



# The Queen's Sorrow

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## **The Queen's Sorrow** Suzannah Dunn

A queen brought low by love compromised and power abused -- the tragedy of Mary Tudor. Plain, dutiful and a passionate Catholic, Mary Tudor was overjoyed by joy when she became England's queen. After the misery of her childhood, when her father had rejected her mother, and effectively disowned his daughter, Mary felt at last that she was achieving her destiny. And when she marries Philip of Spain, her happiness is complete. But Mary's delight quickly turns sour as she realises that her husband does not love her. In fact he finds her devotion irritating. Desperate for a baby, she begins to believe that God is punishing her. Her people are horrified at the severity of the measures she takes and begin to turn against their queen who is lonely, frightened -- and desperate for love. Rafael, a member of Philip of Spain's entourage, is a reluctant witness to the unfolding tragedy and as the once-feted queen tightens her cruel hold on the nation, Rafael becomes closer to Mary and his life -- and new-found love -- are caught up in the terrible chaos that follows.

## **The Queen's Sorrow Details**

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# From Reader Review The Queen's Sorrow for online ebook

## Shannon says

Yet another deceiving title from Dunn as The Queen's Sorrow and cover illustration as well as the synopsis on the back cover elude to this being the story of Mary Tudor, on her ascension to the throne. The story is told through the eyes of a Spanish sundial maker, Rafael, and actually is his story. Though Queen Mary is a central figure that the reader encounters briefly throughout the novel it is not her sorrow that we encounter but really that of Rafael. Perhaps the novel would be redeemed if Rafael wasn't a pathetic, naïve man who has known great pain, but in turn, and perhaps because of it, causes great pain to many others.

I, like many other reviewers, waited for the story to turn to Mary and it never did which was so disappointing. I had hoped for some insight into Mary, a woman I long to understand, but Dunn fell far short of exploring the Queen's sorrow.

Ultimately I must say that after my last encounter with Dunn's work in The Sixth Wife, and my research on Dunn herself who claims not to be a writer of historical fiction, I have concluded that she merely uses a historical setting in which to construct her novels of pure fiction and would go so far as to say that the misleading titles and allusions to historical figures are merely a ruse to grab readers of historical fiction for her own gain. Therefore, I cannot imagine reading anything by Suzannah Dunn again and would recommend that anyone who enjoys true historical fiction not waste his or her time either.

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## Lois says

Excellent, not what I thought but quite good.

Queen 'Bloody' Mary appears in the book several times, but is not the narrator. The narrator is a Spanish (of Jewish decent) sundial builder who is brought to England with Mary's new Spanish consort and his court.

The palace is full and Rafael is placed with a private English family for the duration of his stay.

Rafael is an excellent narrator of this story as he likes and approves of Queen Mary, but is very familiar with Spanish Inquisition and watches in horror as innocents are murdered and burned in the name of faith.

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## The Book Whisperer (aka Boof) says

What a con this book is. The title and the blurb lead you to believe that this book is all about Queen Mary and her marriage to Prince Philip of Spain. I was really looking forward to getting more behind the skin of Bloody Mary and her phantom pregnancy etc but if she appears in more than 10 pages overall I'd be surprised. As for Prince Philip - well, I'm still waiting for his entrance.

This story is told through the eyes of Rafael Prado, a Spanish sundial maker who is one of Philip's entourage brought over to England when the Prince and Mary marry. He is made up. The household he lives in is made up. The English woman he falls in love with, and her son, are made up. This whole book is about made up people, with a story that never happened and a few fleeting appearances by Queen Mary that make her look like some pathetic, desperate old woman. Gah!

I gave it 2 stars, because having said all that the story of Rafael and Cecily (his English love) is sweet enough (even if it is made up) but I did find myself speed reading trying to get the actual historical facts (of which there are precious few). I wouldn't bother with this one, especially if you are a real history buff.

