

# **Simple Self Love**

By

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## CAST OF CHARACTERS

Kayle, 17.....female, high school student, innocent and naive, dancer, good- looking, low self-esteem, caring, reserved.

Josh, 18.....Kayle’s boyfriend, self-centred, athlete, not very clever, manipulative, he just wants to show Kayle off.

Karen Jr., 22.....Kayle’s job interviewer, raised by another Karen, dresses badly, works at her family’s Café, racist, homophobic, very religious, doesn’t like teenagers.

Ms. Poppy, 68.....Kayle’s English teacher, conservative, sick of her job, dresses like a grandma, depressed, has a lot of cats, smell bad, still single.

Ms. Lee, 25.....Kayle’s dance teacher, strict, really active, closed minded, toxic, was an anorexic ballerina, was really affected by the dance world she grew up in.

Laura, 30.....Kayle’s mom, caring, loving, she wants the best for her, but she often makes comments without thinking how they affect Kayle.

## TIME

Present day. The scenes take place throughout the day, starting in the morning with scene 1.

## SETTING

Neutral setting, that can be used in all scenes, the setting adjusts depending on the scene.

SCENE 1

It's morning, Kayle is getting ready to go to school, she's packing her bag, her mum sees her.

LAURA

Morning!

KAYLE

Hi mum.

LAURA

Sweetie, aren't you gonna be cold dressed like that?

KAYLE

I'm fine mum, don't worry, and outside it's so hot.

LAURA

I think you should cover up, you're going to school, and everyone will be able to see your stomach.

KAYLE

(She covers her stomach with her hands)

I don't think anyone cares.

LAURA

I'm saying it for you sweetie. Have you been watching what you're eating lately?

(Sticks a sticky note on her stomach, lights go darker.)

KAYLE

(She takes a sweater, and she puts it on)

I'm trying, you know I don't like to talk about that, please stop.

LAURA

Maybe I didn't express myself in the right way, I don't want to hurt you, it's just that maybe you should pay more attention at what you're eating.

(Sticks a sticky note on Kayle, lights go darker)

KAYLE

Ok.

LAURA

You should try eating less, losing weight wouldn't be so bad, and with all the money I spent for your diet, between the specialist and all that healthy food. You know I love you sweetie, and I only want the best for you.

KAYLE

I'm sorry, ok?! I'll try harder to follow the diet, but I'm tired, I wanna eat whatever I want, I want to go out with my friends, and not worry and feel guilty about what I eat. I'm exhausted!

LAURA

I know, but you should know that to be a dancer, you've got to be fit, if this is really what you want, then you've got to work hard for it, and I will support you along the way.

KAYLE

I'm trying, I'm trying so hard, but for once I'd like to eat whatever I want, and not worry about it. Why does it have to be so hard?

LAURA

Because when you work hard for something, and then get it, it's even more satisfying.

KAYLE

But why are people so worried about a number on a scale? I mean we're in 2022, shouldn't it be the era of acceptance?

LAURA

Well, I'm afraid that if being a dancer is still what you want, then you've got to lose weight for it. And I know it's hard, but eventually it will pay off.

KAYLE

I'll try harder.

LAURA

I'm sure that if you try hard enough, you'll get what you want, probably even easily. But now go or you'll be late for school!

(Doorbell sound)

KAYLE

It must be Josh I got to go, bye mum!

LAURA

Bye sweetie! Have a great day! Don't forget to watch what you're eating!

(Kayle grabs her backpack and leaves, before her mom can finish talking)

JOSH

Hey babe!

KAYLE

Hey.

JOSH

You look good today!

KAYLE

Thanks... you came early.

JOSH

Yeah well, I went to Tim Hortons before coming here, I got you breakfast.

(He gives her the Tim Hortons bag)

KAYLE

(She grabs it quickly and nervously starts eating)

JOSH

Jeez, slow down.

You ok?

