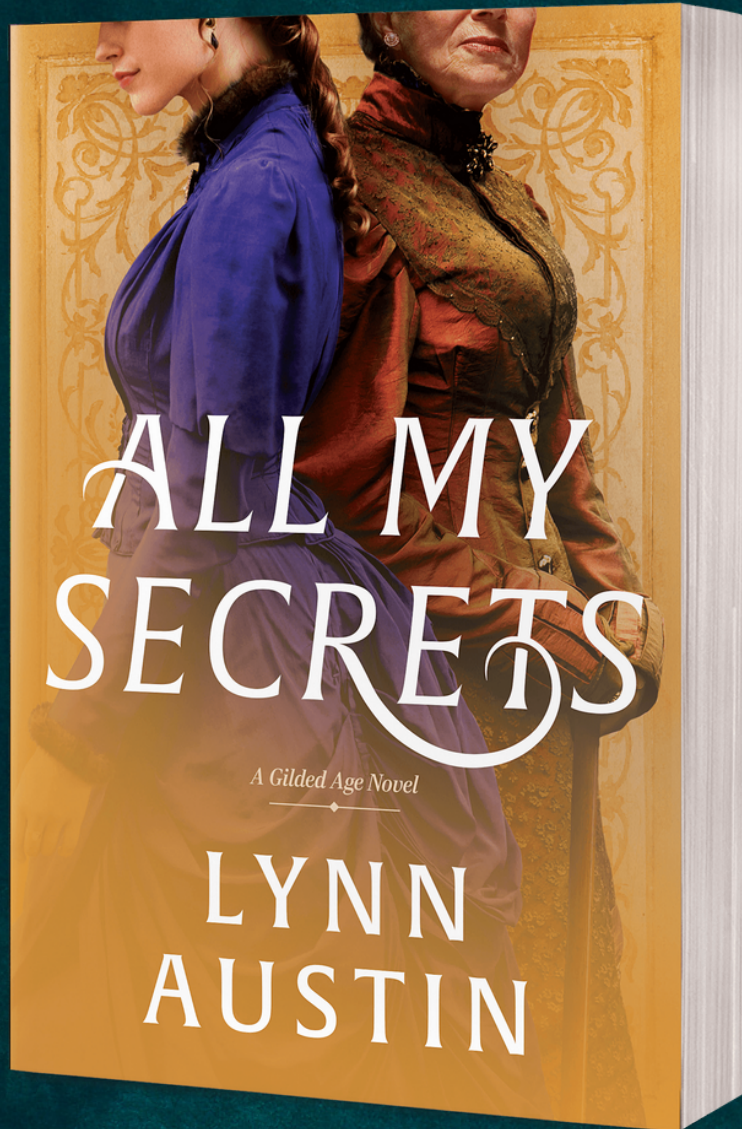


BOOK CLUB KIT



New York, 1898. The only thing more shocking than Arthur Stanhope III's unexpected death is the revelation that his will bestows his company—and most of the vast fortune that goes with it—to the nearest male heir, leaving his mother, wife, and daughter nearly impoverished. His widow, Sylvia, quickly realizes she must set aside her grief to ensure their daughter, Adelaide, is launched into society as soon as the appropriate mourning period passes.

But Sylvia's mother-in-law, Junietta, vows to give her granddaughter the power to choose a path beyond what society expects.

But for Addy to have that chance, both mother and grandmother must first confront painful truths about their own choices. Only in bringing their secrets to light can they hope to reshape their family inheritance into a legacy more fulfilling than they ever dared dream.

“Austin brings a complex tangle of family bonds to life with nuance, delivering an inspiring message about the value of following one’s heart in the face of social pressures.”

Publishers Weekly



A NOTE *from* THE AUTHOR

Dear Book Club Members,

Thank you so much for choosing to read and discuss *All My Secrets*. It's a style of novel that I especially enjoy writing—the family saga. I love exploring the relationships between generations, showing how the choices each woman makes influence the generations that follow. I hope you'll find a lot to talk about—from the restrictions women faced, whether rich or poor, to the expanding opportunities they experienced at the turn of the century.

