

From A MAN'S WORLD by Rachel Crothers
Excerpt from Act I
1 M, 1 F

In a rooming house of artists, Dutch violinist Fritz Bahn shares his concerns with female writer Frank Ware about her independent lifestyle, which causes people to talk.

FRITZ: You are tired tonight, yah? Un?

FRANK: A little Fritz.

FRITZ: Und you must work yet?

FRANK: I'm going out later.

FRITZ: Oh, no. Don't do dot!

FRANK: Oh, I must. If I get what I'm after tonight I'll have a fine study. I'm going to have supper with a girl from the East side.

FRITZ: I vill be back. I vill go with you.

FRANK: Indeed you won't.

FRITZ: But, I don't want you to go alone at night.

FRANK: Now—now—Fritzie-- if you get fidgety--

FRITZ: Oh-- but de talk-- de talk-- I can't stand it for you. When you go out like dis people don't believe it is for your work. They say you have a lover-- they say he writes your books.

FRANK: That's very flattering. It means that they think they are too good for a woman to do.

FRITZ: But you see you make dem talk when you do foolish things.

FRANK: Foolish? You mean going out alone? Good Heavens! You don't suppose I'm going to give up all my chances of seeing and knowing and understanding just because a few silly people are talking about me?

FRITZ: But you are a woman. You must not expect people to trust you-- too much.

FRANK: I'm not going to spend my life explaining.

FRITZ: No--but you--

FRANK: Oh, Fritz, don't. You've been so nice and so comfortable. And now you're beginning to worry. You see how much better it would have been for both of us if I'd never told you anything about myself and about Kiddie.

FRITZ: Don't say that. You have to talk to somebody-- sometimes. Don't say you are sorry you told me, dot was de most natural ting I haf ever seen you do.

FRANK: Natural? Surely, I am nothing but natural. I'm a natural woman because I've been a free one. Living alone with my father all those years made me so. He took me with him every possible place.

FRITZ: Ah, but he was with you to protect you.

FRANK: I didn't need much protection. Dad wanted me to see-- to know-- to touch all kinds of life-- and I surely did. He developed all his stories by telling them aloud to me. He used to walk up and down the little library and talk out his characters. So I began to balance men and women very early --and the more I knew-- the more I thought the women had the worst of it.

FRITZ: Something has made you bitter to men.

FRANK: Kiddie has made me better. Poor little nameless fellow! I shall never forget the night his mother came to us. I didn't know her very well-- she was only one of the hundreds of American girls studying in Paris-- but she came to me because she wanted to get away from her own set. We kept her and she died when Kiddie was born-- and then we kept him-- because we didn't know what else in God s world to do with him-- and then we loved him-- and after father died-- some how that poor, little, helpless baby was the greatest comfort in the world to me. I couldn't bear Paris without dad, so I came back to America. Kiddie was two then, and we set up house in this old place three years ago-- and here we are-- and it's nobody s business who he is. I don't *know* who his father was; I don't *care* who he was-- but my name is better for the boy than his-- for mine is honest.

FRITZ: I tink it iss a too bad ting to be a woman wid a big mind, a big soul. Yah, I tink it. But I am glad you are one already.

FRANK: Dear old Fritz!

FRITZ: I only wonder wat vill be de end.

FRANK: Kiddie will be the end of everything for me.

FRITZ: No-- he vill not. Someday you vill lof a strong man-- and he vill change it all.

FRANK: You don't believe me of course. But, its Kiddie-- Kiddie I am living for. Everything I believe about men and women has been so intensified by him that he has become a sort of symbol to me of what women suffer through men-- and he's given me a purpose-- something to do.

FRITZ: I tink Malcolm Gaskell has cut me out wid-- Kiddie.

FRANK: Nonsense! Nobody could do that.

FRITZ: I am not so sure. I think Gaskell can get most anything he want-- if he try.

FRANK: Why don't you like him, Fritz?

FRITZ: He isn't de kind of a man dot everybody knows all about and can trust de first time you see him.

FRANK: Yes, he is. That's just what Gaskell is. Whatever his faults may be at least they're honest, right out from the shoulder!

FRITZ: I am not so sure, *(A pause.)* Don't be sorry tomorrow that you haf talked a liddle to night. It s gute for you und don't tink I don't understand. Gute nacht. *(Giving her his hand.)*

FRANK: Good night, Fritz.