KAYLE

Yes, why?

JOSH

You just shoved a whole donut in your face. Remember prom is in two weeks, I want the dress to fit you perfectly, everyone is going to be looking at us.

(Sticks a sticky note on her, lights go darker)

KAYLE

I don't even know if I want to go anymore.

JOSH

What do you mean? We have to go, everyone is expecting us to be king and queen, I am expecting that.

KAYLE

(She kind of ignores what he says)

We probably should leave, or we'll be late, Ms. Poppy is going to be mad if I'm late again.

JOSH

Ok. I gotta go to PE anyway, but this conversation is not finished.

(They both exit)

Scene change to classroom, objects to be decided, either chalkboard, or desk.

## SCENE 2

Kayle arrives late to Ms. Poppy's class, while she is talking about the new dress code.

MS. POPPY

(Talking to the 4<sup>th</sup> wall)

Good morning, as you should know, the schoolboard, has just introduced a new dress code, and I would love to see you all respe....

(She stops and looks at Kayle entering the class, and seat down in the front row)

Thank you for giving us the honor of joining, how kind of you Kayle.

KAYLE

I'm sorry Ms. Poppy, I lost track of time, and my boy....

MS. POPPY

(Interrupts Kayle)

Enough with excuses!

KAYLE

It won't happen again.

MS. POPPY

I hope so, or I will have to talk to your mother. Again.

KAYLE

It won't happen, I promise.

MS. POPPY

I don't know why, but teenagers, nowadays think that they can do whatever they want. Don't you know arriving on time is a sign of respect? Also dressing properly is, you would know if you had arrived when you were supposed to.

(Kayle raises her hand)

What do you want Kayle? Didn't anyone teach you that you shouldn't interrupt?

KAYLE

I'm sorry Ms. Poppy, I didn't mean to interrupt you, but

MS. POPPY

(Interrupts Kayle)

Another treat of teenagers they can't take the truth.

KAYLE

Excuse me? (Still respectful)

MS. POPPY

Yes, excuse you, with all that attitude you won't get anywhere young lady. And you girls should start dressing more appropriately, this is a school for God's sake, not a whor...

(Sticks a sticky note on her body, lights go darker)

KAYLE

I'm sorry to interrupt you again, but respectfully I think me, and all my classmates can agree that it's very hot outside, and everyone is just trying to avoid melting.

MS. POPPY

That doesn't give you the right to display your whole body in front of the school, compromising your male classmates' focus.

KAYLE

It's not our fault if they get distracted!

MS. POPPY

It is, if you seek their attention.

KAYLE

But we're not! It's just very hot outside.

MS. POPPY

See! Other excuses, and then people still wonder why girls get assaulted. Maybe if they didn't dress like that, men wouldn't feel like they're inviting them.

(She sticks a sticky note on Kayle's body, lights go darker)

KAYLE

Are you seriously blaming assault on victims? Are you saying that it's their fault if they get assaulted?!

MS. POPPY

Are they really victims? Well, if they want so much to show their bodies, they must be ready to face the consequences.

KAYLE

Consequences?! What about the consequences of assaulting a girl, and lie about doing it, ruining someone's life forever?

MS. POPPY

What do you even know about assault? You're a teenager, you don't know what you're talking about!

(Sticks a sticky note on Kayle's body, lights go darker)



KAYLE

You know what Ms. Poppy, what makes me and my female classmates even more sad, is that you're a woman and you should understand the struggle, but you certainly don't.

MS. POPPY

You girls always think you're so intelligent, don't you? What do you even know about real life? It's unbelievable that girls at your age still don't understand their place! And as I was telling your classmates before you gave us the honor of joining, there are new dress code rules, and since you're no different than them, start respecting them!

Class is dismissed! And for next class, cover up for Christ...I'm sick of this nonsense.

