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The Neverland Project

By

STEPHEN GREGG

Dramatic Publishing Company

Woodstock, Illinois • Australia • New Zealand • South Africa

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STEPHEN GREGG

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(THE NEVERLAND PROJECT)

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The Neverland Project was first produced by Olathe South High School (Olathe, Kan.) on Oct. 24, 2024.

CAST:

WENDY DARLINGHana Obaideen
PETER PAN.....Noah Hastings
HOOK Cole Witt
SMEE Hayden Boyington
A.T.O.P.....Aidan Nixon
JOHN DARLING.....Lucas MacNider
MICHAEL DARLINGReece Johnson
MRS. DARLING..... Addisyn Posch
MR. DARLING Jonas Gipson
SLIGHTLYChristian Steger
NIBSChiron Crabb
MISS.....Aly Arenholz
THE SADDEST WOMAN
IN THE WORLD.....Emilia Huerta Torres
TINKER BELL.....Alicen Silva
LIZA Zoey Starke
NANA..... Niko Sichter
WILLIAM CROWN/NIGHTBraeden Mitchell
PAIGE LAMOTT/NIGHT Izzie Gladney
AUBREY LENCH/NIGHT Zachary Rathman
SOPHIE WARNICK/NIGHT Angie Rivera
SPERRY WHISHAM/NIGHT Wesley Tillotson
TRANSLATOR Ethan Drake
NEVER BIRD Indera Davis
CONSTABLE TURNER/NIGHTCamille Kamseu
MERMAID Linette Ndungu
JANE/NIGHT Megan Mahoney
JANE/AUBREY LEACH/NIGHT..... Milly Colgan
ARNOLD MEEKS/NIGHT.....Tucker Sowles

PRODUCTION:

Director David Tate Hastings
Technical Director..... Skyler Smith
Costumer Stacy Hatton
Hair and Makeup..... John Hollan
Lighting Designer Jarret Bertoncin
Sound Sean Rathman

To Jessica Goldapple and Ben Bodé,
two Lab Twenty6 actors who, for almost 20 years,
have helped shape every play I've written.

The Neverland Project

CHARACTERS

WENDY DARLING

JOHN DARLING: The middle child.

MICHAEL DARLING: The youngest child.

MRS. DARLING

MR. DARLING

LIZA: The maid.

NANA: The dog.

PETER PAN

TINKER BELL

HOOK

SMEE

A.T.O.P.: "All the Other Pirates."

NIBS: A lost one.

SLIGHTLY: A lost one.

MISS: A lost one.

THE SADDEST WOMAN IN THE WORLD

MERMAID

NIGHT 1-3: More or fewer is fine.

NEVER BIRD

TRANSLATOR: For Nana.

JANE: Wendy's daughter.

LONDONERS:

CONSTABLE TURNER

COLIN WHISHAM

WILLA/WILLIAM MEEKS

M.C. CROWN

THE FLIGHT:

SURPRISED PLANT: In the audience.

THRILLED/AMUSED PLANT: In the audience.

SCARED PLANT: In the audience.

THE ISLAND (V.O.): Calm, warm, like a beacon.

FLIGHT NOTE: After the first production of *Peter Pan* in 1904, the playwright, J. M. Barrie, had to address a problem:

“I had to add something to the play at the request of parents (who thus showed that they thought me the responsible person) about no one being able to fly until the fairy dust had been blown on him; so many children having gone home and tried it from their beds and needed surgical attention.”

Flight has always been essential to *Peter Pan*, which was the first full-length play ever to incorporate it. As amazing as the world of Neverland is—pirates and fairies and mermaids—it was the theatricality of the flight that tipped it into worldwide hit-dom. The flight was what people talked about or, in the case of parents, hid from their children so as not to spoil the surprise.

Flight is easy to imagine. It's the superpower we can come closest to achieving on our own; a trampoline will do the trick. In 1905, young audiences flew along with the Darlings, gasped when invisible wires swept them into the air. *The Neverland Project* doesn't require wires, just blindfolds—a little help keeping young eyes (make that all eyes) closed. That doesn't mean that the Neverland travel can't use a little help of its own. In the original Olathe South High School production, crew members walked down the aisles holding huge box fans. It was fun to watch the blindfolded audience react to the wind in their faces. Try it in your production or not. Just don't forget the fairy dust, which keeps everybody safe.

The Neverland Project

(As they enter the theatre, all patrons are handed blindfolds. Perhaps the blindfolds are labeled “Flight Goggles.”)

The ushers sprinkle each audience member with an invisible but potent substance—fairy dust. They announce what it is as they do so.

AT RISE: The set is plain or nonexistent. We might have the disappointing feeling that we’re about to watch Reader’s Theatre.

WENDY DARLING enters, speaks to the audience.)

WENDY. Welcome. My almost complete name is Wendy Angela Moira Darling. You’ve heard the name, of course, because you’ve read the book about me and my brothers, about Peter and all the rest. *Most* of the rest.

That book is fiction. It’s full of lies, falsehoods, and mendacities and it will soon be forgotten. The only thing I like about that book is that it’s divided into chapters, which keeps it tidy.

