

THE WEST WIND Part III



It was the first day of Spring. Jane and Michael knew this at once, because there was only one day in the year when Mr. Banks sang.



They always remembered that particular day. For one thing, it was the first time they were allowed to come downstairs for breakfast, and for another Mr. Banks lost his bag.



-Where is my bag ?- shouted Mr. Banks, turning round in the hall. And everybody else was running round too.



At last Mr. Banks discovered his bag himself in his study and rushed out of the house.



He went into the garden and sniffed the air.

-H'm, wind's in the West, I think. Bright and warm. I won't take an overcoat.



He picked up his bag and his hat and hurried away to the city.



-Did you hear what he said ?- Michael touched Jane's arm.
-The wind's in the West, -she said slowly.
They were afraid of trouble.



Jane worked in the garden. She had just sown the last radish-seed when she heard a great noise in the Nursery.



Presently Michael appeared, panting loudly.
-Look, Jane, look!
Mary Poppins' compass lay in his hand.



During that afternoon Mary Poppins never said a cross word. She seemed to be thinking very deeply.



The boy's heart felt heavy with the thought that something was about to happen at Number Seventeen, Cherry-Tree Lane.



The wind grew wilder towards evening. It went puffing and whistling down the chimneys, slipping in through the cracks under the windows turning the Nursery carpet up at the corners.



Mary Poppins gave them their supper and cleared away the things, tidied up the Nursery and put the kettle on the fire.



She was silent for a minute. Then she put one hand lightly on Michael's head and the other on Jane's shoulder.

-Now I'm just going downstairs. Behave yourselves, please, till I come back.



She went out and shut the door quietly behind her. The children remained quiet waiting for her to come back.



The clock ticked loudly from the mantelpiece. The fire flickered and crackled and slowly died down. They still sat there, waiting.



The wind whistled and cried about the house. The clock went on ticking ...
Suddenly the front door banged. The children ran quickly to the window.



Outside the front door stood Mary Poppins, dressed in her coat and hat, with her carpet bag and umbrella. The wind was blowing wildly about her.



With a quick movement she opened the umbrella and thrust it over her head.



The wind, with a wild cry, lifted Mary Poppins and carried her out.
The children had no doubt that she had gone for good because the wind had changed.



The children opened the window.
- Mary Poppins! Come back! Come back!



But she did not hear. For she went sailing on and on, and at last disappeared.
-She stayed till wind changed,-said Jane, turning sadly from the window.



