

Peter Pan

MRS. DARLING. (George not so loud; the evening is all over.) All hear you. (Liza leaves the room with an armful of hot-water-bottles, and a discreet sniff in the direction of Mr. Darling.)

MR. DARLING. (Defiant.) Let them hear me; during in the whole world. (The desperate man who has not been in fresh air for days has now lost all self-control.) I refuse to allow that dog to lord it in my nursery for one hour longer. (Nana supplicates him.) In vain in vain, the proper place for you is the yard, and there you go to be tied up this instant. (Nana again retreats into the kennel, and the children add their prayers to hers.)

MRS. DARLING. (Who knows how contrite he will be for this presently.) George, remember what I told you about that boy.

MR. DARLING. Am I master in this house or is she? (To Nana fiercely.) Come along. (He thunders at her, but she indicates that she has reasons not worth troubling him with for remaining where she is. He resorts to a false bonhomie.) There, there, did she think he was angry with her, poor Nana? (She wriggles a response in the affirmative.) Good Nana, pretty Nana. (She has seldom been called pretty, and it has the old effect. She plays rub-a-dub with her paws, which is how a dog blushes.) She will come to her kind master, won't she? Won't she? (She advances, retreats, waggles her head, her tail, and eventually goes to him. He seizes her collar in an iron grip and amid the cries of his progeny drags her from the room. They listen, for her remonstrances are not inaudible.)

MRS. DARLING. Be brave, my dears.

WENDY. He is chaining Nana up! (This unfortunately is what he is doing, though we cannot see him. Let us hope that he then retires to his study, looks up the word "temper" in his thesaurus, and under the influence of those benign pages becomes a better man. In the meantime the children have been put to bed in unwonted silence and Mrs. Darling tucks them in.)

JOHN. (As the barking below goes on.) She is awfully unhappy. WENDY. That is not Nana's unhappy bark. That is her bark when she smells danger.

MRS. DARLING. (Remembering that boy.) Danger! Are you sure, Wendy?

WENDY. (The one of the family, for there is one in every family, who can be trusted to know or not to know.) Oh yes. (Her mother

looks this way and that from the window.)

JOHN. Is there anything there?

MRS. DARLING. All quiet and still. Oh, how I wish I was not going out to dinner to-night.

MICHAEL. Can anything harm us, mother, after the night-lights are lit?

MRS. DARLING. Nothing, precious. They are the eyes a mother leaves behind her to guard her children. (Nevertheless we may be sure she means to tell Liza, the little maid, to look in on them frequently till she comes home. She goes from bed to bed, after her custom, lighting the night lights and crooning a lullaby.)

MICHAEL. (Drowsily.) Mother I'm glad of you.

MRS. DARLING. (With a last look round, her hand on the switch.) Dear night-lights that protect my sleeping babes, burn also and steadfast tonight. (The nursery darkens and she is gone, intentionally leaving the door ajar. Something uncanny is going to happen, we expect, for a quiver has passed through the room, just sufficient to touch the night-lights. They blink three times one after the other and go out, precisely as the children [whom familiarity has made them resemble] fall asleep. There is another light in the room now, no larger than Mrs. Darling's fist and in the time we have taken to say this, it has been into the drawers and wardrobe and searched pockets, as it darts about looking for a certain shadow. Then the window is blown open, probably by the smallest and therefore most mischievous star, and Peter Pan flies into the room. In so far as he is dressed at all, it is in autumn leaves and cobwebs.)

PETER. (In a whisper.) Tinker Bell, Tink, where are you? (A jug lights up.)

TINK. (The answer comes as of a tinkle of bells; it is the fairy language. Peter can speak it, but it bores him.) I'm in here.

PETER. Oh, do come out of that jug. (Tink flashes hither and thither.) Do you know where they put it?

TINK. In the big box.

PETER. Which big box?

TINK. Over here.

PETER. This one?

TINK. Yes.

PETER. But which drawer?

TINK. I'll show you if you like.

PETER. Yes, do show me. (*Tink pops into the drawer where the shadow is, but before Peter can reach it, Wendy moves in her sleep. Startled, Peter slips through the door into the bathroom for a moment but reappears at once as Wendy has not waked. [A subtle adjustment has been made to his costume, but we don't notice it at all.] He crosses to the drawer and scatters its contents to the floor, as kings on their wedding day toss ha'pence to the crowd. In his joy at finding his shadow he forgets that he has shut up Tink in the drawer. He sits on the floor with the shadow, confident that he and it will join like drops of water. Then he tries to stick it on with soap from the bathroom, and this failing also, he subsides dejectedly on the floor. This wakens Wendy, who sits up, and is pleasantly interested to see a stranger.*)

WENDY. (*Courteously.*) Boy, why are you crying? (*He jumps up, and crossing to the foot of the bed bows to her in the fairy way.*)

PETER. *Wendy, impressed, bows to him from the bed.*

PETER. What is your name?

