

The Taste Of Belief

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

A bright, echoey lecture hall. STUDENTS spill across the rows, half chatting, half on their phones and laptops.

At the front, Dr. RICHARD, 52, sharp suit, graying beard. He scans the room like a hawk.

DR. RICHARD
(booming)
Good afternoon. To my left, science
and religion fanatics. Right side,
spiritual, astrology, occults,
pseudos. Move.

A ripple of chatter. Desks scrape. Students shuffle, laugh, protest under their breath. Chaos for a moment, then clusters take shape.

Richard paces to the chalkboard. On it:

WELCOME TO THE CLASS OF PSYCHOLOGY
> we see you.
> we read you.
> we know you before you open your mouth.
> we have trauma.
> we connect dots.
> we overthink.
> so shut up, and have a great day.

He stares at it. Tight face. Then a quick smile. He wipes it clean.

Chalk in hand, he writes in block letters:

THE TASTE OF BELIEF

Richard plants himself at center stage, chin high, hands clasped behind his back. Silence.

The students' chatter flickers, dies down.

Now a pin could drop. Richard's eyes sweep the room. Stone still.

Richard scans, so many students on the Religion and science side, the other with only three.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
Wow.

He points at the trio. CHENG, 20, Chinese. PATEL, 20, Indian, and MARTIN, 20.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
Three musketeers. Lone warriors.
What are you, conspiracy club?
Monks? Yogis? Mommy issues?

The trio looks at each other.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
You guys are the pseudos.

A STUDENT from the religion side cups his hands and shouts:

STUDENT #1
They're bringing gifts for baby
Jesus! Follow the star!

The room bursts with laughter.

STUDENT #2
Hagrid's looking for you!

More laughter.

Richard lets it roll, a smile sneaking out. Then, still.
Hands behind his back. His silence pulls the class down with him.

The room dies quiet.

DR. RICHARD
And you guys are the louds. Today's
topic, who's right?

From the louds side, a FEMALE STUDENT calls out:

FEMALE STUDENT
Taste of belief?

Richard glances at the board, then back at them.

DR. RICHARD
We'll get there... Come on. Someone
start.

No one moves.

Richard turns to the pseudos. Points.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
You. Patel. Spill it. Something
from India.

Patel exhales, sits forward.

PATEL
My parents believe in astrology.
They had a birth chart made for me.
Ah... It says my Rahu, the north
node, is strong. I'll do well
abroad. So far... it's been true.

Richard nods once.

DR. RICHARD
Thank you, Patel. Good.

He shifts his gaze to the larger side.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
Anyone?

EMILY, 20, raises her hand.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
Emily. Go.

EMILY
I just... don't get how moving
planets can decide anyone's fate...
I'm Christian. I believe in God.
But planets? No.

Emily glances at Patel. Patel meets her eyes.

PATEL
Okay... well, based on my
experience--

DR. RICHARD
You agree with her?

Patel nods.

PATEL
Yeah... but from her shoes, I get
it.

Richard opens his hands, impressed.

DR. RICHARD
Wow. Open-minded. You were saying?
Experience?

PATEL
Our astrologer predicted my brother
would marry an older woman.
(MORE)

PATEL (CONT'D)

Strong Saturn in the 7th house. And it happened. Love-cum-arranged, even that part.

TODD, 20, jumps up. Richard snaps his fingers, smiling at him.

TODD

Millions of people born the same time as your brother... were they all married to older women?

The room murmurs, chuckling.

DR. RICHARD

Nice one, Todd.

PATEL

The chart's unique. Changes every second. Location, rising sign... not everyone gets the same reading.

Cheng raises his hand.

CHENG

You know those twin videos on Instagram? They make the twins stand apart, answer questions, spin, lift their hands... In many, they mirror each other perfectly. On that scale, yeah, it's believable.

EMILY

So planets shape your life. Planets of rock, acid rain, no life, gas, deciding your spouse. We're modern now. We know more than Earth.

TODD

(Smirks)

How does that even work? The world's spinning, orbiting the sun. All the other planets moving too, and they're picking your partner?

MARTIN

Why do you believe the Earth spins? Who told you those are planets?

Richard's eyes slide to Martin. A faint smile.

TODD
You should learn some science.
Astronomy. NASA. Neil Armstrong.
Wait, are you a flat earther?

The loud side boos Martin.

TODD (CONT'D)
I'm not talking.

