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Women and Honesty: Chopping Down The Cherry Tree

Honesty and lying have a rarified place in our culture. Children are told that “honesty is the best policy” and indeed the values of truth-telling are often extolled through folk tales, religion, and the law. The bible says that “thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbor.” According to myth, when George Washington confessed to his father that he chopped down his cherry tree, his father responded that [that honesty was worth more than a thousand trees](#). On the inverse, the boy who cried wolf was punished by death.

Of course the lesson of these tales is blunted when we find out that the people telling them are liars themselves, and shameless ones at that. Parents are probably the most dishonest people on earth: think Santa Clause, the Tooth Fairy, where babies come from, etc. Parents will even lie in the course of teaching their children not to lie, the story about George Washington, of course, is an apocryphal tale. More subtle forms of dishonesty occur as well, like when a parent promises a reward or punishment that they don't intend to dole out.

Perhaps the reason our culture values honesty in our children is because we ourselves know we're bad at it. In the process of writing this, I was listening to a YouTube playlist called “70's classics” (In the spirit of honesty I've decided to be honest about my music taste, even when I find it embarrassing.) A song called “Honesty” by Billy Joel started playing. I took the liberty of copying down some of the lyrics. “Honesty is such a lonely word, everyone is so untrue” And on and on it goes, singing about how hard it is to find honest people.

Billy Joel might be vindicated, or perhaps deeply saddened, by the fact that everyone is guilty of lying at some point. [A study at UMASS found that 60% of people can't get through a ten-minute conversation without lying at least once](#). At the same time, it is remarkable that people don't lie more often than they do. In Dan Ariely's book “The (Honest) Truth about Dishonesty” he details how the prevailing behavioral economist view of lying is that people perform a cost-benefit analysis in their head every time they have an opportunity for deception—whether that entails telling a white lie or stealing a bike that was left unlocked. According to this view, anyone will lie when the punishment for being caught x the likelihood of being caught is less than the reward for lying x the likelihood of getting away with it (x's are meant to signal multiplication, adding to the spirit of ruthless calculation). Yet most people do not steal unlocked bikes, even when there's little chance of facing retribution.

While extensive research exists on the human capacity for dishonesty, surprisingly little has been published on the connection between honesty and gender. What does exist is simplistic. Some research shows that men lie more than women, but that is in the context of experimental games where money can be earned from cheating. In contrast, the aforementioned UMASS found that women and men lie the same amount, but that the type of lie is different. According to that study, men tend to lie to make themselves sound better, and women tend to lie to make others feel better about themselves.

From my experience and the experience of my friends, as well as from what I've read, women do not shy away from dishonesty. This is not to cast a value judgement on my gender. Dishonesty isn't inherently a bad thing. At its best, it's a way to earn freedom, protect oneself, and gain privacy. Some studies suggest that lying is an indicator of intelligence: children who lie earlier in life have higher verbal IQ scores, and those who are better at lying have better executing functioning skills¹. On the other hand, there are obvious downsides to lying: lack of trust, isolation, hurting others.

The dualistic nature of honesty is what I wanted to explore through interviews. For this essay, I sat down with six college-aged women and talked about what has motivated them to lie throughout their life. Most of these women were strangers or casual acquaintances. One was a good friend. I did not prepare interview outlines because I wanted the conversations to feel casual and associational rather than regimented.

The two interviews below I grouped together for their contrast. The first is with a Mexican-American sophomore named Carmen (all names have been changed). The details she offered from her life gave me a rich insight into the relationship she has with honesty.

Carmen remembers the first lie she told. Her mom asked her if she dried her hair in a towel, and she responded that she had. In reality, she had used a cotton t-shirt to dry her hair, something that her mom was against. When her mom figured out that she'd been lied to, she told Carmen that lying was an act against god.

Over the years, Carmen lied more and more to her mom. Lying for her was a way to gain freedom from her mom's controlling parenting. She lied about when she was studying, when she was going out with friends, and what she was wearing. When she went to college, she continued lying to her mom, both over the phone and in person. Because she lives close to home, she sees her family often. One time, she told her mom that she had gone to a fancy dinner with a professor. When she went home to do laundry that weekend, her mom noticed that there was no formal wear, and questioned her. Carmen quickly made up something on the spot about wearing a dress but hanging it up again afterwards because it wasn't dirty.