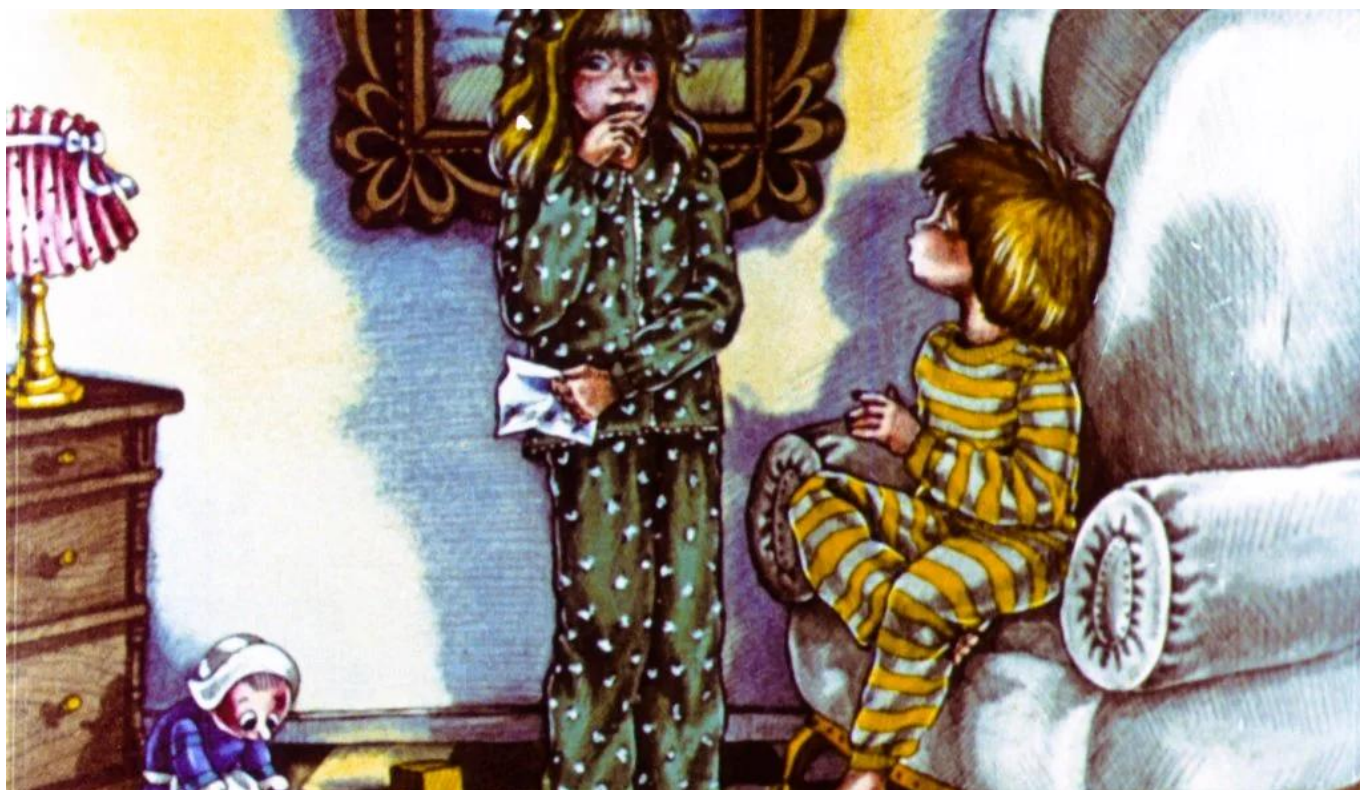
In the evening going to bed Jane found a small parcel under the pillow.



Michael watched her undo the string and tear away the brown paper.



The thing that was in the parcel lay In Jane's hand.
-It's her picture, -she whispered.



There was a letter attached to the painting.

-Mammy! What does 'au revoir' mean?

-'Good bye'. dearie !- mother answered.



Jane and Michael looked at each other. Joy shone in their eyes. They knew what Mary Poppins meant.



