

ASK MARIAH – Barbara Freethy - READER'S GUIDE

1. Michael, when justifying why he made the right choice to pick a stable job versus a risky one more in line with his dreams, says "ideals were fine, but they didn't put food on the table."

What compromises have you made in your life and to your ideals in order to survive? Looking back, do you think these were necessary? Would you do things differently knowing what you know now? Why or why not?

2. Vincent wants Tony to come home and run the family business. He says that since he provided a home and food for Tony, this is what Tony needs to do for him.

What do children owe the parents who raised, fed and clothed them? Does Tony owe his parents something so they can retire in peace knowing the legacy of their restaurant is safe? What have you done out of respect for your parents that meant giving up personal goals or dreams?

3. As a historian, Joanna believes in protecting and studying the past so that we can learn from past mistakes.

Do you believe in preserving the past or should one look forward? Given our history and the repeated conflicts and events, do you believe we really learn from our past or do you believe we repeat patterns? What do you find is true in your personal life?

4. Joanna had broken up with her boyfriend because his love for English Literature, which she had once found romantic, began to bug her. Michael notes that the things you love about someone can turn into the things you hate.

Has something you loved about someone ever turned into a pet peeve? When did your feelings transition? What do you think triggered this change? Has anyone ever said the same of one of your traits or habits?

5. As Joanna becomes more obsessed with discovering her family's roots, her friend Nora tries to tell her that no matter what she finds, she would still be her - but Joanna isn't so sure.

Do you think your roots make you who you are? If you suddenly discovered you had another set of parents, would that change how you view yourself? Do you believe where you come from (nature) influences you more than how you were raised (nurture)?

6. Joanna and Michael share a lighthearted moment about the things people do when no one is around to see them, and he speculates she probably strips down to her underwear and dances around the house like Madonna.

Are there things you do only when you're alone - like you only sing in the shower or dance when one is watching? What kind of things? Why do you keep them private?

I hope you enjoyed ASK MARIAH and that these questions inspire some interesting discussion. Happy Reading!

Barbara Freethy