While she lies frequently to her mom, Carmen does so rarely to her friends. Because they don't have any power over her, she sees no need to. She also has a tendency to be blunt. As an engineering major, she takes a lot of classes at Harvey Mudd, and she doesn't hold back her opinion when she encounters sexist assumption from male classmates. On the other hand, when Mudders invite her to study with them she'll occasionally fib that she's busy, sensing that they don't actually want her to come and are only inviting her out of politeness.

The next interview, with Laila, a Latina woman, was conducted initially around the premise of her experience growing up with a pathologically lying brother. Over the course of the

¹ Stone, Alex. "Is Your Child Lying to You? That's Good." *The New York Times*, 5 Jan. 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/05/opinion/sunday/children-lying-intelligence.html>.

interview, I started asking Laila questions about her own life, and the result was a study of the motivators of honesty.

Laila grew up in a household where the virtues of honesty were extolled regularly. Her father always taught his children that the worst thing you could do was break a promise. Despite this, Laila's brother was a pathological liar. Laila started to notice his behavior in high school, around the time that he got his first girlfriend. She witnessed him act like an entirely different person around her: someone emotional, sweet, sensitive, close to his family. Yet she sensed that this was not a real transformation. Her would steal things from his family, and then refuse to give it back when he was confronted, claiming that he didn't have enough money. He once read Laila's diary and then told her he thought it was her notebook, and that he had read it because he was thinking of going back to school. Later, he said that he had read it because he was concerned about how she was doing and wanted to check up with her. He lied to his parents about graduating from high school, and even about things he had no reason to lie about, like when he got into a motorcycle accident that wasn't his fault but lied while filling out the police report anyways.

Because of her experience growing up with her brother, Laila has very negative associations with lying. She claims she has a no-lying code and has even broken up friendships when she sensed the person was not being truthful to others. For example, she once had a friend who identified as a feminist but continuously cheated on his girlfriend. When asked why he was unfaithful, he would make sexist, derogatory claims about her sexuality, a contradiction to his supposed feminist philosophy. She stopped being friends with him.

Despite this, Laila identifies as being good at lying. When she was a child she would often steal stuff from her elementary school classroom. Once, she created a diversion so that everyone would go over to one side of the room, and then slipped to the other side when no one was watching to steal a handful of marbles. She stole an entire bowl of marbles just by taking a few every day.

She still lies sometimes to strangers. When she's Ubering she likes to make up elaborate stories about her origin. She'll tell the driver she's a student from Yale visiting her boyfriend at Harvey Mudd. As a Latina woman who goes to a women's college, people will often make assumptions about her, which she likes to play with in this way. One time she played dumb with a while male classmate who was full of himself so that he would do her homework for her. These lies don't count as bad to her, because they either don't have any effect on the person's life (in the case of strangers) or she believes that the person she's lying to deserves it.

Both Laila and Carmen grew up in households where dishonesty was morally prohibited. Laila through her father and Carmen through her mother. However, their attitudes towards dishonesty ended up completely different. Carmen's mother's admonitions that lying was a sin did little to discourage her from lying. Indeed, Carmen displays a certain comfort with lying to

her mom, at least in the pursuit of freedom. Laila, on the other hand, grew to be strongly morally prohibitive of lying—mostly through her experience of growing up with a sibling who was a pathological liar. There is not a lot of literature on the experience of growing up with a pathological liar as far as I know, but it seems to be a rich avenue for research. Witnessing the consequences of lying first-hand caused Laila to internalize the message so many parents hope to teach their children through fairy tales.

This is not to say that growing up with a pathological liar is a good thing. Carmen displays a healthy and developmentally appropriate attitude towards dishonesty. Lying to one's parents is actually quite common, and some research suggest that lying early in life is actually a sign of increased verbal IQ. As an adult in college, Carmen is fairly blunt with her classmates and friends—she sees no need to lie or keep secrets from them. There was even some confusion on her front throughout our interview---why she could be so honest at times and so dishonest at others. Take the moment where she declines to study with Mudd students. While Carmen was comfortable criticizing these “mudders” for their sexist attitudes, she was still quick to decline an invitation to study together, not because she didn't want to go, but because she believed she was only invited out of politeness. This dynamic nature of honesty—that one not only may be willing to lie to their parents and not their friends, or their coworkers but not their families, but that the types of lies one is willing to tell changes with the person, is one of the main findings of my project.

