

# MARY POPPINS



## CHAPTER ONE

# The East wind

Cherry Tree Lane is a nice London street. On one side there are houses, on the other there is a park. The cherry-trees go dancing right in the middle. Number Seventeen is the smallest house in the street. The Banks live in this house. They are six - Mr. and Mrs. Banks and their four children - Jane, Michael and the twins - Barbara and John. Mrs. Banks has a lot of housework and she has a nurse to help her with the children. But one day their nurse left them and Mrs. Bank didn't know what to do.

"Write to the newspaper," said Mr. Banks, "and the nurses will come. I'm sorry, but now I must go to work."

He kissed his wife on her nose and went away to the City. The City was a place where Mr. Banks went every day. There he sat at a large desk and made money. He was very busy with it. And he brought some money home in his little black bag. Sometimes he gave some to Jane and Michael, but sometimes he didn't and said: "The Bank is broken."

When Mr. Banks went to work, Mrs. Banks began to write letters to the newspapers.

Upstairs in the Nursery, Jane and Michael were waiting for their father. It was a windy evening and the East Wind was blowing through the cherry-trees.

"Look! The trees are dancing!" cried Jane.

"That's Daddy over there!" said Michael.

"That's not Daddy," she said. "It's somebody else."

It was a woman with her hat on and a bag in her right hand. Suddenly a strange thing happened. The wind lifted her up and brought her to the garden door. When the woman opened it, the wind lifted her up again and carried her at the front door.

"Let's go and see who it is!" said Jane.

They left their room to have a look at a visitor. Jane and Michael could

see that she was thin and had black hair and blue eyes.

"They are very nice and very quiet children," said Mrs. Banks but in fact she didn't believe it. The 'Nursery' was upstairs and the woman followed Mrs. Banks but she slid up the banisters! Down, of course, the children often did it themselves. But up - never!

"Well, children," said Mrs. Banks. "This is your new nurse, Mary Poppins!"

Mary Poppins looked at them carefully. At last the woman gave a long loud sniff and said: "All right. I'll stay."

When Mrs. Banks left the Nursery, Jane and Michael came up to Mary Poppins.

"How did you come?" Jane asked. "Did the wind blow you here?"

"It did," said Mary Poppins and no more. And she gave another sniff and opened her bag.

"What a funny bag!" Michael said. There was nothing inside.

But the next moment Mary Poppins took out a white apron, a large cake of soap, a tooth-brush, a packet of hairpins, a bottle of perfume and a small armchair. Jane and Michael were shocked.

Then Mary Poppins took out a large bottle of medicine.

"Is that your medicine?" asked Michael.

"No, it's yours," said Mary Poppins.

"I don't want it! I won't!"

But suddenly Michael understood that he could not say "no" to her. He closed his eyes and opened his mouth.

"Strawberry ice," he said. "More, more, more!"

But Mary Poppins, with her cold eyes, came up to Jane. Her spoon was full of something green and yellow.

"Sweet lemon-juice. I love it," Jane said but when Mary Poppins came to the twins with the bottle, she cried.

"Oh no! It's not good for them. Please!" But Mary Poppins didn't look

at her. She brought the spoon to John's mouth. He drank it and Jane saw there was milk in the spoon!

Then Marry Poppins opened her bag and took out eleven pyjamas, a pair of boots, a set of dominoes, two bathing-caps and a book. Then came a bed.

Jane and Michael were very surprised. Now they knew that something strange and wonderful happened at their house.

"Mary Poppins," said Michael, "will you never leave us?"

"Till the wind changes," she said and went to bed.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **The day out**

"Every third Thursday," said Mrs. Banks.

"The best people, madam," Mary Poppins said, "give every second Thursday. Or..."

"Very well," said Mrs. Banks quickly.

So her Day Out began. Mary Poppins put on her white coat and white gloves and took her umbrella with a parrot's head for a handle under her arm. Mary Poppins liked to look her best. And she knew she always looked her best.

She walked very quickly. But sometimes she stopped near a car or shop window to put her hat straight. She didn't forget about her dress and her umbrella.

So she went to meet her friend, Bert. He was very good at drawing pavement pictures.

It was a fine day and there were some pictures - two Bananas, and an Apple, and a head of Queen Elizabeth on the pavement.

"Mary!" Bert cried happily.

"It's my Day Out, Bert," she said.

"I know, Mary," he said, "but..." and he looked sadly into his cap. There was little money in it. "Business is bad today. I'm sorry, I can't take you to tea today."

Mary Poppins thought of the lemon-cakes. What a pity! But when she saw Bert's face and said:

"That's all right, Bert. I really don't want any tea today." And it was nice of Mary Poppins because she liked lemon-cakes very much.

Bert understood everything but he said nothing. He took her hand in his and said: "Look, there is a new picture!" They could see big trees, green grass and blue sea in it. "Mary," he said, "I've got an idea! Let's go there, into the

picture?"

And he got Mary out of the street, into the picture. There they were, inside it!

How green it was there and how quiet! What soft grass under their feet! There were green leaves near their hats, and little coloured flowers near their shoes. Mary Poppins looked at Bert. Now he had a bright green-and-red coat and white trousers and a new yellow hat.

"Bert, you look fine!" she cried.

Bert could not say anything; he was looking at her with round eyes! She took a little mirror out of her bag and looked into it. Round her shoulders there was a watery blue dress, on her head there was a beautiful blue hat. She was wearing shoes with diamonds like a princess.

So, they went and went and came to a little table. And there on a green table was Afternoon Tea! There were hundreds of lemon-cakes on it!

"Sit down, Madam," asked a tall man in a black coat. Mary Poppins and Bert sat down on little green chairs.

"I'm the Waiter!" said the man in the black coat.

"Oh! But I didn't see you in the picture," said Mary Poppins.

"Ah, I was behind the tree," said the Waiter.

So, they began their afternoon tea. They drank a lot of tea and finished all the cakes.

"There is nothing to pay," said the Waiter. "Can you see a Merry-go-Round?" And he showed them the way between trees.

"That's funny," said she. "I didn't see it in the picture."

They came up to the Merry-go-Round. Mary Poppins and Bert jumped on two horses. When the music started, the horses left their places! What a surprise! Mary Poppins and Bert had a nice ride that day! When they came back, it was nearly dark. "I'm very sorry," the Waiter said, "but we close at seven. May I show you the Way Out?"

"It's a wonderful picture, Bert!" said Mary Poppins.

"Well, I did my best, Mary," said Bert and they saw a large white door.

It was made of thick chalk lines.

"Here you are!" the Waiter said. "This is the Way Out."

"Good-bye and thank you," said Mary Poppins. Then they went through the white door.

When they went out, the lovely dress and the diamonds from her shoes and her beautiful hat disappeared. So did Bert's bright clothes.

When she came back to Number Seventeen, Jane and Michael asked her:

"Where have you been?"

"In Fairyland," said Mary Poppins.

"Did you see Cinderella?" said Jane.

"Cinderella? Not me... No!" said Mary Poppins.