(Kayle grabs her things and exits, and after Ms. Poppy exits too)

JOSH

(Josh is waiting for Kayle)

Hey babe

KAYLE

Hi!

JOSH

What's wrong again?

KAYLE

You won't believe what Ms. Poppy said in her class, that woman gets to my nerves so easily, I wish I could just drop her class.

JOSH

She's just mad at the world, don't take it personally. Last year she told Nate that he shouldn't wear nail polish because he is a boy. I mean it's not like I completely disagree but....

KAYLE

Why is she even still teaching?

JOSH

I don't know, but everyone hates her.

KAYLE

As they should.

JOSH

Fair enough.

KAYLE

I gotta go, or I'll be late to teach the children's class. By the way, can I get a ride?

JOSH

I have football practice today, I can't I'm sorry, but I thought we were going to have lunch in the cafeteria before your lesson, we need to show the student body that we are present in the community. It's my senior year, I want to be king.

KAYLE

Omg! What is it with you and being prom King. No one is going to remember that in five years.

JOSH

Well, I am, can't you just do something for me for once, I am always here listening to you complaining, for once can't you do something for me?

KAYLE

Ok! I don't understand why it is so important for you, but I'll do it!

JOSH

Thank you!

KAYLE

Ok, I have to go now, I'll see you tonight?

JOSH

Yes.

KAYLE

Bye, love you!

JOSH

(Awkward pause)

See ya!

(They both exit)

Scene change to dance classroom, nothing on stage, beside Kayle's personal objects, backpack and water bottle on the side.

### SCENE 3

Kayle is teaching a dance class to children, when Ms. Lee comes to talk to her.

KAYLE

(Facing the audience)

Ok from the top, 5, 6, 7,8.

(Sound of excited kids. Kayle starts the music from her phone, and accentuate the movements)

Lily turn over here please. Ok leg up and now down, and turn, go to your partner take their hands and turn, open and close, and open again, pose!!! Good job. Go grab your things and wait for one of your parents to come and get you, don't leave the room please!

(She grabs her water bottle and take a sip; Ms. Lee enters the stage)

Good afternoon Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE

Hi Kayle! You're doing such a great job with them, and all the parents are happy, the kids won't stop bragging about how Ms. Kayle's lesson is so fun.

KAYLE

Thank you, Ms. Lee, I'm so grateful that you gave me the opportunity to teach this class, I feel like they're learning, and I am too.

MS. LEE

It's my pleasure. How's everything going with the choreography for showcase?

KAYLE

Most of them get things really fast, but some of them still need some practice. What makes me laugh is how Lily acts. She keeps forgetting where the front is, I don't know how, but she keeps turning the wrong way.

MS.LEE

Oh, give her some time I'm sure she'll get it eventually. I used to have a student just like that, she was just lost in her world, but with discipline, she became good, and then she started working even harder, reaching dreams she didn't even know she had.

KAYLE

She sounds familiar.

MS. LEE

She does, you've come a long way, Kayle. I'm sure showcase will be great.

KAYLE

Thanks, I needed that.

MS. LEE

Have you already chosen one of the junior girls to help you?

KAYLE

Not yet, I'm still deciding. I was thinking about Lola, or Anna, but I don't know who would be a better fit.

MS.LEE

They're both really great, but maybe you could ask Charlie, she would benefit a lot from this experience.

KAYLE

Yeah, maybe that's the best solution for everyone. (To the 4<sup>th</sup> wall) Oh, bye Charlotte, I'll see you next week.

MS.LEE

Now that all the girls got picked up, I would like to discuss some things with you, nothing major, don't worry.

KAYLE

Sure, no problem.

MS. LEE

So how are you feeling?

KAYLE

These last few weeks were tough, but I'm good.

Did I do anything wrong?

MS. LEE

Not really, but I needed to talk to you about some things, you know...

(She stops and try to think the best way on how to tell her)

You've always told me that you wanted to be a dancer, but are you still sure about that?

