

## ***Secrets: Visible and Invisible***

### **Discussion Questions**

#### **“The Underappreciated Virtues of Rusty Old Bicycles” by Corinna Turner**

1. Have you ever been in a situation in which you exposed yourself to danger to help someone, like Bane did when Margo couldn't run? Would you risk your life to save a friend? What about a stranger? An enemy?
2. This story is set in the future. What are the similarities and differences between this fictional future and the world today?
3. Margo mentions she has a secret that she is keeping from Bane. Why do you think she is keeping it? Should she be honest and tell him?
4. Margo and Bane manage to avoid serious trouble with the EuroGov. For now. What about Margo's and Bane's circumstances make them likely to clash with the government in the future?

#### **“Recreation” by Cynthia T. Toney**

1. Is making money important? At what age should you start earning money? Besides helping to support yourself now with food, clothing, gasoline, and other necessities, what are other good uses for your money?
2. Have you ever been embarrassed to tell a friend that you were helping someone unpopular, for fear of being ridiculed? How did you or could you overcome those feelings?
3. Have you ever helped a stranger out of kindness, without any hope of reward?
4. Elijah makes a big difference by helping his elderly neighbor. Is there anyone in your life who could benefit from your help and kindness?
5. Find an instance of irony in this story. What makes it ironic?

#### **“The Portrait of the Fire Starters” by Theresa Linden**

1. Some people find it a challenge to make and keep friends. Are you aware of others who might be longing for friendship but because of special needs, social anxiety, or other challenges, might not make friends easily? What can you do to reach out to others?
2. Have you, like the teens in the story, ever been in a situation where you were expected to confide personal feelings and failings in front of a group? How did that make you feel? What virtue do you think is needed to be able to open up about ourselves in front of others?
3. Do you pass by people during the day that could use a friendly smile?
4. Which character do you think changed the most? The least? Why do you feel that way?

### **“On the Brink of Hell” by Susan Peek**

1. Dario is a mercenary, a soldier for hire. Do you think being a mercenary is ethical?
2. How were 16th century hospitals different from modern hospitals? Would you have felt safe in a 16th century hospital?
3. A character in the story ends up reforming hospitals. Can you name some other saints throughout history who reformed institutions?
4. Dario, knowing that he would soon die, had a lot of regrets. Do you have any? How can you fix them?
5. Have you ever told someone about an experience you had that was so fantastical, the other person didn't believe you? Explain.

### **“Sister Francesca” by T.M. Gaouette**

1. In the story, Francesca was modest and pure. What are some words and phrases the author used to convey this character's virtue?
2. Francesca always wanted to be a nun. What do you hope to be when you grow up?
3. Were you surprised by the ending of this story? How did the author accomplish this surprise?
4. Like Jason, sometimes we must accept and respect someone else's decision because it is right for that person. Have you ever had to do the same? Have you ever had to make a difficult decision, knowing it was the right thing to do?

### **“Behind the Wheel” by Carolyn Astfalk**

1. Paul was pressed into keeping Sean's secret but ultimately had to tell their dad Sean's whereabouts. Have you ever been asked to keep a secret then had to break your promise for the other person's welfare? Give an example of a situation that would require you to divulge a secret.
2. The author builds amazing tension simply by having a character driving a truck. The reader not only sees, but hears, smells, and feels throughout the scene. What are some of the sensory descriptions the author uses to achieve this?
3. Sean didn't think through the possible consequences before he acted. Can you think of ways to avoid doing something reckless?
4. What is the most risky thing you've done to impress or make contact with a member of the opposite sex? Did you later regret your actions or realize they were unnecessary? Why or why not?

### **“More Precious than Gold” by Leslea Wahl**

1. The four protagonists of this story all show compassion and kindness in different ways. List the different ways each of the main characters show kindness to the children at camp.

2. Hans was very hurt by the townspeople. Why do you think more people didn't try to get to know him and stick up for him?
3. What are some qualities or characteristics a person should have if placed in charge of the care or activities of others? Have you ever been in charge of someone younger than yourself? Explain.
4. The arts have a unique way of uniting people through words, music, and images. Share an experience you had in which you connected with others through a song, a poem, or another art form.