"Or Robinson Crusoe?" asked Michael.

"Robinson Crusoe - no!" said Mary Poppins.

"Then you have not been to our Fairyland!"

Mary Poppins gave her greatest sniff.

"Don't you know," she said, "that everybody's got a Fairyland of their own?"

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Laughing gas**

That nice afternoon Mary Poppins took Jane and Michael to her uncle, Mr. Wigg. It was a long way to Number Three, Robertson Road. But when Mary Poppins rang the bell, the door flew open and a thin lady came out.

"How do you do, Mrs. Wigg," said Jane.

"Mrs. Wigg!" said the thin lady. "No, thank you! I'm Miss Persimmon and am proud of it!" Jane and Michael looked at each other. They thought that Mr. Wigg was a very special person if the lady was so glad not to be Mrs. Wigg.

Jane and Michael followed Mary Poppins upstairs.

"Come in! And welcome!" called a loud voice from inside.

Mary Poppins opened the door and they came into a nice large room. There was a fireplace in the corner and in the middle of the room there was a big table with four cups, bread and butter, biscuits, chocolates and a large cherry cake.

"Nice to see you," somebody said. Jane and Michael looked around but saw nobody.

"Oh, Uncle Albert - not again! It's not your birthday, is it?" Mary Poppins said and looked up. Jane and Michael looked up too and saw a round, fat man in the air. Indeed, he was sitting on the air and reading a newspaper.

"My dear," said Mr. Wigg, smiling down at them, "I'm very sorry, but it is my birthday." he said, looking down at Jane and Michael.

"I can see you're a little surprised," said Mr. Wigg. And, indeed, their mouths were so wide open! "You see, I'm a happy sort of man. I can smile and laugh at everything," said Mr. Wigg.

"But why...?" said Jane.

"But how...?" said Michael.



"Well, when my birthday comes on Friday and I laugh on that day, I become filled with Laughing Gas. I can't keep on the ground. The first funny idea, and I'm up like a balloon!" Mr. Wigg said. "And now here it is Friday again and my birthday, and you are visiting me. Oh, don't make me laugh, please..." Mr. Wigg began to laugh loudly. He looked so funny, like a big balloon in the air, that Jane and Michael started laughing too. They laughed. And they laughed. They tried to stop, but couldn't.

Then a funny thing happened to Jane - she felt herself growing lighter and lighter, getting filled with the air. It was a curious and nice feeling. And suddenly, she jumped up in the air.

"Oh, this Laughing Gas is catching!" said Mr. Wigg.

The next moment Michael flew up on Mr. Wigg's knee.

"Nice to meet you," said Mr. Wigg to Michael. "It is kind of you to come up to me! Because I can't come down to you!" And then he and Michael looked at each other and started to laugh again.

"Well, Mary," said Albert to Mary Poppins, "what about you, my dear?"

"Mary Poppins, Mary Poppins, come up!" said Michael and Jane. "Think of something funny!"

"Ah, she can come up if she wants to," said Mr. Wigg, "even without laughing."

"Well," said Mary Poppins, "it's all very silly! But you're all up there and you can't get down, so..."

Then she put her hands down at her sides and without a laugh, without even a smile, she flew up through the air.

"Now we're all comfortable... And we can have tea," Mr. Wigg said. "But ... the table's down there and we're up here. What shall we do? We're here and it's there. It's a terrible tragedy! But oh, it's terribly comic!" And he hid his face in his hands and laughed loudly. Jane and Michael joined him. Finally, Mr. Wigg dried his eyes.

"Well," he said, "we must think of something sad, very sad. And then we shall get down! Well, I had an aunt Emily. She was run over by a bus.

Sad. Very sad. Terribly sad. Poor aunt Emily. But her umbrella was OK. That was funny, wasn't it?" And he started laughing.

"Mary, can't you do something? We want our tea," he said finally.

The next moment the table began to jump on its legs. Suddenly with all the cups and plates, it flew up and stopped next to them.

"Good girl!" said Mr. Wigg. "It is my birthday, so we will begin with the Cake!"

Then they heard a quick knock at the door. The door opened, and there stood Miss Persimmon.

"I thought, Mr. Wigg," she began, looking around the room, "you want some more hot water... Well, I never!" She saw them sitting on the air round the table. "Mr. Wigg, I know you are a little special. But to have tea in the air! For a gentleman of your age!"

"But perhaps you will, Miss Persimmon!" said Michael.

"Will what?" said Miss Persimmon.

"Catch the Laughing Gas, as we did," said Michael.

"I hope, young man," she said, "I'll stay on my feet, oh dear - what is the matter? I can't walk, I'm going, I - oh, help, HELP!"

Miss Persimmon flew up and came to the table with the jug of hot water. Then she turned and went down again.

"I must see a doctor. I must see a doctor," she said again and again and ran away from the room.

"IT IS TIME TO GO HOME," Mary Poppins said seriously. Suddenly Jane and Michael and Mr. Wigg came down. That thought was the first sad thought of the afternoon!

"What a pity!" Mr. Wigg said. "It's very sad that you must go home."

They came back home by bus. Jane and Michael were very quiet all the way. Then Michael said to Mary Poppins:

"How often does your Uncle get like that?"

"Like what?" said Mary Poppins sharply.

"Laughing and going up in the air."

"Up in the air?" Mary Poppins' voice was angry. "What an idea! He is not a balloon!"

"But he did!" said Michael. "We saw him." "What? My Uncle is a gentleman!" Michael and Jane said nothing. "Is it true or isn't it? About Mr. Wigg. Is Mary Poppins right or are we?" they thought.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **Miss Lark's Andrew**

Miss Lark lived in the biggest house in Cherry Tree Lane. All day they could hear her loud voice:

"Andrew, where are you?" or

"Andrew, put on your coat!" or

"Andrew, come to Mother!"

Was Andrew a boy? No, he was a dog. A nice small dog called Andrew. Some people said that he looked like a toy-dog. But he was a dog!

Andrew lived like a prince. He slept in his bed; he had milk and chocolate for every meal. Andrew could do what he wanted. His days looked like our birthdays. And when Andrew had his birthday, he had two candles on his cake for every year, not one.

But Andrew wasn't happy. People laughed when they saw Andrew in his best coat or nice boots.

"Oh, no!" said Michael. "He looks so stupid! And he is stupid too!"

"He is not stupid," said Mary Poppins.

And Mary Poppins was right. Andrew wasn't stupid at all. You can think that he didn't love Miss Lark. But he did. She always was so kind to him! But he didn't like his life. He would like to have a nice piece of red meat. He wanted to be a usual dog. And he wanted to have usual dogs as his friends.

Sometimes he ran out of his garden. He wanted to speak to a dog. One day Andrew had a new friend. It was more than a usual dog - it was a terrible dog. All people were happy that he was not their dog.

Miss Lark didn't like Andrew's friend. When she saw that Andrew was talking to his friend, she called:

"Andrew! Come home, my dear! Don't talk to this dog!"

