



## The Pleaser

*The kindness that costs you yourself*

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### What the mandala shows

A figure stands before a tall ornate mirror at the center of the page. Around her hang many gowns on hooks — each a different style, color, posture, each a version of self she has tried. At her feet lies a tangle of discarded ribbons and shoes. A long table stretches to the right with arranged place settings, no one seated. A single candle burns in outline. The mirror shows not her, but a stranger who looks almost correct for everyone else.

### What this shadow is

The Pleaser learned that if she stayed pleasant enough, agreeable enough, helpful enough, she would be kept. So she became the person most needed in the room, at the cost of whatever she actually wanted. You cook the meal others like. You pick the movie they want. You say yes before you've even read the invitation. You agree with the opinion being spoken. Then the next one. Then the next. Old programming says this is just being nice. But pleasing is not kindness. Kindness comes from someone with a self still intact. Pleasing comes from someone who has learned to dissolve on contact.

### You may recognize The Pleaser when:

- You apologize when someone bumps into you
- You do not know what you want for dinner until you hear what others want
- You feel guilty for having preferences
- You feel uneasy in a room where no one needs anything from you
- You cannot imagine a version of yourself that is not immediately useful to someone

### Where it lives in the body

A smile that arrives before the thought. A subtle leaning-forward toward whoever is speaking. A small relief when someone else takes the last slice so you do not have to choose.

### What the coloring does

Color the empty place at the table first — the seat where you should have been, and were not. Not because you were kicked out. Because you left it first, to serve. Then color one gown — only one — the one you would wear if no one else were watching. The other gowns can stay on the hooks today. You are not picking an identity. You are practicing the radical act of choosing one thing for yourself while other options exist.

### After coloring, take five minutes:

1. **Breathe.** Three slow breaths, let the jaw drop.
2. **Color.** The empty seat first. One gown second. The mirror last.
3. **Notice.** What would you want right now if no one's approval were at stake?
4. **Write.** One sentence: "A small preference that is genuinely mine is \_\_\_\_"

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*You do not have to dissolve to be loved. A kindness that erases you is not a gift to anyone.*