Kate SIDE #2

Prologue

(January. KATE, mid-30s, stands at the front of a college lecture hall. She is poised, professional, and highly entertaining. Her lecture has a slight feel of stand-up comedy to it. Throughout the play, she addresses the audience as her classroom of students.)

KATE

Alrighty, hopefully everyone grabbed a syllabus on the way in. If you look at it, you will see that this is Introduction to Ethics. I'm sincerely hoping this is not your actual introduction to ethics—if so, I am concerned for your friends and family. But rather your introduction to the *study* of ethics, with me, Professor Gordon.

So why study ethics? I'm sure some of you are here because you heard I don't give a traditional final exam. That part is true--there is only one question on the final, and I'll tell it to you now: Is your highest ethical responsibility to yourself, or to other people?

(She scans the room and laughs.)

Oooh, some of you look nervous! And yes, you'll have to support your final answer with a theory of ethics that we study.

So let's look at two of those theories, that strive to answer your final exam for you--is your highest ethical responsibility to yourself, or to other people? Raise your hand if you think it's to yourself.

(She scans the audience)

Does nobody think that, or you're just too scared to admit it? RAISE YOUR HANDS! Ah, some brave Nietzsche souls. And how many think it's to other people?

(She scans the audience)

Ah, the Confucians. No, not confusions. Some of you look like the confusions right now.

Yes, these are two of the philosophers we will be looking at more in depth. An epic showdown of Nietzsche vs. Confucius!

(She holds a pretend microphone and mimics a boxing announcer voice)

In this corner, weighing in at 180 pounds, with some questionable political leanings and a penchant for Wagner we have NEITZSCHE! He will try to convince you that you should throw off the yolk of mass culture and be true to yourself--and while Nietzsche himself didn't believe this, the bigger idea is that by elevating yourself, you elevate society as a whole. More on that later.

And in this corner, weighing in at 240 pounds, hailing from the far east with a penchant for getting exiled its CONFUSCIUUUUUUS! He will try to convince you that your highest calling is to your family and your role in society, and that by fulfilling your role well you fulfill yourself along the way.

(She drops her imaginary mic)

We'll see who wins your heart and mind this semester. We'll meet again on Wednesday. Oh! And I forgot something very important.

(She leans forward, as if looking into each of their eyes individually.)

Do not. Lie to me. This semester.

(Beat.)

If you lie to me—*your ethics professor*--and I find out about it, you will automatically fail this class. Do not pass go, do not collect $200. And I will warn you now, the ghosts of the dishonest students who have come before you have blown your covers, and I am on to you. I know about increasing the size of the font, just on the periods, to make your paper longer. I know about changing the time zone on your computer to make the time stamp look like you submitted your paper by the deadline.

Do not. Lie to me. This semester.   *END*

(Beat.)

Have a great day, I'll, see you on Wednesday!

(The scene transitions around KATE. She stays standing center, and the elements of a middle-class apartment arrive onstage around her. She sits on a couch. Transition to--)

Scene One

(KATE sits on the couch looking over papers. BEN, her husband, walks in the front door carrying a grocery bag and a mail package, and wearing a Best Buy polo.)

                    BEN

Hey, babe!

                    KATE

Hey! How was your day?

                    BEN

Amazing.

                    KATE

Really?

                    BEN

No. A guy brought his computer to the help desk today, and I was talking him through how to fix it. I said "Click 'start', then click 'my computer.'" And he said, "Oh, it isn't my computer. It's my wife's."

(He playfully falls face first onto the couch next to KATE)

Remember when I was an engineer? Remember happiness?

(KATE indicates the package.)

                    KATE

What's this?