

*Review by D. Donovan, Senior Reviewer, Midwest Book Review — September 2020*

**What's Not Said**

**Valerie Taylor**

**She Writes Press**

**978-1-63152-745-6**

**Paperback: \$16.95**

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*What's Not Said* will appeal to urban women who like fun stories of cityscapes and interpersonal relationships. It follows Kassie O'Callaghan's plan to divorce her abusive husband and move in with a younger man. But his claim of suffering from chronic kidney disease temporarily stymies her until she discovers the truth, making her escape plot all the more important. Or, so it seems.

*What's Not Said* is about deceit and lies in marriage, secret lives and vows of fidelity and loyalty, and the kinds of decisions an older, long-time wife faces during the process of exploring new options and justifying old habits.

As Kassie takes several unexpected turns, each revelation bringing its own decision and life-changing choice, readers follow the trajectory of a self-admitted perfectionist who is used to doing the right thing even when that approach is unclear.

Husband Mike, too, is facing changes as he examines the future of his life, both in sickness and in health, and muses on his new options and restrictions: *"Did he have a choice? Not a good one anyway. So Mike, outnumbered and defeated, grabbed the TV remote, clicked on Andrea Mitchell, and ate his lunch; one bland spoonful aft er another. Not half bad. Not half good, either. Is this what I have to look forward to the rest of my life? Good grief. Soon, Mike surrendered his mood to sleep. At last."*

Mike has always been immersed in image and success. When Kassie discovers his big stash of hidden money, the marital game changes for both of them. Kassie is a neat freak used to order and control in her life. Can she grasp something that is spiraling out of the zone of familiarity she's built with Mike over the years?

Things are changing. With aging and new restrictions as new possibilities, Mike and Kassie make their decisions, discoveries, and field the obstacles of health and aging. Readers will find in their story an absorbing tale of mistakes, looming divorce, love, and the kinds of concessions demanded by health changes and a revised form of affection.

There are ethical conundrums, illicit associations within and outside of the family structure, discussions of organ donor challenges, and a mother and daughter's secrets, which impact across generations. "What if..." is one of the major threads connecting Kassie's life with those around her as she explores these new possibilities and strangely altered realities.

Female readers who look for "chick-lit" about mature women facing changes in their lives and loves will find *What's Not Said* develops good characters and realistic scenarios, creating encounters that keep the action nicely paced and the characters believable and appealing.

It's a fine marital examination that covers changing scenarios, ideals of loyalty and love, and the drive of each main character to find something more meaningful and important than they've experienced in the past. *What's Not Said* is highly recommended for women who look for not just stories of marital relationships, but the unexpected revelations that revolve around life purpose and the immortality of love.