

From A MAN'S WORLD by Rachel Crothers  
Excerpt from Act III  
2F

*Singer Lione confronts writer Frank with her suspicions about Gaskill, and the two find a new appreciation and regard for each other.*

LIONE: I don't know what Fritz has been telling you and I don't care. You said you wanted me to speak plainly, so I suppose you'd like to hear what I mean and why I mean it. I've come up as soon as I could get here.

FRANK: Well?

LIONE: Oh, we can't be blind, you know -- even to please you.

FRANK: You mean Kiddie looks like me and you draw the self evident conclusion.

LIONE: Oh, no, not at all. We mean he looks like Malcolm Gaskell.

FRANK: What?

LIONE: Why you ever let him come here -- why you ever undertook such a pose and expected to carry it out is more-- (She stops as Frank goes slowly toward her.)

FRANK: What do you mean?

LIONE: I mean he's your child and Malcolm Gaskell is his father.

FRANK: Lione, don't say that. Don't lie about a thing like that -- it's too awful. Why do you? Kiddie isn't my child. I can prove it by people who knew his mother.

LIONE: (Impressed by the blaze of truth in Frank's eyes.) Then who -- who was his father?

FRANK: I don't know who his father was.

LIONE: For God's sake, do you mean that? Haven't you ever had a -- Haven't you ever seen the resemblance to Gaskell?

FRANK: No! No! No! No! Of course not! Not the slightest bit in the world. (Hurrying to desk and taking miniature out of drawer.) It isn't there at all. He doesn't look the least bit like him. See look! (They bend over the picture.) What do you see? Where? What? I don't see it. Not a thing. Do you?

LIONE: Well I -- you -- I -- I thought I did.

FRANK: Did they all say they saw it? All of them?

LIONE: Yes -- no, not all of them. You can imagine anything in a picture.

FRANK: What did Fritz say?

LIONE: He believes you and always has. From the first.

FRANK: But he saw the resemblance to Gaskell, though -- he saw it? (Starting.) That's what he meant. That's what he's going to ask Gaskell. Oh, it can't be. It can't be! Look again. What did you think was like him? I don't see a thing. I'm telling the truth, as I live. I'd see it if it were there. What is it you think is like him? Tell me. What? What?

LIONE: Through the eyes.

FRANK: The eyes? No, I can't see it. I can't see it. It's imagination. You can imagine anything in a picture. You don't see it now do you? Oh, Lione, any man -- any man in the world but Gaskell. (Sinking into chair at R. Of desk.)

LIONE: I'm sorry I stirred this up. I ought to have kept my mouth shut. It was imagination. Let it alone, I say. It's the wildest most improbable thing in the world.

FRANK: But I've got to know. I've got to know.

LIONE: Let it alone. Good Lord, you can't stir up any man's life. You're lucky if it looks right on top. If you love him, take him -- that's the point. Let it alone.

FRANK: Um -- you don't understand. Whoever Kiddie's father is -- I've hated him all these years. Every time I look at Kiddie and think that somewhere in the world is a man who branded him with the shame of -- Every time I see a girl who's made a mess of her life because she's loved a man, I think of Kiddie's poor little mother, with the whole burden and disgrace of it and the man, scott free. I tell you, it's horrible, the whole thing -- the relation between men and women. Women give too much. It's made me afraid to love any man. I've prided myself that I never would because of Kiddie. Because I saw and went through that -- I feel almost as deeply, as bitterly as if I really were his mother. Don't you see? Don't you see?

LIONE: I suppose it does make a difference when a thing is brought home to you. I've never thought much about the whole business myself. Men are pigs of course. They take all they can get and don't give any more than they have to. It's a man's world -- that's the size of it. What's the use of knocking your head against things you can't change? I never believed before that you really meant all this helping women business. What's the use? You can't change anything to save your neck. Men are men.

FRANK: If women decided that men should be equally disgraced for the same sin, they would be.

LIONE: Oh, yes -- if -- if. That's easy enough to preach. When it comes to morality, a woman never holds anything against a man. What good would it do if she did? She'd be alone. Why, see here -- what if -- just suppose that Malcolm Gaskell were Kiddie's father. You love him, and love is no joke with you. You've let yourself go at last. You've found the one man. What are you going to do about it? Throw him over because you happen to find a little incident in his life that doesn't jibe with your theory? Where will you be? What becomes of you? Um? Not much fun for you for the rest of your life. He's the man you want, take him and thank your lucky stars you have him. That's all I see in it.

FRANK: It's all you say. He's the one man, but if it were true --

LIONE: Well?

FRANK: If it were true-- (She shakes her head.)

LIONE: Oh, bosh! Then you can't marry any man -- they're all alike. You know, we've worked ourselves up over nothing after all. I've been at the bottom of all that picture business. It was easy enough to sort of hypnotize the others into it. You can see anything in a picture -- in Clara's pictures. I've always been looking for something to get hold of about you because I was jealous. I'm a fool about Fritz. (Frank quickly puts a hand over Lione's.) I can't sing any more. I can't sleep. I can't eat. I'm a fool and I know it, but I can't help it.

FRANK: Go away from him for a while, Lione -- get away and he'll go after you.

LIONE: Oh, I don't know. I don't know.

FRANK: There it is! Love! What fools it makes us. Oh, I'm afraid of it!

LIONE: I don't believe this thing's true. Brace up. I don't believe it -- not for a minute.

FRANK: I don't either now.