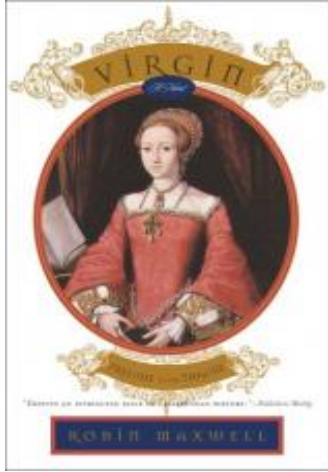


Virgin: Prelude to the Throne

by Robin Maxwell



About the Book

...a riveting portrait of Elizabeth I as a romantic and vulnerable teenager, dangerously awakening to a perilous liaison with the wrong man.

England, 1547: King Henry is dead. Elizabeth's half-brother, nine-year-old Edward, is king in name only. Thomas Seymour, brother to the ambitious duke who has seized power in this time of crisis, calculatingly works his way into Elizabeth's home in genteel Chelsea House. He marries Henry's widow, Catherine Parr, and uses his venerable charms and sexual magnetism to indulge his infatuation for young Elizabeth. Caught hopelessly under Thomas Seymour's spell, surrounded by kind friends and hidden enemies, Elizabeth can only follow her heart to ensure survival.

"History doesn't come more fascinating" (*Entertainment Weekly*) than in the enthralling novels of Robin Maxwell. **Virgin** is her crowning achievement in a stunning trilogy that "brings all of bloody Tudor England vividly to life" (*Publishers Weekly*, starred review).

Discussion Guide

1. What was the nature of Elizabeth's relationship with her father, Henry VIII? What kind of man was he? How did Anne Boleyn's legacy influence her daughter Elizabeth's behavior, if at all?
2. Catherine told Elizabeth that her mother, Anne, made a deadly blunder when "she refused to share any of her power with other women of the court," and that "she did not understand your father [Henry VIII] nearly as well as she supposed she did." What were Elizabeth's greatest mistakes?
3. What was it about Thomas Seymour that made him so irresistible to Anne and other women? Why did she ignore her

doubts about him until the situation had gotten out of hand? Have you ever known a person like him? Are there any contemporary political figures or celebrities that Thomas resembles?

4. A woman's virginity was an essential element in all dynastic marriages. Discuss the idea of virginity as it applies to this story, to Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII's relationship in **The Secret Diary of Anne Boleyn**, and to the contemporary story of Prince Charles, Princess Diana, and Camilla Parker Bowles.

5. How did Thomas and Edward Seymour differ in their approach to their vicious sibling rivalry? Was there any difference between the nature of their ambitions? Did the actions of either seem more right or fair? What was the root of their bitterness toward each other? How might they have resolved their conflict without bringing ruin to each other?

6. Which characters do you think cared most about Elizabeth? Why? What could they do to warn her about the dangers of her actions? If they didn't intervene, why didn't they? Was their decision to stand by without taking action the best choice in the long run?

7. Discuss the relationship between Catherine and Elizabeth. What did they give each other that they couldn't find elsewhere? Which rift most threatened their feelings for each other? How and why did they overcome it?

8. Why was Robin Dudley motivated to spy on Thomas? Do you think his father's urging was the only factor that played a role in his decision? What came of his spying, and how did it affect his relationship with Elizabeth in the short- and long-term?

9. Was there an instance when Thomas's hunger for power brought him to a point of no return? When was it? Was Thomas simply a power-hungry man, or was his lust for power pathological?

10. While they were being interrogated, Elizabeth lamented that she, Kat Ashley, and Thomas Parry were "equally responsible for their current predicament." Do you agree with that assessment? If not, how was the responsibility divided among them? Who was most responsible, and why?

11. Were you surprised by the fate of any of the characters described in the Epilogue? If so, whose? And why? How was it different from the way you imagined it would be?

12. Why do you read historical fiction? Is there a particular subject, character, or period you prefer? If so, why? How do you feel about an author taking liberties with history and "filling in the holes"?

13. The thread that connects each of the novels in Robin Maxwell's trilogy (**The Secret Diary of Anne Boleyn**, **The Queen's Bastard**, and **Virgin**) is the enduring relationship between Elizabeth and Robin Dudley. Do you believe Dudley truly loved Elizabeth or was he simply "playing her" in order to receive the honors, titles, and riches she provided him throughout her life?

Author Bio

Robin Maxwell lives in the wilds of the California high desert with her husband, yogi Max Thomas. Visit her official website, www.RobinMaxwell.com.

Critical Praise

"Tense, absorbing, and highly entertaining."

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