

# DISSECT

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# God on the Pedestal

The town didn't have a name people remembered. It was one of those places where the trees leaned over the road like nosy aunts and the air always smelled like someone had just put out a fire that burned quietly for years.

It was coastal, sleepy, and had the kind of charm people lie about missing when they move to cities. The men played chess in silence, and the women watered the same plants daily like they were convincing God they still cared.

Everyone knew everyone, but not deeply enough to get involved. That's what made it the perfect place for a man like Ishaan to vanish in plain sight.

He walked like punctuation—never rushed, always in control of what came next. If an accident occurred across the street—a screeching brake, a fallen cyclist, the splatter of chaos—Ishaan wouldn't flinch. He wouldn't gasp, or break pace, or shout for help. At most, he'd tilt his head, observe the mess like a wine critic at a cheap bar, maybe mutter, "Overreaction," and move on.

People said he was brilliant. But brilliance was only the tip of it. Ishaan made people feel *seen*, in ways that left them uncomfortable. He didn't just speak—he dissected. Every conversation was a controlled experiment, every classroom an operating table.

He taught philosophy and logic at the local junior college. But he wasn't a teacher. He was an excavator. He didn't give answers—he pulled the questions out of you like infected teeth.

"If a man hits another man, we punish him. But what of the man who stood still and let it happen? Is that not cowardice married to complicity?"

He wasn't bound to morality—only to himself. He could argue one thing and do the opposite, with no sense of irony. His brilliance wasn't in consistency, but in the precision with which he shattered those who clung to it. He often watched good-natured students fumble with their values after his questions—eyes wide, faith cracked, as if someone had turned their soul inside out. He took no pleasure in cruelty. Just in clarity. And clarity, he believed, was only born when morality finally bled out.

He asked questions like that mid-lecture, while sipping lukewarm coffee and watching students squirm. He never made eye contact when challenging you—it felt worse that way. Like a god bored of his own creations.

At school, he was polite—never warm. Civil enough to maintain access to the buffet of human behavior. He needed subjects, after all. Wide-ranging ones. Varying ages, backgrounds, belief systems. His students were chess pieces. The cashier, a bishop. The old librarian, a knight who didn't know she'd been captured years ago.

He only selected a few to be his true experiments—the ones who lit something inside his otherwise frostbitten mind. He called them his *subjects*. In his journal, which he ironically titled **Buffet**, he gave each a label: Subject A, Subject B, all the way through Subject R. Names didn't matter. Only patterns.

"Subject G: Clenches jaw before admitting fault. Appears confident but folds when touched. Possible trauma? Feed self-doubt subtly."



"Subject K: Uses laughter as a shield. Track which jokes follow shame-related comments. Observe threshold for silence."

Empathy? That trait was likely buried somewhere in him, under decades of dust. He hadn't used it in so long, it might as well have expired. He didn't comfort. He didn't console. He observed. And occasionally, he triggered reactions just to see where they bled from.

He questioned everything. If someone struck another, he'd ask, "Why did you hit him?" But if someone was struck, he'd ask, "Why did you allow it?" Moral binaries didn't interest him—only the *impulses* behind them.

His home reflected his brain: symmetrical, deliberate, silent. Books arranged by spine height, shades drawn at identical angles. Even the creases on his bedsheet mirrored each other. He disliked unfinished sentences—finished them aloud when others trailed off, like a punctuation addict having withdrawals.

He hated small talk. He corrected grammar mid-conversation without looking up, like he was training puppies rather than humans. Most people were distractions—bags of meat with poorly programmed thoughts.

But the right ones, the broken or cracking ones? They were gold. They were ignition.

Manipulation wasn't just a tool for Ishaan. It was his stimulant. His drug of choice. His way of asserting a god's patience over mortals who didn't yet know they were chess pieces.

He didn't dominate with rage. He dominated with detachment.

He had always been that way. Ishaan's childhood wasn't tragic. That was the most unsettling part. There was no violence, no drama. Just quiet detachment. He had two parents, both present but hollow—like furniture that once meant something to the room but had long since become decorative. They weren't cruel, but they weren't curious either. His questions were often met with silence or half-answers. So he learned early: if people won't give you truth, you carve it out of them.

He dissected ants as a child—not to kill, but to understand why they moved. He once froze a frog and revived it, just to see if it would still hop. His mother once found a notebook labeled "Father: Baseline Observations." She didn't ask. She just closed the book and placed it back without a word.

