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10 Ways To Get Disappointed In People

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Yehor Mirnov asserts the moral right to be identified as the author of this work.

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To the disappointed

My intuition is telling me there'll be better days.

Jermaine Lamarr Cole.

ACT I: Illusion

Prologue

1: The Illusion of (Over)Giving

2: The Illusion of Depth

3: The Illusion of Intention

4: The Illusion of Potential

Prologue

You are running late. You look at your phone, tempted to cancel, but it feels rude to do it last minute. The café is buried deep in a part of the city you've never had a reason to visit, tucked into the corner that trains don't reach, nor buses do bother with. Maybe that's the point. Maybe places like this, like your feelings, are meant to stay hidden.

Lately, you've felt hollow. Not just tired but more emptied out than usual. The present barely exists in your mind, as you keep repeating and letting the past run through it, pressing harder each time until it feels safer to let it smother you than to fight it. Activities started to feel less enjoyable, hobbies stopped making sense, and the whole sense of *purpose* seems murky. Two nights ago, a friend told you, "You sounded sick". She said you should talk to someone, maybe a professional. That's the only reason you're out of your bed this early, wearing clothes that don't feel like yours and don't suit you. You avoid mirrors because every time you look at yourself, you see something you already hate, so you just put up with the fact of a bad fit. You don't believe this meeting will help. But somewhere online, you read that saying "yes" to things saves you. So here you are, walking at 7 AM on the half-empty street, hoping for a miracle, but for something small enough to keep you going.

You push open the café door, and the smell of coffee and chocolate breaks through your nostrils, greeting you like your mom after school. Inside, a wall of chocolate stares back — twenty different kinds, each with a name you can't pronounce. You pause and feel slightly overwhelmed. You wonder why anyone needs this many choices. You draw a parallel with your feelings again,

thinking that your emotions work the same way: endless varieties, all leaving a different aftertaste. You shake this thought off and move past the display and grab a menu. As you approach the cashier's desk, you start scanning the underground space. It's smaller than you expected, dimly lit, not that humid and a little too quiet. You search for the face your friend described: blonde, buzzed hair, blue eyes. The café isn't busy, so you find him quickly. Blonde, buzzed hair. It should be him. You see a young man grinning at you like he knows something you don't, his look makes you feel naked, stripped of whatever disguise you thought of wearing earlier. You can't decide if he's someone who wants to help you or someone who already knows every bad thing you've done. Probably both. You force a polite, awkward smile and walk toward him. His grin still makes you feel uncomfortable, but you take a seat and mumble an apology for being late.

"No problem, it is okay. This place is literally in the middle of nowhere, so it makes sense." He leans forward, resting his elbows on the table.

"Our friend told me you've been going through some stuff," he says. "Look, I'm not a therapist or counsellor. I'm just someone who's walked this path. Want to tell me what's happening?"

You stare at him. You don't know what to say. Your throat tightens. You're not sure where to start, or if it's worth starting at all. It feels like you've told this story too many times, and no one ever listened. You doubt that a pseudotherapist would change that. Your scepticism is palpable, and as you are getting ready to answer, he cuts in with a sharper question.

"How often do you feel like you didn't deserve the way you were treated?" He sounded calm yet assuring. "Like someone overlooked you. Took advantage of your kindness. Made you feel small."

You didn't expect this question this early. It's been sitting in you for months. You swallow. Again. But now you answer without thinking.

PROLOGUE

“All the time.”

He tilts his head, almost studying you.

“Are you tired?”

“Yes,” you whisper.

“Tired of people?”

You don’t want to say anything. You just nod.

The tension eases up as he leans back and says:

“I get that. I’m tired too. I’ve been disappointed in people more times than I can count. I hate that aftertaste disappointment leaves behind. It stings, you know? That bitterness. I thought many times I’d found someone different, yet it turned out the same. Always the same outcome.”

“Disappointment,” you say.

He nods slowly, like you’ve solved a sophisticated math task. It makes you feel slightly proud of yourself.

“Exactly. Disappointment.”

You shift in your seat. Suddenly, your full attention is on him and what he’s going to say next.

“Seems like it rings a bell, huh?” he says.

You start wondering about this stranger. He seems too young too cynical, too put together to be sitting in a café at this hour talking to someone he barely

knows. There's something about his certainty that makes you curious.

"How do you know all this?" you ask after some hesitation.

His mouth curves into a half-smile, but there's no smugness in it — just recognition.

"Because I've been exactly where you are. I used to believe in people completely. Thought everyone had the same intentions as me. However, I learned the hard way it's not the case."

You don't know whether to feel comforted or unsettled by what he said.

He leans forward again and asks.

"What are the drivers behind disappointments? What do you think?"

"Heartbreaks? Loneliness? Betrayal? I don't really know," you reply, unsure.

"You want to know the truth? There are ten ways to get disappointed in people. Ten. And you've already probably lived through some of them."

You keep listening closely to him. He's smiling like a gambler who knows the cards are in his favour.

"The first one is overgiving."

He pauses, collecting his thoughts.

"This was years ago, long before the woman I thought I'd marry. I was in university and there was this girl..."

The Illusion of (Over)Giving

She walked into class on a rainy Tuesday, water dripping from the ends of her hair, her coat clinging awkwardly to her shoulders. If you asked what the lecture was about that day, I couldn't tell you. All I saw was her. Her curious eyes moved across the room like she was searching for something, and I kept hoping to be it. Her look instantly spoke to me like we had already met before. My palms stuck to the desk, and my body started to betray me as I became hyperaware of every single noise — the teacher's monotonous voice, the projector's buzz, the smell of wet clothes, I felt it all. Something in me stirred. I didn't want to admit it, but it felt different.

"Hi," I said.

"Hi?" She looked up from her laptop, confused by the interruption.

"This is random, but..." I gestured vaguely at the empty seat beside her.

"Yeah? You wanted to sit here?"

"No, no. I mean yes, but..." I felt my face heating up. "I just noticed you in my class, and you're the only one in this lecture hall that I at least remotely know, and I thought maybe we could, you know, talk, or something."

She blinked, clearly trying to process this approach and assess it on the scale from 1 to 10. A small smile on the corner of her mouth. She was amused.

"Talk about what?"

"Subject matter?"