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### **Linda (Miss Greedybooks) says**

I MIGHT have actually liked this book if:

The cover was not of Mary Tudor.

The title was not "The Queen's Sorrow".

The back cover is about Mary Tudor, Henry VIII, Philip of Spain.

I felt betrayed and manipulated.

(Bloody) Mary was mentioned a few times, I was hoping to read about her...

The main character Rafael - meets with her 3 times.

This book, all about Rafael - from Spain coming to England to create a sundial for Queen Mary from her husband Philip of Spain moved slow, but I was ok with getting acquainted with characters, and it would move to court & Mary.

It did not.

The home Rafael stayed in was in London (there were too many Spaniards at Whitehall) - ok... The relationship with Cecily is labored, understandable the language barrier, the fact that most English people were unhappy with the Spanish (and Mary for marrying a Spaniard).

English population did not want to go back to Catholic ways - and when burnings began blamed Mary's Spanish half and the marriage to Prince Philip.

Rafael's life and past relationships with women (none of them did much more than make me sad for this naïve man) unfold - in a back and forth narrative.

When I finally like him no amount of my screaming at this book "NOOOOO! DON'T DO IT RAFAEL!" Made him listen and he does the completely stupid thing that you presume he is going to do.

And he never even realizes what he has done.

No closure!

Not that I wanted the Hollywood ending - "Happily Ever After" but, I was left angry with nothing having been completed - and would not read another book about him if it promised to tell me what had happened after this ended!

I had to bitch at my husband for 20 upon completion!

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## **Bibliophile says**

Despite its misleading title and even more misleading back-cover blurb, *The Queen's Sorrow* by Suzannah Dunn is really the story of Rafael del Prado, a Spanish sundial-maker who arrives in England just after the marriage of Philip, heir to the Spanish throne, to Mary Tudor, Queen of England, known to history as "Bloody Mary." Rafael is commissioned by the Prince to build a sundial as a wedding gift to his wife, but instead arrives in the midst of the diplomatic wrangling necessitated by trying to integrate the Prince's Spanish household and the English one provided for him by the Queen. This means Rafael ends up lodging with an English family, where he becomes fascinated by the housekeeper, Cecily, who has a mysterious past and a young son the same age as Rafael's dearly-loved child in Spain.

Most of the novel is actually about how Rafael is desperately homesick and hates England but loves Cecily. He has a couple of encounters with Queen Mary – the final one ending quite disastrously – and many memories of Spain and because he's cautious and also sick a lot, not that much happens in the novel. I was deeply distracted by the very modern-sounding dialogue that coupled oddly with the descriptive passages! Moreover, Rafael is almost ludicrously naïve, considering that he's supposedly the descendant of *conversos* in Spain, and I find his final actions unforgiveable. As for Cecily and Nicholas, they are the other main characters, and they're not very well-sketched out.

I did like the very lovely descriptions of Rafael's love for his toddler son, which is why I enjoyed the novel; they were much more concrete and believable than his various encounters with women, including Mary Tudor.

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## **Alisa Kester says**

If you're expecting a book about Bloody Queen Mary told from her viewpoint, you'll be disappointed. If, however, you're open to gaining insight into the ordinary person's experience during her rule, you'll find this book fascinating. Told from a man's perspective (and that in itself was refreshing to me) and who is one of the disliked Spanish foreigners "invading" England during the Queen's marriage, it's filled with nice historical observations, lovely language, and a surprising sweet love story. I'd rate this one 3 1/2 stars if I could, purely because of the ending; it was way too abrupt and felt disjointed from the rest of the story. I also felt that the result of the main character's naive visit to the Queen was not properly acknowledged or experienced by him. It could have been (should have been!) heartbreaking, and instead was only a little confusing.

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## **Linda Lipko says**

England post Henry VIII continued to be fraught with intrigue, back stabbing and a political system lending to a court of fear.

When Mary Tudor, Henry's first daughter, and child of Katharine of Aragon took the throne, the fires of Mary's hell raged throughout as indiscriminate burnings were a daily occurrence.

