



HERE'S A SECRET ...

## Simplicity Is Not Always Superior



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I'd had one of *those* days. The 15-minute recheck's pathology report crossed my desk moments before the appointment was scheduled to start, and it turned into an hour-long oncology consult. The last appointment before lunch was late, and the indigestion from scarfing down leftovers followed me into the afternoon when the Bernese mountain dog's emotional support Chihuahua, Pickle, also needed his ears looked at. And while Pickle was a lovely canine companion, he was a terrible veterinary patient.

I just wanted to get home, get into threadbare sweats, and curl up to watch the charming family photographer break up with the career-obsessed city guy to start over again with the Christmas tree farmer. That's when the blue and red lights in my rearview mirror appeared and my day was topped off with a deserved speeding ticket and a reminder about my safety.

Let's face it, we like it simple. The man in the black hat is bad, and the cowboy in the white hat is good. The elitist villain is cleverly defeated by the "awe shucks" secret superhero. These tropes are popular for a reason: They don't force us to ponder life choices or resolve moral entanglements.

Real-life "characters" are far less satisfying. Politicians on the opposite side who decide to support legislation we agree with, musicians we love who create music with risqué lyrics that surprise us, or our favorite author who takes action on a social stance we find abhorrent. All you have to do is log on to your favorite social media addiction to find proof that we hate those characters. We don't want to resolve those contradictions. We want to walk away, boycott, and cancel them or ignore their shortcomings and defend them. But what if you can't just walk away or brush off the problems? What if the complicated character in your life is you?

There are a multitude of studies that show that most people think they are good (above average in fact!). You probably think you are a good person—I know I do. At the same time, nearly 90% of the population will admit to speeding while driving, a crime. When I told my dental hygienist that I was routinely flossing, that was a lie, immoral. Some estimates say almost 40% of us will shoplift at some point in our lives—ever walked out of the grocery store with that case of toilet paper below the cart you forgot about?

When we don't let others exist in a world of contradictions, we don't let ourselves either. We make excuses for our behavior rather than doing the very hard work of examining ourselves, acknowledging our shortcomings, and improving our own behavior. You won't be the hero in every story, even if in the made-for-TV movies the veterinarian is *always* the good one! **TVP**