

It was a moment she had the wisdom not to prolong, and yet she could not let him go without a bridge thrown out by which, for his comfort, he might return to the consoling relation.

"That's why," she said, "I thought you'd like to do this for me. It's something you could save me from; this anxiety and disappointment about Ken. . . . I suppose it is about all anybody will ever save me . . ."

"Anne, Anne . . . I can't tell you what you've been to me." It was plain he had not known himself until that moment. "What you'll always be . . . the best . . . the noblest . . ." He had her hands, and not knowing what else to do he kissed them.

"I hope," she said, "you will be very happy. Shall we see you at Palomitas this summer?"

"I think not. I'm going East. Miss Rutgers wants me to meet her people."

She gave him her grave approval. But when, as she moved toward the door, she saw what was in his face, there was something in hers that was as near to fright as for Anne was possible. She put up her hand as if mutely to say that that was the one thing he must not ask of her; and in the same moment the mother in her rose to meet his need of a tangible restoration to his status as the old and valued friend. She lifted her face to him where she stood and kissed him quietly.

In the decent interval which Frank allowed himself before he faced the office force again, he realized that before he had time to consider how he would go about it, he would be obliged to give some account of his interview with Anne. He heard the door opening into his father's