



## No One Craves Vanilla

What is it that they think of me? It is not quite true to say I do not care. I am, after all, human and we humans are built with a predisposition to desire acceptance. But to be accepted, approved of and liked by all is to be vanilla. Yes, vanilla is quite tasty in a predictable, easy, goes-along-with-anything kind of way. Vanilla is the backup choice, the option that is always there if you don't see something more enticing. Loved by all but craved by none, vanilla is rarely anyone's first choice.

No, I do not want to be vanilla. I want to be craved...anticipated...savored and enjoyed. I don't want to be the backdrop, the flavor that blends well with bolder choices. I want people to look at what I have to offer and say..."Ooooh, I'd like to try that please." I want to be the bolder choice.

But what of those who look at me and think, "No, thank you"? Ah well, let's not forget that I have preferences of my own and of half that lot I may have thought the same. While being ignored or regarded as less than favorable by some has its momentary sting, the truth is that "You are what you love, not who loves you." And yes, I am quoting the lyrics of a Fall Out Boy song. But think about it. What would your cosmic resume look like? Would it be a list of those who approve of you, like you? Is that the measure of your worth? Or would it detail your accomplishments, your passions, what you have to offer the world?

As for me, I have no interest in building a list of those who like me. I am content in the knowledge that I am worthy of interest and love and time by virtue of what I do; what I offer. I do not seek to convince anyone of that except myself. I know what interesting is; what worthy is. And if I find I have grown boring, unlikeable, or somehow crossed the line into unlovable then it's time for me to look inward and make adjustments. Not for the sake of pleasing others, chasing acceptance; but to make of this precious life I was granted all that I want it to be.

I don't want to be vanilla; vague and inoffensive...nice. I want to be salt and pepper -- spicy and savory; too much for some and necessary to others. I want to be the kind of thing that people reach for when they desire to add flavor to their life. Yes, if I have to care what others think of me then that is what I want.

I will build a life that pleases me; a life that makes me proud for having created it. I will not seek to exclude others from it or trample upon their attempts to do the same

for themselves. I will help them when it pleases me; when it fulfills me to do so; when it is the right thing to do. But I will not seek to blend into the lives of others; I will not wait for them to invite me in. Instead, I will live my life to its fullest, make of myself the most I can and try my hardest to put the best me forward every chance I get. What will they think of me? Well, the ones who matter...the ones who *should* matter...will see me for who I am and whether they like me or not will be irrelevant...for they will respect me for a life well-lived.

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