



Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow

Juliet Grey

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A captivating novel of rich spectacle and royal scandal, *Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow* spans fifteen years in the fateful reign of Marie Antoinette, France's most legendary and notorious queen.

Paris, 1774. At the tender age of eighteen, Marie Antoinette ascends to the French throne alongside her husband, Louis XVI. But behind the extravagance of the young queen's elaborate silk gowns and dizzyingly high coiffures, she harbors deeper fears for her future and that of the Bourbon dynasty.

From the early growing pains of marriage to the joy of conceiving a child, from her passion for Swedish military attaché Axel von Fersen to the devastating Affair of the Diamond Necklace, Marie Antoinette tries to rise above the gossip and rivalries that encircle her. But as revolution blossoms in America, a much larger threat looms beyond the gilded gates of Versailles—one that could sweep away the French monarchy forever.

Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow Details

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From Reader Review Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow for online ebook

Arleigh says

Juliet Grey, along with Amanda Elyot, is a pen name belonging to the lovely and talented Leslie Carroll—one of my favorite historical novelists. Having read seven of her books thus far, fiction and non-fiction, I much enjoy her smart writing style and her ability to write a perfectly balanced and intriguing story. All for Love, a fictional biography on the 18th century actress, Mary Robinson, remains one of my favorites, while this new trilogy on Marie Antoinette has been added to the list.

Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow is the middle book of a trilogy based on the life of Marie Antoinette. While the first installment, *Becoming Marie Antoinette*, explores the early life and four-year period during which she was dauphine, *Days of Splendor* delves into the many events and misunderstandings that led to the Queen's undoing and the French Revolution. Marie Antoinette's distaste for strict etiquette and lack of privacy, her snubbing of the old regime and seclusion at Petite Trianon created ripples among the nobility, which trickled down to commoners, maligning the Queen undeservedly.

While she waited (quite patiently) for her husband to undergo the surgery necessary for the couple to consummate their marriage, she had no outlet other than decorating her apartments, creating magnificent dresses and coiffures and hosting card parties and masked dances—as her husband barred her from all state matters. While she yearned for children and a more rustic existence, she gained many enemies to add to those who simply held her contemptible for being Austrian. By the time the heir was born, eleven years after her political marriage, her reputation was tarnished beyond repair, and the Revolution—sparked by the Americans—was quickly materializing.

This middle volume of the trilogy goes into the year 1789, just after the storming of the Bastille. The heartbreaking and bloody final years of the life of Marie Antoinette will be chronicled in Juliet Grey's final novel, titled *The Last October Sky*, due to publish in 2013. This reader is very excited for the finale, though it is sure to be a heart rending story, knowing the Queen's horrific fate.

After you devour Juliet Grey's first two novels, other suggested reading is *The Queen's Confession* by Victoria Holt, a fictional biography of the life of Marie Antoinette, *The Queen of Diamonds* by Jean Plaidy, which chronicles the theft ring behind the stolen necklace that helped bring scandal to the monarchy, *Annette Vallon* by James Tipton, the French Revolution through the eyes of the lower classes, and *Madame Tussaud* by Michelle Moran, the famous waxmaker during her early years as she lived through the Terror.

Stephanie says

I've always been intrigued with Marie Antoinette. she was such a complex women, I wanted to shake her at one moment, then hug her the next. She bore a tremendous amount on her shoulders and yet at the same time made very bad decisions. Out of all the books I've read about her, I would say that I have really enjoyed Juliet Grey's two novels, *Becoming Marie Antoinette* and *Day's of Splendor, Day's of Sorrow* the most. But keep in mind this is Historical Fiction but I believe Grey stayed true to the events in this story.

Marie and Louis have ascended to the French throne and they have yet to consummate their marriage.

Meanwhile, Marie began to fall out of favour with the French people (such as the royals) as the gossip and propaganda about her outrageous and extravagant spending was well known. She was spending more than her allowance had allowed and was in considerable debt. But that did not stop her as she continued to spend money on jewels, gowns and running up gambling debts among her peers. Even after her mother and brother's warning and advice she could not see what she was doing was wrong and couldn't see that it would cause serious trouble for her and her husband.

