

## STORY TWO *Silent Girl*

The title story of the collection was inspired by the improbable plot of *Pericles, Prince of Tyre*. In *Pericles*, the hero's wife, presumed dead, is buried at sea yet turns up later, alive and untouched by another man, having hidden herself in a temple to the goddess Diana. His daughter, Marina, is kidnapped by pirates and sold to a brothel yet retains her virginity. In *Silent Girl*, Matsi, a girl from Vancouver, is vacationing in Thailand in 2004 when she loses her mother in the tsunami. Her father sends her back home with people he thinks are trustworthy, but they sell her to human traffickers.

### QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

*If you're into Shakespeare:*

1. According to scholars, Marina's function is symbolic: to represent continuity of life and kingship and the virtues of innocence, purity, and kindness. She experiences no internal conflict. How would you describe Matsi's character?
2. Marina is fifteen when she's kidnapped by pirates and sold to a brothel. Matsi is seven when the Wongs deliver her into the hands of traffickers. How does the age difference affect your reading of *Silent Girl* compared to *Pericles*?
3. Marina saves herself from brothel customers through her eloquence. What does Matsi's silence do for her?
4. Virtue is rewarded and vice punished in *Pericles*. What does *Silent Girl* have to say about virtue and vice?
5. Storms create chaos in the lives of Marina and her parents. What do the tsunami and later hurricane accomplish in *Silent Girl*?
6. What is the role of the italicized sections in *Silent Girl*? How is it similar or different than that of Gower's monologues in *Pericles*?
7. Marina leaves the brothel openly in keeping with the virtue she symbolizes. How does Matsi leave her brothel? What does her exit say about her character?

*If you're not:*

1. *Silent Girl* is set in a variety of locations. What clues help the reader figure out where Matsi is, even when she doesn't know?

2. What does Matsi's silence do for her? What other writing techniques add complexity to her characterization?
3. What is the role of the italicized sections in *Silent Girl*? What is the role of the story of Ma-tsu, Empress of Heaven?
4. How are virtue and vice rewarded or punished in *Silent Girl*?
5. Is the story's portrayal of reality for children sold into sexual slavery more or less horrifying than you believe it to be? Why?
6. What do the tsunami and later hurricane accomplish in *Silent Girl*?
7. What does Matsi's decision at the end say about her character? How do the brown girls influence her actions?
8. To what degree is Maw-Maw a collaborator in the oppression of females, a victim of it, or both?