

The Taste of Belief

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM - DAY

A bright, echoey lecture hall. STUDENTS, all in their early 20s, 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 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, Chinese. PATEL, Indian, and MARTIN.

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, NADIA calls out:

NADIA
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, 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. You were saying? Experience?

PATEL

Our astrologer predicted my brother
would marry an older woman. Strong
Saturn in the seventh house. And it
happened. Love-cum-arranged, even
that part.

TODD, 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.

TODD
(Smirks)
So planets shape your life. How
does that even work? The world's
spinning, orbiting the sun. 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.

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 school. Learn all the theories. 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, eyes roll toward the ceiling.

TODD

Really? Those scientists who worked day and night, sending satellites, are they dumb? All the researches and observations? Have you seen the photos? Do you know the James Webb Telescope? The hubble? Gravity? The theories, 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? I know science and stuff, that's why I'm talking.

Richard leans forward, fascinated.

MARTIN

And also, 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.

Todd sits down, exhales.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

Anything outside that group, you ignore or dismiss. Like religion, Todd. And that's low awareness, and also being closed minded. Why are you 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? How do you believe that?

Nadia stands up.

NADIA

Look, believe what you want. But if you're making the claim, you've got to show the proof. That's literally how science works, evidence first, belief after.

TODD

Where is the proof, Martin?

Martin sighs, gets up.

MARTIN

We do show evidence videos, experiments, data. All we get back is eye-rolls and jokes.

(MORE)

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You act like it's all settled. And you mock us.

NADIA

I'm not mocking you. I'm saying if your evidence holds up, it'll speak for itself. Until then, the burden's still on you. Nasa has proved the earth is round, it spins. What about you?

Richard nods, smiles.

DR. RICHARD

Nadia, that's a good point.

MARTIN

That's the authority bias right there.

Nadia, rolls her eyes.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

NASA proved? You believe NASA. I believe myself. I don't need their validation. Then you call us dumb. But we think for ourselves.

NADIA

Proof Martin? Proof about your claims.

Martin exhales.

MARTIN

Look around, I'm standing here, the ground? It's fixed, you say it spins, I don't feel any movement. So you say, the way I'm thinking is wrong. But NASA has already proved it doesn't spin, I want to believe that. I'm asking why do you believe others? But, why are you not believing in yourself? I see the sun move, you see it too. I see the moon move, you see it too right? Are we moving? Or are we stationary. Well, here is your proof.

Nadia sighs. Todd smirks.

MARTIN (CONT'D)

You don't mock Nadia. But your team, when we talk about astrology, they laugh. We show evidence, they reject it. Why? Because NASA already "proved" it? So what's the point of showing evidence when you've decided we're crazy before we even speak?

DR. RICHARD

Okay, enough. That was a good one, Nadia. 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. 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? 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. Old
 friend. A classmate.

Insert: Parking lot. Todd and Patel exit their car. Martin smiling at them. They laugh, hug, trade high-fives.

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

Insert: The trio nods, 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 nods no, gestures his hands to his mouth and belly.

DR. RICHARD (V.O.) (CONT'D)
(As Patel)
"Even Dr. Richard backed off. He
said it's not good. We dodged a
bullet."

Insert: Patel pats his stomach makes a queasy face.

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

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

Classroom: Students laugh. Martin winks at Richard.

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

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's
like.
(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 looks into his eyes, 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. 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. Nadia, rises up.

NADIA
Dr. Richard?

Richard freezes, eyes her. Silence.

NADIA (CONT'D)
Are you... a flat earther?

The class murmurs. Richard smirks.

DR. RICHARD
Why do you ask that question?

NADIA
You said, sit with the opposition.
They are not speaking into the air.
Don't dismiss astrology, flat earth
outright. You talk about open-
mindedness... but you seem to be
siding with them. You want to
believe in the flat earthers and
astrologers.

Richard smiles, calm.

DR. RICHARD
I'm an observer. I tasted both. But
did you Nadia?

Nadia stands still.

TODD
But you are still siding with the
pseudos.

DR. RICHARD
It's not who is right, Todd, it's
about understanding. I side with
psychology and human behaviour.
You'll know when you work on the
thesis.

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.