Marie was also under considerable stress to produce an heir for France and Louis suffered from a physical deformity it seems and finally after almost seven years of without consummating their marriage, he underwent a procedure, and they were finally able too. Soon after they had their first child, a daughter. Louis and Marie loved their children and I felt such sadness knowing what was to come. Louis troubled me at the end of this book. It's like he couldn't fully comprehend the magnitude of their situation and I think he felt that the French people would not turn on their King.

I enjoyed the pace of the story and Juliet Grey's style of writing appeals to me. The book is written in beautiful detail and one can tell that Grey did an extensive research for her novel. There are so many aspects to this story and I was enthralled with every part, but I would like the reader to find out more for themselves by reading this novel. I highly recommend that you do.

Stephanie
Layered Pages

www.layeredpages.blogspot.com

Lucy says

This second book of Juliet Grey's Marie Antoinette trilogy exceeded- by far, all my expectations. In the author's first book, *Becoming Marie Antoinette*, we read about Antonia and how she, at a very young age becomes Queen of France- a most delightful read from beginning to end - So much so that I named it my favourite read of 2011. So how was *Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow*, going to compare, or better yet; give me more to get excited about?

Detailed to perfection at what is now customary Juliet Grey style, *Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow*, does not disappoint. Marie Antoinette blossoms into her own woman going through many peeling and riveting stages.

Her life is initially filled with the border-line obsession of finally consummating her marriage for the ultimate goal of bearing an heir to the French throne. Infinitely troubled by this freakish circumstance for several unbearable years, (ultimately due to the couple's ingenuousness and failure to seek proper medical intervention), Marie Antoinette desperately needed a diversion.

Young and carefree, but nonetheless suffocating behind those palace walls, Marie Antoinette chose to keep a close-knit entourage to help alleviate her sadness. She enjoyed her late card games, her fashion, her theatre

and her beloved Petit Trianon, where she could be herself. Her every move at court though, was hence discriminated.

Finally, through motherhood and an heir to the throne –Marie Antoinette thought she had finally achieved happiness and won the love of her people...hmmm. Louis and Marie Antoinette shared a unique bond, but apparently another highly regarded male friend, Axel von Fersen, also held a special place in Marie Antoinette's heart...

Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow is Marie Antoinettes' rise to womanhood through splendor, carefree times, love, friendship, motherhood but along with that followed: worries, hurt, tragedies, defamation, betrayals, remorse, and as well, a rise to maturity.

I think what I love most about this novel is precisely the way Marie Antoinette is portrayed. Juliet Grey does not create an untouchable, pure Marie Antoinette-nor does she follow those who have much maligned her in history. In this novel, Marie Antoinette encompasses the roles of queen, wife, mother, lover and friend in their purest form; told as is, without pretension.

My favourite part of the book was definitely the necklace affair. So much has been written on this topic already, yet in this novel it is told in even greater depth- almost like a minute by minute retelling of the facts- the story flowing with flawless elements and way more information than I have ever read before. Incredibly interesting!

Every little detail in this book is delectable, and I savoured it thoroughly. Written in good taste, nothing is amiss, and everything is possible. A work of fiction, yet written with such precise historical details, Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow is much more than just another Marie Antoinette story! I can't wait for the next and final book of this amazing trilogy. Excellent!

Brenna says

I would give it 3.5 stars. The beginning and the end were very interesting and made for easy reading. However most of the middle portion was a little too far fetched and exaggerated. Marie Antionette was quite annoying during the marjority of her reign. However, she really showed maturity once she bore her first child.

Jane says

Where I got the book: purchased from author. Signed.

I was pretty enthusiastic about the first book in this series, *Becoming Marie Antoinette* , so I'm kind of sorry to report I didn't like this one nearly as much. *Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow* covers the story of Marie Antoinette from the first days of Louis XVI's reign to the beginning of the French Revolution, so from 1774 to 1789.

Except that it didn't stick to just Marie Antoinette. I think my problem with *Days* by contrast to *Becoming* is that the latter was a fairly intimate portrait of Marie Antoinette's life and how she coped with marrying into a

strange country, while *Days* has the more ambitious aim of extending the reader's understanding to the political events of the day. The author evidently did a huge amount of research for this book and succumbed to the temptation of using it.