But one day Jane and Michael saw Andrew, all alone, in the park. He

was running very fast and looked very serious.

"Hi, Andrew! Where's your coat?" cried Michael.

But Andrew just looked at them both and then turned to Mary Poppins.

"Yap-yap!" said Andrew very quickly.

"Second house on the left," said Mary Poppins.

"Yap?" said Andrew.

"No - no garden."

Andrew barked again.

"I'm not sure," said Mary Poppins. "He usually goes home at tea-time."

And Andrew ran away.

"What was he saying?" Jane and Michael asked together.

"Nothing special!" said Mary Poppins, and closed her mouth.

"I think he asked you where somebody lived..." Michael began.

"Well, why are you asking me then?" said Mary Poppins sniffing. "I'm not a dictionary."

"Oh, Michael," said Jane, "Mary Poppins, tell us what Andrew said to you, please."

But she did not say.

When they were near their house, they heard Miss Lark's loud cries. She ran and ran about the garden. She looked under and up every tree. "Oh Andrew! Where are you?" she cried again and again.

Then she saw him. Andrew was coming to her and near him was walking a big brown dog.

"Oh, you are OK!" said Miss Lark. "But that terrible dog! Shoo! Shoo! Go home!"

But the dog didn't go.

"Go away! Go home!" said Miss Lark. "And you, Andrew, come in the house! You mustn't go for a walk without me and without your coat."

Andrew barked but did not go.

"What's the matter? Come in!" said Miss Lark.

Andrew barked again.

"He says," said Mary Poppins, "that he's not coming in."

Miss Lark looked at her in surprise. "How do you know what my dog says? Of course he will come in."

Andrew barked again.

"He won't," said Mary Poppins. "He will go home only with his friend."

"No!" said Miss Lark angrily. "That terrible street dog will never come into my garden."

Andrew barked three or four times.

"And he will go away..."

"Oh, Andrew, you can't!" Miss Lark was crying.

Andrew barked and the two dogs got up.

"Oh, he is going away!" Miss Lark was going to cry. "Very well, Andrew. This dog can stay. But he will sleep in the garden."

"He says, madam, that that his friend must sleep in the room. Or he will go and sleep in the garden with his friend," said Mary Poppins.

Andrew got up and was ready to go.

"Oh, Andrew!" cried Miss Lark. "Very well, he will sleep in the room."

Andrew barked again.

Andrew barked to his friend "Come on!" and they went into the house.

"He isn't stupid, you see," said Jane.

"No," said Michael. "But how can Mary Poppins...?"

"I don't know," said Jane. "And she'll never, never, tell us."

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **The dancing cow**

Jane was in bed. She was very ill.

"Shall I sit at the window and tell you what is happening outside?"

"Yes, please," said Jane.

So Michael came up to the window and cried "Wow!"

"What is it?" said Jane.

"A very strange thing. There's a cow," said Michael.

"A cow? In the middle of a town? How funny! Mary Poppins," said Jane, "there's a cow in the Lane."

"Yes, and it's walking very slowly and looking around. I think it has lost something."

Mary Poppins came up to the window.

'It's not funny at all,' she said. "I know that cow. She was my Mother's great friend. The Red Cow lived in the field of beautiful yellow flowers. She had a happy life in her sunny and green world. In the morning and in the afternoon she gave lessons to the Red Calf, her daughter. Then they had supper, and the Red Cow showed the Red Calf how to tell good grass from bad grass. When her daughter went to sleep, she went into a corner of the field and thought her own happy thoughts.

The Red Cow liked her life and she didn't want any change. But one night she came to the end of her happy days. That night the Red Cow got up suddenly and began to dance. There was no music but she danced and danced and danced.

'What a strange thing!' said the Red Cow. 'I don't like dancing, but now I am dancing and I like it.'

At last she got tired and decided to stop. But, to her great surprise, she could not stop dancing. She went dancing all the night. In the morning she couldn't have breakfast because she couldn't stop. In the afternoon and in the

evening she danced too. When the second night came, and she still could not stop, she got very worried. And at the end of a week dancing she was very, very, very worried.

'I must go and see the King,' she said. She danced out of the field and went to the King. All the people and animals looked at the dancing cow with a great surprise. But nobody was more surprised than the Red Cow herself.

At last she came to the Palace where the King lived. When the Palace door opened, she danced through the halls to the King's throne.

'The King was very busy. He was making new Laws. His Secretary was writing them down in a little red notebook.

'How many laws?' asked the King.

'Seventy-two, your Majesty,' the Secretary said.

'Well, not bad for an hour's work,' said the King. He stood up and saw the Red Cow. She was dancing to the throne.

'What is that?' the King asked.

'A Cow, your Majesty!' she answered.

'I can see that, but what do you want? Be quick, because I am a very busy King! And stop dancing,' the King said in an angry voice.

'That's my problem, your Majesty. I can't stop!' said the Red Cow.

'The Red Cow tried to stop dancing but it was no good.

'I can't. It is the seventh day of dancing. And I can't eat. I can't sleep.'

'Hm - very strange,' said the King. 'What does it feel like?'

'Funny,' said the Red Cow, 'it's a happy feeling, too.'

'Very funny,' said the King and looked at the cow very carefully.

'Suddenly he jumped on his feet and cried, 'Don't you see that? The cow has caught a fallen star on her horn! Now, pull it off and this lady can stop dancing and have some breakfast.'

'But the star didn't come off. Then the King took the biggest book but it said nothing about cows with stars on their horns. Except the story of the Cow Who Jumped Over the Moon.



'Try that too,' the King said.

'Try what?' said the Red Cow.

'Try to jump over the Moon. I think it will help.'

'Me?' the Red Cow was very surprised. 'I am a serious animal. Jumping is not good for a lady.'

'Madam,' the King said, 'do you want to go on dancing? Do you like to feel hungry and sleepy?'

The Red Cow thought of the sweet yellow flowers and soft grass. And she said, 'I'll try it.'

And they went to the garden.

'Now,' said the King, 'One! Two! Three!'

That moment the Red Cow jumped and flew up into the sky. She looked down. The King was growing smaller and smaller. She went higher and higher through the dark sky. The stars were dancing around her like great golden plates. Then she closed her eyes because the moonlight was very bright and cold. Suddenly the star fell off with a great noise.

Next moment the Red Cow came down on the Earth again. To her great surprise she was in her green field. And she stopped dancing!

The Red Cow and her daughter had a lovely dinner of soft grass and sweet yellow flowers. And she began to live her usual life. At first she enjoyed it very much. She was glad to eat her breakfast without dancing. She lay down in the grass and slept peacefully at night. But one night she began to feel uncomfortable. She wanted something else. But she couldn't understand what it was. At last she understood it. It was the star. She thought only about the star. She lost her appetite. One day, she went to my Mother and told her the story.

"My dear!" my Mother said to her. 'You know, millions of stars fall out of the sky every night! But they fall in different places.'

'So I'll go and look for one...' the Red Cow began, and a happy look came into her eyes."

Mary Poppins paused.

