

BOOK CLUB KIT

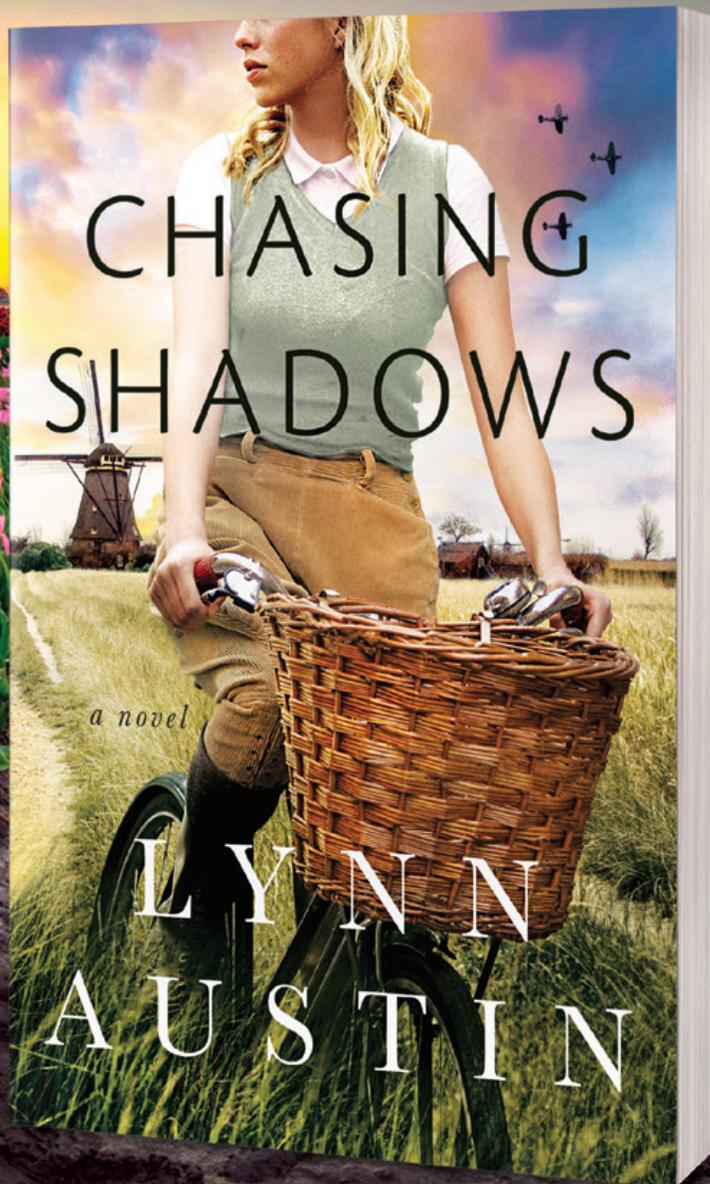
LYNNAUSTIN.ORG

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.”



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

—Publishers Weekly, starred review

A NOTE *from* THE AUTHOR

Dear Readers,

Thank you so much for choosing *Chasing Shadows* for your book club selection. With so many great books to choose among, I'm honored that you chose mine.

Years ago, I read Corrie ten Boom's book *The Hiding Place*, and it had a profound effect on my Christian walk. Corrie's deep faith and love for Christ led her to hide Jews in her home at great personal risk after the Nazis invaded her country. Her testimony of faith and of God's faithfulness in spite of all that she endured in a concentration camp made me long for a relationship with God like the one she had. In another inspiring autobiography, *Things We Couldn't Say*, author Diet Eman tells how she and her fiancé worked for the Resistance in the Netherlands during this same time period, propelled by their Christian faith. They were both arrested and imprisoned in a concentration camp where Diet's fiancé, Hein, died at age twenty-five. Christians in the Netherlands suffered a great deal during WWII, yet they accomplished brave, heroic deeds in Christ's name. I wanted to honor them by telling their story and inspire readers to trust God as wholeheartedly as they did.

My research took me to the Netherlands to visit the picturesque city of Leiden with my husband and son Benjamin, who studied at the university. I could easily imagine Ans living there and strolling along the rivers and canals with her boyfriend, Erik. We rented bicycles and rode out into the countryside to see the farmland and villages where I imagined that Lena might live. I also spent an afternoon at Westerbork, the former

concentration camp that played a part in Miriam's story. Visiting the settings for my novel always helps the story come alive for me so I can take readers there with me.

