***Mary Poppins Comes Back* by P.L. Travers**

**Introduction of Mary Poppins**

Up and up went the tossing tail, darting through the air until it seemed but a faint, dark speck on the sky. The cloud moved slowly towards it. Nearer, nearer …

“Gone!” said Michael, as the speck disappeared behind the thin grey screen.

Jane gave a little sigh. The Twins sat quietly in the parambulator. A curious stillness was upon them all. The taut string running up from Michael’s hand seemed to link them all to the cloud, and the earth to the sky. They waited, holding their breaths, for the Kite to appear again.

Suddenly Jane could bear it no longer.

“Michael,” she cried. “Pull it in! Pull it in!”

Michael turned the stick and gave a long, strong pull. The string remained taut and steady. He pulled again, puffing and panting.

“I can’t,” he said. “It won’t come.”

“I’ll help!” said Jane. “Now – pull!”

But, hard as they tugged, the string would not give, and the Kite remained hidden behind the cloud.

“Let me!” said the Keeper importantly. “When I was a boy we did it this way.”

And he put his hand on the string, just above Jane’s, and gave it a short, sharp jerk. It seemed to give a little.

“Now – all together – pull!”

The Keeper tossed off his hat, and planting their feet firmly on the grass, Jane and Michael pulled with all their might.

“It’s coming!” panted Michael.

Suddenly the string slackened, and a small whirling shape shot through the grey cloud and came floating down.

“Wind her up!” the Keeper spluttered, glancing at Michael.

But the string was already winding round the stick of its own accord.

Down, down came the Kite, turning over and over in the air, wildly dancing at the end of the jerking string.

Jane gave a little gasp.

“Something’s happened,” she cried. “That’s not our Kite! It’s quite a different one!”

They stared.

It was quite true. The Kite was no longer green-and-yellow. It had turned colour and was now navy-blue. Down it came, tossing and bounding.

Suddenly Michael gave a shout.

“Jane! Jane! It isn’t a Kite at all. It looks like – oh, it looks like –“

“Wind, Michael, wind quickly!” gasped Jane. “I can hardly wait!”

For now, above the tallest trees, the shape at the end of the string was clearly visible. There was no sign of the green-and-yellow Kite, but in its place danced a figure that seemed at once strange and familiar, a figure wearing a blue coat with silver buttons and a straw hat trimmed with daisies. Tucked under its arm was an umbrella with a parrot’s head for a handle, a brown carpet bag dangled from one hand, while the other held firmly to the end of the shortening string.

“Ah!” Jane gave a shout of triumph. “It *is* her!”

“I knew it!” cried Michael, his hands trembling on the winding-stick.

“Lumme!” said the Park Keeper, gaping and blinking. “Lumme!”

On sailed the curious figure, its feet neatly clearing the top of the trees. They could see the face now, and the well-known features – coal-black hair, bright blue eyes and nose turned upwards like the nose of a Dutch doll.

As the last length of string wound itself around the stick, the figure drifted down between the Lime Trees and alighted primly on the grass.

In a flash Michael dropped the stick. Away he bounded, with Jane at his heels.

“Mary Poppins, Mary Poppins!” they cried, and flung themselves upon her.

***Anne of Green Gables* by L.M. Montgomery**

**Introduction of Anne**

She had been watching him ever since he had passed her and she had her eyes on him now. Matthew was not looking at her and would not have seen what she was really like if he had been, but an ordinary observer would have seen this: A child of about eleven, garbed in a very short, very tight, very ugly dress of yellowish-gray wincey. She wore a faded brown sailor hat and beneath the hat, extending down her back, were two braids of very thick, decidedly red hair. Her face was small, white and thin, also much freckled; her mouth was large and so were her eyes, which looked green in some lights and moods and gray in others.

So far, the ordinary observer; an extraordinary observer might have seen that the chin was very pointed and pronounced; that the big eyes were full of spirit and vivacity; that the mouth was sweet-lipped and expressive; that the forehead was broad and full; in short, our discerning extraordinary observer might have concluded that no commonplace soul inhabited the body of this stray woman-child of whom shy Matthew Cuthbert was so ludicrously afraid.