I think there's food for thought for readers of all ages. Young women like Adelaide still feel the burden of others' expectations, along with the pull of popular culture. Readers who are Sylvia's age may be facing unwelcome changes such as an empty nest. I'm closer in age to Junietta, and like her, I'm facing age-related challenges. Yet God is willing to use us at any age if we say yes to Him.

In this kit, I've included an activity your group might want to try and a few suggestions for holding an afternoon tea like Adelaide and Sylvia did. Hats and gloves are optional, but have fun! And be sure to post pictures on social media so I can enjoy the event along with you.

Happy reading!

Lynn



BOOK CLUB ACTIVITIES

family stories

I love hearing and sharing family stories from the past. As a fun activity, ask your book club members to bring an item to the meeting from an ancestor (or someone important in their life), and share the story behind it. I'll start the game:

This is a picture of my great-great-grandmother's "crying cup." My grandmother, who was born in 1896, told me she remembered drinking from this cup at her grandmother's house when she was a little girl. It has been passed down through our family ever since. Whenever a child is upset and crying, their tears will soon disappear if they drink from the crying cup. It works! (But I suspect it's because you can't cry and drink at the same time.)



Photo courtesy of Lynn Austin

BOOK CLUB ACTIVITIES

afternoon tea

What better way to discuss *All My Secrets* than to hold a tea party. A typical afternoon tea consists of dainty finger foods, both savory and sweet, served on a three-tiered stand. There are tiny sandwiches, such as egg salad, cucumber, and salmon; scones with toppings such as clotted cream, lemon curd, jam, and marmalade; and a variety of fancy sweets such as sponge cake, tarts, eclairs, shortbread, and macarons. Of course, a variety of teas is also served—Earl Grey, Darjeeling, English Breakfast, and herbal teas—preferably in porcelain tea cups with saucers.

An internet search for “afternoon tea” will give you a variety of creative sandwiches to try, some yummy scone recipes, and a multitude of dainty desserts. And if you’re interested in a few rules for your tea party, here are some I borrowed from *The Essential Handbook of Victorian Entertaining* by Autumn Stephens:

- Do not remove your hat. Ladies retain their hats throughout the tea, and likewise their gloves.
- Request no more than one or two spoonfuls of sugar with your tea. Although you may customarily take more, it is ill-bred to do so at someone else’s table.
- It is not proper to drink with a spoon in the cup, or to quite drain the cup.
- Don’t allow the spoon to clink noisily against the cup as you stir your tea.
- Do not extend your small finger upward; this bespeaks of arrogance, not refinement.
- Do not peek over the cup at others while you are sipping.
- Do not overindulge. Black tea, when taken to excess, so acts on the nervous system as to produce sleeplessness and insomnia, and finally makes a complete wreck of its victim.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Addy's mother and grandmother both tell her their life stories to help her understand them better. How much do you know about your parents' and grandparents' stories? If you are a parent, aunt or uncle, or grandparent, what parts of your own story do you want to pass on to the younger generations?

2. Junietta and Sylvia have very different opinions about what to do next after losing most of their wealth. Is one of them right and the other wrong? How does learning each woman's background help you understand their perspectives?

3. Junietta tells the others, "I had learned from my brothers the futility of arguing with a man who was being stupidly contrary." Setting aside the gender generalities, have you ever encountered a situation where it's not worth arguing with someone? How can you tell whether someone genuinely wishes to understand a different point of view or is set in their ways?

4. Junietta feels shame and guilt for her past mistakes and for being associated with the Stanhopes, who have built their wealth on taking advantage of others. Her feelings lead her to establish a charitable foundation to help those in need and to break the family cycle of evil and cruelty. Have you or someone you know made a choice to consciously counteract the consequences of past wrong actions? What are some ways this might play out in today's world?

5. Young Junietta first encounters God's forgiveness through reading the Gospel of John, especially verse 3:17, "God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved," and the story of the woman Jesus forgave in chapter 8. Do you or someone you know need to hear this message?