MARTIN
I am. I believe the Earth is flat.
Why do you believe it's round?

TODD
Dude. Are you serious?

Richard, hands clasped behind his back, says nothing.

MARTIN
Why do you believe the Earth is
round and it spins?

Todd freezes.

DR. RICHARD
Come on, Todd. You can do it.

TODD
That's a stupid question. Watch a
science channel. Go back to class.
Learn your physics. Then come back.
By that time, we'll be at Mars. Not
waiting for you.

Everyone laughs. Richard chuckles along.

MARTIN
I believe the earth is flat because
I feel it to be flat and still, not
spinning. I don't see a curve. I
don't see planes dipping down when
they fly. I live here. I know it's
flat. But you, tell me how you know
it's round.

Todd sighs, exasperated.

TODD
Really? Those scientists who worked
day and night, sending satellites,
are they dumb? Have you seen the
photos? Do you know the James Webb
Telescope? Heard of Elon Musk?
(MORE)

TODD (CONT'D)
Gravity? All the theories, all the books? Have you read them?

MARTIN
I've read plenty, Todd. But have you read about the Flat Earth?

Todd laughs, dismissive.

TODD
Why should I?

MARTIN
Exactly. And that's ego.

TODD
Ego? What? You're being stupid but I have ego?

Richard leans forward, fascinated.

MARTIN
Not ego. Status. You want to be perceived as smart. You like the idea of yourself as someone who "knows." That gives you respect. But that's groupthink. You want to belong to the group, so you feel special. Anything outside that group, you ignore or dismiss. Like religion, Todd. And that's being closed minded.

TODD
Why are you stupid? How is flat Earth even possible?

MARTIN
How is globe Earth even possible? Spinning at insane speed across the galaxy... really, Todd? You all believe that?

DR. RICHARD
Okay, enough. That was a good one, Todd, I appreciate it. And Martin... I like where you were going.

(he gestures)
Now, a show of hands, those who believe the Earth is round, spinning, rotating?

All the louds raise. Patel and Cheng raise. Martin freezes, surprised, whispers:

MARTIN
You're on their side?

Patel drops his hand slowly.

DR. RICHARD
Easy. Now, I'm going to share a story. I want you all to decide, who's right. Ready?

The class nods.

MONTAGE:

DR. RICHARD (V.O.)
A sedan drives through a busy street.

Insert: A black sedan weaving through traffic, neon signs reflecting on the hood.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Inside... Todd at the wheel. Patel shotgun. And me, Dr. Richard, in the back.

Insert: Interior sedan. Todd grips the wheel, Patel flips through a book. Richard sits composed, suit neat, observing.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Todd pulls the car aside in front of a restaurant named "A."

Insert: Side lamps flicker. The sedan stops. A clean, modern restaurant stands before them. Big, bold letters: "A."

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Parking is three blocks away. Patel helps Todd. They leave me alone.

Insert: Richard standing outside, gesturing toward the parking lot. The sedan drives off.

Insert: Todd and Patel parking the car, both stepping out.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
They enter Restaurant A. I block them from inside.

Insert: Todd and Patel pause at the entrance. Richard stands in front, nods no.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 I pull them aside. Hey, the food is
 bad here. I just tried it. Stinks.
 Let's go somewhere else.

Insert: Richard chatting with Todd and Patel outside the
 restaurant A.

Back to classroom: Richard eyes Todd.

DR. RICHARD
 Todd and Patel? what do you do? Eat
 at Restaurant A?

TODD
 Nope. Not eating there. Don't want
 diarrhea.

Class laughs.

DR. RICHARD
 Patel?

PATEL
 I wouldn't either.

DR. RICHARD
 Good decision. Back to the story.

Insert: Richard, Todd, and Patel walking down the sidewalk.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.)
 Now we're at another restaurant.
 Let's call it Restaurant B.

Insert: High-end, clean, neat restaurant. Big, bold letters:
 "B."

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Todd orders a whole steak. Patel
 goes for his favorite biryani. And
 I... grilled salmon, my usual.

Insert: The SERVER places the hot steak on Todd's plate.
 Patel digs into his biryani. Richard takes a bite of his
 salmon, chewing thoughtfully.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 We enjoy the food. Patel likes it.
 Todd orders another. I head to the
 restroom.

Back to class: Todd lets out a burp. The room cracks up.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
I pay the bill. Everyone leaves
happy.