KAYLE

Yes, I am.

MS. LEE

A 100%?

KAYLE

A 100%.

MS. LEE

Then we've got to be on the same page.

KAYLE

We are.

MS. LEE

I don't think you are. By now you should know that to be a dancer you need a certain type of body, and right now you certainly don't. I think we all noticed you gained a little weight. I'm disappointed in you, you were doing so great with the new diet, you should have known better.

KAYLE

I know, and I'm sorry, but I've been having a tough time.

MS. LEE

If you want to be a dancer, I should be able to put you in a sport bra, and shorts, without you looking chubby, without anything moving.

(Ms. Lee sticks a sticky note on Kayle's body, lights go darker)

KAYLE

I know that my body is not a traditional dancer body, but I'm trying so hard to keep losing weight, and I've been busting my ass in class, and teaching.

MS. LEE

That's not enough! If you want to get into a company in the future, you should look as your classmates do, you have one month to lose weight, or I won't be able to put you in our competition group. Companies are all about conforming into a team, all the dancers need to look the same, move the same; they're one organism living together.

KAYLE

Ok.

MS. LEE

Remember being a dancer is a tough life, the sooner you learn it, the better! I know what I'm talking about, I've experienced it on my own skin.

KAYLE

Thank you, Ms. Lee.

MS. LEE

I'll see you on Monday. Be prepared to check in with me in a month.

KAYLE

Sure.

MS. LEE

I'll be waiting with the scale! (smiling)

(Sticks a sticky note on Kayle, lights go darker)

KAYLE

Bye!

(Kayle exits)

Scene change to café, some tables and chairs.

#### SCENE 4

Kayle has an interview for a new job at family run Café Her interviewer is a depressed 22-year-old woman, with no goal in life, named Karen.

KAREN

(Kayle enters the stage)

Good afternoon Ms. Richardson.

KAYLE

Good afternoon.

KAREN

Take a seat. (Kayle sits) Tell me a little about you.

(She's scrolling through Kayle's resume)

KAYLE

Ok so, I'm seventeen, I was born and raised here, and I'm a dancer.

KAREN

I would like to know more about your past jobs.

KAYLE

Oh yeah right, sorry! So, I worked at White Spot for 4 months as an hostess, and then I worked at Home Depot for half a year as a cashier, and now I'm searching for a new job.

KAREN

I can see that you've got several reference letters from those jobs, and your teachers, they've all written very nice things about you.

KAYLE

Thank you. I mean, I hope so.

KAREN

(She is still scrolling)

So why would you want to work here? And sit straight please.

KAYLE

(Kayle straightens out)

I'm sorry. Well, I would like to get this job because, since I'm a teenager, I would like to earn some money, to pay for my college education.

KAREN

And what do you know about us, about this Café?

KAYLE

Well, I am aware that your family opened this place 30 years ago, and it has stayed in the family since then.

KAREN

Correct! We are very proud of our heritage, and we've been sharing with the community what we know and love.

KAYLE

I admire that, my parents used to take me here when I was a child, your mom, or I assume she was your mom, used give me a cookie every time I came here.

KAREN

So, you understand the values we want to share with the community?

KAYLE

Yes, totally, I would love to work for your family because of the way you share kindness with the people that come here every day.

KAREN

I see, and do you think how you're dressing is appropriate for this job?

KAYLE

Sorry?

KAREN



Don't you think you're showing a little bit too much of your skin. Inviting men to look at your body is a sin!

(She sticks a sticky note on her, lights go darker)

KAYLE

Respectfully, I don't see any problem with what I'm wearing.

KAREN

Of course, you don't.

KAYLE

What are you trying to say?

KAREN

Well, if you want to come to work dressed like this, might as well just stop at the corner of the street. This is a family run business, customers come here with their children and families, how you dress could threaten the image my grandparents built for this place.