Besides the two autobiographies, I also read several other first-person accounts about life in the Netherlands under the Nazis and asked people to share their memories of the wartime years. I wove many of these true stories into the fabric of the novel, including the incident where Pieter narrowly escapes a Nazi execution. One reader shared photos of her relatives, which I used as models for Lena and Pieter.

One of the interesting facts I learned while researching was that the Nazis considered the Dutch people members of the Aryan race and invited them to join them in building the Reich. The majority of the people refused because of their strong Christian faith, saying they would bow down only to God. The Nazis had surrounded the tiny country on all sides, yet Christians bravely held on to their faith and their convictions, risking their lives for others in spite of severe famine, Nazi brutality, and suffering. They inspired me, and I pray they've inspired you, too.

Thanks again for choosing my book. I hope your group enjoys *Chasing Shadows* and that it inspires a lively discussion. You're welcome to contact me on my website and let me know what you think.

Blessings!

—Lynn



“RECIPE” for a GREAT BOOK CLUB

FOOD

Whether you’re getting together in person or virtually, have some Dutch treats nearby to enjoy while you discuss the book.

One easy snack would be cheese—the Dutch love cheese. Whenever Lynn visits her publisher in the Netherlands, they serve it at all of her book events.

They also love herring if you want to get adventurous! They have herring stands near the train stations where they sell all kinds of herring to commuters—like hot dog stands in the US.

If you’re in the mood for something sweet, Lynn recommends her Dutch *Jan Hagel* cookies that she makes every Christmas:

Ingredients

- 1 cup butter
- 1 cup sugar
- 2 cups flour
- 1 egg, separated
- ½ teaspoon cinnamon
- sliced almonds



Directions

Cream butter and sugar together. Add flour, egg yolk, and cinnamon. Press thinly onto two cookie sheets. Brush with beaten egg white. Sprinkle with almonds. Bake at 350 degrees for about 10 to 12 minutes until golden brown. (Watch! They burn easily!). Cut into squares or triangles and allow to cool before serving.

DECOR

Get in a Dutch state of mind! If possible, wear or bring something Dutch to your group’s meeting, whether in person or on screen. Here are some suggestions:

- o Just like windmills and tulips, **wooden shoes**—also called *klompen*—are a commonly recognized symbol of the Netherlands. If you’ve ever visited, you may have purchased this popular souvenir item!
- o Eat your snack on some delftware (authentic or not—no one will know!). **Delftware** or Delft pottery, also known as Delft Blue (*Delfts blauw* in Dutch), is a general term now used for Dutch tin-glazed earthenware. Most of it is blue-and-white pottery, and the city of Delft in the Netherlands was the major center of production.
- o Bring some **tulips**, fresh or fake, to use as decoration, a bookmark—anything you want!
- o Wear something **orange** in honor of the House of Orange-Nassau, the current reigning house of the Netherlands.



MUSIC

Music plays a big part in the story, as the violin and the music Miriam plays with it are treasures to her throughout the story. If you’re meeting in person, create a playlist with the following music to listen to on your drive or as background music while your group gets ready to begin. If you’re gathering virtually, play the music throughout the day or as you prepare for your meeting.

- o Tchaikovsky’s violin concerto in D major
- o Mendelssohn’s violin concerto in E minor
- o Johannes Brahms’s “Lullaby”



GAME—CHASING SHADOWS *trivia*

Find the answers on page 7

How good is your memory? Give your group five minutes to answer the questions below. Have a small prize ready—or just give bragging rights if you're meeting virtually—to the person who gets the most correct answers!

1. Lena and Pieter's main Resistance contact is named Wolf; what is the name of Ans's main contact?
2. Where is the secret door to Max and Ina's hiding place in Pieter and Lena's home?
3. What does Professor Huizenga teach at Leiden University?
4. How was Ans introduced to Erik?
5. How old is Wim when he is taken by the Nazis?
6. What does Ans take to the patriotic demonstration on June 29 celebrating the birthday of Queen Wilhelmina's son-in-law, Prince Bernhard?
7. Where was Erik born?
8. What does Bep's Hebrew name, Elisheva, mean?
9. What do Pieter and his Dutch countrymen steal from the post office for the Resistance?
10. What did Bep name the doll that Lena got her?



"You're trying so hard to hang on to control," Pieter had told her, "but you never were in control to begin with. It's an illusion. The sooner you realize that, the sooner you'll put everything into God's hands and find some peace."



