

Side #4
Noble
Abigail

START
↓

ABIGAIL

He told me -- who wrote them -- the first drafts ...

NOBLE

Yes?

ABIGAIL

Before I ... rewrote them.

NOBLE

Edited them. Yes ...?

ABIGAIL

He did!!

NOBLE

Indeed -- may I ask if he achieved his presumed objective?

ABIGAIL

His objective? --

NOBLE

Well, the only motive which leaps to mind for such a revelation would be the desire to impress the listener, and thereby gain access to her -- favors.

ABIGAIL

Access to --? It had nothing to do with that!!

NOBLE

You mean he actually believes it? Fascinating. There may actually be a novel in this -- well, a novella. Luckless Lyle -- The Man Who Mistook His Life for Another's. I give it to you. Gratis. It has everything. Pathos, intrigue, self-delusion. Go easy on the pathos.

ABIGAIL just looks at him, unsettled and confused. He heads off towards the kitchen.

ABIGAIL

But ... you're not going to say anything else? You're not going to deny it? Tell me it's not true?

NOBLE

It's not true.

ABIGAIL

Not like that!!

NOBLE

You don't like my performance? You want something more

Henry Irving-ish -- a hand on the breast? A quaver in the voice? It's n-n-not t-t-t-true? Is that better?

ABIGAIL

You're getting me all confused!!!

NOBLE

I'm sorry. I'm being cruel. To one who least deserves it. No doubt it's to cover my distress that I've treated you so abominably that I've left you prone to believe such nonsense.

ABIGAIL

But -- he knew parts of False Gods by heart. Elspeth's porch, wallowing in the primordial ooze. He knew that part very well.

NOBLE

As I know large chunks of Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, which proves -- that I wrote them? Hardly. It's the curse of the creative mind such as yours, Abigail -- to conjure up mysteries where none exist. The truth is that pounding away at my beloved Underwood has long since become too much for my arthritic fingers. My first drafts, as I thought you knew, are entirely handwritten these days. So I had them typed up --

ABIGAIL

On an Underwood?

NOBLE

Of course. My aversion to computers is well known.

ABIGAIL

But why ask Lyle? I would have been happy to/

NOBLE

Out of the question. Such secretarial drudgery is beneath you, my dear. Besides, I felt sorry for Lyle. He needs the money, desperately. And he'd been a follower of mine, in his younger years -- a disciple, you might say --

ABIGAIL

I'm familiar with --

NOBLE

The affliction.

ABIGAIL

The condition.

NOBLE

It was a mistake. Laboring over my words, the poor

fellow must have come to believe he wasn't just typing them, he was actually writing them. Himself.

ABIGAIL

How could he possibly believe that?!

NOBLE

Perhaps he's mad. He's been so steeped, so marinated in failure -- he literally doesn't know the truth any more. I've heard he actually does some sort of imitation of me at parties and such.

ABIGAIL

(not sure what to believe any more)

It's true --

The phone rings.

NOBLE

It's all rather sad.

(picks up the phone)

Harmsworth here ... Shelagh? -- Oh, Shelagh Rogers. I hear you've been trying to reach me, dear lady... Yes, I've been out -- walking -- on a solitary stretch of the Canadian Shield. The wind in my face, the atavistic rock beneath my feet. Drawing succor from the pulsing land itself ... You like that? I thought you would ... Tape an interview? Today? Well, I don't do radio, of course, but for you, and you alone, I shall make an exception... Excellent. Tee hee to you as well.

(hangs up)

Irritating woman.

(ABIGAIL is looking at him with an odd expression)

Atavistic rock? Was that too much?

ABIGAIL

You weren't out walking.

NOBLE

No, no. Just doing my bit to feed the mythical flame. Like Trudeau and that ridiculous walk in the blizzard.

(ABIGAIL just looks at him)

I sense your disapproval, but really, it's a harmless little fiction. Gives the scribblers something to scribble, the babblers something to babble --

ABIGAIL

Lies just roll trippingly off your tongue, don't they?

NOBLE

Of course. I'm a writer.

← End