Yes, yes, it's the HF author's dilemma: you're damned if you do use your research and if you don't, some readers are going to say you didn't do it. There's an extremely fine line to walk with respect to supplying just enough flavor of what's going on to keep the reader anchored in history, but not overdoing it. In *Becoming* it was the imagined interpersonal dynamics I enjoyed the most: I'm not sure whether the interspersed letters were real or imagined, but I thought they added enough weight to the story as it was. I wanted more of the same, and didn't get enough of it.

I'm the sort of HF reader who would rather dig into a history book than a novel to get at the facts. What I look for in historical fiction is the imagined interior and exterior world of the character. I want to be there; I want the setting to be as accurate as possible but I don't need to read too much about it; I want to feel what the character must have felt. The stuff that history books generally leave out. In *Becoming* Grey satisfied this requirement, whereas in *Days* I felt as if Marie Antoinette was sitting there telling me "this happened, and then this happened," and I just want to ask her: but how did you FEEL?

For example, in her author's note Grey suggests that Marie Antoinette's pleasure-seeking behavior during the early days of the monarchy (her excessive gambling and expenditure on clothes and décor) was due to the fact that her deepest needs, a true marriage and children, were not being fulfilled. That's a reasonable suggestion. But the story concentrates on the externals: how much was wagered, what was lost, what was purchased, and so on. It's nicely put together as a fictional account: dialogue and setting are well done, but I can't help feeling that we're seeing the surface of the story rather than the depth.

Another problem that developed as I read into the novel was that the point of view, which at the beginning is firmly in Marie Antoinette's head (as it was, if I remember rightly, all through *Becoming*) starts shifting around, first jumping out just for a while into someone else's head and then, by the end of the book, resembling more and more that of an omniscient narrator. For example:

Beneath the gilded medieval vaulting a crush of perspiring and over-perfumed spectators sat brocaded elbow to elbow on the benches in the two galleries of the Palais de Justice's Grand Chambre. Even the worst seats were being sold for astronomical sums, and on any day a lucky man might make his fortune by retailing his privilege to sit on an unforgiving bench for nine hours to a soul even more desperate for sensationalism. The preliminary investigation had been conducted in secret, with the lawyers' fictionalized trial briefs the only way for the public to learn what was transpiring behind the walls of the Palais de Justice.

Do you hear the voice of Marie Antoinette here, or that of the author?

I hope I've done a reasonable job describing what I think went wrong. Of course every reader's requirements from fiction are different, and if I'd approached this book as a standalone I might have reacted differently. But the first book created an expectation in me for the second that wasn't really met.

Teipu says

Between 3 and 4 stars.

Greys writing style is nice, but Marie Antoinette isn't a very likeable person. very self-absorbed and she seems very stupid tbh.

of course I knew were this was heading but I found myself hoping that Antoinette would suddenly change, become more level-headed and somehow evade her faith.

I really want to read some non-fiction about the French Revolution now

Allie says

Juliet Grey continues the saga of Marie Antoinette in her second volume. Covering the years between her ascent to the throne and the beginning of the French Revolution. Spanning fifteen years, readers explore the French Court through the eyes of its infamous queen. Grey focuses the full life of Marie Antoinette, from her everyday life to the momentous events that shaped the Queen and the Court.

Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow really captures the spirit of Marie Antoinette. The author does a great job in creating a feeling of kindrenship between the reader and Marie Antoinette. I enjoyed her spunky nature and passive aggressive rebellion. I loved watching the Queen develop from a shy girl to a Queen with feelings, heartbreak and love for her husband and adopted country. As the years become harder and harder on the pretty Queen, I find my heart breaking for her as she recklessly spends enormous sums on gambling, clothes and presents to soothe her fears and heartbreak. Once Marie's greatest dreams of having children are fulfilled, I was amazed at what a great mother she was.

Grey recreates the French Court with ease, accurately portraying the Queen, King and it's players. Staying true to history, Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow stays true to history, including with accurate detail actual historical events and conversations. This really makes Grey's Marie shine. I have always felt that Marie was unfairly blamed for causing the Revolution with her reckless spending, but Grey gives the reader the whole picture, showing the lack of competence in the Government, and Marie's lack of influence over policy and politics. The book also accurately shows the French Aristocracy's views on unlimited money, power and play.