QUESTION & ANSWER *with* LYNN AUSTIN

1. Why did you choose the Netherlands as the setting for your next WWII novel?

Since all of my books have been translated into Dutch and are popular in the Netherlands, my publisher has invited me on several book tours over the years to meet my readers. I fell in love with that beautiful little country and its people and have always wanted to write about it. I got to know the Netherlands even better when our son Benjamin lived there for four years while earning his PhD from the University of Leiden. And my husband's maternal grandfather immigrated from the Netherlands to Holland, Michigan, which added to my interest in learning about his ancestors and homeland.

2. You wrote this book roughly six months before the coronavirus swept across the world. Did you see any themes from the novel unfold in real life after you finished the manuscript?

Yes! As I researched WWII for *Chasing Shadows* and for my previous novel, *If I Were You*, I noticed several similarities with the worldwide COVID-19 crisis that we were all experiencing. As the people in Europe suffered through the Nazi invasion and nearly six long years of war, they had no idea what the future held. We know that the Nazis were defeated, but the millions of frightened people who lived one day at a time, huddled inside air-raid shelters, watching their food supplies shrink, and seeing the death toll mounting, didn't know. Would they and their loved ones survive? Would the enemy be defeated? Would life ever return to normal? These questions and fears are similar to ours during this pandemic: fear of an unknown future; fear because of our helplessness

and loss of control; fear of death. But the hope we can cling to is also the same: God is in control. We can trust Him with our lives.

3. An interesting aspect of this book is that it's told from the POV of three women, different in many ways—personality, age, background. Was this intentional or did the characters come to you organically? Did you identify with one more than another?

I wanted to explore different perspectives because the war affected people of different ages in different ways. Lena is in her forties, and her concerns and fears are for her family and her home. Everything she loves and has worked for is at risk. Her daughter Ans, who is in her early twenties, is just discovering who she is and what she wants in life. With her first job and first boyfriend, she enjoys living in the present with an exciting future ahead of her, waiting to be discovered. Miriam is dealing with unimaginable losses and faces death on a daily basis. Her future is the most precarious and unknown.

I think it was easiest for me to relate to Lena because she is a wife and mother of three children, including an adult daughter. She had to make many difficult choices during the war and needed to consider not only her own safety and survival as she took risks for her faith but her family's as well. She was forced to lean on God and to trust Him in impossible circumstances, something many wives and mothers must often do. And she had to learn the hardest lesson of all—not to hate but to love our enemies as Jesus taught.

4. Did anything surprise you as you were doing your research for this story? What about as you were writing?

I was surprised to learn that the Christian faith of the Dutch people played such a huge role in their resistance to Nazi brutality. Corrie ten Boom and her family, along with countless other Dutch Christians, put their faith into action in spite of the risks. They challenged me to ask myself if my faith is strong enough to do what they did.

Since I make up the plot as I go along, I'm often surprised as I'm writing because I have no idea what will happen until I'm writing it. That was the case with Ans's boyfriend, Erik. He doesn't agree with what the Nazis are doing, but he submits to them so he can continue to be a policeman. As the story developed and the Nazi persecution intensified, I was surprised to see where his accommodation with the enemy would lead him and how it would affect his relationship with Ans.

5. What can readers look forward to from you next?

My Christmas novella, *The Wish Book Christmas*, will be published just in time for the 2021 holidays. It serves as a happy sequel to my novel *If I Were You*, continuing the story of Eve and Audrey and their two little boys.

After that, my next novel, coming in June 2022, is set in the postwar years. It's the story of a returning WWII veteran who suffers from PTSD—which wasn't recognized during that era—and the two women who try to help him recover.



