

AI-03945 Fatal Vows Early Detection

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List 5 items to detect a "fatal vow" type relationship in courtship stage - the getting to know stage.

Use the TV Show "Fatal Vows" as context, Explain, list the pillars of fatal vows, list 22 examples

What it means? Deep dive and provide the psychological pillars.

Describe how a person typically thinks, behaves, and makes decisions.

Provide 22 concrete examples demonstrating these traits in real-life situations.

Then create a 22-point guidelines from the discussion.

The TV show *Fatal Vows* (Investigation Discovery) explores real-life marriages that began with high hopes but devolved into manipulation, psychological warfare, and ultimately, murder. In psychology, a **"Fatal Vow" type relationship** isn't just a bad match; it's a pathological lock-and-key dynamic.

During the **courtship stage** (the getting-to-know-you phase), these relationships rarely look dangerous. In fact, they usually feel incredibly intoxicating. The pathology masks itself as extreme romance, but the underlying mechanisms are transactional, rigid, and possessive.

Top 5 Courtship Signs of a "Fatal Vow" Relationship

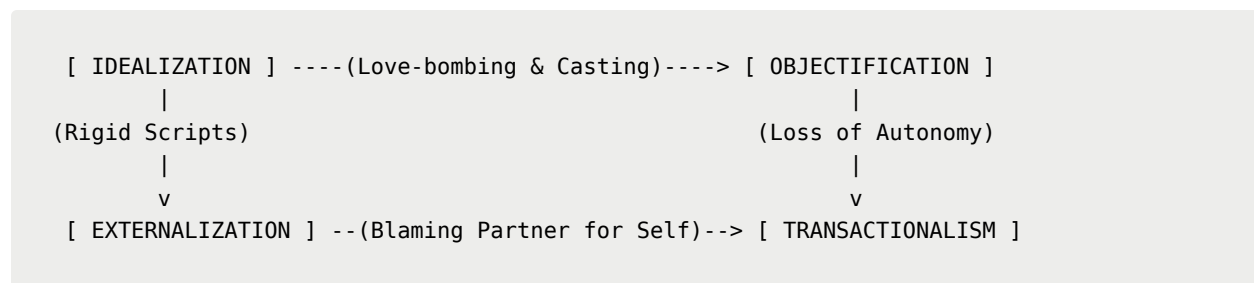
If you are looking to detect this dynamic early on, these five behaviors in the courtship stage are the most critical red flags:

1. **Velocity Over Depth (Hyper-Accelerated Bonding):** Pushing for marriage, cohabitation, or exclusivity within weeks. They fall in love with the *concept* of you to secure a contract, not who you actually are.

2. **The "Soulmate" Casting Call:** You aren't being gotten to know; you are being audited to see if you fit a rigid, pre-written script. If you deviate from the script, their mood shifts instantly from adoration to cold punishment.
3. **Manufactured Vulnerability & Trauma-Bonding:** Sharing deeply disturbing or highly personal history on date one or two to force a false sense of intimacy and obligation.
4. **Subtle Territory Marking (Incipient Isolation):** Pouting or framing it as "romantic longing" when you spend time with friends or family. They are softly drawing a perimeter around you.
5. **Scorekeeping of Concessions:** They remember every favor, every compromised boundary, and every nice thing they did, ready to weaponize it as leverage the moment you assert independence.

Deep Dive: The Psychological Pillars of a Fatal Vow

The true-crime profiles in *Fatal Vows* show that these relationships do not fall apart by accident. They collapse because they are built on four highly destructive psychological pillars:



1. Pathological Idealization & Casting

The predator or deeply toxic partner doesn't view you as a human being with flaws. They view you as a savior, a trophy, or a missing piece to fix their broken life. You are cast in a role. Because it is an illusion, it requires massive emotional energy to sustain.

2. Utter Objectification (Lack of Clean Empathy)

They lack the ability to see where they end and you begin. Your utility is measured by how well you regulate *their* anxiety, boost *their* ego, or fulfill *their*

domestic/financial needs. If you have an independent bad day, it's viewed as a personal attack on them.

