



The Sixth Wife

By Suzannah Dunn
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Introduction

A gripping novel of love, passion, betrayal and heartbreak. Katherine Parr survived Henry VIII to find true love with Thomas Seymour—only to realise that her love was based on a lie. Clever, sensible and well-liked, Katherine Parr trod a knife edge of diplomacy and risk during her marriage to an ageing, cantankerous King Henry. When he died, she was in her late thirties and love, it seemed, had passed her by. Until, that is, the popular Thomas Seymour—bold, handsome, witty and irresistible—began a relentless courtship that won her heart. Kate fell passionately in love for the first time in her life and, also for the first time, threw caution to the wind with a marriage that shocked the worldly courtiers around her. But all too soon it becomes obvious that Thomas has plans beyond his marriage for the young, capricious, quick-witted heir to the throne—Elizabeth—and that in his quest for power, he might even be prepared to betray his now pregnant wife! Kate's whirlwind romance is witnessed and recounted through the eyes of her closest friend, Catherine, Duchess of Suffolk, who lives through the

tumultuous years after Henry's death at Kate's side. A sharp and canny courtier in her own right, Cathy is keenly aware of the political realities of life at court and is, apparently, a loyal supporter of her friend. As her story weaves its way through that of Kate and Thomas's heady passion and tragic denouement, however, it gradually becomes clear that Cathy has her own tale of betrayal and regret to tell!

Questions for Discussion

1. Why do you think Suzannah Dunn chose to tell Kate's story through the voice of her best friend, Cathy, rather than in the first person?
2. What drives Cathy, Duchess of Suffolk? To what extent are her motives determined by the circumstances of her upbringing?
3. Do you see Kate Parr as a victim? How much control does she exert over the events in the novel? Could any of them have been prevented? What does she feel for Cathy?
4. What do you make of Thomas Seymour's character and of his relationships with Kate, Cathy, and Elizabeth? Do you think he set out to deceive Kate from the beginning?
5. How much room is there for loyalty in the life of a sixteenth-century English courtier?

Author Bio

Suzannah Dunn is the author of nine novels in the UK: *Darker Days Than Usual*, *Blood Sugar*, *Past Caring*, *Quite Contrary*, *Venus Flaring*, *Tenterhooks*, *Commencing Our Descent*, *Queen of Subtleties*, and *The Sixth Wife*. She lives in Brighton.