"And now she is walking down Cherry Tree Lane," Jane said.

"Yes," said Michael, "she is looking for her star."

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Bad Tuesday**

That morning Michael got up with a funny feeling. Something was wrong with him.

"What day is it today, Mary Poppins?" he asked. "Tuesday," said Mary Poppins. "Go and take a shower!" He didn't. The funny feeling got stronger.

"I won't," he said slowly. "I WON'T."

All day nothing went right with him. He did the most terrible things. And he felt very pleased and glad!

"You are ill," said Mrs. Banks, "you will have some medicine!"

"I'm not ill," said Michael. "I don't want to be good."

Suddenly Mary Poppins said to him, "You got out of bed the wrong side this morning."

"I didn't," said Michael. "There is no wrong side to my bed."

"Every bed has a right and a wrong side," said Mary Poppins.

"Not mine - it's next to the wall."

"Both sides were wrong this morning! Now, sir," said Mary Poppins. "Let's go for a walk."

When they were in the park, Michael saw a compass on the ground.

"What is it, Michael?" Jane asked.

"I won't tell you," said Michael.

"Mary Poppins, what is it for?" asked Jane. Mary Poppins took the little box from Michael's hand.

"To go round the world with," said Mary Poppins.

"What an idea!" said Michael. "It is not a ship! This little box can't take you round the world."

Mary Poppins sniffed, turned the compass and said the word "North!"

Suddenly it got very cold, and the wind was very strong! All around them there was a lot of ice and snow.

"Oh!" cried Jane. "Where are we now? Where is the park?"

The next moment a Polar Bear jumped out. He was standing on his legs.

"Welcome to the North Pole! You are very cold, aren't you?" the Bear asked in a kind voice. "That's because you need something to eat. What would you like? Fish?"

"I'm afraid we can't stay. We're on our way round the world. South!" Mary Poppins said to the compass.

The next moment the air got soft and warm. The children were in a noisy green jungle.

"Welcome!" said a large Parrot. "Can you help me, Mary Poppins? My wife's out and I'm so tired sitting on the eggs. Well, stay here, and I can get some sleep. Do, Mary Poppins! And I'll get you some bananas."

"I'm sorry but we are on our way round the world," said Mary Poppins. Jane and Michael wanted to try some tropical fruit but Mary Poppins said, "East!"

Again the world went round and round - or they went round and round the world?

Now they were among bamboos. A big black animal with white spots was sleeping on the ground. It was a Panda in its own home and not in a Zoo!

The Panda opened one black eye. "Oh, it's you, my dear girl," he said sleepily. "Well, I'll make a home for you all in a moment."

"We are not going to stay," Mary Poppins said. "We're taking a little trip round the world."

"Isn't it strange? Going round the world when you could stay here with me. My dear children, tickle me behind the ears. That always sends me to sleep."

In a moment he was sleeping peacefully and Mary Poppins said in a low voice: "West!"

Hills and lakes, mountains and forests went round and round. This time they were on long white seashore. And before them there was a large black and grey Dolphin with her baby.

"Mary Poppins, you're just in time for an evening swim. What are you doing here?"

"Oh, Amelia, we are just going round the world," Mary Poppins.

"Well, now for a meal. What would you like?" Amelia smiled at Jane and Michael, showing her white teeth.

"Thank you, Amelia. But we must be at home in a moment," said Mary Poppins.

"What kind of visit is that? Next time you must stay for tea, and we'll all sit together on a rock and sing a song to the moon." Amelia got very sad.

"That will be lovely," said Jane and Michael.

"Well, bye-bye then!"

"Bye, Amelia!" Michael and Jane cried.

"What are you doing, Michael?" The boy heard Mary Poppins's cold voice. The sea was not there. There was green grass and Jane and the Twins and Mary Poppins walking in the Park.

"Round the world and back in a minute - what a wonderful box!" said Jane.

"It's a compass. And it's mine," said Michael. "Give it to me!"

"My compass," said Mary Poppins and put it into her bag.

He looked at her very angrily. The strange feeling inside him grew worse, and in the evening he grew very naughty. He kicked the Twins and pulled Jane's hair.

"And that," said Mary Poppins, "is the end."

Michael was naughty and hated everybody. He got into bed without cleaning his teeth! Suddenly he saw the compass on the table and had an idea.

"I'll take the compass and go round the world. And they will never see me again!" He got up, took the compass in his hand.

"North, South, East, West!" he said very quickly.

He heard a noise and saw four large animals - the Polar Bear, the Parrot, the Panda and the Dolphin. They were coming to him, not kind and friendly, but angry and terrible.

"Oh! Mary Poppins, help me!" Michael cried and shut his eyes.

Suddenly the animals stopped and then disappeared.

"Mary Poppins!" he cried again.

"I can hear you OK," he heard Mary Poppins's voice.

He opened one eye. No angry animals. Then he sat up and looked round the room. There was nothing there. He was in his bed. And there was no strange feeling inside. He felt quiet and happy.

"What happened?" he asked Mary Poppins.

"I told you that it was my compass. Don't take my things, please," she said. Then she took the compass, put it in her pocket and went out of his bedroom. She came back in some minutes with a cup of hot milk in her hands.

Michael was drinking the milk very slowly. How comfortable his bed was! How warm it was! How happy he was to be at home!

## CHAPTER SEVEN

### **The bird woman**

"May be, she won't be there," said Michael.

"Yes, she will," said Jane. "She's always there."

Mary Poppins and the children were on the way to the Bird Woman! Mary Poppins walked between Jane and Michael. She had a new hat on and looked into every shop window. Was the hat OK? Didn't the pink roses turn into daisies?

At last they came to St. Paul's Cathedral. It was built a long time ago by a man with a bird's name - Sir Christopher Wren. That was why so many birds and the Bird Woman lived near Sir Christopher Wren's Cathedral.

"There she is!" cried Michael suddenly.

"She's saying it! She's saying it!" cried Jane.

And she was saying it.

"Feed the birds, tuppence a bag! Feed the birds, tuppence a bag! Feed the birds, tuppence a bag!" she said it again and again in a high singing voice.

In her hands the Bird Woman had a lot of little bags full of breadcrumbs. She was selling them. There were many birds around her. They were flying or walking or eating something. Mary Poppins didn't like them. She always called them "sparrows." But they were not sparrows, they were pigeons. There were grey pigeons like Grandmothers; and brown pigeons like Uncles; and grey-green, noisy pigeons like Fathers. And the silly soft blue pigeons were like Mothers. That's what Jane and Michael thought about them.

They flew round and round the head of the Bird Woman, and when the children came up to her, they suddenly flew away and sat on the top of St. Paul's, laughing and looking down.

It was Michael's turn to buy a bag. Jane bought one the day before. He came up to the Bird Woman and gave her money.

"Feed the birds, tuppence a bag!" said the Bird Woman, and she put a

bag of crumbs into his hand.

Michael knew it was no good asking her any questions. He and Jane often tried, but she always said, "Feed the birds, tuppence a bag!" and nothing more. Just as a cuckoo can only say "Cuckoo," no matter what questions you ask it.