3. Radical Externalization of Internal Conflict

People who form fatal vows have an external locus of control for their emotional states. If they feel inadequate, angry, or bored, it is *your* fault. They lack the psychological plumbing to digest their own shame, so they pump it directly into the partner.

4. Aggressive Transactionalism

Every act of kindness is a loan, not a gift. They keep a meticulous emotional ledger. The "vow" to them is a binding corporate merger where they own 51% of the voting shares, and any attempt at independent decision-making is treated as a breach of contract.

How a "Fatal Vow" Partner Thinks, Behaves, and Makes Decisions

To understand this dynamic, you have to look past what they say and look at their internal cognitive blueprints:

- **How They Think (Cognitive Style):** They operate on *Splitting* (Black-and-white thinking; you are either an angel or a demon, with no middle ground) and *Paranoid Projection* ("If I feel guilty, it's because you made me do it").
- **How They Behave (Behavioral Style):** Relentless boundary testing. They don't smash your boundaries; they chip away at them with passive aggression, conditional affection, and manufactured emergencies that require your rescue.
- **How They Make Decisions (Decision-Making Style):** Unilateral and zero-sum. Every choice is made to maximize their control and minimize your leverage. Win-win does not exist in their vocabulary; if you win something, they feel they have lost.

22 Concrete Examples in Real-Life Courtship

Here is how these pillars, thoughts, and behaviors manifest during the getting-to-know-you stage:

1. **The Fast Proposal:** On week three, they say, *"I know it's crazy, but I want to marry you. Why wait when you know?"*
2. **The Social Audit:** They scroll through your social media years back and ask detailed, accusatory questions about old friends or exes.
3. **The Boundary Test:** You say you have a girls/guys night out. They text you an emergency or say, *"My stomach hurts, can you stay?"* to see if you'll cancel.
4. **The Gift Trap:** They buy you an expensive designer item or watch on the third date, making it socially impossible or awkward for you to pull away.
5. **The Bad Ex Narrative:** Every single ex in their past was a "crazy psycho" or "abusive," and they were the pure, innocent victim.
6. **The Unsolicited Helper:** They show up at your apartment uninvited to fix your sink or clean your kitchen, framing it as "being sweet" while violating your space.
7. **The Waitstaff Test:** They treat you like royalty but are incredibly rude, dismissive, or volatile toward waiters, drivers, or retail workers.
8. **The Schedule Monopolizer:** They assume every free evening or weekend you have belongs to them, getting visibly cold if you make other plans.
9. **The Identity Mirror:** Suddenly, your favorite indie bands, obscure hobbies, and political views are *exactly* theirs, perfectly copied to create instant alignment.
10. **The Micro-Correction:** *"I love your style, but that shirt makes you look a bit sloppy. Wear this instead."* (Soft curation of your appearance).
11. **The Over-Exploratory Financial Questions:** Early on, they ask deep questions about your credit score, salary, inheritance, or property ownership.
12. **The Reaction to "No":** When you decline a date because you're exhausted, they text back dry, one-word answers or go silent for 24 hours.
13. **The Public Claim:** They post pictures of you online with deeply intense, possessive captions before you've even had the "exclusivity" talk.
14. **The Manufactured Rivalry:** They drop hints that other people are constantly hitting on them, trying to spark your jealousy and make you compete for

them.

15. **The Subtle Sabotage:** If you have a massive job interview the next morning, they keep you up late talking or picking a circular argument.
16. **The Privacy Breach:** They peek over your shoulder to see who you are texting or pick up your phone to "check the time" while watching your reaction.
17. **The Quick Move-In Hint:** Their lease is coincidentally up in two months, and they suggest it *"just makes financial sense"* to move in together.
18. **The Gaslight Trial Run:** You remember them saying they hated seafood. Later, they take you to a sushi place and say, *"I never said that. You're misremembering things again."*
19. **The Sympathy Hook:** They tell a tragic story about their childhood the moment you point out a minor flaw in their behavior, instantly derailing your critique.
20. **The Quick Flurry of Texts:** If you don't reply to a text within 20 minutes, you return to a string of: *"? / Busy? / Guess you're ignoring me / Fine."*
21. **The Opinion Erasure:** When you disagree on a serious topic, they don't discuss it—they smirk, pat your hand, and say, *"You'll change your mind when you're older/wiser."*
22. **The Dynamic Switch:** One day they love-bomb you; the next, they are unaccountably distant, forcing you to chase them to find out what you did wrong.