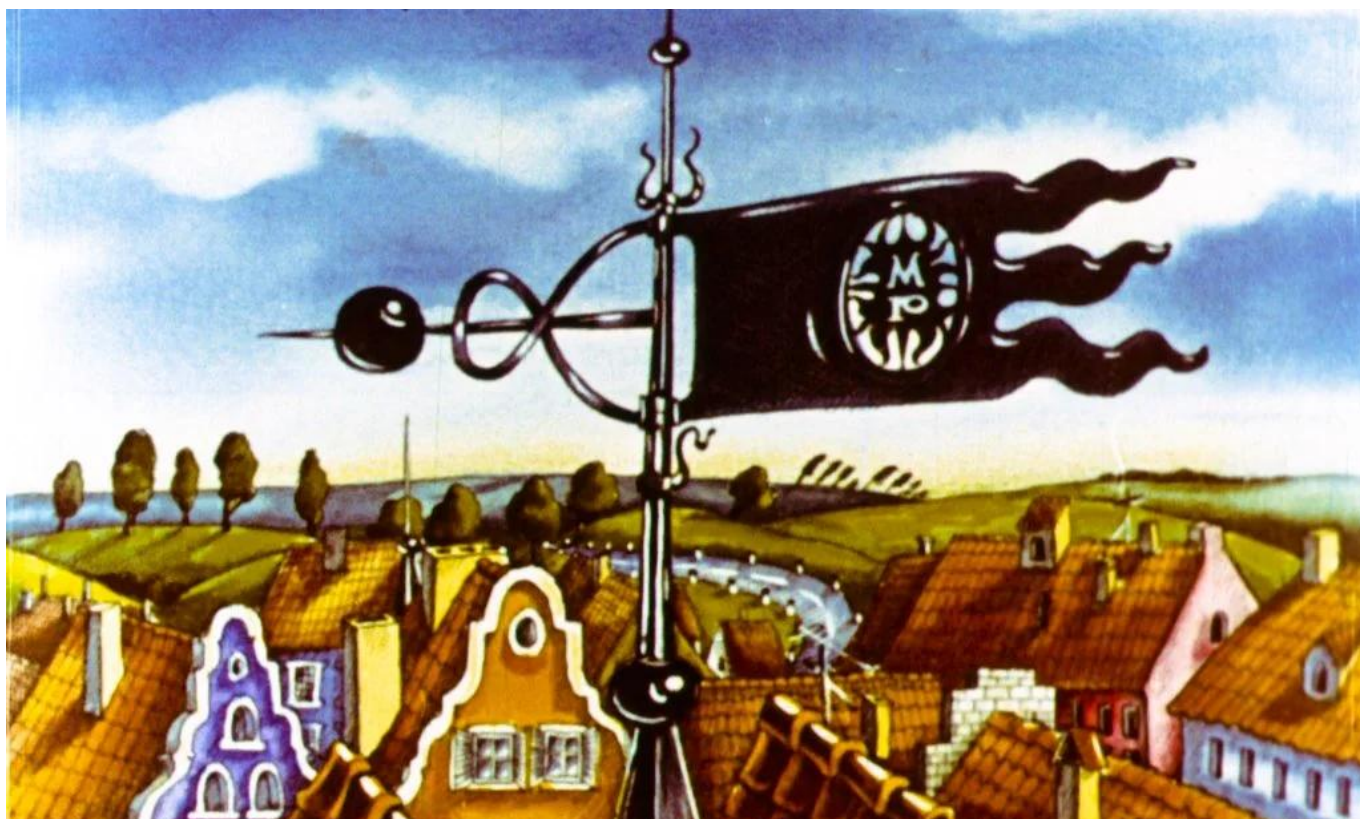
-That's all right. She always does what she says she will, -said Michael and turned away.



- Are you crying ?- Jane asked.
He tried to smile at her.
-No. I am not. It is only my eyes.

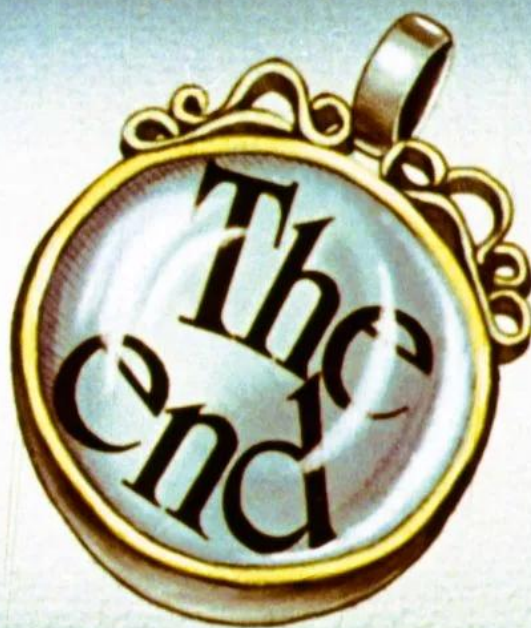


Jane pushed him gently towards his bed and slipped the portrait into his hand.
-You have it for tonight, darling, -whispered Jane, and she tucked him in just like Mary Poppins used to do ...



So Mary Poppins disappeared from the Number Seventeen Cherry-Lane Tree.
But Michael and Jane knew that she would come back. Surely!

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EDITED by A. STAKHOVSKAYA The End