(She sticks a sticky note on Kayle's body, lights go darker)

KAYLE

(Trying to stay calm)

I'm sorry, but I don't see any problem with what I'm wearing.

KAREN

Well, you might not be able to see what's the problem here, but certainly anyone entering that door, right now, would see it.

KAYLE

Ma'am, I think that you...you're being kind of sexist, and I don't feel comfortable working in an environment like this.

KAREN

Don't call me ma'am, I could be your older sister! And no one is forcing you to stay! Pfff! Nowadays teenagers don't appreciate when someone genuinely tells them the truth. I wasn't like this at your age. Yes, good job leave while I'm talking!

(Kayle leaves while Karen is still talking)

I mean how can some parents let their kids go out like that, my mum would kill me, and ask the devil to leave my body if I dressed like that.

(Talking to herself)

### SCENE 5

Kayle meets with her boyfriend, Josh, they meet out of a cinema to go on a date.

JOSH

(Josh enters on stage, and greets Kayle)

Hey!

KAYLE

Hi! How was practice?

JOSH

It was...normal. You?

KAYLE

I had the worst day, I don't know, but it feels like the world is against me today.

JOSH

Don't be so dramatic.

(He sticks a sticky note on her, lights go darker)

KAYLE

I am not being dramatic, to start the day, my mum started bothering me again about my weight. Then Ms. Poppy with her usual misogynistic lecture, just because we were wearing tank tops, it's freaking June, what do you expect us to wear! And then finally something was going well, but Ms. Lee had to remind me that I'm not in shape to be a ballerina. Obviously, it wasn't enough, and even the job interview went awfully. I'm sick of this!

JOSH

Jeez! Breath.

KAYLE

I'm just exhausted.

JOSH

Well...

KAYLE

(Interrupts Josh)

But I can't tell you how grateful I am to have you as a boyfriend, thanks for always being there for me, I don't know what I would've done without you. I love you.

JOSH

No worries. I love you too.

KAYLE

What were you trying to say?

JOSH

Oh, nothing important, don't worry.

KAYLE

Are you sure?

JOSH

Yeah, yeah, it's fine. Now let's go or the movie will start before we arrive.

KAYLE

You're right I love the previews before the movie starts.

JOSH

I know you do, even though it's so annoying. You're such a weirdo.

KAYLE

Oh, stop it, that's not true. Let's go or we'll miss it.

JOSH

Ok, ok. (She grabs his hand and drags him out)

SCENE 6

Josh just took Kayle home after the cinema, they're saying goodbye.

KAYLE

Thank you for taking me home, and for saving my horrible day.

JOSH

No problem (awkward silence) but I really need to tell you something.

KAYLE

Is it the same thing you tried to tell me earlier?

JOSH

Yeah.

KAYLE

Ok shoot!

JOSH

You know how you said you're exhausted.

KAYLE

Yes?

JOSH

Well.... (Rethinks about it) maybe it's better if we talk about it another day.

KAYLE

What is it?

JOSH

It's just...

KAYLE

What it's going on? Just tell me.

JOSH

It's just that... It's, I

I think we should break up!

KAYLE

What?!

JOSH

I'm sorry, it's just that, I...

KAYLE

I think you should leave.

JOSH

Look, I am exhausted too! You just keep dumping on me everything, I didn't sign up for this!

KAYLE

And tell me what is it you signed up for?

JOSH

It was supposed to be easy...

KAYLE

Leave!

(Josh leaves, and Kayle is alone on stage, she goes and sits on the stairs, and after a while her mum enters)

LAURA

Hey sweetie. What are you doing sitting outside?

(She sits next to Kayle)

KAYLE

Hi mum...honestly, I don't even know anymore.

LAURA

What do you mean? Weren't you going out with Josh?

KAYLE

Yeah, we did go out. He, he broke up with me.

LAURA

Oh sweetie, I am so sorry.

KAYLE

It's fine.