Jane and Michael and Mary Poppins spread the crumbs in a circle on the ground, and one by one, the birds came down from St. Paul's.

The birds were eating the crumbs and making a great noise. They left no crumbs on the ground because it is not polite for a pigeon to leave anything on the plate. When the meal was finished the birds flew up and went flying round and round the Bird Woman's head. One of them sat on her hat and looked like a hat decoration. And one bird sat on Marry Poppins's hat and took a flower off it. Mary Poppins got very angry and shook an umbrella at the bird: "I'll put you in a pie!" said Mary Poppins. Then she called to Jane and Michael.

"It is time to go," she said.

"Good-bye," said Jane and Michael to the Bird Woman.

"Feed the birds," she replied, smiling.

They left her, walking with Mary Poppins between them.

"What happens when everybody goes away?" said Michael to Jane.

He knew well what happened, but asked Jane because it was her story.

"At night when everybody goes to bed," began Jane, "all the birds come down from the top of St. Paul's and run very carefully all over the ground just to see there are no crumbs left. And when -"

"You've forgotten the baths."

"Oh, yes - they have a bath and clean their wings. And when they fly three times round the head of the Bird Woman, they..."

"Do they sit on her shoulders?"

"Yes, and on her hat."

"And some on her knee. Then she looks at them and smiles at them and tells them to be good birds."



"In the bird language?"

"Yes. And when they are all sleepy and it is time to go to sleep, she spreads out her skirts, as a mother hen spreads out her wings, and the birds go under the skirts and they sleep there till morning."

Michael looked at his sister happily. He loved the story and was never tired of hearing it.

"And it's all true, isn't it?" he said, just as he always did.

"No," said Mary Poppins, who always said "No."

"Yes," said Jane, who always knew everything...

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### **Mrs. Corry**

"Now we are going to buy some gingerbread," said Mary Poppins to the children. They were doing shopping that morning.

The next moment Mary Poppins turned the corner and suddenly stopped. Jane and Michael saw a strange shop. It was very small and very dark. There was a small dark door between the windows, and through it Mary Poppins, Jane and Michael came in.

There wasn't any lamp inside. The golden light came from paper stars lying all around the shop. They were gingerbread decorations. Mysterious - that's the right word for that shop.

"Fannie! Annie! Where are you?" Mary Poppins called.

And the next moment two of the largest people in the world appeared and shook hands with Mary Poppins and the children.

"What's this, what's this?" A high, thin, little voice came from the back of the shop. The next moment Fannie and Annie became frightened.

"What's going on?" cried the voice. And the woman appeared. She was as small and thin as her voice. She looked very old with thin hair and a little face. But she ran up to them as quickly as a young girl.

"Mary Poppins, with John and Barbara. What - Jane and Michael, too? I haven't been so surprised since Christopher Columbus discovered America!"

She smiled at the Twins so nicely that they stopped crying and began to laugh.

"That's better!" she said and then she did a very strange thing. She broke off two of her fingers and gave them to John and Barbara. And the strangest thing was that the next moment she had two new fingers on her hand. Jane and Michael saw it.

"What a pity," Michael said, "they aren't chocolate."

"Well, they are, sometimes," said Mrs. Corry, "I often eat them, if I

can't sleep at night. I think, my dear" - she turned to Mary Poppins, "I think you want some gingerbread. Now, my darlings," said Mrs. Corry in a soft voice and smiled sweetly at Jane and Michael, "won't you come and take some? It's very special today. How many?"

"Four each," said Mary Poppins. "That's twelve. One dozen."

"I'll make it a Baker's Dozen - take thirteen," said Mrs. Corry.

So Jane and Michael chose thirteen bars of gingerbread, each with a golden paper star. Michael tried one of them.

"Good?" asked Mrs. Corry, and then she cried in her thin voice: "Hooray, hooray!" Then she stopped and her face grew serious.

"But remember - you must pay."

Mary Poppins opened her bag and took out three coins. She gave them to Jane and Michael.

"Now," said Mrs. Corry. "Stick the coins on my coat! They won't come off!"

Mary Poppins was the first to stick her coin on the Mrs. Corry's coat. And it stuck. Then Jane and Michael put theirs on - Jane's on the right shoulder and Michael's on the left one.

"How strange!" said Jane.

"I'm afraid we must be off now, Mrs. Corry," said Mary Poppins.

"Well, my dear Miss Poppins, it has been a very pleasant visit. And you'll come again soon, won't you, with Jane and Michael and the Twins?"

They nodded. Then Mrs. Corry came closer to the children with a curious look on her face.

"I wonder," she said, "what you will do with the paper stars?"

"Oh, we'll keep them," said Jane. "We always do."

"Ah - you keep them! And I wonder where you keep them?"

"Well," Jane began, "my paper stars are all in the box under the table and..."

"My stars are in a shoe-box on the first shelf of the wardrobe," said

Michael.

"Box under the table and shoe-box in the wardrobe," said Mrs. Corry and looked at Mary Poppins. You could see some secret passed between them.

"Well," said Mrs. Corry, "that is very interesting. And now, good-bye!"

Suddenly Jane and Michael found themselves outside. They turned and didn't see the shop.

"How strange!" said Jane, "but the gingerbread is very good."

And they were so busy eating their gingerbread that they forgot how very strange it was. They remembered it again that night when they were in bed.

"Jane!" called Michael. "I can hear someone coming up the stairs!"

The door opened and somebody came into the room. It was Mary Poppins. She moved about the room softly with quick secret movements. First she took Jane's box, opened it and shut it quickly. Then she opened the wardrobe and took something out. Then she went out.

In the garden somebody was speaking in a low voice. There were some people there. Jane and Michael got out of bed and came up to the window. They saw a little figure and two gigantic ones near their gate.

"Mrs. Corry with Fannie and Annie," said Jane.

Fannie had two long ladders on her shoulder and Annie had a large pail of something that looked like glue and a large brush. Then the front door opened and Mary Poppins came to meet them. She had a basket on her arm, and in the basket there was something. It gave out a soft, mysterious light.

"Come on, we must hurry! We haven't much time," said Mrs. Corry.

Jane and Michael saw them go down Cherry Tree Lane, and then they turned to the left and went up the hill. When they got to the top of the hill, where there were no houses but only grass and flowers, they stopped.

"What are they going to do?" asked Michael. But there was no need for Jane to answer because they could see what was happening.

Annie and Fannie fixed the ladder with its one end on the ground and

the other in the sky. Mrs. Corry took the brush and the pail of glue and climbed the ladder. Mary Poppins with her basket climbed the other ladder.

Then the most surprising thing happened - Mrs. Corry started covering the sky with the glue and Mary Poppins took something shiny from her basket and fixed it to the glue. She was sticking the gingerbread stars to the sky! They understood it when she took her hand away. When the star was placed on the sky it began to shine brightly.

"They are our stars!" said Michael.

At last it was over. Then Mary Poppins and Mrs. Corry came down and started their way back.

