

## Book Club Discussion Starters

# THE LIFE I STOLE by Nikola Scott

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### *About the book*

It's 1953. Memories of the war are beginning to fade and young Queen Elizabeth has just ascended to the throne.

Isobel McIntyre is a doctor-in-training at a London teaching hospital. It's not easy being a woman working in medicine, and Isobel carries the additional burden of a shocking secret. One night three years ago, she took someone else's name. By the time she understood the implications, it was too late to turn back.

Now the secret she's been hiding for so long threatens everything – her career, new-found friendships, and a love affair that promises the kind of joy Isobel thought was only for others.

Love and happiness can't thrive in a world of lies. But does Isobel have the courage to tell the truth, whatever the consequences?

### *Questions for discussion*

1. How do you view the moral implications of Agnes' decision in the vault? Do you think her action is justified? Could you imagine doing the same?
2. And if you could walk into someone else's life like this, what would it be?
3. Agnes' mother Daisy is portrayed as fiercely independent within a small community where everyone is expected to strictly fit in. Does she do the right thing in modelling this behaviour for her daughter, or did you feel occasionally that it might be quite exhausting for a child to constantly be caught between fitting in and standing out?
4. Did you like or dislike Everett Carlisle? Would you consider him a typical 'villain' in this story?
5. What do Ella, Mrs Schwartz and Mrs Smith have in common? What roles do they play in Agnes' life?

6. Agnes has no problem standing up for her views in general, so why does she not own up to her romantic involvement with Grey when they're discovered by his father?
7. The fifties were a difficult time for women in England. Having worked in men's roles during the war, they were suddenly expected to go back to their traditional roles as if nothing happened. The moral code was very strict and women who didn't adhere to it or found themselves 'in trouble' had few resources to help them. Reading Lily's story (and indeed Daisy's, too), can you remember hearing similar experiences among family members of your own?
8. After some initial hiccups, Agnes seems to be doing really well at the hospital. What makes her decide to come clean about her lie after all and jeopardise everything she worked so hard for?
9. And what do you think about Agnes getting the chance to start over at the Royal Free Hospital? Is it acceptable, in your view, that she got away with her actions?
10. In early drafts of the story, the love story between Agnes and Grey did not have a future. Are you happy that I changed my mind and there is hope for them after all? 😊 Or would you have found it more realistic if he had truly broken with her?
11. If there is one passage in the book that you would highlight and that has stuck with you, which one is it and why?

### **About the author**

Nikola Scott was born and raised in Germany and studied at university there. Having been obsessed with books from a young age, Nikola moved to New York City to begin her first job in book publishing – a career in which she could fully indulge her love of fiction. She spent ten years working in publishing in New York and then in London, editing other people's books, before she decided to take the leap into becoming a full-time writer herself. She now lives in Frankfurt with her husband and two sons.

Her previous novels, *My Mother's Shadow*, *Summer of Secrets* and *The Orchard Girls*, have been international bestsellers and translated in more than twelve languages around the world.

For more news and behind-the-scenes information, join Nikola's monthly newsletter on [www.nikolascott.com](http://www.nikolascott.com)!

Nikola is also on Instagram and Facebook at *@NikolaScottAuthor*