Matthew, however, was spared the ordeal of speaking first, for as soon as she concluded that he was coming to her she stood up, grasping with one thin brown hand the handle of a shabby, old-fashioned carpet-bag; the other she held out to him.

“I suppose you are Mr. Matthew Cuthbert of Green Gables?” she said in a peculiarly clear, sweet voice. “I’m very glad to see you. I was beginning to be afraid you weren’t coming for me and I was imagining all the things that might have happened to prevent you. I had made up my mind that if you didn’t come for me to-night I’d go down the track to that big wild cherry-tree at the bend, and climb up into it to stay all night. I wouldn’t be a bit afraid, and it would be lovely to sleep in a wild cherry-tree all white with bloom in the moonshine, don’t you think? You could imagine you were dwelling in marble halls, couldn’t you? And I was quite sure you would come for me in the morning, if you didn’t to-night.”

***Mary Poppins* by P.L. Travers**

**Introduction of Mary Poppins**

After supper Jane and Michael sat at the window watching for Mr Banks to come home, and listening to the sound of the East Wind blowing through the naked branches of the cherry trees in the Lane. The trees themselves, turning and bending in the half light, looked as though they had gone mad and were dancing their roots out of the ground.

“There he is!” said Michael, pointing suddenly to a shape that banged heavily against the gate. Jane peered through the gathering darkness.

“That’s not Daddy,” she said. “It’s somebody else.”

Then the shape, tossed and bent under the wind, lifted the latch of the gate, and they could see that it belonged to a woman, who was holding her hat on with one hand and carrying a bag in the other. As they watched, Jane and Michael saw a curious thing happen. As soon as the shape was inside the gate the wind seemed to catch her up into the air and fling her at the house. It was as though it had flung her at the gate, waited for her to open it, and then lifted and thrown her, bag and all, at the front door. The watching children heard a terrific bang, and as she landed the whole house shook.

“How funny! I’ve never seen that happen before,” said Michael.

“Let’s go and see who it is!” said Jane, and taking Michael’s arm she drew him away from the window, through the Nursery and out on to the landing.

***A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett**

**Introduction of Miss Minchin**

"Here we are, Sara," said Captain Crewe, making his voice sound as cheerful as possible. Then he lifted her out of the cab and they mounted the steps and rang the bell. Sara often thought afterward that the house was somehow exactly like Miss Minchin. It was respectable and well furnished, but everything in it was ugly; and the very armchairs seemed to have hard bones in them. In the hall everything was hard and polished—even the red cheeks of the moon face on the tall clock in the corner had a severe varnished look. The drawing room into which they were ushered was covered by a carpet with a square pattern upon it, the chairs were square, and a heavy marble timepiece stood upon the heavy marble mantel.

As she sat down in one of the stiff mahogany chairs, Sara cast one of her quick looks about her.

"I don't like it, papa," she said. "But then I dare say soldiers—even brave ones—don't really LIKE going into battle."

Captain Crewe laughed outright at this. He was young and full of fun, and he never tired of hearing Sara's queer speeches.

"Oh, little Sara," he said. "What shall I do when I have no one to say solemn things to me? No one else is as solemn as you are."

"But why do solemn things make you laugh so?" inquired Sara.

"Because you are such fun when you say them," he answered, laughing still more. And then suddenly he swept her into his arms and kissed her very hard, stopping laughing all at once and looking almost as if tears had come into his eyes.

It was just then that Miss Minchin entered the room. She was very like her house, Sara felt: tall and dull, and respectable and ugly. She had large, cold, fishy eyes, and a large, cold, fishy smile. It spread itself into a very large smile when she saw Sara and Captain Crewe. She had heard a great many desirable things of the young soldier from the lady who had recommended her school to him. Among other things, she had heard that he was a rich father who was willing to spend a great deal of money on his little daughter.

"It will be a great privilege to have charge of such a beautiful and promising child, Captain Crewe," she said, taking Sara's hand and stroking it. "Lady Meredith has told me of her unusual cleverness. A clever child is a great treasure in an establishment like mine."