Readers should start with the first book in the trilogy, Becoming Marie Antoinette. This will allow the reader to seamlessly transition into Archduchess to Dauphin. I am anxiously awaiting the 2013 release of the final book, The Last October Sky. Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow is an amazing read on the misaligned Queen.

Glen Stott says

This is the sequel to "Becoming Marie Antoinette." As the story continues, Louis XV dies and a large funeral is held. Then Louis XVI becomes King and Marie Antoinette is Queen. The King gives Marie a little Chalet on the palace grounds that Louis XV built for Madame du Barry, his mistress. Marie spends a small fortune redecorating it. Still her marriage to Louis XVI has not been consummated. The doctors say a circumcision would alleviate the King's problem, but he is afraid.

Duke Fersen of Sweden comes, and a relationship develops between him and Marie. (The relationship did happen but Grey admits to taking some historical license with it for the sake of the story).

For many reasons, France is experiencing financial problems. The King tries to cut expenses, meanwhile Marie believes that her subjects expect her to put on a good face. She spends money lavishly on jeweled gowns and the tall hairdos she has made popular. Her mother warns her to be more careful, but she doesn't listen. She loves to throw expensive parties and play cards all night. Though she is being excoriated in the press for her excesses, she maintains she can't cut back – it would show the wrong example to the people. Bread riots in Paris move to the palace at Versailles.

The King agrees to help the American Revolution in spite of France's financial crises. On August 22, 1777 the marriage is finally consummated after Louis XVI has the operation. Marie's brother, King of the Roman Empire, warns her to change her frivolous ways, but she ignores the advice. Finally, she gets pregnant and vows to change her extravagant lifestyle.

Count Fersen has been away. He returns and tells Marie he is going to America to fight in the revolution. Their relationship, though not physical, deepens. In Dec 1778 Marie has baby girl and learns the people of France do not like her. She refuses to sleep with the King because she doesn't want to get pregnant again. Meanwhile, she comes to realize she is in love with count Fersen.

She agrees to have another child, but she has a miscarriage. She finally delivers a son in 1781. Because her hair is thinning, probably from the strain of her tall hairdos, she has her hair cut short and creates a new fashion in Paris. Her son is weak and sickly.

Marie is pulled into a scandal when a woman named Jeanne claims she is a close friend of the queen and barrows a fortune in the queen's name. Pamphleteers smear Marie's name and sentiment toward her drops more. Marie's son dies in her arms. There is little sympathy from the people.

Conditions in France deteriorate as Louis XVI shows himself to be indecisive and inept. An attempt to placate the people with a meeting of the three estates, (royals, nobles, people) gets out of hand. As matters worsen, the King does nothing. The Bastille is taken, and the revolution begins.

On the surface, Marie looks spoiled and self-absorbed. However, Grey examines her with care and empathy. Judging by the contents of Marie's letters and the things going on around her, I think Grey has created a fairly accurate picture of a girl forced to grow up fast and put in circumstances an experienced adult would have problems dealing with. Those early years set patterns Marie was not able see or deal with.

The details leading up to the revolution and the what-ifs were thought provoking. Louis XVI was good for America but for France, he was the wrong man. At times, he wanted to do good, but he didn't have the strength or the ability to do the right things.

Amanda says

I was a little worried about this one. Not only are "middle" books in a trilogy always a little tough, but it seemed like keeping the "middle" of Marie Antoinette's life could be even more difficult. I mean, you can't get to the Revolution until the third book, and the first book introduced readers to the heroine and her struggles -so what is there to talk about in the "middle" book?

It turns out there's a lot.

In *Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow*, Marie Antoinette's tale continues, taking up not long after the end of *Becoming Marie Antoinette* when the ill-fated queen and her husband ascend to the French throne. But all is not right in the French court. Between Marie's inability to have children (and her husband's disinterest in making babies) and the many political intrigues surrounding her, she becomes engrossed in an extravagant world of gambling, elaborate gowns and jewels, and all of life's wildest pleasures -no matter what the cost to the royal treasury. As the propaganda against Marie Antoinette mounts, she must deal with her feelings for another man and the infamous Affair of the Necklace.