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

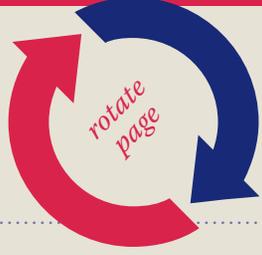
1. The three main characters in *Chasing Shadows*—Lena, Miriam, and Ans—are all in different seasons of life and have different outlooks on the world. Which character did you most closely identify with? Which one was the hardest for you to relate to? How did each woman grow and change as a result of her experiences during the war?
2. In the prologue, we read that Lena “used to believe that the enemy of faith was doubt.” But by the end of the war, “she’d learned that faith’s destroyer was fear.” Do you agree with this conclusion? Read Hebrews 11. Did these heroes of faith battle doubt or fear or both?
3. A recurring theme in Miriam’s story is the power of music. Do you have a similar appreciation for music? What form does it take in your life—playing an instrument, singing, listening to favorite artists or genres? Why do you think music can be such a powerful force? How does it help Miriam, both physically and emotionally?
4. Ans tells Erik that she answers to a higher authority than the Nazis. If God asks her to disobey the authorities (what’s known as civil disobedience), she says she has to obey God, even at the risk of her own life. How do you feel about civil disobedience? What are some other examples from history that come to mind? Are there any moral issues you feel strongly enough about to risk disobeying the law?
5. In one of Erik and Ans’s conversations about right and wrong, Erik asks, “What can you and I do to stop evil when it’s all over the world?” Have you ever felt overwhelmed by the evil in the world? How have you found ways to make a difference? What advice would you give a friend who has the same outlook as Erik?
6. Miriam’s father tells her and Avi that his best university students were the ones who asked questions and says, “I think God likes it when we ask questions.” Do you agree? Can you think of examples from the Bible that point to this being true? How might this idea of questioning God change your prayer life?
7. After Pieter escapes death from a Nazi firing squad, he tells Lena, “I felt at peace as I knelt there. I thought of that Scripture that says, ‘For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.’ I understood it.” The Scripture he quotes is Philippians 1:21, written by the apostle Paul. What do you know about Paul’s life that might have led him to make this declaration? How does it apply to Pieter’s life? Is this an assertion that you feel able to make? Why or why not?
8. Ans and her grandfather discuss whether it’s okay to lie for a good cause. He brings up the example of the Jewish midwives lying to Pharaoh in order to save Jewish babies and says, “There’s a difference between lying to save yourself and for your selfish ends—to get yourself out of trouble or make yourself look good—and lying to save another person’s life. A huge difference.” Can you think of other examples from the Bible where someone lied for a “good” reason? How do you feel about passages like these?
9. Eloise speaks words that inspire Ans and which Eloise goes on to live out: “What good is my life if I selfishly keep it to myself and don’t spend it for others?” How does this reflect a biblical worldview? What are some ways you have been challenged to spend your life for others? What do you find difficult about doing this?
10. *Chasing Shadows* deals a lot with impossible choices—trying to decide between two or more options, none of which are really good or right. Miriam and Avi are faced with the impossible choice of whether to separate and entrust their precious baby to strangers, just in hopes of surviving. Have you ever needed to make a decision that had no right answer? Do you think you would make the same choice they made?
11. Lena’s pastor-father tells his congregation, “Jesus said the most important commandments are to love the Lord your God and love your neighbor. And so, whenever we face a dilemma, we can ask, What is the best way to show our love for God and for our neighbor?” How do various characters in the book choose to show their love for God and neighbor?
12. After Pieter is deployed, Lena tells her father she’s “never understood why [God] doesn’t answer our prayers if He loves us.” How does her father respond? When you’ve faced a challenging circumstance and it feels like your pleas are falling on deaf ears, what comforts you?
13. After being invited to join the prison camp orchestra, why does Miriam falter before her first performance? What does Luke 9:23 say about the life of a believer in Christ? Is it too much to ask Miriam to go on with the show?
14. As the war nears its end, Lena has an interesting conversation with her cousin Truus in which Lena tries to share how she’s changed and how her faith has grown. Truus responds, “Can we please talk about something else?” Do you like to share and analyze like Lena, or would you rather put the past behind you and focus on the future like Truus? Is one way better than the other?
15. When we go through a major event—whether it’s a personal battle like an illness or the loss of a loved one, or something more widespread like a world war—does it make sense that we would come out the other side changed? In what ways have you experienced change after big upheavals?



ANSWERS

GAME—CHASING SHADOWS *trivia*

From questions on page 4



No peeking! Turn this page upside down to see the correct answers from the trivia game on page 4.

