

THE PRICE OF SILENCE

By Camilla Trinchieri

Questions for Discussion

1. Secrecy and intimacy seem to feed off one another in *The Price of Silence*. Consider the secrets kept by the following characters: Emma, Tom, Josh, and An-ling – even Feldy. In each case, what motivates the deceiver? Who is protected and who is harmed by the secret? Can deception ever be an expression of love?
2. Early on, Emma becomes obsessed with An-ling and begins to neglect her own son, Josh. Do you think Emma's a good mother? Do you think it's possible to consciously withhold love from a child -- either as an attempt to punish or protect? Did you find yourself criticizing Emma, empathizing with her, or both?
3. Tom is a good father. Is he also a good husband?
4. What motivates Emma to leave her family? Can it be justified, even if she originally planned to be gone only for a few days? Does Tom understand why she left?
5. What allows Tom to see through An-ling's lies, while Emma can't? Why do you think Emma does not see the lies?
6. It's been said that rape is one of the most alienating, isolating experiences imaginable. Emma's rape by Tom on p. 40, however, might appear to be a positive turning point in their marriage. How do the characters justify the violence between them and how do they both experience the loneliness and solitude of grief after the rape?
7. A child's death can tear marriages apart or bind them more closely together. What did Amy's death do to Emma and Tom? Did they experience loss the same way? How is each character responsible for their marital problems? What could their future hold, after the trial?
8. Some families share intimate expressions of affections, even including kissing on the lips. Examine the scene and kiss that Emma and An-ling share p. 138-139. Is this, as Emma claims, a motherly kiss? Or are Tom's sexual jealousy and sense of betrayal justified?
9. Organized religion and cultural traditions are contrasted in the story. Belief in and dependency on the spiritual seems to ebb and flow during the course of the book. Compare Emma's loss and rediscovery of religion to An-ling's quest for cultural identity. Are there similarities? How do their family histories impact this side of their lives?

10. Consider An-ling's relationship with Josh. What motivates her seduction? Is it, as Emma believes, an attack? A mutual attraction? How does An-ling's own childhood in her US adopted home affect her sexual identity? Given that Emma sees An-ling as her daughter, An-ling might see Josh as her brother. Why is there so much sexual tension between family members in this story?
11. How did An-ling die, do you think? Suicide? Murder? Who is responsible? Examine Josh's choices regarding An-ling's email. In what contexts do children find themselves responsible for their parents' safety?
12. What do you think of this story's representation of the justice system? What was your opinion of the final outcome of the trial?
13. Trinchieri may be saying that out of tragedy comes healing. Emma's marriage seemed unsure from the start, later her family cracks and then is eventually rejoined. Or is it? Do you agree that good can come of great trauma?