WENDY. (*Well satisfied.*) Wendy Moira Angela Darling. What is yours?

PETER. (*Finding it lamentably brief.*) Peter Pan.

WENDY. Is that all?

PETER. (*Biting his lip.*) Yes.

WENDY. (*Politely.*) I am so sorry.

PETER. It doesn't matter.

WENDY. Where do you live?

PETER. Second on the right and then straight on till morning.

WENDY. What a funny address!

PETER. No, it isn't.

WENDY. I mean, is that what they put on the letters?

PETER. Don't get any letters.

WENDY. But your mother gets letters?

PETER. Don't have a mother.

WENDY. Peter! (*She leaps out of bed to put her arms round him, but he draws back.*) No wonder you were crying.

PETER. I wasn't crying about my mother. I was crying because I can't get my shadow to stick on. Anyway I wasn't cry-

ing.

WENDY. It has come off! How awful. (*Looking at the spot where he had lain.*) Peter, you have been trying to stick it on with soap!

PETER. (*Snappily.*) Well, then?

WENDY. It must be sewn on.

PETER. What is "sewn?"

WENDY. You are dreadfully ignorant.

PETER. No, I'm not.

WENDY. I will sew it on for you my little man. Stand still. I dare say it will hurt a little.

PETER. (*A recent remark of hers rankling.*) I never cry. (*She seems to sew the shadow to his heels. He bears the pain, and then tests the combination, but the flimsy thing drags uselessly behind him.*) It isn't quite itself yet.

WENDY. Perhaps I should have ironed it.

PETER. Perhaps it's dead.

WENDY. I think we need a little more light. (*She touches something and to his astonishment the room is illuminated. The shadow awakes and is glad to be back with him as he is to have it. He and his shadow dance together. He is showing off now. He crows like a cock. He would fly in order to impress Wendy further if he knew that there is anything unusual in that.*)

PETER. Wendy, look, look; oh the cleverness of me!

WENDY. You conceit; of course I did nothing!

PETER. You did a little.

WENDY. (*Wounded.*) A little! If I am no use I can at least withdraw. (*With one haughty leap she is again in bed with the sheet over her face. Popping onto the end of the bed the artful one appeals.*)

PETER. Wendy, don't withdraw. I can't help crowing, Wendy, when I'm pleased with myself. Wendy, one girl is worth more than twenty boys.

WENDY. (*Peeping over the sheet.*) You really think so, Peter?

PETER. Yes, I do.

WENDY. I think it's perfectly sweet of you, and I shall get up again. (*They sit together on the side of the bed.*) I shall give you a kiss if you like.

PETER. Thank you. (*He holds out his hand.*)

WENDY. (Aghast.) Don't you know what a kiss is?

PETER. I shall know when you give it me. (Not to hurt his feelings, she gives him her thumb.) Now shall I give you a kiss?

WENDY. (Primly.) If you please. (He pulls an acorn button off his person and bestows it on her. She is shocked but considerate.) I will wear it on this chain round my neck. Peter, how old are you?

PETER. (Blithely.) I don't know, but quite young, Wendy. I ran away the day I was born.

WENDY. Ran away, why?

PETER. Because I heard father and mother talking of what I was to be when I became a man. Wendy, I want always to be a little boy and to have fun; so I ran away to Kensington Gardens and lived a long time among the fairies.

WENDY. (With great eyes.) You know fairies, Peter!

PETER. (Surprised that this should be a recommendation.) Yes, but they are nearly all dead now. (Baldly.) You see, Wendy, when the first baby laughed for the first time, the laugh broke into a thousand pieces, and they all went skipping about, and that was the beginning of fairies. And now when every new baby is born its first laugh becomes a fairy. So there ought to be a fairy for every boy or girl.

WENDY. (Breathlessly.) Ought to be? Isn't there?

PETER. Oh no. Children know such a lot now. Soon they don't believe in fairies, and every time a child says "I don't believe in fairies" there is a fairy somewhere that falls down dead. (Heartlessly.) They just crumple up.

WENDY. Poor things!

