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The Fifth of October

By Mary Raymond Shipman Andrews

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When the road of life turns sharply right or left, according to a decision; when the decision must be ready of a Monday morning, and this is Saturday; when one has five times gone down into soul-depths to consider, and five times been jerked back by a rap or a ring, and banality--when this is the state of affairs, the state of mind is rasped. One bitterly resents the fate that has led to a Paris hotel, and a numbered door, and a telephone.

The girl, Alixe, struggling for calm and concentration, was aware that she was listening all the time to sounds in the corridors. Yet her thoughts ran at length into a quieter, remoter groove; they slipped across the ocean to her own America, to country roads where brown earth was soft and hillsides misty with a springtime gone by, where she rode a horse through fresh weather, through woods starred with white trilliums; and riding beside her was the Only Man in the World--the man who would never forgive her. By the pang that came as she remembered those rides, she knew that, whether he forgave her or not, she cared for him still. But the girl was not of the Griselda pattern--not meek. She had humbled herself, had gone all the way. It had been her fault; she had been unpardonable: yet, she was worth pardoning.

There the man had failed her. He had not seen,--through the things she did, which were unworthy, the thing that she was, which was worth while. She had taken her pride--her very stiff pride--in her hand, and said that she was sorry; had tried to show him that it was not the regular traveling of a small nature, but the running off the track of a warm and generous one. And the man would not see. By that she knew that he was limited and vain. Yes, but he was other things--himself, above all. It is hard to resolve personality entirely into qualities; it holds, often, when qualities go to pieces.