I thoroughly enjoyed author Juliet Grey's refreshing take on Marie Antoinette in *Becoming Marie Antoinette*, and she did not disappoint in the sequel. Grey does an incredible job of portraying the infamous French Queen as more of a victim of her time and place than the horrible and unfeeling "let-them-eat-cake" queen that history seems to remember her as. Grey has done an incredible amount of historical research, and it shines through in every luscious detail. The world of 18th century France comes alive, complete with plenty of historical accuracy. (I especially enjoyed the discussion of France's involvement in the American Revolution, Marie Antoinette's thoughts on the "colonies" and Benjamin Franklin, and how, almost ironically, the country's involvement in that war helped lead to the French Revolution.)

Grey's style rivals that of many other, most established historical fiction authors out there. I seemed to float almost effortlessly from sentence to sentence, and the transitions between Marie's point of view and the letters between Marie, her family and others were not confusing at all -I really liked hearing the voice of other characters through the letters. It helped give additional perspective on Antoinette herself.

For fans of well-written biographical historical fiction (there is some juicy romance, but it's not the centerpiece of the novel), devotees of the French queen -or readers who love a good scandal -*Days* is an excellent follow up to *Becoming* and hints at more excellent work from this talented author. I cannot wait for *The Last October Sky*, the final book in Grey's Marie Antoinette trilogy, due out next year.

Elmira says

This was a well researched and engaging story. This is a work of fiction, so the author can explore possible actions and thoughts through her characters that the real person might or might not have done or thought. What makes this an excellent work of historical fiction is the care that the author takes to be sure that the actions and thoughts of the characters are entirely consistent with the factual record, as well as with the likely motivations he/she was likely to feel.

Throughout the entire book the reader feels the bleakness of knowing how it will all end. The author puts this ever-present tension to good use as she exhibits for us many different scenarios in which the main characters made decisions without seeing how these actions were going to add up to Revolution. Since we have the benefit of hindsight as we observe these same actions, the author lays stepping stones of drought, riots, rivalry, debt, etc. that when viewed from the 21st century create a vision of the path to Revolution that the royal family did not perceive from their vantage point.

My only complaint would be the minor historical inaccuracies that were purposely placed by the author in order to better fit the storyline. I would rather have a historical fact omitted than changed.

Karen Stinneford says

I read this book because I thoroughly enjoyed its prequel, "Becoming Marie Antoinette." THAT book offered great insight into the thoughts of a young girl whose life was not her own -- whose birthright belonged to the state, and who had to completely make herself over to meet ridiculous standards set by the country and rulers to which she would devote herself. Reading about 18th century orthodontists made me thank my lucky stars for modern medicine.

THAT book was revealing and interesting.

THIS book however was, in short, a trudge. Never the sharpest knife in Marie Therese of Austria's drawer of children, Marie Antoinette found herself irrelevant and bored in France. Confined to a taxing code of court etiquette, she found little to do except decorate herself and the environment around her. When the country's finances fell apart and she and her husband, Louis XVI, were confronted with the need to change, she was completely incapable of doing so. She lacked the mental and emotional resources to think outside her little box.

This book ends with the storming of the Bastille -- which means the royal family's attempt to flee the country and Marie Antoinette's trial and execution have been saved for the third book. Which I cannot read. Watching one of the original dumb blondes grapple with the life-and-death consequences of royal action -- inaction, really -- is more than I can bear.

Anna says

This is probably the most detailed historical fiction series on Marie Antoinette I've come across. For some readers it might seem a bit dry at times - this second installment takes place in the years between Marie and Louis XVI's marriage and the Revolution, so it mostly depicts lifestyle and excess and exactly how Marie came to be loathed by her people for being a spendthrift - not a lot of action at times but plenty of description. I love that sort of thing and this is one of my favorite time periods in history to learn about, so it worked well for me.

Jessie (Ageless Pages Reviews) says

Read This Review & More Like It On My Blog!

Don't miss the interview and GIVEAWAY going on at my blog!

