

in plain sight. ABIGAIL just stands there, rigid, trying not to look at it.

FAWCETT

I fear your lover doesn't like me.

ABIGAIL

My lover! He's not my lover! I scarcely know him!

FAWCETT.

I'm glad to hear it. So, you say you've seen Noble's manuscripts. Which ones, precisely?

ABIGAIL

Well --

FAWCETT.

"The Hamlet Man". "Prestidigitation"...? Awful title.

ABIGAIL

I guess -- why?

FAWCETT

This new one? "False Gods"? --

ABIGAIL

(hesitates, a bit wary)

Yes.

FAWCETT

You have? -- When?

ABIGAIL

Recently.

FAWCETT eyes her closely. ABIGAIL tries to meet his gaze, to look anywhere but at the manuscript lying on the table.

FAWCETT

Fascinating -- Where is it?

ABIGAIL

At the cabin.

FAWCETT

May I say something, Miss Bliss? -- You're an appallingly bad liar. Look at your body language --
(she looks)

You're positively aquiver with concealment. In fact, you're so inept that I fear for your literary future -- a field in which lying is essential -- But don't lose heart. I can answer your question.

Side # 1
Fawcett/
Abigail

ABIGAIL

My question?

FAWCETT

"What's in it for me?"

ABIGAIL

That's not my question.

FAWCETT

Miss Bliss -- that is everyone's question. I expect you have literary ambitions of your own. Secret dreams of a brilliant career? --

(She shrugs)

Of course you do. And I can be of enormous help to my friends, Miss Bliss. The more friendly -- the more enormous. Now, let's play a little word game, shall we?

ABIGAIL

Why?

FAWCETT

Indulge me. I'll say a word -- and you tell me what pops to mind -- Imprimatur ...

(pause)

No? Indubitable -- antediluvian -- behooves -- ah -- prestidigitate -- oxymoron -- tickety boo... Posthaste.

ABIGAIL

Well -- they're --

FAWCETT

Yes --?

ABIGAIL

They're words Mr. Harmsworth uses. Sometimes. I guess.

FAWCETT

Uses sometimes you guess indeed. In fact, in his first nine novels -- he used imprimatur 17 times, antediluvian 12 or 13 times and his perennial favorite posthaste no fewer than 27 times. In his three most recent novels -- not counting "False Gods" which I haven't had the benefit of seeing -- would you care to venture a guess how often those words appear? --

(ABIGAIL shrugs.)

Zero. Zero -- and one lonely little posthaste somehow slipped through.

ABIGAIL

I really don't see --

FAWCETT

Every writer, Miss Bliss, and certainly Noble Harmsworth, leaves his own literary fingerprint -- and his is completely different for the last three books in virtually every aspect -- vocabulary, word patterns, verbal idiosyncrasies. I have reams of computer printout covering my walls. The internal evidence is overwhelming -- He didn't write them!!

ABIGAIL

That's -- that's -- absurd.

FAWCETT

(hears a slight noise from outside)
What was that?!

They listen. Ever so faintly, we hear a "Meoww" sound. FAWCETT turns back to ABIGAIL.

FAWCETT

This will be the greatest literary expose of the century. I'm not just going to discredit him. I'm going to annihilate him -- God, I hope he wins on Thursday.

ABIGAIL

You hope he wins?

FAWCETT

Absolutely. It makes my bombshell all the greater. "Nobel Prize Winner a Fraud" is a lot catchier headline than -- "Aging Canadian Novelist a Fraud". But I need those original manuscripts. They're my weapons of mass destruction!

(puts his hand on her shoulder. Instinctively she recoils.)

Why are you so tense, my dear? --

(stops abruptly, looks at her closely)

It's here, isn't it? False Gods? That's what's bothering you. It's right here under my nose!

End

ABIGAIL

No! I told you --

FAWCETT

(starts looking around)

Am I getting warm? -- Warmer --??

ABIGAIL

No!

FAWCETT

Colder? -- How's this? --

(changes direction)