

## ***THE SECRET BETWEEN US***

### **Reading Group Discussion Guide**

1. What did the scenes depicting the accident reveal about the family dynamics between Deborah and Grace? How would you or your parents have reacted in a similar situation?
2. How does Deborah reconcile her role as a mother with her role as a daughter? What aspects of her upbringing does she try to avoid repeating? How did your perception of her family shift throughout the novel?
3. Do Jill and Deborah remember their mother the same way? How is their family affected by her absence? What accounts for the distinctions between Jill's and Deborah's paths in life?
4. Discuss the power and lack of power created by the many secrets woven throughout the novel. Which deceptions (including self-deceptions) harm the characters the most? Which deceptions are unavoidable?
5. Compare Grace and Dylan. How do they cope with their vulnerabilities? Do they respond to their parents' divorce in essentially the same way, or are their temperaments distinct?
6. Why was Calvin so secretive during his lifetime? What do his brother's observations about their childhood tell us about Calvin's outlook on life? How did your initial theories compare to the truth of Calvin's death?
7. Why was it difficult for Karen to realize the truth about Hal's infidelity? What sustains marriages such as theirs?
8. In what way do Deborah and her father view their role as physicians differently? How do they define the keys to healing?
9. What does it take for Deborah to trust Tom? How might their relationship have unfolded without the tension of a possible lawsuit on the part of Calvin's widow? In Tom's case, did the law help or hinder his quest for the truth?
10. Is Grace's wish to take responsibility for the accident related to her feelings about her parents' divorce? Or is she simply an honest young woman who wants to do the right thing? Does Greg respond appropriately to her self-destructive behavior?
11. What was Greg looking for when he married Rebecca? How was his perception of himself and his family transformed in the novel's closing chapters?
12. Why does Grace give Danielle the cold shoulder when she so badly needs someone to talk to? What do their fathers have in common?
13. What is it like to live in a close-knit community such as Leyland? On what basis do the residents judge one another? Who determines who the power brokers will be? How would Deborah and Grace's situation have changed if the accident had taken place in a large city?

14. In the end, was justice served by John's decision? What was his share of the responsibility in perpetuating the secret?

15. What makes the rain an appropriate sign for representing transformations, both when Deborah is with Tom and in the final images of Grace?

16. In what way does *The Secret Between Us* underscore dilemmas of truth and dishonesty explored in Barbara Delinsky's previous works? What distinguishes this novel from the other Delinsky fiction you have read?

17. What is the most significant secret you have ever tried to keep? What led you to reveal the truth?