, is the love of a man who accepts her as she is and sees within her more than she could ever have imagined.