Another solidly impressive journey into the life of Marie Antoinette, Grey again proves, with her second novel in a planned trilogy, that she is a skilled writer, able to evoke time, place, and characters with equal vivacity. Beginning two weeks after the first novel, *Becoming Marie Antoinette*, ended, Grey immediately relaunches herself and the reader into an opulent, turbulent world with her title character more prominent than ever in French society. In this detailed, rich novel, full of eye-popping descriptions of everything from le Petite Trianon to the poufs that adorn Marie's head, both the narrative and the letters from the Queen to her family at home in Austria all serve to form a comprehensive picture of life in Louis XIV's France. Formerly

the Dauphine, transitioning now into the role of the Queen of France, Marie finds herself with prestige, but little actual power. Iconic, but politically impotent, bereft of the love and attention she desperately craves, Grey provides ample reasons (that actually work!) for the reasons behind the monarch's spendthrift ways. Much like the evolution she underwent in the first book, this well-rendered version of Marie Antoinette is far from stagnant, but makes choices, for good or ill, that will drastically affect the people and country she governs.

The Marie so carefully cultivated by the author is much more than the villainess that most of history remembers her as. Spoiled, yes. A glutton for fine things? Yes. But evil, intent on harming the common folk and abusing them? No. The vivid woman shown here in *Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow* is a more mature, more intelligent version of the girl she used to be and Grey takes care to paint her protagonist as realistically as possible. For all that Queen Marie is remembered and vilified as a one-sided caricature of vice, selfishness, and greed, Grey shows a multitude of other facets of her personality. Kind, lonely, funny, maternal, the author is deft in her portrayal in all the facets of this fascinating woman from the good to the bad. Her Marie Antoinette is always not wholly sympathetic ("For what is money, with happiness at stake?"), but she is often understandable in her opinions and attitudes. With her well-meaning but often oblivious husband Louis balancing an already-taxed treasury with the wants, demands, and rights of the people he rules by divine right, Marie and her coterie of noble ladies find themselves skewered by cartoonists, and resented for the life of grand palaces and sumptuous gowns they use once and discard, despite the Queen's good intentions.

Louis plays a larger role in the second novel than he did in the first; the King is much more directly involved with the plotline of this novel than the previous. More peripheral in the introduction of the series, here in part two, now, married and reigning as King, this Louis indulges his wife's flights of fancy, and spending as a concession to make up for the lack of intimacy and input he offers her in their private life. With the Queens of France traditionally have prestige but no real governing power, Louis is very Gallic and rigid in his role, a devoted adherent to the traditions his wife so dislikes. Louis is a good foil for his spendthrift *femme*; often shown trying to reign in the out-of-control treasury, his royal brother's profligate attitudes about women and coin, to little or no avail. He is not developed as Marie, but he is shown in realistic views - and Grey even tries to rectify his reasons for a lack of a royal heir (for seven years after marriage!) with a possible, plausible medical condition. His (unknown?) rival for Marie's affections in the Swedish Count of Axel von Fersen adds even more intensity and tension to a novel thick with conflict. Though there is a love-triangle of sorts in *Days of Splendor, Days of Sorrow*, Juliet Grey is able to pull it off with aplomb, without making it halt the plot's momentum or the characters involved tiresome. Each man appeals to a different side of the complicated Queen, and though she may be more her father's daughter than she thought to be, Marie's attractions to both came off as authentic - as did her actions.

For the most part, I thought that first-person POV was an excellent choice to showcase the plot and varied characters of this story. It allows for a closer view of Marie and how she works internally, and reading Marie's well-intentioned inner monologue helps to firmly create the three-dimensional version of the character. It is easy to feel for the entitled Queen, even as she haplessly carries herself and her friends toward a grisly end. With factions all around her vying for favor (Polignac vs. Lamballe, etc) even among her dearest friends, Marie Antoinette is a commodity, a property, to be used and controlled for position, power, and money. Her narration helps humanize her and separate this version from the historical, as even her own family-in-law undermines her with the people. The only places the narrative stumbled for me were the thankfully rare occasions that abruptly jumped to third-person narration - like Emperor Joseph's meeting with du Barry, or Jeanne de Lamotte's cunning deception of the Grand Almoner, Rohan. A nice flow, and even pacing across long periods of time, coincide with the well-chosen point-of-view, and all add up to a thoroughly enjoyable, eminently readable historical fiction novel.