PETER. (To whom this statement recalls a forgotten friend.) I can't think where she has gone. Tinker Bell, Tink, where are you?

WENDY. (Thrilling.) Peter, you don't mean to tell me that there is a fairy in this room!

PETER. (Flitting about in search.) She came in with me. You don't hear anything, do you?

WENDY. I hear — the only sound I hear is like a tinkle of bells.

PETER. That is the fairy language. I hear it too.

WENDY. It seems to come from over there.

PETER. (With shameless glee.) Wendy, I believe I shut her up in that drawer! (He releases Tink, who darts about in a fury using language it is perhaps as well we can't understand.) You needn't say that; I'm very sorry, but how could I know you were in the drawer?

WENDY. (Her eyes dancing in pursuit of the delicious creature.) Oh Peter, if only she would stand still and let me see her!

PETER. (Indifferently.) They hardly ever stand still. (To show that she can do even this Tink passes between two ticks of the cuckoo clock.)

WENDY. I see her, the lovely! Where is she now?

PETER. She is behind the clock. Tink, this lady wishes you were her fairy. (The answer comes immediately.)

WENDY. What does she say?

PETER. She is not very polite. She says you are a great ugly girl, and that she is my fairy. You know, Tink, you can't be my fairy because I am a gentleman and you are a lady. (Tink replies.)

WENDY. What did she say?

PETER. She said "You silly ass." She is quite a common girl, you know. She is called Tinker Bell because she mends the fairy pots and kettles.

WENDY. Where do you live now?

PETER. With the lost boys.

WENDY. Who are they?

PETER. They are the children who fall out of their prams when the nurse is looking the other way. If they are not claimed in seven days they are sent away to the Never Land. I'm captain.

WENDY. What fun it must be.

PETER. (Crafsily.) Yes, but we are rather lonely. You see, Wendy, we have no female companionship.

WENDY. Are none of the other children girls?

PETER. Oh no; girls, you know, are much too clever to fall out of their prams.

WENDY. Peter, it is perfectly lovely the way you talk about girls. John there just despises us. (Peter, for the first time, has a

PETER. I am glad. *(They have worked their way along the floor close to each other, but now he jumps up.)*

WENDY. Peter, where are you going?

PETER. *(Already on his way to the window.)* To tell the other boys.

WENDY. Don't go, Peter. I know lots of stories. The stories I could tell to the boys!

PETER. *(Gleaming.)* Come with me then. We'll fly.

WENDY. Fly? You can fly! *(How he would like to rip those stories out of her; he is dangerous now.)*

PETER. Yes.

WENDY. Oh dear, I mustn't. Think of mother.

PETER. You shall! You shall! *(Seizes her.)*

WENDY. Let go, Peter Pan. Besides, I can't fly.

PETER. I'll teach you.

WENDY. But I won't go away with you.

PETER. You won't be able to help it —

WENDY. Then I won't learn.

PETER. I'll teach you how to jump on the wind's back, and then away we go — and if there are more winds than one they toss you about in the sky — they fling you miles and miles — but you always fall soft on to another wind — and sometimes you go crashing through the tops of trees, scaring the owls — and if you meet a boy's kite in the air you shove your foot through it. The stars are giving a party tonight! Oh, Wendy, when you are sleeping in your silly bed you might be flying about with me playing hide and seek with the stars! And Wendy, there are mermaids.

WENDY. Mermaids, with tails?

PETER. Such long tails.

WENDY. Oh, to see a mermaid. *(She just succeeds in remaining on the nursery floor.)*

PETER. Wendy, you could tuck us in at night.

WENDY. Oo!

PETER. None of us has ever been tucked in at night.

WENDY. Oo!

PETER. And make pockets for us. None of us has any pock-

good look at John. He then neatly tumbles him out of bed.) You wicked! You are not captain here. *(She bends over her brother who is prone on the floor.)* After all he hasn't wakened, and you meant to be kind. *(Having done her duty she forgets John, who blissfully sleeps on.)* Peter, you may give me a kiss.

PETER. *(Cynically.)* I thought you would want it back. *(He offers her the thimble.)*

WENDY. *(Artfully.)* Oh dear, I didn't mean a kiss, Peter, I meant a thimble.

PETER. *(Only half placated.)* What is that?

WENDY. It is like this. *(She kisses him.)*

PETER. *(Satisfied.)* Now shall I give you a thimble?

WENDY. If you please. *(Before he can even draw near she screams.)*

PETER. What is it?

WENDY. It was exactly as if someone were pulling my hair.

