When M. Scott Peck wrote People of the Lie in 1983 he offered readers a fascinating glimpse into the human face of evil. His spiritual/psychological profile of people who were narcissistic as well as evil was especially disturbing because so many of us have faced relatives, co-workers, and even spouses with this destructive combination. However, one of his most chilling chapters in that book was titled Of Possession and Exorcism, in which he explored an even more sinister form of evil—the possibility that the devil and smaller demonic spirits could entrench themselves into a human’s soul. That chapter briefly described two clients who Peck believed were possessed by the devil. Ultimately he performed an exorcism with each client. In Glimpses of the Devil, Peck returns to this dark and
controversial chapter, expanding upon his beliefs in demonic possession. Like many science-educated professionals, Peck was a skeptic when it came to believing in the devil. But here he gives readers the complete story of his conversion as well as a full account of the two clinical cases that made him a believer as well as an exorcist. Because he videotaped the exorcisms, the dialog and scene work is stunningly authentic and convincing. Some have criticized this discussion as disappointingly dry. One might argue that Peck’s restraint when it comes to dramatics and sensationalism is this book’s strength. Peck’s mission is not to entertain, but rather to request a more expansive discussion of evil, so that science entertains the possibility of the devil and demonic entities. He also hopes that we will begin a serious discussion of interventions against demonic possession that aren’t limited to the restraints of the Catholic Church. Fans of Peck may also discover an unexpected gift within this controversial discussion. Peck is now an elder. Once a best-selling icon, he is aging into humbleness, comfortably admitting his mistakes and arrogance when it came to those early exorcisms. This softness and humility seem to elevate his authority, and we can only hope that he will offer more books from this voice in the years to come. --Gail Hudson

This book is real page-turner. I read the first 100 pages in one sitting before I realized how far I had gotten. I read the remainder of the book the next day. Peck’s narrative style is gripping. The book reads like a thrill-a-minute fiction novel.

I have two curious observations. First, Peck recounts how his patient Beccah, under possession, made the cryptic comment, I have no reason to join your ranks and be put in the toaster! Peck had no idea what the reference to the toaster meant. Perhaps it was nonsensical ranting. But I remember the toaster scene in the first Ghostbusters movie, where the possessed toaster was dancing to Your Love is Lifting Me Higher. I know that the movie was made after Peck’s experience with Beccah, but I wonder about the archetype of the possessed toaster in American popular culture. Second, Peck recounts in great detail how Beccah took on the appearance of a reptile. Has anyone ever studied the relationship between possession and reptilian shape-shifters (a la David Icke)?

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