Married to a much despised Spanish King, Mary's heart was broken as it became obvious Philip loathed his bride and his primary goal was the throne. Philip brought his household to England were these members

became as hated as Philip.

The story is told from the perspective of Rafael, a member of Philip's entourage.

This is a very disappointing book. The title is misleading. Infact, Mary is a mere back drop to Rafael's ramblings.

Mary and "The Queen's Sorrow" are mentioned but the title does not follow the story line.

NOT recommended

The only good thing I can say is that this is one more book read from my shelf. While I usually retain my books regarding England, this one is not a keeper in any way.

NO STARS FOR THIS ONE!

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### **Jill says**

The title of this book is misleading. The caption on the front of the book reads, "A love denied for which a country must suffer." You think the book is going to be about Queen Mary, her relationship with her husband, and her increasing religious fanaticism as her marriage falls apart. In a sense the book deals with that but only in a round about way. The book actually tells the story of Rafael, a Spainard who has come to England to design a sundial as a wedding present for Mary from her husband. Rafael spends very little time at court and although he has a few brief conversations with the queen the book takes place almost entirely at the home of the English family where he is assigned to stay.

I thought the book dragged a little bit and it wasn't what I expected.

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### **Sara says**

The book was a disappointment in that the blurb does not live up to the expectations it creates. However, this is overlooked as the characters are easy to identify with and follow.

The book really gives an insight into how the people of England lived under rule: with the eventual burnings and the amount of Spanish emmigrating into their country.

Being from the point of view of a Spanish man you see it all from a fresh perspectaive. With the few glimpses of the queen in this book she at last receives some sympathy as we understand how desparate she is for the love of her husband. Yet we also understand her downfall when Rafael, the main character, explains the horrors of the burnings and tries to come to terms that the queen is ignorant if what is happening in her name. Yet in the last few pages we learn that she wasnt ignorant and so fully understand how she became a loathed queen that made many detest catholicism and foreigners, especially the Spanish.

Overall, it is a compelling novel from a different perspective that is worth reading yet I feel other novels have made a greater impact on me.

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## **The FountainPenDiva, Old school geek chick and lover of teddy bears says**

This novel seemed less about Mary Tudor and more about Rafael Prado, a fictional sundial-maker to the King of Spain. Normally when authors create a fictional persona and place them in the thick of events, there's a careful balance between fact and fiction. That doesn't happen here. I picked up this novel because I've always been fascinated by Mary Tudor, her tragic life and how her behaviour shaped that of her half-sister Elizabeth. I've even had a soft spot for her, considering how badly she was abused by her father Henry VIII. After I finished, I had less an idea of who Mary was, what she thought or her life as queen. I knew far more than I wanted about Rafael, his wife and his son. This was a definite let-down.

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## **Elysium says**

The title and back text leads you to believe that the story is about Mary and Philip but all the scenes where Mary is are about one page totally. The story is told by man who comes with Philip to England.

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## **Bowerbird says**

A book which pictures life in London during the reign of Queen Mary. Maybe the title is misleading, as the story focuses on the actions of a Spaniard visiting London to build a sundial for the Queen. The depictions of the Londoners' mistrust of the Spanish, the squalor, the weather, and the household in which he is lodged are excellent. (Though I doubt whether anyone would go picking blackberries in October, a time when they have become tasteless and watery.) The mayhem brought about by ever-changing religious dictats and the resulting tragedies are also well portrayed.

The parts which didn't work well for me were his meetings with the queen herself.

In general though I felt it was a story well told and very readable.

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## **C.W. says**

Mary I of England, better known as Bloody Mary, has never evoked much sympathy, despite her fractured adolescence and horrible young adulthood, where she first suffered much of the deprivation and pain she later inflicted during her reign.