The 22-Point Courtship Guidelines

Use these diagnostic rules during the courtship phase to protect your autonomy and verify if a relationship is safe:

Speed & Pacing

1. **Enforce the 90-Day Baseline:** Keep your independent routine, hobbies, and social life fully intact for the first three months minimum.

2. **Reject Hyper-Acceleration:** If a partner talks about marriage, moving in, or lifetime commitment before six months, explicitly pause and state that you require time to observe consistency.
3. **Decline Pre-Mature High-Value Gifts:** Do not accept lavish gifts, trips, or financial assistance early in dating that create an unspoken debt.
4. **Watch the Mirroring:** Pay attention if someone has zero dissenting opinions or unique tastes of their own; true compatibility has natural friction.

Boundaries & Autonomy

1. **Issue a "Soft No" Early:** Intentionally decline a minor request or invitation early on specifically to observe how they handle disappointment or rejection.
2. **Maintain Separate Social Spheres:** Keep your scheduled time with family and close friends uncompromised; a healthy partner will encourage your community.
3. **Protect Your Physical Space:** Do not allow uninvited pop-ins or unmasked domestic help at your home until trust is deeply established.
4. **Keep Financial Privacy Absolute:** Treat premature inquiries into your income, debts, assets, or credit status as a hard boundary breach.
5. **Monitor Digital Pacing:** Establish clear boundaries around text response times; do not normalize round-the-clock immediate availability.

Behavioral Analysis

1. **Analyze the "Ex" History:** Listen closely to how they describe past partners. Total lack of accountability or extreme vilification is a structural red flag.
2. **Observe Peripheral Behavior:** Evaluate how they treat individuals they have power over (servers, subordinates, retail workers). That is how they will treat you once the courtship mask slips.
3. **Track the Emotional Ledger:** Note if acts of kindness are brought up later as leverage during disagreements or negotiations.
4. **Identify "Splitting" Tendencies:** Watch for rapid swings where people are categorized as completely flawless or completely evil based on minor events.

5. **Audit the Apologies:** Check if their apologies are real (Behavioral\ Change) or manipulative (Deflection + Sympathy\ Hook).
6. **Document Inconsistencies:** If you feel confused or find yourself questioning your memory of events, write down dates and facts in a private journal to combat early gaslighting.

Emotional Safety

1. **Beware of Trauma-Dumping:** Distinguish between genuine, earned vulnerability and strategic, early disclosures used to accelerate intimacy or excuse toxic actions.
2. **Guard Against Aesthetic Curation:** If a partner constantly corrects your wardrobe, posture, speech, or social media presence, they are building an object, not loving a person.
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7. **Maintain a Walk-Away Fund & Mindset:** Never enter a relationship or living situation where you do not have the financial and emotional capacity to leave cleanly within 48 hours.

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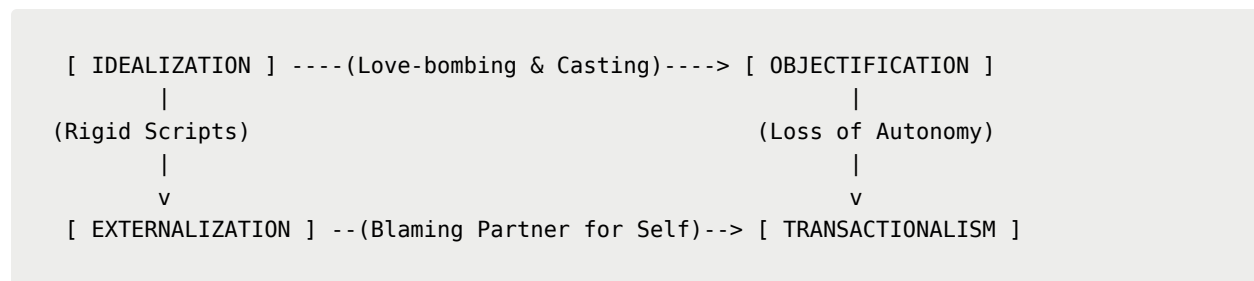
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