Jane and Michael looked at each other. Then without a word they went to their boxes where they usually kept the paper stars. They were empty.

"But why? But why?" said Michael looking surprisingly at his sister.

Jane said nothing. She thought and thought and thought.

"What I want to know," she said, "is this: are the stars made of gold paper or is the gold made of paper stars?"

But there was no answer.

## CHAPTER NINE

### **John and Barbara's story**

One day Jane and Michael were out at a party. Mrs. Banks was on the sofa with her feet up and Mary Poppins was making the room. The Twins, John and Barbara were in their beds.

"Oh, go away! You're in my eyes," said John in a loud voice.

"Sorry!" said the sunlight. "I must move from East to West in a day. Sorry! Shut your eyes and you won't see me."

The golden sunlight went across the room as quick as it could because it didn't want to trouble John.

"How soft, how sweet you are! I love you," said Barbara to the sunlight.

"Talking, talking! What a noisy place! There's always somebody talking in this room," said a voice at the window.

John and Barbara looked up. It was the Black Bird.

"I like that," said Mary Poppins. "And what about you? All day long - non-stop talking. You are worse than any sparrow, and that's the truth."

The Black Bird looked at Mary Poppins.

"Well," he said, "consultations, discussions, arguments, disputes - that is my work..."

"Work!" said John, laughing.

"And I wasn't talking to you, young man," said the Black Bird. "I heard you talking for some hours last Saturday. Well, I thought you would never stop - I couldn't sleep all night."

"That wasn't talking," said John. "I was... I had a pain."

But the Black Birds didn't listen to him. "Well, Barbara, have you got anything for me today?"

"There's the half of a biscuit," she said. The Black Bird took the biscuit and began to eat it.

"Thank you!" said Mary Poppins, but he was too busy eating the biscuit.

"I said 'Thank you!'," said Mary Poppins a little louder.

The Black Bird looked up. "Eh - what? Oh, I'm sorry. I've no time for such useless words." And he finished his biscuit.

The room was very quiet. John put his right foot into his mouth.

"Why are you doing that?" said Barbara, in her soft voice. "There's nobody to see you."

"I know," said John. "But I like to keep in practice. The grown-ups like my trick so much."

"They liked my trick, too," said Barbara. "Yesterday I took off my socks and she said I was so sweet that she would like to eat me. She really wanted to eat me, didn't she?"

"No. It's only the idiotic way they talk," said John. "I don't believe I'll ever understand them. They are so stupid. And even Jane and Michael are stupid sometimes."

"Yes," agreed Barbara, taking off her socks and putting them on again.

"Well," John went on, "they don't understand anything we say. They don't understand what other things say. Last Monday Jane said that she didn't understand the language of the wind."

"I know," said Barbara. "Michael thinks that the Black Bird says 'Wee-Twee!' He doesn't know that the Black Bird speaks English!"

"They knew once," said Mary Poppins.

"What?" said John and Barbara together. "Really? They understood the Bird and the Wind and..."

"And the language of the sunlight and the stars - of course they did! Once."

"But - why have they forgotten it all?" asked John.

"Because they've grown older," explained Mary Poppins. "Barbara, put on your socks at once, please."

"How silly they are! I shall never forget it when I grow up," said John.

"Nor I," said Barbara.

"Yes you will," said Mary Poppins.

"We won't!" said the Twins.

But the Black Bird laughed. "I say you will. You'll forget because everybody forgets. There never was a boy or a girl except, of course, Her." And he looked at Mary Poppins.

"But why can she remember?" said John.

"She's different," said the Black Bird. "She's something special, you see."

The sunlight moved on through the room, outside a light wind was blowing among the cherry trees in the Lane.

"Listen, the wind's talking," said John. "We won't hear that, Mary Poppins?"

"You'll hear," said Mary Poppins, "but you won't understand. It's how things happen."

Now John and Barbara were crying loudly. The door opened and Mrs. Banks came in.

"Oh, my sweets, what is it? Why are they crying, Mary Poppins?"

"I think they're getting their teeth," said Mary Poppins.

"Oh, of course," said Mrs. Banks happily.

"I don't want teeth. I will forget all the things I like," cried John.

"And I don't want any teeth," cried Barbara.

Mrs. Banks was saying sweet words to her babies and John stopped crying. He didn't want his Mother to be sad. So he stopped crying and gave her a lovely smile. Then Jane stopped crying too. Mother gave them a kiss and left the room.

That moment Mary Poppins smiled a secret smile.

"Just listen to them!" said the Black Bird. "They think they will remember. In a month or two - their teeth will grow, they will be one year old



- and they will forget. They won't even know my name, silly children! Ha! Ha! Ha!" And he flew away through the window.

At last the teeth came through and the Twins had their first birthday. Next day the Black Bird came back.

"Hello! Here we are again!" he said happily. "Well, Barbara," he began in his soft voice, "anything for the old friend today?"

"Ba-loo - ba-loo - ba-loo!" said Barbara, finishing her last biscuit.

"What's my name? What's my name? What's my name?" cried the Black Bird in a loud voice.

"Er-umph!" said John. The Black Bird understood everything. "So - it's happened," he said quietly to Mary Poppins. She nodded.

"Oh, well - I knew it. But they didn't believe it. I shall miss them!" and he was gone.

## CHAPTER TEN

### **Full moon**

"I wonder what happens in the Zoo at night?" asked Michael.

"Care killed a cat," said Mary Poppins angrily and sent the children to their beds. Next moment she went away as fast as the wind.

Suddenly the children heard a voice, "Put on some clothes! Quick!" They dressed and opened the door. There was nobody there, but they heard something going down the stairs. Jane and Michael followed. "Quick!" said the voice and they followed it down streets. Finally they were in front of the gate.

"Look!" Jane cried. "It's the Zoo!"

"Welcome!" said a big Brown Bear. "No money! Here's your ticket."

"But we usually give tickets," said Jane.

"Tonight you get them," said the Bear and smiled.

Michael looked at the Bear, "I remember you. Once I gave you a tin of syrup."

"You did," said the Bear. "But you forgot to open it. Be more careful next time."

"Are you always out at night?" said Michael.

"No - only when the Birthday falls on a Full Moon."

Jane and Michael came into the Zoo. The full Moon was up in the sky. It was so bright that the children could see every tree, every flower and every cage too. Zoo animals were out of cages. Suddenly two wolves ran past the children, talking to a very tall stork. In the distance a tiger and a parrot were talking. Near the Elephant House a fat old gentleman was walking up and down on his knees, and on his back there were eight little monkeys. They were having a nice time, laughing and talking!

Suddenly they heard an angry voice.

"Come on! Let's see how you dive for orange." There was a pool of

water near them and the voice came from it. It was a small black Seal:

"But - but we can't swim!" said Michael.

"Really? Why didn't you learn to swim when you were little? Nobody is interested if I can swim or not."

Suddenly they saw a big Lion.

"Oh," he began, "I can show you the way! Come quickly, it is beginning!"