Laila, of course, is a prime example of this fact. Her experience growing up with her brother made her reluctant to lie, yet she finds a way to lie anyways. In her case, it was through people she believes are deserving to be lied to. A pretentious philosophy major who doubts Laila's intelligence--perhaps in no small part because she is a Latina woman, can be duped into doing her homework. She can comfortably lie to an uber driver with the justification that she will never see him again. The consequences of lying are mostly seen in an intimate, familiar context, so that is where Laila's moral prohibitions lie. This brings up an interesting idea: that lying, like food or sex, is a human need which people will find one way or another to indulge.

The next two interviews are with Greer, a gay white woman, and Perrie, a straight indian-american woman.

Greer has always been a conflict-averse person. The youngest of two, her older sister had a tendency of grabbing all the attention from her parents. She grew up feeling uncomfortable with taking all the air out of the room. This meant being as polite as possible, even hiding her feelings, so as to not inconvenience anyone.

When she was in middle school, people started talking about their crushes. Greer would think of a boy and convince herself that she had a crush on him, but she wouldn't tell any of her friends. She was afraid of the fallout: either her friends would tell her that her crush wasn't cute, and she would feel bad, or another person would have a crush on him, and her friends would

manufacture a rivalry between the two. She didn't have any interest in being part of this, so she kept silent.

In early high school Greer started to suspect that she wasn't straight. She wanted to figure her sexuality out for herself before she discussed it with anyone. She feared that if she came out people would force her put a label on her sexuality, or even look at her differently.

Around junior year, Greer realized she definitely wasn't straight. She still didn't want to tell anyone, but she instituted a "no-lying rule." If someone asked her directly, she would tell them she wasn't straight, but she wouldn't bring it up herself. She would also avoid talking about gay issues or watching gay movies and tv shows.

Once, she took out a copy of Carol, a movie about lesbian relationship that takes place in the 1920's, from the library. It was a self-checkout, although it wasn't strangers Greer had a problem with knowing her sexuality. She watched it on the tv in the living room, but when her older sister came home in the middle, she turned it off. She didn't have another chance to watch the movie in private, so she never finished it.

Greer came out the summer before she left for college. In college, she became more open about her sexuality. She regrets not coming out earlier, because she believes it might have given her more opportunities for a community. Although Greer describes herself as a relatively introverted, closed-off person, she believes she could have been more open in high school than she was. She doesn't believe that her sexuality was the only reason that she wasn't very open in high school, but she does think it made her more closed-off than she would have been if she was straight.

Perrie lied a lot in middle school. She would lie about crushes she had on boys—telling her friends she didn't have a crush when she really did. She knew the middle school rumor mill was exhaustive and didn't want the person she had a crush on to find out. Besides, it was middle school, she reasoned, these things never work out.

She lied about other things in middle school as well. She was a big twilight fan, but she learned to hide that from her friends. It was an embarrassing interest to have, especially around that time, when it was in fashion to mock fans of "girly" stuff, like twilight, or one direction. (Although she didn't bother to hide her fandom of one direction). Lying about Twilight made her feel like it was a bigger thing than it really was, like enjoying Twilight was something shameful.

It wasn't until college that Perrie started opening up about her love of Twilight. She had written a paper about the movie for one of her classes and felt so proud of it that she ended up sharing it on Facebook. The experience made her more comfortable with talking about Twilight in her real life, too. She ended up making friends who shared her interests--friends who felt no need to be embarrassed of their interests either, and who encouraged the same in her.

Around the same time Perrie started opening up more to her mother. While they had always been close, Perrie had always been reticent around a few topics: boys, partying, the like. Coming from an immigrant Indian family, her parents were somewhat conservative. She was

surprised how much she felt willing to share with her mother, such as anecdotes about her friends getting drunk at a party (Perrie herself does not drink). On the other hand, there are still certain things she wouldn't share with her mom. For example, over the summer she told her mom she was hanging out with a female friend when she really was visiting a male friend. Even though they were just friends, she worried about what her mom would say about her hanging out in the apartment of a man by herself.