Juliet Grey ably paints a vivid, frenzied look at Marie's troubled, occasionally vapid existence of self-interest and whim. Between the constraint of etiquette steeped in outlandish traditions and little privacy that she found so oppressive, and Marie's subsequent alienation of certain powerful nobles, and with the French-monarchy-supported American Revolution giving the French people new ideas, wants and seeding deep doubts about the right of divine rule, the foreshadowing is subtly woven into the novel and reminds readers of the royal family's ultimate fate while still leaving them wanting more. A fully realized scenario of the French country and economy as it stood in Louis XIV's reign, the atmosphere of *Days of Splendor*, *Days of Sorrow* grows ever bleaker and more ominous with her chapter. It's a hard to put down book, but one that is easy to involve yourself with the goings-on even as that fateful day in October looms ever closer.

Juliet Grey delivers a solid, engrossing, completely entertaining sequel. One that is filled with fleshed-out versions of the historical personages known so well, even into the modern age. Not mere stereotypes or villains, but real, plausible renderings of people who have left a mark on history. What *Becoming Marie Antoinette* started, *Days of Splendor*, *Days of Sorrow* ably continues - a tradition of well-written, thoroughly detailed, engrossing historical fiction novels centered on one of the most interesting times and people in history. I personally cannot wait to see how this talented author will chose to recreate the last years of Marie Antoinette's life, and the fall of the Bourbon dynasty to the French Revolution with the trilogy's conclusion, *The Last October Sky*.

Angie says

I would give this book 3.5 stars if I could...

I have done extensive reading on Marie Antoinette (though it was several years ago) and found her such an enticing person to read about. I "bonded" somehow with her persona in the books I previously read. I recently had the good fortune to visit Versailles, and so my obsession with her has reawakened. When I saw this new book about her, I was so excited to read it! (I found out later that it is bk#2 of the trilogy). I think because of the quality of the books I have read previously, I knew her life story quite well. This book detailed it correctly, but for me wasn't presented in such a way as to excite me or give me anything new. I hate to say it, but I was a bit bored by the book. For someone who has never read about her, this is a good choice. But for me I found it lacking somewhat. I would recommend to Marie Antoinette "first timers." I would also recommend "Queen's Confession" by Victoria Holt. It might be hard to find a copy of but it's worth the trouble.

Christy English says

DAYS OF SPLENDOR, DAYS OF SORROW tells the story of Marie Antoinette's time as Queen of France. In this novel, Marie Antoinette works hard to advise her husband as wisely as she can, reaching for the reigns of power, only to have Louis slap her hands away. She comes from Austria, where her mother co-rules an empire with her eldest brother, Emperor Joseph, and Marie Antoinette thinks that she should have at least an advisory role with her husband the king. But she is not in Austria. The Queens of France have no power of their own, and only one role, to bear a son for the kingdom.

Forced out of the corridors of power, Marie Antoinette begins her reign over a court of pleasure-seekers, throwing masques, gambling all night, decorating palaces and performing in private plays. The worst of her

detractors attack her for her spending, even as the debts of foreign wars mount. But in spite of their mistakes, Louis and Marie Antoinette care for their people. They are kept out of touch with what is going on in the countryside, divided from their populace by factions at court, by their enemies, by their own mistakes.

Caught up in a whirlpool she can not control, Marie Antoinette watches as Revolutionary ideas take hold, not knowing where it will lead.

This is a beautiful novel that opened the gilded gates of Versailles for me. More importantly, it opened the gates of Marie Antoinette's soul. This novel lifts the mask of the queen so that we may catch a glimpse of who this woman was, her foibles and flaws and well as her kindness, her softhearted compassion, and her devotion to her children. Juliet Grey has crafted a fine novel which reveals a living, breathing woman of flesh and blood who speaks from the page and tells us who she was. There is more to the human soul than we can often see, and there is more to Marie Antoinette than is often spoken of. Juliet Grey lifts the veil, and shows us all that lies behind it. A vibrant novel that illustrates the blindness of politics and tradition, which comes to feel like the inevitability of fate.