***Alice in Wonderland* by Lewis Caroll**

**Introduction of the Queen of Hearts**

Five and Seven said nothing, but looked at Two. Two began in a low voice, ‘Why the fact is, you see, Miss, this here ought to have been a *red* rose-tree, and we put a white one in by mistake; and if the Queen was to find it out, we should all have our heads cut off, you know. So you see, Miss, we’re doing our best, afore she comes, to—’ At this moment Five, who had been anxiously looking across the garden, called out ‘The Queen! The Queen!’ and the three gardeners instantly threw themselves flat upon their faces. There was a sound of many footsteps, and Alice looked round, eager to see the Queen.

First came ten soldiers carrying clubs; these were all shaped like the three gardeners, oblong and flat, with their hands and feet at the corners: next the ten courtiers; these were ornamented all over with diamonds, and walked two and two, as the soldiers did. After these came the royal children; there were ten of them, and the little dears came jumping merrily along hand in hand, in couples: they were all ornamented with hearts. Next came the guests, mostly Kings and Queens, and among them Alice recognised the White Rabbit: it was talking in a hurried nervous manner, smiling at everything that was said, and went by without noticing her. Then followed the Knave of Hearts, carrying the King’s crown on a crimson velvet cushion; and, last of all this grand procession, came THE KING AND QUEEN OF HEARTS.

Alice was rather doubtful whether she ought not to lie down on her face like the three gardeners, but she could not remember ever having heard of such a rule at processions; ‘and besides, what would be the use of a procession,’ thought she, ‘if people had all to lie down upon their faces, so that they couldn’t see it?’ So she stood still where she was, and waited.

When the procession came opposite to Alice, they all stopped and looked at her, and the Queen said severely ‘Who is this?’ She said it to the Knave of Hearts, who only bowed and smiled in reply.

‘Idiot!’ said the Queen, tossing her head impatiently; and, turning to Alice, she went on, ‘What’s your name, child?’

‘My name is Alice, so please your Majesty,’ said Alice very politely; but she added, to herself, ‘Why, they’re only a pack of cards, after all. I needn’t be afraid of them!’

‘And who are *these*?’ said the Queen, pointing to the three gardeners who were lying round the rosetree; for, you see, as they were lying on their faces, and the pattern on their backs was the same as the rest of the pack, she could not tell whether they were gardeners, or soldiers, or courtiers, or three of her own children.

‘How should *I* know?’ said Alice, surprised at her own courage. ‘It’s no business of *mine*.’

The Queen turned crimson with fury, and, after glaring at her for a moment like a wild beast, screamed ‘Off with her head! Off—’

***Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum**

**Introduction of Scarecrow**

She bade her friends good-bye, and again started along the road of yellow brick. When she had gone several miles she thought she would stop to rest, and so climbed to the top of the fence beside the road and sat down. There was a great cornfield beyond the fence, and not far away she saw a Scarecrow, placed high on a pole to keep the birds from the ripe corn.

Dorothy leaned her chin upon her hand and gazed thoughtfully at the Scarecrow. Its head was a small sack stuffed with straw, with eyes, nose, and mouth painted on it to represent a face. An old, pointed blue hat, that had belonged to some Munchkin, was perched on his head, and the rest of the figure was a blue suit of clothes, worn and faded, which had also been stuffed with straw. On the feet were some old boots with blue tops, such as every man wore in this country, and the figure was raised above the stalks of corn by means of the pole stuck up its back.

While Dorothy was looking earnestly into the queer, painted face of the Scarecrow, she was surprised to see one of the eyes slowly wink at her. She thought she must have been mistaken at first, for none of the scarecrows in Kansas ever wink; but presently the figure nodded its head to her in a friendly way. Then she climbed down from the fence and walked up to it, while Toto ran around the pole and barked.

"Good day," said the Scarecrow, in a rather husky voice.

"Did you speak?" asked the girl, in wonder.

"Certainly," answered the Scarecrow. "How do you do?"

"I'm pretty well, thank you," replied Dorothy politely. "How do you do?"