Sexual orientation is one driver of “dishonesty,” that bears exploring. Because those in the closet are forced to lie, or at the very least commit some very large lies of omission, their relationship with honesty is different from those of straight people. Some research suggests the separation between the public and private selves of closeted individuals is more pronounced than in heterosexuals². In other words, while most people act differently with their family than with their friends than with the coworkers, and so on, the difference is more pronounced in closeted people. And rightly so. Sexuality is a huge part of identity. It is not merely about who one falls in love with or has sex with, although that in itself affects so much of interpersonal dynamics. It can also encompass culture, personality, clothing, etc. Moreover, people who are closeted must be hyper-vigilant in concealing their sexuality. The closeted person may feel the need to conceal stereotypically “feminine” or “masculine” mannerisms, hobbies, interests etc. which would go unnoticed in a straight person. This may be what the study means when it talks about “private-public self schematization.”

Of course, this is a project on women, so the question is not “what are LGBT people’s relationships with honesty (although that would certainly be an interesting avenue to explore) but, how does being a lesbian or bi-woman add or detract to one’s conception of honesty. Because only one person I interviewed identified themselves to me as part of the LGBT umbrella, I am not going to make any broad sweeping conclusions here. I bring in this research not to draw conclusions on Greer’s personal experience, but to situate her narrative in a larger context. Indeed, while a pronounced division between Greer’s “public” and “private” self is not immediately evident, moments like the “Carol” one suggest vigilant omission. When Greer’s sister walked in on her watching Carol, Greer turned it off. If she was straight, she may not have felt compelled to do that--after all, she would have nothing to hide. Her sister’s recognition that she was watching a movie about a lesbian relationship might cause a lightbulb to go on in her head about Greer’s sexuality, it might have also opened up a dialogue that Greer wasn’t ready for, especially with her “don’t ask, don’t tell policy.”

Although Perrie is straight, she also exhibits some amount of private-public separation, seen mainly through her love of Twilight. This is not to cast “liking twilight” as a marginalized identity equivalent to being gay. At the same time, it’s fun to draw parallels. Stigma has been studied as a social force for some millenium. The characteristics of stigma from an interpersonal

² Pachankis JE. *The psychological implications of concealing a stigma: a cognitive-affective-behavioral model.* Psychol Bull. 2007 Mar;133(2):328-45. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.133.2.328. Review. PubMed PMID: 17338603.

standpoint include “secrecy, withdrawal, covering, informing or disclosing.”³ That quote comes from a study on genital herpes, but the same description applies to queerness (obviously) and liking twilight (perhaps not so obviously).

Womens’ interests, as Perrie points out, are often looked down on. When you think of some of the most mocked artists of the last few decades--Justin Beiber, One Direction, Taylor Swift, it becomes apparent that the all have a female audience base. The only exception I can think of to that rule is Nickelback, and the example is shaky at best. (what demographic is known for liking Nickelback, I do not know). When people talk about secrecy in this particular area, they generally talk about how men feel embarrassed to have feminine interests. A girl in one of my classes said that she learned that her dad read his daily horoscope only recently, even though he had been doing it since before she was born. On the other hand, women live in the same world as men do, so it’s not surprising that some women also develop complexes about their “embarrassing interests,” going to great measures to hide their true feelings. The result, as in Perrie’s experience, is often an outsized sense of shame.

Secret keeping is also the subject of the next interview. In it, Sascha, a mexican american woman, details her evolving relationship with honesty.

At heart, Sascha is an honest person. In middle school, while everyone around her was pretending to be a different version of themselves so people would like them, Sasha remained true to herself. That may be one of the reasons she was bullied, she thinks. She didn’t like putting on airs. She preferred telling the truth. If people didn’t like her, that was their fault, not hers. In high school, she went through a three-month period where she thought she was pregnant. She went to the doctor, got tested for stds, researched abortion, and talked it over with her then-boyfriend, but she never told her mom. Keeping such a big secret was a burden. She debated back and forth whether she should confess her possible pregnancy like she had confessed many other things during her life. Her mom was old-fashioned. She might think of Sasha differently if she knew was having sex. Sasha ultimately concluded that it was best not to let her know. In the end, she turned out not to be pregnant.

Sasha’s mom ended up finding out about her pregnancy scare. She had been cleaning out Sasha’s room when she’d found some suspicious documents. “Did you get an abortion” her mom asked, incredulous. Sasha told her everything.

In college, Sasha was sexually assaulted. She didn’t want to tell her parents, but when she went to the student health services, the bill showed up in her mom’s account. Her mom now keeps the fact a secret from Sasha’s dad, something that causes Sasha guilt.

