

LIVING
SECRETS

written by *Danielle Ma* | June 6, 2015



"You have a way of bringing out secrets in people."

As we sat together under the twinkly Shake Shack string lights, I thought about my friend sitting in front of me. Endlessly observant and expert at social intricacies, he was so spot on about people. I turned his assessment of me over in my brain. Secrets. Hmm.

A couple months ago, I had the joy of interviewing the lovely founder of a well-known dating app. We ran through all the standard app-world and startup questions before finally landing in the personal stuff. The stuff I turned my recorder off for. He told me the most extravagant, unlikely, swoon-inducing love story. *His* love story. I hung on every word of his deeply personal, meaningful journey to being with the sole person that made him believe in true and everlasting love. Far from the calculating and analytical approach to relationships that you might expect. Not one algorithm factored into his happily ever after.

I left with a promise to keep his story off the record and promptly sent a thank-you email an hour later. He responded instantly,

"I don't know how you got all that information out of me—maybe you should be a reporter full time."

Were they right though? Do I have an affinity for secrets? My self reflection began to beg the question... what is a secret, really? It's not simply a fact or thought that is known only to you and nobody else. That constitutes as private information, maybe. But it's not a secret.

Secrets are inherently social. Their existence depends entirely on their relationship to people. Secrets are active. They can hide, they can grow, they can spread. Secrets are pieces of reluctant vulnerability. And maybe that's why I draw them out for others. Unintentionally, to be clear. I don't like to pry or gossip. But I love vulnerability. It's the most honest, engaging, beautiful part of people. It's the universal connector. It's the way that our shared humanity makes itself apparent.

I realized that I don't have many secrets; my vulnerability is not often reluctant. And sometimes that bites me in the ass. It's a foolproof recipe for occasional heartbreak and disappointment. But it's also freeing. Like changing out of your work clothes or finally dropping heavy groceries when you get home. Like a cool breeze on a sticky day or the first sip of water when you're parched. Secrets are inherently social, and maybe they're meant to be shared.

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Danielle is a passionate twenty-something living in New York City with too many interests and not enough time in the day. She works at a boutique ad agency next to her favorite building, the Flatiron, and spends a lot of time in parks with coffee. She frequents food festivals, listens to science podcasts, explores comedy clubs, and writes, a lot. She diarizes the moments and conversations in her life, writing mostly about dating, love, and sex in the city on her blog, [Here's The Thing](#).

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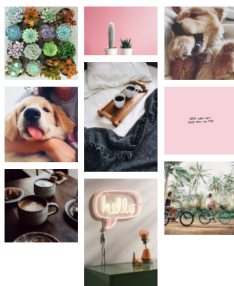
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