



SCANDAL!

JACK OF HEARTS (AND OTHER PARTS)

by LC Rosen

This YA (young adult) novel has a storyline similar to Becky Albertalli's *Simon Vs The Homo Sapiens Agenda* (*Love, Simon*). The main character, Jack, has a secret admirer and the mystery of who it might be keeps the reader turning the pages.



Simon was finding his way out of the closet and into romance, but Jack is absolutely notorious at his school for his frequent hook-ups with guys and his eye-catching appearance (he likes to wear make-up). The book opens with three of Jack's peers gossiping about him having a four-way! In fact, Jack is so confident about his sexuality and sex in general that his friend Jenna enlists him to write a sex advice column for her blog.

The other difference is that Jack's admirer quickly escalates from being innocuous into a stalker. Pinky (as Jack calls him), knows so much about Jack's life that it becomes completely unnerving. He knows when Jack hooks up with someone, but he even knows secret things about Jack's mother and his friends. And as the notes become increasingly

“
Jack is notorious at his school for his frequent hook-ups with guys...

threatening, the need to uncover the stalker becomes more urgent.

Jack Of Hearts is unusual for gay YA fiction as it is very explicit about sex. The columns that Jack writes are an integral part of the book and he delivers first-rate advice on subjects such as (straight) anal sex, blowjobs, coming out, dating, sex and intimacy, losing one's virginity, S/M, and even asexuality. It could be argued that no 17-year-old could be this articulate and insightful but that would be churlish.

Ultimately, Jack (and author LC Rosen) deliver excellent sex advice for teens in a highly accessible way. Not just for gay readers, Jack's advice is for girls, guys, gay, straight and the uncertain.

THE POISON BED by EC Fremantle

The author has taken a real-life scandal in the time of King James I of England and crafted an intriguing and highly atmospheric novel based around these suppressed events.



Robert Carr was a favourite of King James and, although historians argue as to whether or not they were lovers, Fremantle takes the view that they were. As sodomy was a crime in those times, any evidence of their intimacy is impossible to come by.

But before Robert caught the eye of the king, he was involved with Sir Thomas Overbury, who never quite got over being supplanted by a better prospect. Overbury became an irritant and eventual threat to Robert, his new wife Frances and her powerful family (the Howards), and even to the king.

Imprisoned in the Tower Of London, Overbury became ill and died, which was convenient to many. Then rumours that he'd been poisoned began to circulate and gain credence. Eventually both Robert and Frances were arrested and stood trial on charges of murder. The novel has been cleverly structured with Robert and Frances telling their stories in alternating chapters from their cells.

Frances Carr is a fascinating figure and is portrayed here as calculating and ambitious. She was married off at 14, a union she managed to have annulled years later. This left her free to marry Robert, who she had fallen in love with, and with his access to the king it was also a union that was highly desirable for the Howard family.

Witchcraft, poisoned jellies, lethal enemas, executions and a medical examination to prove virginity - this scandalous case offers a wealth of eye-raising incidents, and Fremantle does a superlative job bringing it to life.

For those who prefer established facts or just want to know more, Hachette have recently reissued *Anna Somerset's* non-fiction work on the case, *Unnatural Murder: Poison In The Court Of James I*.

MORE: The Bookshop Darlinghurst specialises in gay and lesbian books. Tel: (02) 9331 1103. Email: info@thebookshop.com.au. Web: thebookshop.com.au. Visit: 207 Oxford Street, Sydney.



Gay And Bisexual Men Living With Prostate Cancer: From Diagnosis To Recovery

Edited by Jane M Ussher, Janette Perz and BR Simon Rosser

Prostate cancer is the most diagnosed cancer in Australia. However, while diagnoses are increasing, deaths from prostate cancer are falling and recovery rates are improving.

One of the complicating factors in treating it is that here are a number of decisions that need to be made. Surgery or radiation therapy? Does action need to be taken urgently or is there time to "watch and act"? And for gay and bisexual men the experience is complicated by a medical establishment - GPs, specialists, surgeons - who assume all their patients are heterosexual.

This book, at over 350 pages, published by Harrington Park Press, is a thorough and academic report. While its primary audience appears to be other academics, social researchers and those in the medical profession, it's an excellent resource for gay and bisexual men living with prostate cancer. Not only is there detailed information about the process from diagnosis to recovery, the editors have highlighted key concerns for G and B men, as well as trans women, included in chapters like *Threat To Gay Identity And Sexual Relationships*, *My Partner Is My Family* and *Sexual Rehabilitation*.