He carried that habit forward. Observing. Dismantling. Testing.

There were no romantic partners, not really. The idea bored him. Affection was unpredictable. Control was sacred. Even as a teenager, he would study his classmates in conversations—when did they blush? When did they stammer? What tone made them flinch?

In college, he charmed a professor into giving him access to restricted psychological case files. The professor thought Ishaan wanted to publish. What he really wanted was to compare the minds of patients to his own notes on people he saw daily—grocery clerks, janitors, even his own roommates.

He once predicted a breakup three days before it happened—down to the exact sentence used. Not because he was psychic, but because he understood behavioral patterns like some men understand chess. One move always leads to another.

And yet, he never flaunted it. That was his art. He lived modestly. Wore soft colors. Ate alone. Didn't drink. Rarely smiled.



But when he did—it was a smile that felt like it had studied yours first.

To outsiders, he was eccentric. To peers, brilliant. But to himself? He was simply curious. Pathologically so.

He believed kindness was mostly cowardice. That morality was a script everyone performed to avoid being studied. And so he played along, just enough to be left alone... until he found someone worth unraveling. He never forced, only nudged. He could move a person to tears, to confessions, to collapse, without ever raising his voice.

He lived not to teach, but to observe collapse. And the collapse, when orchestrated right, was symphonic.

He was a man split into three personas, coiled together like a snake with three heads:

**The Professor**, who wore civility like a glove and posed impossible questions with surgical calm. Once, during a debate on free will, he convinced a devout student that her deepest beliefs stemmed not from her faith but from a traumatic incident she'd casually mentioned weeks earlier. He never claimed credit. Just sipped his tea and watched her unravel mid-sentence.

**The Philosopher**, who wrote essays in anonymous journals about human behavior being a hallucination of empathy. In one of his most read underground essays, he posited: "Empathy is not compassion. It's proximity to pain that doesn't yet threaten you." He'd leave copies tucked inside certain library books, curious if anyone would find them, read them, and suddenly feel watched.

And **The Psycho**, who saw the world as a glass tank of insects, picking the most interesting ones to watch drown slowly, precisely, deliberately. Once, he spent three months befriendng a lonely local shopkeeper just to confirm a suspicion—that the man exaggerated his stutter around women. Ishaan tested him subtly, created scenarios, documented frequency shifts. When the man finally confessed to doing it for sympathy, Ishaan smiled and never spoke to him again.

All three lived in harmony within him, each feeding the other. A holy trinity of dissection—mind, method, malice.

He was waiting for the next subject. Something that would truly test his methods. Something that wouldn't break too easily. Something worthy of more than a paragraph in the *Buffet*.

He didn't know it yet, but she was already walking into town.



# The Discipline of Deception

The first time Ishaan saw her, she was seated alone on a park bench just outside the railway station, surrounded by luggage she hadn't unpacked and sunlight she didn't seem to notice. She was reading—not a novel, not a newspaper, but a worn, spiral-bound diary with flowers drawn in the margins. She looked at each page like it was a map leading back to herself.

Her name was Maya. She had that softness that made people underestimate her—the kind of smile that made you confess things before realizing why. Her eyes didn't sparkle. They scanned. Quietly. Thoroughly. There was something about her stillness that didn't belong in this noisy world.

Ishaan didn't approach her. Not at first. He merely watched. And what caught him wasn't her presence—it was the way she reacted to her own writing. She would smile sometimes. Other times, her expression went blank, like she was excavating memory. There was a curiosity there—a self-curiosity—that excited him.

In the following days, they crossed paths again. Once at the bookstore, then at the tea stall, and again at the bench. Always alone. Always with that journal.

He started small.

“Is it a secret you're hiding in that book, or just a better version of the truth?” he asked casually, gesturing to her diary.

She looked up. Smiled. “Neither. It's just the version I can live with.”

That was all it took.

Their conversations began like pebbles in a pond—small, rippling. She spoke of her childhood, how she moved often, how friendships never lasted. She never explicitly mentioned the psychiatric care. Not until one evening, while they walked silently past the harbor, and she said:

“I spent a year in a place where even silence echoed too loud. They said I was healing. But I think I was just being reprogrammed.”

Ishaan didn't ask questions. He didn't need to. That single statement was a seam he could pull for months.