Nevertheless, her story is a fascinating one, and author Suzannah Dunn captures a fragment of it in her haunting novel, *The Queen's Sorrow*. In focusing on the months after Mary's marriage to Philip II and her tragic, illusory pregnancy, Dunn has crafted an introspective account of desire, unrequited longing, and the price we sometimes pay when we believe we know someone else's heart.

Dunn tells her beautifully etched story through the eyes of a Spaniard in Philip II's entourage, Rafael de Prado, who arrives in storm-drenched England bewildered and viewed with suspicion by the English, even as he is charged with the task of building a sundial for the queen. Only, no one really knows how Rafael will be paid or where exactly he is supposed to lodge; in the upheaval caused by the Spanish arrival, there is no room at court, and so Rafael and his apprentice are sent to stay in a London manor, where Rafael - homesick, sensitive, and trapped in a shadowy world between two opposing faiths - meets Cecily, the manor

housekeeper, and her young son. A father himself, separated from his beloved boy, Rafael finds himself drawn to the enigmatic Englishwoman.

As their attraction deepens, we learn more about Rafael and Cecily's secret pasts, even as they find themselves plunged into the tumult and terror of Bloody Mary's persecution, their fates forever altered by the queen's sorrow.

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### **Jennifer (JC-S) says**

'You question faith, and it's broken, and it lets the darkness in.'

This novel was not what at all what I expected and initially I felt disappointed. However, as I continued reading, I found I was engaged by the lives of the various characters and at times was transported back to the politically and religiously difficult times in which they lived.

This is not really a novel about Mary Tudor (Queen of England 1553-1558). It is a novel about a number of people brought together by circumstance with each impacted in different ways by the accession of Mary to the throne of England, by her marriage to Philip of Spain and by her unwavering commitment to her Catholic faith. The lives, and pasts, of Rafael the sundial-maker and Cecily the housekeeper are the main ingredients of this novel which is set in England during the period when Mary thought herself pregnant. There are a number of tragedies in this novel and the events portrayed are broadly consistent with the times.

It will depend on your view of Mary Tudor whether you are sympathetic to the suffering of Mary the woman or critical of the actions of Mary the Queen. For myself, I had to suspend belief of some aspects of the story and actions taken by characters in order to appreciate the whole.

This novel is a good read provided that you remember it is fiction. Yes, a number of characters are real and some of the actions attributed are entirely plausible. I did not enjoy this novel as much as I did Ms Dunn's earlier works but I consider this is more related to my ability to envisage the story being told than with Ms Dunn's abilities as a novelist.

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### **Alex says**

I honestly hate throwing in the towel on books. I never used to be able to do it, but I've finally gotten to a point in my life where I realized that trudging through a boring or bad book and hoping it gets better is not worth it. There's so many other books I want to read, it doesn't make sense to waste my time.

(I do always get at least 100-150 pages in before I quit, though.)

This book was just so incredibly disappointing. The title, the cover, the blurb on the back - they all suggest that we are going to hear about Mary Tudor's life. I, for one, could not wait. I've only read a few books from her point of view and am always looking for more.

Imagine my disappointment when a random fictional character is telling the story instead. We follow his life



only, and in the 160 or so pages I read (of a book that is 300 pages, so I did read half of it) he sees Mary once. Their interaction is so brief, it barely warrants a mention. And the 160 pages I read were BORING. I would have thrown in the towel much sooner, but I was babysitting and it was the only book I had on me. It was a real struggle to keep reading.

I decided to read a few other reviews before I called it quits to see if the book ever switches to Mary's point of view. And there I found that not only is it never through her POV, but that Mary doesn't even make many more appearances in this book. The book really does just follow this fictional guy and has nothing to do with Mary's reign and "the love denied for which a country must suffer" as the front cover boasts.

I was so looking forward to getting into Mary's heard and hearing "her" justify her harsh punishments on England when they wouldn't conform to Catholicism. It really irks me that they tricked all these people into picking up a book on Mary Tudor and finding nothing of her. What a waste!

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