

## Bartleby and Bess Side 1

### BARTLEBY

Hi.

*(A long pause, he looks around awkwardly.) I'm...uh, (shakes head, becomes silent. Noise offstage. He gets up. Silence. Returns to seat.)*

It's been, uh, 408 days since...well, since we've, you know. Well, no you don't know, how could you know? No one knows. I don't know...408 days. That's approximately 1 year and uh, well, 408 minus 365 would be uh...You don't care do you? She didn't either. That's why its been 1 year and ....well. *(Sound offstage.)* I wish I knew why it's been so long. Part of me thinks that I do know why...the other part of me knows that I don't. Is it hot in here? I feel hot. I hope I'm not coming down with something. I left my thermometer at home when I left this morning. I hope I'm not coming down with something. I feel hot.

Gah. My mouth tastes so dry. I had some crackers on the plane. Crackers can make a person's mouth so dry. You need to drink plenty of fluids when you're having crackers. I didn't have enough water with my crackers earlier because I only got the one cup from the stewardess on the plane. I don't like airplanes. I had to take one to get here. I don't, don't like them. If we were supposed to fly then we'd be able to without being jammed into a tiny little seat that's got gum stuck to it and about this much leg room. And someone always does the crossword on the inflight magazine wrong. And in pen. Always in pen. Stupid people love pens. I use pencil.

It's not really lead in pencils, you know. It's graphite. I always want to tell people that. But then I'll notice that they're carrying a pen and I know they wouldn't understand. Because they're stupid. She used to write in ink...I should have known then. I don't like pens. Everything's permanent with a pen, unless you use one of those erasable kinds and those are just...imposters. To the pencils. Pencils erase. Pencils allow for change. Pens don't. She didn't allow for change. Do you know, it's been 408 days since we last saw each other? 408 days...that's a lot of time to change. And she'll walk in here, take one look at me, and announce that I look the same. And I don't. I've changed. This tie? It's new. These shoes? I never wore these shoes with her! But she won't notice that. She'll come in and say, Bart, you haven't changed one bit. And she'll smile and come towards me with her arms out and her hair will fall just so. And then I'll try to explain to her that I have changed. I'll point out my shoes and my tie. And through my explanation we'll both realize that she is right, and that I haven't changed at all.