

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

Frank, a female writer, admits her love for Gaskell.

GASKELL: I've been thinking since that -- since this afternoon. I was a cad. At least, that's what I seemed to you. I don't know what those other duffers were driving at... Oh, I do know in a way, but -- All I mean is that I love you and ask for your confidence.

FRANK: I'm not angry now, but I was then -- so horribly angry and hurt. I could tell you who his mother was and prove it in a hundred ways, but don't ask me to do that. Oh, Malcolm. You must believe me -- just me. Look at me. I give you the one love of my life.

GASKELL: (Catching her in his arms.) Frank!

FRANK: I love you. I love you.

GASKELL: My darling! It was hell to doubt you, but I couldn't help it, dear. It was only because I love you so. Because I want you to be the most perfect woman in the world. Do you understand?

FRANK: And don't you see why I wanted you, of all people in the world, to trust me in every way? Don't you understand?

GASKELL: No, not quite. (Sitting beside her.) When will you marry me?

FRANK: Oh, I don't know.

GASKELL: I want to take care of you. You need it as much as any woman does. Do you love me?

FRANK: I've tried not to.

GASKELL: Don't say that. Why?

FRANK: I haven't wanted to love anybody and when I knew I was beginning to care, I didn't want to.

GASKELL: When did you know you cared?

FRANK: Oh. When I began to fight with you. You made me so awfully angry and then I was always wretched until we made up. I began to know your step in the hall, and when you opened the door and stood there I knew something strong and sweet, something stronger than myself, was coming in.

GASKELL: I'm a beast in lots of ways and stubborn as a mule, but I can take care of you and I'll be good to you.

FRANK: When did you first know you cared?

GASKELL: From the first minute I saw you.

FRANK: Oh, every man says that. You know that isn't true. I wouldn't want it to be. I'll tell you when I first knew you cared.

GASKELL: When?

FRANK: Do you remember that day -- it was -- it was Sunday evening about three months ago. You were here and Fritz came in with some roses for me and you didn't look at me for the rest of the evening. You talked to Clara every minute.

GASKELL: Oh, come, I wasn't quite such an ass as that.

FRANK: You were. You were just as silly as you could be, and perfectly adorable. When you'd gone I --

GASKELL: You what?

FRANK: I won't tell you.

GASKELL: Oh, please tell me.

FRANK: No.

GASKELL: Oh, please. What did you do when I'd gone?

FRANK: I won't tell.

GASKELL: I don't believe you love me at all. Do you?

FRANK: Um, you haven't the faintest idea how much.

GASKELL: Well, tell me -- tell me how much.

FRANK: I never can. You don't know what it means for a woman to love only one man in all her life.

GASKELL: Oh, now Frank --

FRANK: It's true. You're the one man, Malcolm. That's why I've tried to resist it -- because it means so terribly much to me. My life has been filled with other things, you know -- with Kiddie and my work. They absorbed me and satisfied me; and when you -- when love began to crowd in -- to overpower me, I was afraid. It seemed almost like being a traitor to myself. Oh, it means such a such an overwhelming thing for a woman to give up to love after she's -- she's been --

GASKELL: After she's been as strong and independent as you have been. I'm the luckiest dog on earth. I don't see how I got you.

FRANK: Just because you are you. Oh, don't ever disappoint me. Be big and fine and honest -- always let me lean on you and worship you.

GASKELL: Kiss me.