PETER. That must have been Tink. I never knew her so naughty before. *(Tink speaks. She is in the jug again.)*

WENDY. What does she say?

PETER. She says she will do that every time I give you a thimble.

WENDY. But why?

PETER. *(Equally nonplused.)* Why, Tink? *(He has to translate the answer.)* She said "You silly ass" again.

WENDY. She is very impertinent. *(They are now sitting on the floor.)* Peter, why did you come to our nursery window?

PETER. To try to hear stories. None of us knows any stories.

WENDY. How perfectly awful!

PETER. That's why swallows build in the eaves of houses. To listen to the stories. Wendy, your mother was telling you such a lovely story.

WENDY. Which story was it?

PETER. About the prince, and he couldn't find the lady who wore the glass slipper.

WENDY. That was Cinderella. Peter, he found her and they were happy ever after.

ets. Wendy, how we should all respect you. (At this she strikes her colours.)

WENDY. Of course, it's awfully fas-cin-a-ting! Would you teach John and Michael to fly too?

PETER. (Indifferently.) If you like.

WENDY. I don't promise to go away with you. I don't think there's the least chance of my going.

PETER. (Crafitly.) All right.

WENDY. (Playing some-trick on John.) John, wake up. There is a boy here who is to teach us to fly.

JOHN. Is there? Then I shall get up. (He raises his head from the floor.) Hullo, I am up.

WENDY. Michael, open your eyes. This boy is to teach us to fly. (The sleepers are at once as awake as their father's razor; but before a question can be asked Nana's bark is heard.)

JOHN. (To Peter.) Quick, hide! Out with the light! (They arrange their bedclothes to resemble their own sleeping bodies, and then hide in the bathroom or behind the curtains. When Liza enters with a firm hand on the troubled Nana's chain, the room is in comparative darkness.)

LIZA. There, you suspicious brute, they are perfectly safe, aren't they? Every one of the little angels sound asleep in bed. Listen to their gentle breathing. (Nana's sense of smell here helps to her undoing instead of hindering it. She knows that they are in the room. Michael, who is behind the curtain window, is so encouraged by Liza's last remark that he breathes too loudly. Nana knows that kind of breathing, and tries to break from her keeper's control.) No more of it, Nana. (Wagging a finger at her.) I warn you if you bark again I shall go straight for master and missus and bring them home from the party, and then won't the master whip you just! Come along, you naughty dog. (The unhappy Nana is led away. The children emerge exulting from their various hiding-places. In their brief absence from the scene strange things have been done to them; but it is not for us to reveal a mysterious secret of the stage. They look just the same.)

JOHN. I say, can you really fly?

PETER. Look! (He is now over their heads.)

JOHN. How splendid!

WENDY. Oh, how sweet!

PETER. I'm sweet, oh, I am sweet! (It looks so easy that they try it first from the floor and then from their beds, without encouraging results.)

JOHN. (Rubbing his knees.) How do you do it?

PETER. (Descending.) You just think lovely wonderful thoughts and they lift you up in the air. Look. (He is off again.)

JOHN. You are so nippy at it; couldn't you do it very slowly once? (Peter does it slowly.) I've got it now, Wendy. (He tries, no, he has not got it, poor stay-at-home, though he knows the names of all the countries in England and Peter does not know one.)

PETER. I must blow the fairy dust on you first. (Fortunately his garments are smeared with it and he blows some dust on each.) Now, try; try from the bed. Just wriggle your shoulders this way, and then let go. (The gallant Michael is the first to let go, and is borne across the room.)

MICHAEL. (With a yell that should have disturbed Liza.) I flew! (John lets go and meets Wendy near the bathroom door though they had both aimed in an opposite direction.)

JOHN. (Tending to be upside down.) How ripping!

WENDY. Lovely!

MICHAEL. (Playing whack on a bed.) I do like it!

THE THREE. Look at me, look at me, look at me! (They are not nearly so elegant in the air as Peter, but their heads have bumped the ceiling, and there is nothing more delicious than that.)

JOHN. (Who can even go backwards.) I say, why shouldn't we go out?

PETER. There are pirates.

JOHN. Pirates! (He grabs his tall Sunday hat.) Let us go at once! (From down below in the street the lighted window must present an unwonted spectacle; the shadows of children revolving in the room like a merry-go-round. This is perhaps what Mr. and Mrs. Darling see as they come hurrying home from the party, brought by Nana who, you may be sure, has broken her chain. Peter's accomplice, the little star, has seen them coming, and again the window blows open.)