Insert: Richard slips cash into the check pouch. Todd leans back, satisfied, nodding. Patel flashes a thumbs up.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Next day, the same thing.

Insert: The trio enters Restaurant B again.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Another day, this time Todd's
paying.

Classroom: Student's laughter ripples.

Insert: Todd slides his card to the server, annoyed. Patel grins, spoon in hand. Richard savors a dessert, content.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It goes on. Routine. Until one day.
I'm not there.

Insert: Sedan on the road. Interior. Todd drives, Patel shotgun. The backseat, empty.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
You park. And there's Martin,
stepping out of his SUV. An old
friend. A classmate.

Insert: Parking lot. Todd and Patel exit their car. SUV door swings open, Martin climbs out. They laugh, hug, trade high-fives.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Martin invites you both for lunch.
You agree.

Insert: The trio strolls down the sidewalk.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
But Martin heads straight into
Restaurant A. You pull him back.

Insert: Restaurant A's glass door swings open. Martin pushes forward, but Todd grabs his sleeve. Patel shakes his head firmly: no.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Now you all argue.

Insert: The trio at the curb, hands slicing the air, heads shaking, fingers pointing at signs. A jumble of "no, yes, maybe" in body language.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Todd's like.
 (As Todd)
 "Smells. Old food. Not worth it."

Insert: Todd leans in, waving his hand toward the restaurant. His lips move sharp, clipped. He pinches his nose, shakes his head, fans the air, disgust written all over him.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Martin's like, what?

Insert: Martin's face, unreadable.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Then Patel piles on.

Insert: Patel pats his stomach, makes a queasy face. He points at Richard's empty seat, then gestures to his mouth like "never again."

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (As Patel)
 "Even the professor backed off. We dodged a bullet."

Insert: Martin straightens. Hands fold. A sly half-smile.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 (As Martin)
 "I come here all the time. Family. Friends. Girlfriend. Side chick. Second side chick."

Classroom: Students laugh. Martin winks at Richard.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Martin tugs them toward the door.
 Calm. Certain.

Insert: Martin gesturing them inside, firm but easy. Todd digs in his heels, Patel points across the street.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 But they won't budge. Now Todd goes.
 (As Todd)
 "Blind? Dumb? Can't you hear what I'm saying, it's poison."

Insert: Todd exhales, jaw tight, hands slicing the air like knives. He jabs a finger at Martin, lips spitting sharp syllables. Patel nodding behind him, quick little echoes.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Martin tilts his head. Then he goes.

Insert: Martin's brow arches. Eyes narrow, steady.

Back to classroom: Silence. Every eye fixed on Richard.

DR. RICHARD
Dr. Richard said it's not good? But did you eat? Did you taste the salmon, the steak, the desserts at Restaurant A?
(beat)
No? Then how can you call it bad, just because someone else said so? Suddenly I'm the fool? The dumb one? Or is the judgment itself foolish?

Stillness. A ripple of unease. Martin smirks at Richard.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
So whose argument holds? The one who criticizes without ever tasting the other side, or the one who actually sat down and ate?

Not a sound.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
Raise your hand, if Todd is right.

No hands. Todd frowns, lost in thought.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
That's the point. Taste of belief. Sit with the opposition. Don't just blindly say Astrology is not real, flat Earth is dumb, because my professor, scientist, the government said so, learn it, then decide. Be open. Listen. They're not speaking into the air, there's a reason, a root. Don't just mock, don't dismiss by words alone.
(beat, softer)
Knowledge has no edge.

Patel nods slowly. Martin glances at Todd. Todd exhales, then smiles faintly at Martin, nodding back.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
Now. Your assignment.

Pens, laptops, phones already in hands, pages flips open, keypad clicks.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
Cognitive Dissonance. Authority
Bias. Repetition Effect. The
Milgram Experiment. School
conditioning. Groupthink. Mass
Formation Psychosis. Psychology
behind bullying and mockery,
observe both the bully and the
victim.

Richard gathers his bag, tucks papers under his arm.

DR. RICHARD (CONT'D)
I want a thesis, end of the month.
No AI. Pure observations, lectures,
books and organic surveys. Thank
you, class.

Chairs shuffle, books slide. Richard strides out.

The chalkboard reads: "THE TASTE OF BELIEF."

THE END

Text over black: "Dismiss what you refuse to know, and you'll never know what you dismissed."

FADE OUT.