6. Reverend Cooper tells Junietta, "Sin is sin, and we all do it. Every one of us. Yours is just a bit more obvious than mine. No one can see me coveting the fine horses and carriages that fill the churchyard every Sunday morning, but even so, coveting, like adultery, is also a sin." Why is it so easy to judge others whose sins are more visible—or less culturally acceptable—than the ones we might struggle with ourselves?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

7. Reverend Cooper also reminds Junietta that even though her sin is forgiven, she will still have to deal with painful consequences, perhaps for the rest of her life. He says, “If you do suffer for your mistake in the future, please don’t ever let the enemy tell you it’s because God hasn’t forgiven you.” How can we counteract the feelings of shame and guilt that often result when we are reminded of past mistakes, even though we’ve received forgiveness?

8. Sylvia has gifts and talents that she has hidden away for many years—her artistic ability and the organizational skills necessary for running the foundation. Why has she let these gifts lie dormant? Are there abilities or skills that you could be using to make a difference, either in your own life or in the larger world? What’s holding you back?

9. Sylvia realizes that she’s been promoting the kind of life for her daughter that she always wanted for herself. She also realizes that her parents did the same thing to her and her brothers. Have you seen this at work in your own family? How can parents give their children a “good life” while also taking into account the children’s own ideas about what a good life will look like?

10. Addy decides she wants a life with Howard, even though it will mean a change in the lifestyle she’s grown up with. Her grandmother wisely counsels that they will need to figure out how to “meet in the middle” of their individual experiences and expectations. What are some other areas besides finances where married couples need to learn to meet in the middle? Why is this sometimes challenging?