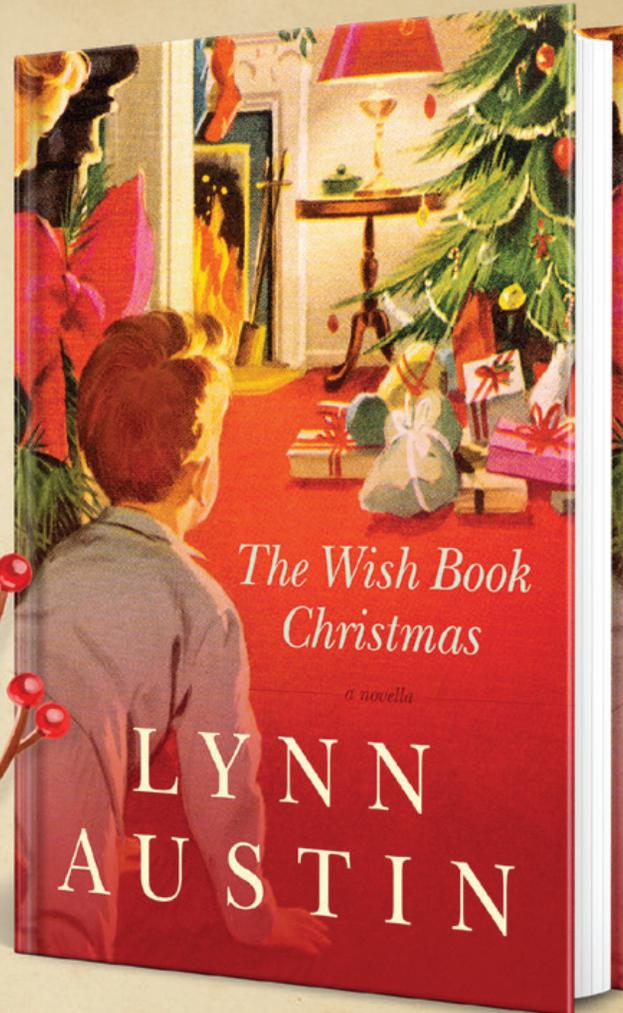
1. Lena and Pieter's main Resistance contact is named Wolf; what is the name of Ans's main contact?
Answer: Hawk
2. Where is the secret door to Max and Ina's hiding place in Pieter and Lena's home?
Answer: in the front of the piano, under the keys
3. What does Professor Huizenga teach at Leiden University?
Answer: physics; he arranges a job for Miriam's father to also teach physics
4. How was Ans introduced to Erik?
Answer: He was friends with the boyfriend of a waitress Ans befriended at a cafe Ans and Eloise visited often
5. How old is Wim when he is taken by the Nazis?
Answer: sixteen
6. What does Ans take to the patriotic demonstration on June 29 celebrating the birthday of Queen Wilhelmina's son-in-law, Prince Bernhard?
Answer: A white carnation
7. Where was Erik born?
Answer: Bandung, Java, the Dutch East Indies
8. What does Bep's Hebrew name, Elishava, mean?
Answer: God's promise
9. What do Pieter and his Dutch countrymen steal from the post office for the Resistance?
Answer: ration cards
10. What did Bep name the doll that Lena got her?
Answer: Nollie



COMING
SOON

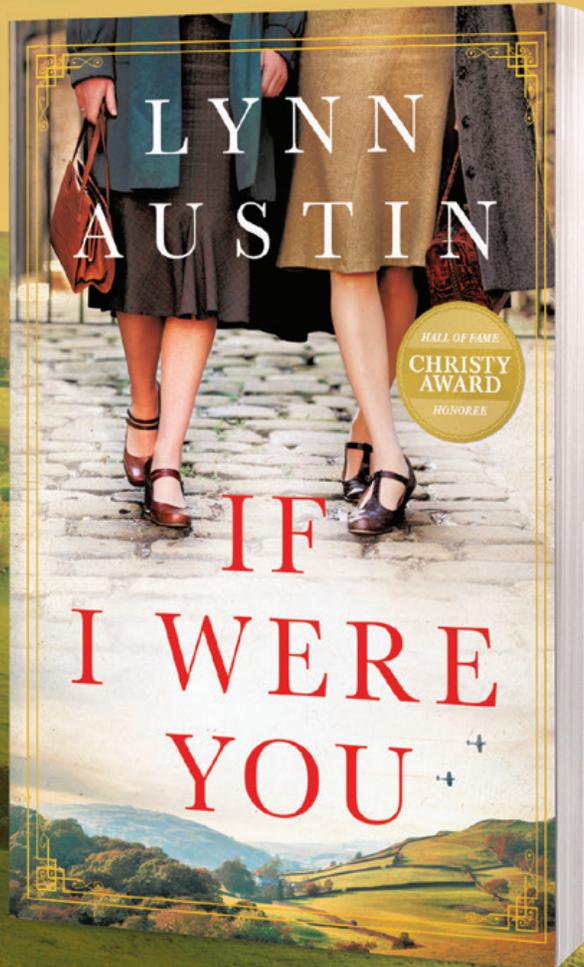
The Wish Book Christmas

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.



ALSO, BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR LYNN AUSTIN'S
NEXT NOVEL, COMING JUNE 2022

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“Desperation and forgiveness are part of a classic upstairs/downstairs plot . . . [in this] tantalizing domestic drama.”

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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