He began studying her—covertly at first, then intimately. He noted her pauses, the tremor in her voice when certain memories surfaced, her ability to pivot away from vulnerability with humor. She became Subject S.

*Subject S: Uses reflective writing as defense mechanism. Emotionally intelligent, but damaged. Responds to controlled silence with either withdrawal or curiosity. Push harder.*

He would ask questions with no answers. “Do you think sanity is just collective denial?” She'd chuckle, unsure whether to answer.

He mirrored her trauma—not empathized, mirrored. Gave just enough emotional feedback to let her think he understood. Every time she cried, it was a data point. Every time she opened up, it was a hypothesis confirmed.



Maya, meanwhile, kept writing. Her diary remained nearby, but she rarely shared it. What she did share was selective—weather thoughts, childhood stories, passing emotions. Nothing of weight. Nothing traceable.

He loved listening. But more than that, he loved controlling her rhythm. Some days, he'd vanish to test her sense of absence. Other days, he'd return with poetic gestures, a quote, a gift, a look.

He studied how quickly she regained trust. How fast she forgave. The elasticity of her emotional recovery became his favorite variable.

One night, when she showed up at his place unexpectedly, shaken from a nightmare, he offered her tea and spoke in riddles.

"You know, Maya," he said, handing her a cup, "most people don't survive themselves. They survive their image of themselves. There's a difference."

She nodded, teary-eyed. "I don't even know which version I'm trying to keep alive anymore."

He smiled softly and placed a hand on her shoulder. "Then let me help you bury the wrong one."

He didn't mean to comfort her. He meant to recreate her.

He left notes around his flat—quotes about identity, half-written ideas. Once, he left a notebook open with observations about another subject, knowing she might peek. The notes were ambiguous, abstract, intriguing enough to plant curiosity.

He began subtly gaslighting her. Slight changes in their agreed meeting times. Half-truths about things he claimed to have said. Watching how quickly she questioned her memory.

When she asked if he remembered telling her about a lost sibling, he smiled faintly.

"I think that was something you imagined. Memory's a fragile thing, Maya."

Her face fell. "Maybe I'm confusing things again."

He made her doubt the ground beneath her. That was the goal. Controlled erosion.

*Subject S - Update: Memory destabilization underway. Trust redistribution leaning heavily toward test subject (me). Recalibrate frequency of truth exposure.*

Still, she smiled at him. Still, she came back. And in that persistence, he saw not strength—but dependency.

The psychological warfare peaked during one late evening. She sat on his couch, silent for too long. He sat across from her and said:

"Love is just a leash made of memory. You can only be bound by it if you remember who tied it."

She blinked slowly. No tears. No reaction.

Just a single nod.

And for the first time, he felt something cold and perfect click into place.

She was his. Not in love. Not in trust. But in reconstruction.

That night, he wrote more than he ever had in one sitting. Pages and pages of psychological dissection.



*Subject S: Fully integrated into projected identity arc. Exhibiting high compliance, low resistance. Manipulation ceiling not yet reached. More layers to unpeel.*

But beneath all his calculation, a flicker—of unpredictability.

She had changed... yes. But not crumbled.

Her eyes sometimes watched him too long. Her laughter came less often—but when it did, it felt rehearsed.

He noted it.

And smiled.

*Let's see how far the rabbit hole goes.*



## Self Served

There was something Ishaan couldn't quite name. A slight dissonance. Maya had begun to laugh at the wrong parts of his stories. Not loudly. Just... half a second too late. Or too soon. She'd glance away when he expected her to hold his gaze, or change the topic when she should've followed it. These weren't mistakes. They were... deviations. And Ishaan didn't believe in deviations.

He started journaling more frequently, with less clinical detachment. The words grew terse, occasionally overwritten. He told himself it was nothing—mental fatigue, perhaps. But deep down, he knew it wasn't her who was tired. It was his grip.

They still met. Still spoke. Still played the same roles. But there was a texture in the air, a friction between the pauses. Maya had become unpredictable, and unpredictability in a subject was either evolution or rebellion.

One night, after Maya left, he stared at his journal and wrote a line he immediately crossed out:

"Subject S - resisting simulation."

He replaced it with:

"Subject S - rich inner schema; previously undetected. Initiate deeper probing."

This wasn't about failure. He didn't fail.

He began with precision.

"Test 1 - Withdraw affection post-disclosure. Observe Subject S's emotional response to sudden absence. Hypothesis: Increased vulnerability."