LAURA

You know, it doesn't have to be fine, you don't have to be fine, allow yourself to be sad if that it's what you need.

KAYLE

The thing is that I am so sick of everything, I'm just done.

LAURA

Life can hit hard sometimes, but it doesn't mean you should give up.

KAYLE

I guess...

LAURA

Have you tried to talk to him?

KAYLE

I asked him to leave, I didn't want to talk right now.

LAURA

Maybe he had his reasons, maybe you weren't what he wanted anymore.

KAYLE

Not helping.

LAURA

I am just trying to logically understand why he would break up with you.

KAYLE

Yeah, I know, but for once couldn't you just hug me and say that everything will be fine. I don't need you to tell me that I'm the problem, I know I am.

LAURA

I am not saying you are the problem; I am just saying maybe he broke up with you because of some good reasons.

(She sticks a sticky note on her, lights go darker, Kayle stands up to leave)

Where are you going?

KAYLE

To my room.

LAURA

Ok, I love you sweetie.

(Kayle leaves, and after Laura leaves too, lights are off)

### SCENE 7

Kayle is in the middle of the stage, all the lights are off, there's only one light that surrounds Kayle. All the characters are going to come in to stick more sticky notes on Kayle's body. This scene is fast.

LAURA

Are you sure you want to eat that too?

MS. POPPY

You teenagers are all the same!

MS. LEE

You're too chubby to be a dancer!

KAREN

You're dressed like a slut!

JOSH

We were supposed to be king and queen, but you had to ruin everything with your feelings!

(Everyone leaves after sticking a sticky note on Kayle, and they leave her alone on stage)

## SCENE 8

Kayle is in the middle of the stage; her body is covered in sticky notes.

KAYLE

(She starts talking facing the audience, while she talks, she takes all the sticky notes off her body, one by one)

My mom always told me: (Laura echoes with Kayle) those jeans make you seem bigger, I can see your stomach, you should lose some weight.... my family never gave me peace about my body! They used to always comment about what I would do. I started eating more, and more, whatever I wanted. Food felt like the only comfort I could ever get. I was lost, I didn't know what was going on with me, but life just sort of passed in front of me, and I couldn't do anything to make it stop. I was drowning in other people's opinions; I was drowning in what I thought I was supposed to think about myself. (Chorus of characters in the background)

MS. LEE

You're too chubby!

KAREN

You're dressed like a slut!

MS. POPPY

You don't know what you're talking about.

JOSH

I just wanted to make everyone jealous.

I gained some weight and my dance teacher noticed, my friends noticed, my family noticed. It felt like everyone was just looking at whatever I was doing, it felt like suffocating.

And suddenly, I was on a diet, again. At first, I did lose weight, it felt great, my pants were loose again, I was not completely disgusted by what I saw in the mirror. Eventually, everyone started to notice, and suddenly I was showered with compliments, Ms. Lee even hugged me because I lost weight. How fucked up is that?!

But then, I stopped restricting myself and everyone started commenting again about what I was eating:



## LAURA

Weren't you on a diet? Didn't you already eat? Are you sure you want to eat another one?

And here we go again! I looked in the mirror; and I didn't like ANYTHING I saw. I was either too skinny, too fat, dressed like nun, dressed like a slut... Why, why does it have to be so difficult to like ourselves? I mean we're the only person we will always have to deal with, and still, it's so difficult to look straight in the mirror and be like "I love what I see!"

Sometimes I just wish self-love could be taught, I mean we would all need "How to love yourself, the guide that will change your life". It would sell so much, wouldn't it?

Why does appearance count? Weight it's just stupid number on a scale! Opinions are words thrown out in the air too fast. But thoughts, thoughts, are bugs in your head, that only you can kill. You are your own blessing and curse, but it's up to you to choose which one you want to be.

You know what, right now, I don't care anymore, I am going to start living for myself not for what I'm expected to be, not for what the world out there wants me to be.