The biggest lie Sasha ever told also happened in college. She was talking to a guy she had had a crush on since freshman year. He asked her where she grew up, and she told him that

³ Breitkopf CR. [The theoretical basis of stigma as applied to genital herpes](#). Herpes. 2004 Apr;11(1):4-7. PubMed PMID: 15115630.

she grew up between New York and Los Angeles. In reality, she grew up in Los Angeles, and only stayed in New York over the summer, where her (mothers?) family lived. Telling him that she grew up between the two cities felt like a misinterpretation of the facts, like she had lived 50/50 and not 25/75. It was something she mulled over often. Why did I say that? He was from the East coast, and she thought that he would be more impressed with her. If he thought she was more of a New Yorker than she was.

At the same time, Sasha considered that multiple truths could exist at the same time. Even though she only spent her summer in New York, the city had a big influence on her. Why couldn't she say that she grew up between the two places, if that's what it had felt like?

A few weeks after Sasha told that lie, she went to visit her sister, who was a freshman at college. When she arrived, her sister mentioned that she had told her friends that Sasha was actually her cool friend from New York, not her sister. Sasha felt hurt. Why was her sister embarrassed of her? Later, reflecting over the situation, she came to a different conclusion. Her sister wasn't embarrassed of her, she just was sensitive about the fact that she hadn't made as many friends as she thought she should have. By pretending that Sasha her "cool friend from New York," she could convince her suitemates that she was cool and sociable after all.

Sascha's life is very interesting because it contradicts the overarching narrative going on in the rest of the stories. Instead of becoming more honest as she got older, Sasha became more dishonest. This is not the usual pattern. Most people in my interview group found that the transition to college made them more open with their parents. While Sasha experienced this a little, she also was blindsided by occasions where she lied to other students without knowing why.

Like Laila, Sasha has a strong aversion to lying. In middle school, she refused to lie even when it was the cause of her bullying. However, unlike Laila, the reason for Sasha's belief in honesty is unclear. Laila's pregnancy scare is the first time she recounts telling a big lie. She is morally conflicted, having to balance her desire to share everything with her mom with the possibility that her mom might look at her differently if she knew.

In a way, this type of conflict is not uncommon. When deciding whether to hide something from those close to us, we all must make a similar choice. In a perfect world, everyone would be accepting, and those kinds of sacrifices wouldn't have to be made, but of course that is not the case. Sasha's story gets right at the heart of lying, and what motivates us to tell the truth. While honesty might be looked on kindly in our culture, it's also a choice that comes with made trade-offs. In Sasha's case for example, the trade-off between preserving her relationship with her mother and sharing her burden. There are also the practical aspects of secret keeping, like the energy it takes to lie about where you're going when you get a pregnancy test, what you need money for if you need to borrow money, why you seem not yourself, and so on.

I was recently watching a reality show called Couple's Therapy where a similar dilemma comes up. In the show, four real couples are filmed undergoing couple's therapy over three

months. One of the couples, married couple of two years, struggle with honesty. The husband is constantly lying to his wife about what he does after work, fearing that she will judge him if she knows he's drinking out with friends, or hanging out with people she doesn't like. In a way, it's easier to lie, but his lying also puts a strain on their relationship. His wife can't trust him, and so she's unhappy in their relationship, which makes him unhappy. In the end of the show they break up. The risks of telling the truth vs. lying are baldly evident. If we tell the truth people might judge us for who we are, but if we lie they will imagine much worse.

Of course, Sasha's story cannot be analyzed without taking into account gender. Reproductive issues are women's issues as well. Many parents expect that their daughters will not have sex in high school. If they are especially conservative or religious, they may expect that they wait until marriage. Even in families where this is not the case, a high school girl who gets pregnant may be branded as irresponsible or even stupid by her parents, even though unwanted pregnancies can happen for a variety of reasons, even with people who are careful. A lot has been written on how the pressure to stay abstinent through high school creates undue pressure on teenage girls. All these social stigmas create fertile ground for dishonesty in a woman's teenage years.

The next interview is the final one. It follows the life of Veronica, a white college-aged woman.

Veronica learned how to tell a convincing lie in elementary school. She mostly lied to get out of eating her vegetables: she would tell her parents that she was sharing her vegetables with her sister, and then throw them away. In 7th grade, she once was very late to turn in an assignment, so she told her teacher that she emailed it to her on time, but that it must have not gone through. The teacher believed her.