He vanished for three days. No texts. No explanation. He expected longing, a desperate message, maybe a breakdown.

But when they met again, Maya only smiled and said, "Hope the world was kind to you while you were gone."

A soft jab. No neediness. No panic. Just... control.

He made note of it, adjusting parameters.

"Result: 98% effective. Mild deviation from expectation. Repeat test with variable emotional framing."

Test 2 involved guilt.

He told her he'd read about a woman who was institutionalized simply for not mourning her husband the way society expected.

"Isn't it cruel?" he asked. "To be punished for grieving incorrectly?"

She looked at him, distant. "Crueler still to pretend you know what grief looks like."

Strike two. 97%.





That night, he triple-checked his tone, timing, inflection. Everything had been perfect. But Maya—Maya was off-script.

Test 3: Jealousy.

He fabricated a story about reconnecting with someone from his past—romantic in implication, vague in detail. He wanted to see the flicker of insecurity.

Maya only replied, “That’s nice. Sometimes the past deserves one more chance to disappoint us.”

96%.

He began to spiral—but methodically. He blamed execution, not design.

Over the next week, Ishaan tested Maya five more times. Each experiment was sharper, deeper—ethically thinner. She reacted every time, yes. But never how he predicted. He would see her eyes shimmer, but never break. Her breath catch, but never falter.

Every reaction he thought he owned—she returned with a flavor of her own.

By the tenth test, his notes read:

"Subject S - Resistance increasing. Unclear whether defense or strategy. Recalibrate approach. Explore access to unfiltered emotions. Consider notebook."

The notebook.

He had never touched it. It was her space. Untouched, sacred—even to him. But lately, Maya had started leaving it out more often. On tables. Half open. Sometimes barely tucked beneath a cushion. Careless—or was it deliberate?

One evening, she excused herself to answer a call outside. The journal sat on the arm of her chair. Open. Vulnerable.

His fingers twitched.

He knew he shouldn't.

But he also knew—he never got it wrong. And he was getting it wrong.

He picked it up. And the first words he read were:

"Subject I. Predictable in unpredictability. Observes like a hawk, but hates the idea of being watched."

He hasn't moved for hours. The room's quiet except for the hum of the fridge and the occasional groan of the fan blades. He reads her final entry again:

“Love is boring. Making someone fall without catching them? That’s art.”

He doesn't cry. He can't. His emotions are still filed away in neatly labelled drawers that suddenly no longer open.

This wasn't just about outwitting. This was inversion of power. He studied others to remain untouchable. But now? Someone slipped into his blind spot. She became him—better, quieter, smarter.

He's not angry. He's in awe. Which terrifies him even more.



Because for the first time—he's been emotionally affected. And it didn't come from a tragedy. It came from losing control.

"So this is what my subjects feel... when I begin." He mutters.

"She didn't break the rules, just rewrote the game.... walked inside me like a house she'd already memorized. And I... I told her where the keys were."

She enters with no smile. Calm. Dressed simply.

He stands, trying to look composed, but his hand trembles on the side of his leg—barely noticeable. A scholar's version of a panic attack.

**Ishaan** "You could've just left me broken."

**Maya** "But you were never whole to begin with." *(pause)*

"You studied broken things so no one would see your cracks."

He stares. She's not here for cruelty. She's here for closure—hers, not his.

**Ishaan** "What was I to you?"

**Maya** "A question."

"And now... an answer I don't need anymore."

**Ishaan** "You made me feel—impressed."

**Maya** *(tilting her head)*

"Yes. That's how it starts."

She turns to leave. He tries one last attempt at reclaiming himself:

**Ishaan** "You said it wasn't about love... then what was it? Revenge?"

**Maya** *(still not facing him)*

"People said I could make any man fall.

I didn't want to fall in love. Love is cliché. It's babyish."

*(turns slightly toward him, half profile)*

"I wanted to see if I could make someone fall into a void."

And then: "Turns out you were already standing at the edge."

She leaves.

He stands there.

No subject. No study.

He silently goes into his home, opens his journal, and writes: *Subject S: Subject S: Reacts to being hurt by trying to reverse control. Journal confirmed. Defensive ego forming into god complex. Cognitive functions sharper than expected. Still predictable. Still mine*

.His eyes- Gleaming with joy, his smile- the widest.

*Fin.*

