

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

Frank, a female writer, and Gaskell, a newspaper editor who is in love with her, express their differing views on the inequality between men and women.

FRANK: I don't understand.

GASKELL: Impudent, pig-headed, irresponsible set -- every one of them. How do they expect to get along if they don't take a chance when you hand it out to them? Bohemians! Geniuses! Damn fools, I say.

FRANK: Oh, Fritz isn't like that. There's something else -- some reason. What was the matter with him? Something came over him -- I don't --

GASKELL: Why, it's me -- that's what's the matter with him. He won't take it from me; because he's so jealous of you he's crazy. If I'd known he was such a fool, I'd have had them send to him direct so he wouldn't have known I had anything to do with it. That would have pleased you? But I thought the safest and quickest way to get him was to come and find him myself. Sorry I've balled it up. Your friend's so fine and sensitive; I don't know how to handle him.

FRANK: Don't be unjust to Fritz just because you've lost your temper. I must say, I don't blame you for that -- he did seem awfully rude and ungrateful, but I know he didn't mean it. He--

GASKELL: Mean it? Good Lord, what did he mean then?

FRANK: That's just what I don't know.

GASKELL: You're trying to find another reason for what's just plain ordinary jealousy. Do you want me to keep out of his way?

FRANK: Don't be ridiculous.

GASKELL: (Taking both her hands.) Do you want me to clear out and let you alone?

FRANK: (Trying to draw her hands away.) This has nothing to do with the case.

GASKELL: Yes, it has. Everything to do with it. He doesn't make any more difference to me than a mosquito, but if you -- Good God, I love you and you know it. (He catches her to him and kisses her, then slowly lets her go. She puts her hands over her face and turns away.) You've kept me outside. I know he knows the whole business --whatever it is. You've shut me out. But I know you're making a mistake by making a mystery of your life.

FRANK: You mean I ought to tell about Kiddie? Explain and prove every bit of my life?

GASKELL: I don't put it that way. I mean everything ought to be open -- understood.

FRANK: I thought you said you accepted me just as you see me here -- just as you accept a man.

GASKELL: In the beginning, I thought I did. But when a man loves a woman, the whole world changes to him. He wants to protect her -- he wants to understand her. He wants to look into her eyes and see the truth.

FRANK: You're afraid of what you might see in mine?

GASKELL: Tell me whatever it is.

FRANK: Why should I?

GASKELL: Frank, don't fool with me. I love you. That's why I ask. That's why I care. I want to understand you. Why won't you tell me? Have you told this other man?

FRANK: He never asked me.

GASKELL: Do you love him? Are you going to marry him? Are you? You've got to tell me that. Are you going to marry him?

FRANK: No.

GASKELL: Then I'm going to make you love me. I love you. I love you, I tell you. This child is the most important thing in your life. I ask you to tell me what he is to you.

FRANK: How dare you say that to me?

GASKELL: Because I love you. That gives me the right.

FRANK: What if I said to you, "I love you, but I don't believe you. You must prove to me that everything in your life has been just what *I* think it ought to be. "

GASKELL: I'm a man. You're a woman. I love you. I have the right to know your life.

FRANK: You mean if Kiddie were my own child, you couldn't ask me to marry you?

GASKELL: Is he?

FRANK: And if he were? Can't a woman live through that and be the better for it? How dare a man question her! How dare he!