

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

*Frank, a writer, comes to terms with the truth about Gaskell, the man she loves.*

GASKELL: Frank, this thing isn't going to make any difference in our lives, is it?

FRANK: Whatever I do, Malcolm, you'll know I do without bitterness -- without any spirit of revenge.

GASKELL: You mean if you throw me over?

FRANK: I mean if the future doesn't seem possible for us together.

GASKELL: Why shouldn't it be possible?

FRANK: You know.

GASKELL: No, I don't. This thing has been a shock to you, of course. It's shaken you terribly, but you haven't given me any real reason -- any facts why there shouldn't be a future for us. I love you and I am going to have you.

FRANK: (Moving away from him.) Oh, don't -- please. I must -- I must --

GASKELL: (Following her.) There's little enough in the world worth having, heaven knows. Why should we miss each other?

FRANK: Kiddie. Kiddie.

GASKELL: Well -- well, we love each other. That's the first thing to reckon with.

FRANK: Oh, you don't know yet what I mean.

GASKELL: Talk won't get us anywhere. We've got to look this thing square in the face, as it is. Either you throw me over, or you let me give you the rest of my life and make you happy.

FRANK: Oh, that isn't --

GASKELL: I love you, Frank. I'd lay down my life for you. You're the whole world to me.

FRANK: Love isn't the only thing in the world.

GASKELL: It's the biggest thing. We've found each other. Look at me. You know it's the one perfect thing on earth -- a perfect love -- and we've found it.

FRANK: It never could be perfect while you believe what you do.

GASKELL: What's that got to do with the facts?

FRANK: Do you believe it wasn't wrong just because you are a man?

GASKELL: Oh --

FRANK: Do you believe that?

GASKELL: (After a pause.) Yes.

FRANK: Oh!

GASKELL: Good heavens, Frank, I thought you were so much bigger than the average woman. All women kick against this and what good does it do? Why, since the beginning of time, one thing has been accepted for a man and another for a woman. Why on earth do you beat your head against a stone wall? Why do you try to put your ideals up against the facts?

FRANK: I'm not talking about my ideals now, nor the accepted thing. I'm talking about you, that girl, this child. You think I must excuse what you did -- that it really wasn't wrong at all, just because you are a man.

GASKELL: It's too late to say these things to me now. You know must have known when you first knew me that I'd -- well, that I'd lived a man's life. When you first loved me, why didn't you think of all this?

FRANK: Ah, that's just it -- I loved you. I took you as all women take men: without question. Oh, don't you see, I'm not looking for something bad in men. If it hadn't been for him -- if he hadn't been put into my arms -- a little helpless, nameless thing -- if I hadn't seen that girl suffer the tortures of hell through her disgrace, I probably wouldn't have thought any more about this than most women do.

GASKELL: Isn't our love more to you than that?

FRANK: No!

GASKELL: Good God, Frank! You're a woman. You talk like a woman -- you think like a woman. I'm a man. What do you expect? We don't live under the same laws. It was never meant to be. Nature -- nature made men different.

FRANK: Don't make nature the excuse for ruining the life of a good girl. Oh, Malcolm -- (Putting her hand on his arm.) Do you think it wasn't wrong?

GASKELL: (Drawing her to him.) I only know I love you. You said you loved me. I won't give you up.

FRANK: Oh!

GASKELL: You're angry now. When you've had time to think you'll see. Frank, I love you. I love you.

FRANK: (Getting away from him.) Oh, no, no.

GASKELL: Frank, you're not as cold and hard as that. You're going to forgive me.

FRANK: Oh, I want to forgive you. If you could only see. If your soul could only see. Oh, dear God! Malcolm, tell me, tell me you know it was wrong -- that you'd give your life to make it right. Say that you know this thing was a crime.

GASKELL: No! Don't try to hold me to account by a standard that doesn't exist. Don't measure me by your theories. If you love me, you'll stand on that and forget everything else.

FRANK: I can't. I can't.

GASKELL: I'm not a man to beg, Frank. Do you want me to go? Is that it? Is this the end?

FRANK: There's nothing else.

GASKELL: Do you mean that?

FRANK: There's nothing else. It is the end. (He goes out closing the door.)