



# READING GUIDE

## AND EVERYTHING NICE KIM MORITSUGU

Reading level: 4.6

Interest level: Adult

Themes: truth, lies, honesty and integrity

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### Summary

Twenty-four-year-old Stephanie lives with her mom and manages a Gap store. When her mom invites Steph to join the Tuesday night rock choir at a nearby church, Steph laughs it off. But when her boyfriend says it would do her some good to try something different, she agrees to give it a try.

At the first rehearsal, Steph sits beside Anna Rai, a local TV personality. A true journalist, Anna is friendly and curious about everyone, and knows the group well. She seems nice enough, but she raises the hackles on a couple of catty women, who can't get enough of dissing Anna's lifestyle segment, "And Everything Nice," on her daytime talk show, *Noontime*. It's so high school, thinks Steph. But she enjoys choir more than she anticipated—and she finds a friend in Anna.

Over the course of their friendship, Steph advises Anna about how to shape her show to appeal to a broader, younger audience. In return, Anna gives Steph some tips for being on camera as she prepares a new training video for Gap.

When Anna's personal journal goes missing, she panics. Despite a thorough search, the journal doesn't turn up. Anna confesses to Steph that she's having an affair with a senior broadcaster at the TV station. If their relationship (so neatly charted in her journal) is exposed, it'll wreck his family—and Anna's chances of succeeding him as chief anchor.

A blackmail letter arrives. Together, the two sift through possible suspects and devise a scheme to catch the journal-snatcher. As per the blackmailer's instructions, Anna leaves \$10,000 in an envelope in the church bathroom. The women rig up a camera—and catch Brandon, a young choir member, red-handed. Brandon confesses he didn't actually steal the journal; Anna had placed it in his bag by accident. But when he read its contents, a nefarious idea hit: a way to pay off his student loans! How could he resist?

As a reward for helping her solve the mystery, Anna invites Steph to sign onto *Noontime* as a junior producer. Things are looking up, indeed.





### Questions for Discussion

1. Have you ever found someone's wallet, or something of great value, and felt momentarily conflicted about what to do with it? Discuss why these situations pose moral dilemmas.
2. Stephanie feels like she doesn't measure up to her mother's expectations, even though she's an adult. Why do we hang on to that need for our parents' approval?
3. What are the difficulties in sharing a house with a parent, grandparent or relative of a different generation? What are the rewards? Is this a preferred living arrangement, in your view?
4. Singing is culturally universal; every group of people on earth sings or creates music. Why does music have such power over us? What is it that we seek through making and listening to music?
5. In the beginning of *And Everything Nice*, Stephanie has no intention of joining the choir. But good things can happen when you try something you thought you never would. How has this proven true in your own life?
6. Anna Rai presents herself in a friendly, "nice" way, both on television and in person. Some people—notably the catty women who sit behind Stephanie in the choir rehearsal—think it's an act. And when Stephanie watches Anna's show, commenting to her mother that Anna's niche is "nice," Joanne says, "Poor her then." What does she mean? How is being nice undesirable?
7. In chapter 7, Nathan observes that if you want something these days, you have to go after it. Give an example of a time when this has been true for you.
8. Anna Rai uses a journal to help her sort out how she's thinking and feeling. She enjoys using it as a means to express herself. What are some other ways that people use to express their emotions and sort through the hard stuff?
9. Anna asks Steph what her plans are in terms of her career. Steph tells her she might like to make training videos, even though that's a far reach. Really, she just wants Anna to think she's got some sort of direction. Why is it so important for us to seem like we know what we're doing in this life?
10. Do you agree with Steph when she reflects that all of life is just like high school?
11. Anna and Steph are unlikely friends—two people who have been thrown together by chance circumstances and who now are forced to work together to solve the case of the missing journal. Has a unique problem ever driven you to team up with someone you otherwise wouldn't? How did it turn out?
12. When the culprit is finally caught, Steph takes a few minutes to read through Anna's journal. Would you have done the same thing? Why are we always so interested in other people's messiness?





13. Anna Rai seems to be a very nice woman who plays by the rules—until we learn she’s sleeping with the senior anchor of the evening news, who is married with three children. Does this change your opinion of her? How easily are we misled by the appearances of others?
14. Steph considers blackmailing Anna with the information she has about the woman’s affair with her colleague. But she doesn’t. She also reflects that she isn’t the type of person to try to get ahead through dishonest means such as stealing or cheating. Do you think that’s what it takes to get ahead? How does one’s feeling of accomplishment change when he or she cheats versus when he or she uses hard work and perseverance to succeed?
15. What is the message of this book?
16. What is the author’s purpose in writing the prologue to *And Everything Nice*?

