



# SECRETS OF THE CHOCOLATE HOUSE

by Paula Brackston

About the Book

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## *About the Book*



Continuing the Found Things series has allowed me to spend more time in the charming county of Wiltshire, and I am very happy about that. Those of you who have read book one, *The Little Shop of Found Things*, will already be familiar with the small market town of Marlborough, which sits among the rolling downs, surrounded by an expansive landscape brimming with ancient sites and glorious old houses. In book two we see Xanthe and her mother, Flora, settling into the rhythm of their new life in the antiques shop that is now their home. Another joy of writing this series is that it more or less obliges me to spend time hunting down treasures in antiques shops, emporiums, and markets! I try to resist buying too many wonderful things, but sometimes a particular find will be too good to leave behind. I may not hear objects sing to me, but I swear some of them pipe up with a little “take me home!” now and again.



*In Secrets of the Chocolate House* I chose an old copper chocolate pot as the antique that would summon Xanthe to do her work as

a Spinner. My research led me to discover the history behind these elegant objects. I never realised how many and various they could be. Chocolate houses actually rivaled coffeehouses in the seventeenth century as places where people would meet to discuss the topics of the day,

exchange news, and even plot dissent. All that intrigue and risk fuelled by hot chocolate, exotic and rich and often laced with alcohol, really caught my imagination. Frankly, it's about time we saw these shops opening again!



The main house featured in the seventeenth century part of the book is the home of Benedict Fairfax. I have called it Laybrook Abbey, for ease of pronunciation, but it is based on a real place, called Lacock (pronounced Lay-cock) Abbey. It is a fascinating building that began as an Abbey, was home to a community of nuns, and then became a grand family home. As in the book, it was developed and added to over centuries. I love that quality in an old building! It's so interesting to identify which parts of the house were built when and how they have been adapted and added to over time. The village of Lacock is often used for filming, as is the Abbey itself. I found it inspirational and the perfect home for a social climber like Fairfax. Well worth a visit.

## *About the Book*



## Discussion Questions

1. As in the first book of the series (*The Little Shop of Found Things*) part of the story takes place in the early seventeenth century. How did you feel about spending time in this era? What aspects of living in 1606 do you think you would have enjoyed, and what would you have hated?
2. In this book we get to know some of the original characters better and we meet new ones. Who was your favorite character and why?
3. I would love to see chocolate houses become a thing again! If you were going to open one, where would you have it and what would it be like?
4. As the title suggests, there are secrets in this story. Some need to be kept, others demand that the truth be revealed. What did you feel about how Xanthe had to keep secrets from the people who matter to her?
5. There are new found things in the Little Shop. Did you have a favorite antique or collectable? If you were going to buy stock for the shop, what would you look for?
6. Xanthe is beginning to learn more about the Spinners. What are your feelings about this aspect of the story? What do you imagine might be in that Spinners book?





7. Samuel and Liam are two very different men but both love Xanthe. Which one would you rather have as your book boyfriend?
8. Xanthe is forced to defend herself and her loved ones against Benedict Fairfax. Would you have done anything differently if you had found yourself in her situation?
9. If you had to pack a bag to travel back in time, what would you put in it?
10. The story continues with *The Garden of Promises and Lies*! What are you hoping to see in book three in the series?

I love hearing from my readers! Feel free to contact me on my Facebook page or through my website:  
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