

## **The Poison Bed by E C Fremantle**

**5 stars**

**Power, politics and poison at the court of King James 1.**

**I enjoy historical fiction and this was particularly interesting as it was set in the court of King James the First; a period of history that I had never really discovered before.**

**The author tells us that this is fiction but it is based on fact and could well have happened in the way it is described. The two main characters, Robert Carr and Frances Howard, were real; they did get married and they were involved in a plot to poison Thomas Overbury whilst he was imprisoned in the tower.**

**The book is written with alternate chapters entitled 'Him' and 'Her' so the story is told from both sides and although it starts in the middle of the tale it is very skilfully built up and explained. I really enjoyed reading it from both perspectives and in particular the twist at the end where we are kept guessing as to the eventual outcome.**

**Robert Carr rose from humble beginnings mainly due to his choosing the correct men to sleep with including, eventually, King James himself. However he is portrayed as only doing this to further his own ends and when he meets Frances Howard he falls deeply in love with her. King James, himself anxious to keep his own homosexuality a secret, engineers the marriage between them, managing to get Frances' marriage to the Earl of Essex annulled due to non-consummation.**

**The marriage is happy and passionate for some time but when they are both accused of poisoning one of Carr's former lovers, things begin to fall apart. They are both kept under what we now call house arrest and we discover how Frances tries to manipulate the facts to incriminate her husband, whom she now finds boring and weak whilst Robert still madly in love, tries to prove their innocence.**

**Obviously it cannot be proven how true this story is but the author has put together a very plausible tale of what might have happened. I really enjoyed the style of writing and would like to read more from this author.**

**Dexter**

**Breakaway Reviewers received a copy of the book to review**