At last they came up to the Big Cat House. Inside there were a lot of animals. There were panthers and leopards, wolves, tigers and antelopes, monkeys, goats and giraffes.

"Fantastic, isn't it?" said the Lion proudly. "Just like the dear old jungle days."

"Look! The cages are full of people!" said Michael and his mouth fell open, in one cage two gentlemen in hats were standing and waiting for something. Children of all ages were playing in another cage. The animals outside watched them with great interest. Then there were three old ladies in raincoats in another cage. One of ladies was knitting but the other two were standing and shouting at the animals, "Terrible animals. Go away. I want my tea!"

"But how did they all get in there?" Jane asked the Lion.

"Lost," said the Lion. "We had to put them somewhere for a night. Some are very dangerous. Don't go near them! Look! The Zookeeper is going to feed them!"

Jane and Michael saw four Brown Bears coming to the cage. They opened a small door in each cage and pushed the food inside. There were bottles of milk for babies, cakes for children, cheese sandwiches for the old ladies, meatballs for gentlemen.

"Well, that's the end. I'm afraid we must go. You mustn't be late, it's her Birthday!"

They left the Big Cat House and soon stopped near another small house. The Lion opened the door and pushed the two children inside. It was the Snake House! All the cages were open and the snakes were out. And in

the middle of the hall the children saw Mary Poppins. Jane and Michael could hardly believe their eyes.

Suddenly they heard a hissing voice: "My dear child!" The King Cobra was coming to Mary Poppins. "It is long since your Birthday fell on a Full Moon."

He turned his head to Jane and Michael.

"And who are these?" he said in his soft voice, looking at the children.

"Jane and Michael Banks," said Mary Poppins. "My friends."

"Then they are welcome."

Jane said in a low voice: "He talks as though he were a great lord."

"He is. He's the lord of our world - the cleverest and most terrible of us all," said the Lion.

The King Cobra smiled, a long, slow, secret smile and turned to Mary Poppins, "Cousin," hissed the King Cobra, "I am going to give you my own skin. It is a small present, dear Mary, but it may serve for a belt or a pair of shoes - these things are always useful, you know."

And the King Cobra started to move slowly from side to side. Suddenly he gave a long jump and his golden skin fell on the floor, and in its place he had a new coat of shining silver.

"I will write some nice words on it," said the King Cobra and he wrote something with his tail on the skin.

"Thank you very much. It's so kind of you!" Mary Poppins was very pleased to get such a wonderful present.

"Listen!" the King Cobra said. "It is time for the Great Dance! You must be off. Good-bye, till your next Birthday."

Mary Poppins, Jane, Michael and all the snakes went out. The children could hear the animals singing and shouting. They saw leopards and lions, camels, bears, parrots, antelopes standing around Mary Poppins. Then the animals began to move, wildly crying their Jungle songs and dancing their wild Jungle dances.

Jane and Michael watched the dance. Their friend the Lion was dancing

with a Zebra, a Wolf was dancing with a Rabbit, a Tiger - with an Antelope.

"I thought, Sir," Jane said to the King Cobra, "that lions and birds, and tigers and little animals are natural enemies."

"You are right. But not on the Birthday," said the King Cobra. "Tonight the small are free from the great and the great protect the small. Even I can meet a Goose without any thought<sup>2</sup> of dinner."

Birds and animals were now dancing together, round and round Mary Popping. The trees were moving their branches and the Full Moon was also dancing high up in the sky. Jane and Michael felt that soft light fell on their faces.

"They are sleeping and dreaming," said a soft voice.

Was it the voice of the King Cobra or their mother's voice? Jane and Michael could not tell... could not tell...

"I had such a strange dream last night," said Jane in the morning. "I dreamt we were at the Zoo and it was Mary Poppins' birthday, and animals were out of the cages but the people were inside them-"

"That's my dream," said Michael, looking very surprised.

"We couldn't have the same dreams," said Jane.

"Are you sure? Do you remember the Lion and the Seal?" said Michael.

"Of course I do! And the babies inside the cage, and the King Cobra..."

"Then it wasn't a dream at all," said Jane. "It was true."

"Mary Poppins," she said, "were you at the Zoo last night?"

"At the Zoo? In the middle of the night? I have a Zoo in this nursery, thank you," said Mary Poppins. "Hyenas and orang-utans, all of you. Sit up straight, and no more stupid talk."

"Then it was a dream," Jane said.

But Michael was looking with his mouth open at Mary Poppins.

"Jane," he said, "Jane, look;" and Jane saw what he was looking at. Mary Poppins was wearing a belt made of golden snake skin, and on it there were words, "A Present from the Zoo."



## CHAPTER ELVEN

### **Christmas shopping**

It was Christmas time and Mary Poppins, Jane and Michael were going to the Largest Shop to do their Christmas shopping. Shop windows were full of toys and books and plum cakes.

"Look, airplanes!" said Michael.

"Two little black babies - are they chocolate?" asked Jane.

"Now we will go in," Mary Poppins said to Jane and Michael.

It wasn't easy to choose the presents for all the family.

"That will be for Daddy," said Michael and took a toy train with special signals. "I will take care of it for him when he goes to the City."

"I think I will get this for Mother," said Jane and took a small doll's pram, which her Mother always wanted. "Perhaps she will give it to me sometimes."

After that, Michael chose a packet of hairpins for the Twins and a Meccano set for his Mother.

Jane bought 'Robinson Crusoe' for the Twins to read when they grew up.

"Now I can read it myself," she said. "I am sure they will give it to me."

At last Mary Poppins said: "And it is time to go home."

"Just five minutes longer," asked Jane.

But Mary Poppins said "No" and the children had to go with her. Behind them the dolls on the Christmas tree were saying, "Take me home, somebody!" and the airplanes were all trying to fly, "Let me fly! Ah, do let me fly!"

Jane and Michael hurried away, closing their ears to those voices. The time in the Toy Department was very short.

And when they were going to open the shop door, they saw a running girl.

"Look!" said Jane and Michael both together.

"Oh dear!" said Mary Poppins surprisingly.

The girl had few clothes on. Suddenly she stopped and looked around. The girl was looking for someone. Then she saw Jane, Michael and Mary Poppins.

"Ah, there you are! Thank you for waiting. I'm afraid I'm a little late. Aren't you glad to see me?"

"Yes," said Jane smiling, "but who are you?"

"Who am I? Don't say you don't know me?"

The child looked very surprised and then she turned to Mary Poppins.

"She knows me. Don't you? I'm sure you know me!"

There was a curious look on Mary Poppins' face: "Does it begin with an M?"

"Of course it does. I'm Maia. I'm the second of the Pleiades. Electra - she's the eldest - couldn't come because she's looking after Merope, the baby. Oh, Jane! Oh, Michael! I've often watched you from the sky, and now I'm actually talking to you. There is nothing about you I don't know.

