



Venus in Winter: A Novel of Bess of Hardwick

Gillian Bagwell

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The author of *The September Queen* explores Tudor England with the tale of Bess of Hardwick—the formidable four-time widowed Tudor dynast who became one of the most powerful women in the history of England.

On her twelfth birthday, Bess of Hardwick receives the news that she is to be a waiting gentlewoman in the household of Lady Zouche. Armed with nothing but her razor-sharp wit and fetching looks, Bess is terrified of leaving home. But as her family has neither the money nor the connections to find her a good husband, she must go to facilitate her rise in society.

When Bess arrives at the glamorous court of King Henry VIII, she is thrust into a treacherous world of politics and intrigue, a world she must quickly learn to navigate. The gruesome fates of Henry's wives convince Bess that marrying is a dangerous business. Even so, she finds the courage to wed not once, but four times. Bess outlives one husband, then another, securing her status as a woman of property. But it is when she is widowed a third time that she is left with a large fortune and even larger decisions—discovering that, for a woman of substance, the power and the possibilities are endless . . .



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