

READING GROUP NOTES

*Two women,
an ancient map,
and a devastating secret
spanning centuries*



The
ENGRAVER'S
Secret

LISA MEDVED

PRAISE FOR

The Engraver's Secret

'An inspired blend of history and suspense ... this wonderful debut novel will inhabit your dreams.'

Dominic Smith, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Last Painting of Sara de Vos*

'A captivating debut that brings the art and history of the Baroque era to life on the page.'

Evie Woods, author of the #1 *Wall Street Journal* and Amazon Kindle bestseller *The Lost Bookshop*

'Art and history collide in this sumptuous novel of dark secrets, family, violence and treachery.'

Karen Brooks, bestselling author of *The Escapades of Tribulation Johnson*

'I was utterly taken by this stunning debut, a riveting and perfectly paced tale of betrayal, secrets, theft, ambition, danger, and desire.'

Melissa Ashley, bestselling author of *The Naturalist of Amsterdam*

'A beautifully told tale about the strength of familial bonds, and a centuries-old mystery that holds the key to a young woman's future.'

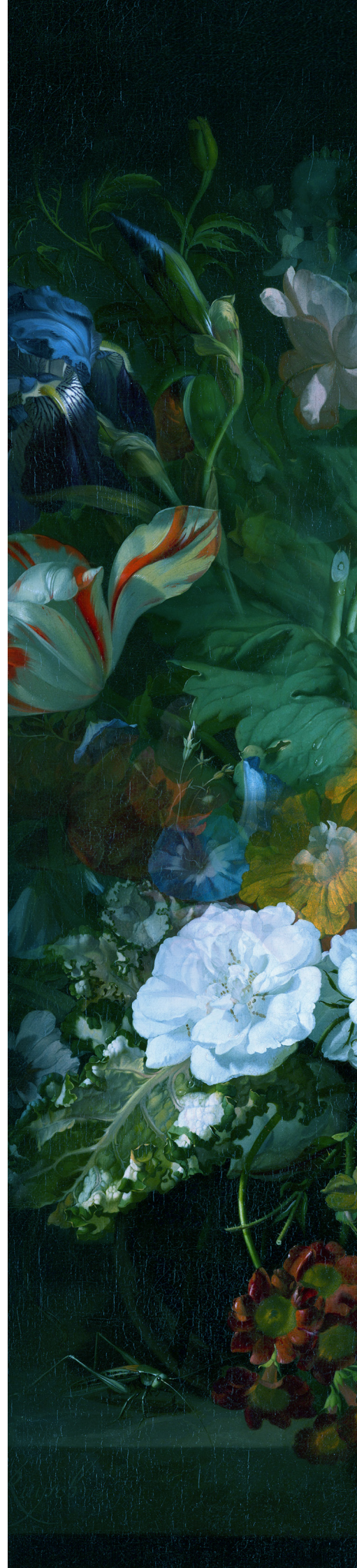
Lauren Chater, bestselling author of *The Winter Dress*

'I was engrossed by this tale of art and intrigue, love and betrayal, friendship and loss.'

Suzanne Leal, bestselling author of *The Watchful Wife*

'The exotic mystery and brutal treachery of art and academia across eras binds two women to both their ambition and each other in Lisa Medved's expertly researched and tenderly wrought debut novel.'

Sally Colin-James, author of *One Illumined Thread*, winner of the Colleen McCullough Fellowship Award



ABOUT THE BOOK

Innocence and delight, guile and misapprehension, the hint of indifference, even disdain on her pretty features. Fickle, he called her, a mixture of surprise and confidence. She is all that and more, brought to life with the ink strokes of a genius.

Spanish Netherlands, 1620s: raised by her father Lucas to know her mind, Antonia Vorsterman sees everything that goes on in her world – all the rivalries and jealousies that course through the artists' studios and workshops of Antwerp.

Drawn into the lively household of the artist Peter Paul Rubens, whose work her father engraves for a living, Antonia begins to see a life of colour and possibility for herself – until Lucas entrusts her with a terrible secret that will alter the course of their family's future.

Belgium, present day: haunted by the recent loss of her mother, art historian Charlotte Hubert moves to Antwerp to research her hero, the Baroque master Rubens, and to seek answers about the father she's never met.

But a startling discovery hidden inside an ancient map folio turns Charlotte's quiet academic life into a dangerous hunt for long-lost treasures, missing for 400 years. In the shadowy cloisters of the university, where ambition, obsession and violence run deep, nothing is as it seems.

Charlotte is certain of one thing – no one can be trusted.

Centuries apart, Charlotte's and Antonia's lives intertwine as they unearth long-buried secrets about a master and his engraver where theft, betrayal and the fallout of family loyalty run rampant.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Lisa Medved is an Australian author who has lived in The Hague since 2008. After completing a Bachelor of Arts in history and fine art from the University of Melbourne, Lisa went on to work in public relations and event management, honing her writing skills for various corporate publications and several magazines in the UK and the Netherlands. *The Engraver's Secret* is her first novel, and was born out of a passion for history and art, a curiosity in the life of a little-known Flemish engraver and his relationship with a world-renowned painter, and a desire to explore the secrets that can lie beneath the surface of family dynamics. Lisa is currently working on her second novel, which is set in fin-de-siècle Vienna and post-WWI London around the art of Gustav Klimt.



READING GROUP QUESTIONS

1. Was the strength and determination displayed by Antonia when she was a girl and, later as an adult, realistic for the seventeenth century?
2. How does Charlotte justify her choice of stealing a keycard and sneaking into the conservation room without permission? Do you think her behaviour can be excused under any circumstances?
3. Did you agree with the advice Rachael Hubert offered Charlotte about being cautious about trusting others, and not revealing your full hand until ready? How did this contribute to Charlotte's hesitancy in trusting Miles and Sébastien?
4. Which of the two settings – modern-day Antwerp or seventeenth-century Antwerpen – did you prefer and why?
5. How did the themes of intellectual theft and ownership manifest in both timelines?
6. Did Rubens treat Vorsterman unfairly over the ownership of the engravings? Should Rubens have allowed Vorsterman to make copies of the engravings and sell them?
7. How does the book explore the core themes of ownership, jealousy, family commitment, loyalty and trust?
8. Do you believe that once trust in a familial relationship is lost that it is impossible to gain it back?
9. What surprised you most about the story? Were there any questions left unanswered by the end of the book?
10. If you promised a loved one to never reveal a secret, under what circumstances would you break your promise?