"Michael doesn't like to brush his hair. And your Father has got thin hair on the top. I like him. It was he who first introduced us - don't you remember? He said one evening last summer: 'Look, there are the Pleiades. Seven stars all together, the smallest in the sky. But there is one of them you can't see.' He meant Merope, of course. She's still too young to stay up all night. She's such a baby that she has to go to bed very early. Some of them up there call us the Little Sisters."

"But what are you doing here?" asked Michael, still very surprised.

"I've come down to buy toys for them all. We can't get away very often, you know. We're so busy making the spring rains. Can you help me?" she said and took the children back to the Toy Department. As they went, the people stood and looked at them and dropped their bags.

"Just look at her. She is so cold. What are her parents thinking of?"

But Jane, Michael, Mary Poppins and Maia were very busy with



shopping and didn't look around.

"Here we are!" said Maia. "What shall we buy? I want something for each of my sisters - six of them. First - my eldest sister. She's very domestic. What about that nice broom? We have so many troubles with star-dust. Now for Taygete. She likes dancing. Don't you think, Jane, a skipping-rope would be just the thing for her. Then there's Alcyone. She's so quiet. Does she want anything? A book, do you think, Mary Poppins? I hope she would like that nice little book. And if she doesn't, she can look at the pictures. I know what Celaeno wants. A hoop. She will like morning exercises with it up there, in the sky. She'll love that red and blue one. Now there are only the two little sisters left. Michael, what would you advise for Sterope?"

"What about a top?" said Michael.

"What a good idea! She will love to watch it turning round and round in the sky. And what do you think for Merope, the baby, Jane?"

"John and Barbara," said Jane, "have rubber ducks!"

"Oh, Jane, how clever you are! A rubber duck for Merope, please - a blue one with yellow eyes."

Then Michael turned and said to Mary Poppins.

"But who will pay for the toys?"

"What did you say?" asked Maia with round, surprised eyes. "Nobody will pay. There is nothing to pay - is there?"

"Nothing at all, madam," the shop assistant said and gave her the bag full of toys.

"Now we must go," she went on, taking Michael's arm. "We must all go home. It's very late, and I heard your Mother telling you that you must be home in time for tea. Besides, I must get back, too. Come." And she led the way through the shop and out.

Outside the shop Jane suddenly said, "But there's no present for her. She's bought something for all the others and nothing for herself. Maia has no Christmas present."

Mary Poppins gave a quick look into the shop window. She saw herself, very nicely dressed, with her hat and her new gloves on. Then she

took off her new gloves and put them on to Maia's hands.

"There!" she said. "It's cold today."

Maia looked at the gloves. They were too big for her little hands. She said nothing, but came up to Mary Poppins and kissed her.

"I've been so happy," said Maia. "Don't forget me, will you?"

The children shook their heads.

"Good-bye," said Maia. She stood on tiptoe, lifted up her arms and jumped into the air. She began to walk the air up and up, climbing higher and higher. You could think there were stairs in the grey sky.

"What on earth is happening?" somebody asked.

"But it's not possible!" said another voice.

A lot of people were standing with their heads up and looking at the girl in the sky. Suddenly they heard the voice of the Policeman.

"What is this? What is going on here?"

He looked up and called angrily:

"There! Come down! What are you doing up there? Come down! We can't have the girl walking through the air. It's not natural!"

But Maia was going up and up. Then a cloud hid her but they knew she was behind it. The bright light was coming through the dark cloud.

When Jane, Michael and Mary Poppins came home and the children told their story to their Mother, she said:

"Perhaps...You know, at Christmas time strange things happen."

"But what about Mary Poppins' gloves?" said Jane. "We saw her give the gloves to Maia. And she's not wearing them now!"

"What, Mary Poppins!" said Mrs. Banks. "Your best gloves! You gave them away!"

Mary Poppins said in her usual cold voice:

"My gloves are my gloves and I do with them what I like!"

## CHAPTER TWELVE

### **The West wind**

It was the first day of spring. Jane and Michael knew it at once, because they heard Mr. Banks singing in the bathroom, and there was only one day in the year when he did that. Then he went out into the garden and smelled the air.

"Hm, I think it is the West Wind. It's warm today," he said.

"Did you hear what he said?" Michael took Jane's arm.

"It is the West Wind," she said slowly.

They didn't say a word but they had the same thought.

They forgot it soon, because everything was fine that morning. But trouble began after lunch.

Jane was in the garden. Michael ran out of the house, very red in the face.

"Look, Jane, look!" he cried. In his hand he had Mary Poppins' compass.

"The compass?" said Jane.

Michael suddenly started crying.

"She gave it to me. Oh, oh, there must be something wrong! What is going to happen? She has never given me anything before."

That afternoon Mary Poppins was very kind. She was thinking about something. At last Michael asked her:

"Oh, do be cross, Mary Poppins! Do be cross again! It is not like you."

"Trouble trouble and it will trouble you!" said Mary Poppins crossly, in her usual voice. And the same moment he felt a little better.

"Perhaps it's only a feeling," he said to Jane.

"Perhaps," said Jane slowly.

The wind grew stronger and stronger. They could hear it everywhere

inside the house: down the chimneys and near the windows, even in the Nursery.

Mary Poppins gave them their supper and took away the plates after it.

"There!" she said. Then she put one hand on Michael's head and the other on Jane's shoulder.

"Now," she said, "I am just going off for a few minutes."

She went out and shut the door quietly behind her. They wanted to run after her, but something stopped them. They were waiting for her to come back.

"How silly we are," said Jane. "Everything's all right." But she knew it was not true. They still sat there at the table, waiting.

At last Michael said: "She's been gone a very long time, hasn't she?" But there was no answer. Suddenly they heard somebody shut the front door.

"Michael!" said Jane, jumping up.

"Jane!" said Michael, with a white look on his face.

They ran quickly to the window and looked out. Down, stood Mary Poppins, dressed in her coat and hat, with her carpet bag in one hand and her umbrella in the other. The wind was blowing wildly about her. She smiled at the wind and opened the umbrella. The wind got under the umbrella and lifted Mary Poppins from the ground. Then it lifted her over the front gate and carried her over the cherry trees in the Lane.

"She's going, Jane, she's going!" cried Michael.

Jane and Michael opened the window and cried: "Mary Poppins! Mary Poppins, come back!" But she did not hear them. She went up into the air. At last she was over the hill and the children couldn't see her.

"I wonder if we'll ever see her again?" said Jane and started to take off her clothes because it was time to go to sleep.

"What is this under my pillow?"

It was a small parcel there. When Jane opened it, she cried:

"It's her picture," she said. And it was! Under it was written, "Mary Poppins by Bert." Jane saw that there was a letter in the parcel too. It said:

"Dear Jane, Michael had the compass so the picture is for you. Au revoir. Mary Poppins."

Jane didn't understand the last word, so she asked Michael: "What does 'Au revoir' mean in English?"

"Au revoir? I think it means To Meet Again'."

Jane and Michael looked at each other. Happiness shone in their eyes. They knew what Mary Poppins meant. "That's all right," Michael said. "She always does what she says she will."

- THE END -

Hope you have enjoyed the reading!

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