

WHAT'S NOT SAID — A NOVEL
By Valerie Taylor
Book Club Discussion Guide

1. The expiration date on the Ricci-O'Callaghan marriage passed long before the novel begins. If Kassie hadn't met Chris, and/or if her mother hadn't died, would she have stayed in the marriage forever?
2. What do you think about Kassie's theory that marriage should be a five-year renewable contract? What are the pros and cons? Could it ever work?
3. Both Kassie and her mother, Patricia O'Callaghan, embrace an Emily Dickinson quote: "Saying nothing...sometimes says the Most." Did this motto serve them well? How would Kassie's marriage and relationship with her mother been different had they both actually said something?
4. Kassie's childhood was marred by the death of her father and the abuse of her wicked stepfather. Yet, her mother wielded strong influence on her, as did Uncle Dan. How did these relationships shape Kassie's view of marriage, family, career?
5. At the beginning of the novel, Mike is an unsympathetic character. Is he any more likeable at the end of the story? What could he have done, if anything, to redeem himself?
6. Are you surprised Kassie agreed to be tested to see if she could be a donor for Mike? What do you think she'd have done if she were a match? Would you donate an organ to a relative, friend, or stranger?
7. When Nancy tells Kassie that her husband, Bill, saw her at the hotel, is Nancy a friend or busybody?
8. When did you make the connection between Mike and Chris?
9. Discuss the ethics of Kassie's decision to unlock the first box she found in Mike's bureau and her determination to find and open the second. What do you think about her taking the money, and then putting it back? What would you have done?
10. Why did Chris defend Mike? Should he have taken Kassie's position? Are you surprised he didn't agree to spy on Mike at the office?
11. What makes Kassie relatable? Did you connect more with Kassie or Bad Kassie?
12. Was Patricia O'Callaghan Mike's accomplice or did she behave the way most mothers would? If you were Kassie, would you forgive Patricia?
13. The characters in this story lie as easily as they brush their teeth each day. Whose deceptions are the worst, most unforgivable? Mike's? Kassie's? Patricia's? Karen's?
14. At the beginning of the story, we learn that Kassie is a control freak. Is being a control freak a flaw or a strength in her character?
15. What do you think the future holds for Kassie and Chris?