In 8th grade she joined crew, which meant she became part of a small, intimate social circle. The crew team would do a lot of gossiping among themselves, and so she learned what to say and to who. Veronica wouldn't insult a team member in front of their friends, for example. Keeping track of the complex social dynamics around her, as well as what to say to who, made her an accomplished liar. She started telling her friends complete fabrications, like that she was SCUBA certified, just to see if they would believe it. They usually did.

As she got older, she started to lie to her parents about going out. Sometimes she told them she was sleeping over at a friend's house when she was really going to a party, or that her friend's parents were home when they weren't. One time, she lied about where she was to her parents and they asked her to send them a location pin. She had to run ten blocks to get to the place they thought she was.

Most of the time, though, her lying didn't get her into any trouble. As she got older, her parents became more lenient with her partying and staying out late. One time she was hungover the day her family was supposed to go on a trip, and she faked food poisoning. It was an obvious lie, and she claimed that she knew her mom knew that she was lying. Much later, her mom made a reference to the time she was hungover and pretended she had food poisoning. A similar

incident happened with water bottles full of alcohol that she hid in her closet. Now that she's in college she lies to her parents much less.

Still, Veronica is a secretive person. While she doesn't lie often to her friends, she does keep certain aspects of her life private from them—like if she has a crush on someone. When she's at college, she'll tell her friends from back home things that she doesn't tell her college friends. Then, when she's home, she'll tell her college friends things that she keeps from her at-home friends. Sometimes she'll tell a friend 10% of a secret and keep the other 90% guarded. Even this requires her to work up a lot of courage.

Veronica was the last interview I did, so it's fitting that she's the last one in this essay, too. I like how her story shows how many different types of lies exist. Through this interview project, I've become privy to the inner worlds of experienced liars--- most people in other words. The motivations for lying I discovered were more various than I imagined: there was outright lies, lying to get out of trouble, lying for justice, lying for safety, lying out of shame, and lies of omission. In a way, Veronica's narrative is a mixed-bag of all the previous interviewee's, which is why I saved her story for last. And of course--Veronica adds a type of lie that wasn't previously covered by any of the other subjects--lying to prank your friends.

Having two sisters myself, I have witnessed this type of "dishonest" first hand. Maybe they're going through a phase. One of them will offer up a high five, and when I go to slap their hand they'll redraw it just as fast. "Too slow!" they shout, and burst into giggles. The potential of dishonesty as a way to have fun isn't often discussed, but it's one of the most primal uses of the human capacity to lie, in my opinion. Before most children have learned to choose their words carefully, they know lying is a sure way to have a good time. When I was a kid, this lying sometimes took on patently ridiculous forms, like a girl in my class who told everyone it was raining even when it clearly wasn't.

As children, especially girls, grow up, lying becomes a social art. As Veronica notes, lying was necessary on her small, close-knit rowing team. Knowing what to say to whom was crucial, if not, you might become the butt of gossip yourself.

To tie it all together, these examples bring up a point that is hopefully obvious by now: women are not necessarily "more honest" than men. Most of the examples of lying here also had nothing to do with performing a cost-benefit analysis on whether to steal a nearby unlocked bike. Lying is a way to boost one's own reputation while at the same not harming others. This is not to say all women lie in this particular way. It's merely to draw attention to the numerous ways women employ dishonesty throughout their lives. Dishonesty is not a sin, but it is a choice, with its own upsides and downsides.

I feel like I would be remiss however to end a piece on lying without talking about "Radical honesty." A self-help movement that originated with a book by the same name, "Radical Honest" told people that the only way they could achieve happiness was by never telling a lie, ever. People, according to radical honesty, should say what they think at all times.

Husbands should tell their wives about all the women they've wanted to sleep with. Wives should tell their husbands about their affair with their boss, or that they regret marrying them, or whatever secret they've kept inside.

Would the world be better if everyone was radically honest? Certainly secret-keeping between family members often leads to more trouble than it's worth. Plus, politicians would be much more trustworthy. And catching a murderer would be shockingly easy. "Did you kill Suzy?" "Yes."

Yet radical honesty was not adopted by all, and probably for good reason. For one, lying is a fact of human nature. We lie to create space between our public and private lives. We lie to protect other's feelings. Stories, in a sense, would be impossible without lies, because there's always something you leave out. At the same time, movements like MeToo show the value of telling the truth, when the truth is valued. In the end, all I can say is that dishonesty isn't as black and white as it seems, but neither is life.

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