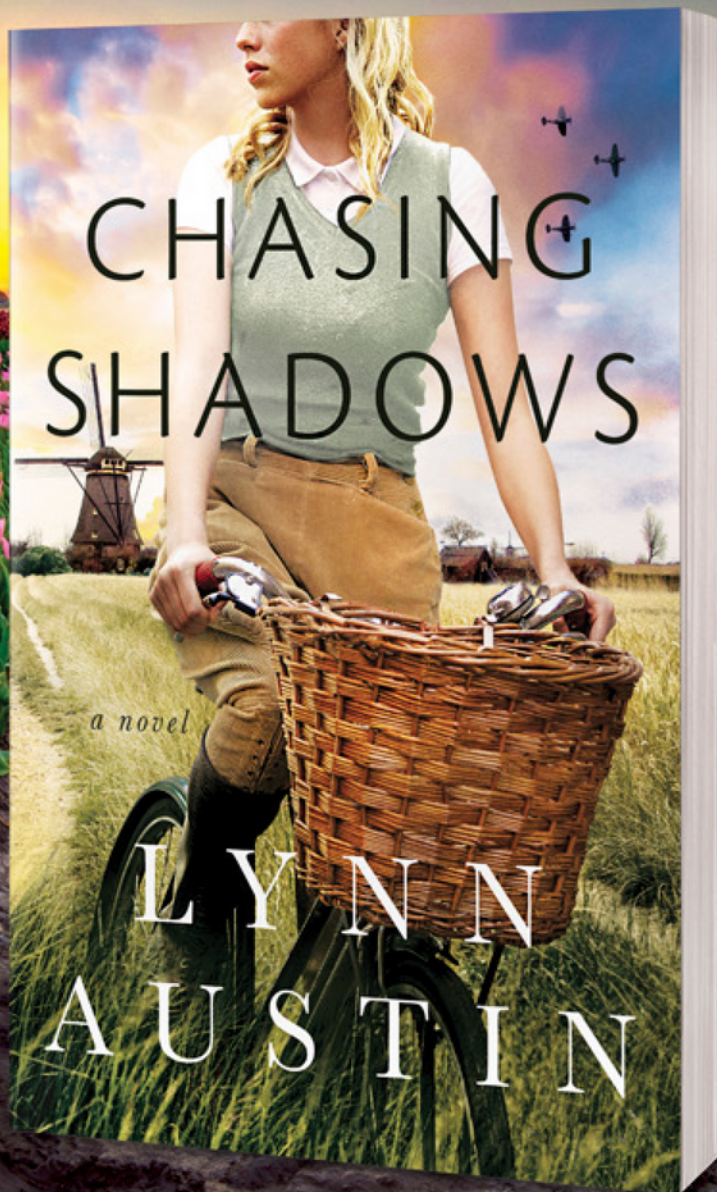


In this gripping portrait of war and its aftermath, a young woman searches for the truth her childhood friend won't discuss after returning home from World War II. In her quest for answers, she crosses paths with a woman whose own perilous journey of exile and survival an ocean away was made possible only by the kindness and courage of a series of strangers she met, including one man who changed the course of her life.



"Lynn Austin's poignant historical novel *Long Way Home* highlights the heroism of those who lived through WWII. . . . A masterful, heartwarming, and heartbreaking historical novel, *Long Way Home* contains reminders of human beings' ability to do great evil—and their duty to do great good."

—Foreword Reviews



"[An] excellent tale. . . This is a must-read for fans of WWII inspirationals."

—Publishers Weekly, starred review

The lives of three women are instantly changed when the Nazis invade the neutral Netherlands, forcing each into a complicated dance of choice and consequence. Their paths cross in unexpected, sometimes heartbreaking ways, yet the story that unfolds illuminates the surprising endurance of the human spirit and the power of faith and love to carry us through.

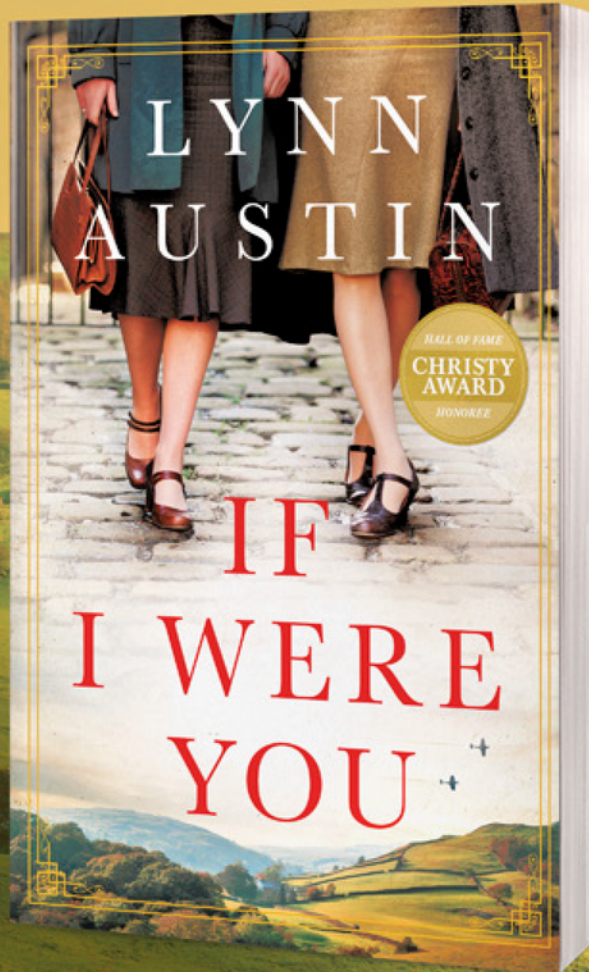
"God has His reasons for allowing this great upheaval. Maybe He's asking us to join the fight against evil and help redeem this fallen world."

"I don't have enough faith for this, Papa."

"None of us do. All we can do is ask Him each day what He wants us to do."

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FOREWORD REVIEWS

Wilhelmina Brewster and Mike Dolan are two very different people—one is trying to figure out how to live, the other how to die.

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The Wish Book Christmas

A highly anticipated follow-up to *If I Were You*, this nostalgic holiday novella reminds us that sometimes the most meaningful gifts are the ones we least expect and don't deserve.



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