The writer of that book changed scenes, altered details and left out an important character. But the main difference between his version and my version—the real version—is that he wasn’t there. I’ll be telling the story as it actually happened—

JOHN (*entering*). With help from me.

WENDY. Yes, with help from my brother.

JOHN. I’m John, the least interesting person in the book. He didn’t understand my dry sense of humor. The only thing anyone remembers about me is my top hat. But for

our version, I did all the interviews, including one with the Saddest Woman in the World.

WENDY. Did that happen? I thought she refused.

JOHN. I broke into her house. She was too sad to run away.

WENDY. John!

JOHN. Wait till you hear what she told me.

WENDY. Prologue: Moonlight.

(The LONDONERS—CONSTABLE TURNER, COLIN WHISHAM, WILLA [or WILLIAM] MEEKS and M.C. CROWN—enter.)

CONSTABLE TURNER. If it hadn't been a full moon, I don't think we would have gotten so many reports. But it was. And we did.

COLIN WHISHAM *(cranky)*. I was the first to see them.

WILLA MEEKS. I spotted them at 9:16 p.m.

M.C. CROWN. I'm the one they didn't believe.

COLIN WHISHAM. Moonlight annoys me. I had gone to close the curtains. But as I pulled them closed ...

WILLA MEEKS. As I looked up ...

M.C. CROWN. The moon so bright I had to squint.

COLIN WHISHAM. There was something in the sky ...

WILLA MEEKS. Against the disk.

M.C. CROWN. Four things, like geese ...

COLIN WHISHAM. *Kind* of like geese, but they were wearing dressing gowns.

M.C. CROWN. I ran for my telescope.

WILLA MEEKS. They were coming toward us, so they were actually getting bigger, from like this *(Fingers almost touching.)* to more like this. *(Fingers barely farther apart.)*

M.C. CROWN. Four of them, but not alike ...

WILLA MEEKS. Three of them were dog paddling, flailing,
but the other one ...

COLIN WHISHAM. But the fourth ...

CONSTABLE TURNER. The abductor.

COLIN WHISHAM. The fourth was different.

M.C. CROWN. It zipped up and down, did circles around the
others ...

WILLA MEEKS. Flew faster and faster.

COLIN WHISHAM (*hands behind the head*). It was flying
like this.

M.C. CROWN. Something green. And laughing.

(The LONDONERS exit.)

WENDY (*to the audience*). Chapter One: How Nana Got in
Trouble.

JOHN (*to MRS. DARLING, who has entered*). Can you state
your name, please?

MRS. DARLING. You know who I am.

JOHN. It's for a project.

MRS. DARLING. Mrs. George Darling.

JOHN. Mother, when was the first time you became aware of
Peter Pan?

MRS. DARLING. I first heard of Peter when I was tidying up
your minds.

JOHN. Do all mothers do that?

MRS. DARLING. All the good ones, yes.

JOHN. What does that consist of, exactly?

MRS. DARLING. It is quite like tidying up drawers. You
rummage in their minds and put things straight for next

morning, repacking into their proper places the many articles that have wandered during the day. You linger humorously over some of the contents, wondering where on earth they had picked this thing up, making discoveries sweet and not so sweet, pressing this to your cheek as if it were nice as a kitten and hurriedly stowing that out of sight. It's why, when you wake in the morning, the naughtiness and evil passions with which you went to bed have been folded up small and placed at the bottom of your mind and on the top, beautifully aired, are spread out your prettier thoughts, ready for you to put on.

JOHN. And in which of our minds did you encounter Peter Pan?

MRS. DARLING. Quite surprisingly—all of them. In yours and in Wendy's and everywhere in Michael's.

But that wasn't the strangest thing. When I came across him in your minds I realized that I'd met him too, a long time ago. But that didn't make any sense. He'd be all grown up by now.

(MR. DARLING, MICHAEL DARLING and NANA enter. All five Darlings sit at the dinner table. NANA's curled up on the floor.)

MRS. DARLING (*cont'd*). John, you're not eating your turnips.

JOHN. I don't like turnips.

MR. DARLING. There was talk at the bank. Another lost child. In South Kensington.

MRS. DARLING. I heard that. Terrible.

MR. DARLING. Careless, if you ask me. Losing a child. Although I do sometimes lose track of the two of you.

MICHAEL. There are three of us.

MRS. DARLING. The lost ones are babies who fell out of their prams. And did you hear the name?

MR. DARLING. I don't remember.

MRS. DARLING. Clarinda Duncan. A girl. It used to be that all the lost children were boys because girls were too smart to fall out of their carriages. You know what this means?

JOHN. Girls are getting dumber.

MRS. DARLING. Yes.

MICHAEL. I've been telling you that.

JOHN. Wendy was standing close to Colin Dear all free period.

MRS. DARLING. Is that right?

MR. DARLING. How close?

JOHN (*arms all the way apart*). This close. (*Arms mostly apart.*) And then this close. (*Halfway apart.*) And then this close. (*Pretty close.*) And then this close ...

MRS. DARLING. What were you doing standing so close to Colin Dear?

WENDY. Trying to learn to like boys.

MR. DARLING. Wendy.

WENDY. I feel like I'm running out of time.

MRS. DARLING. Did it work?

WENDY. No.

MRS. DARLING. What did Colin think about this?

WENDY. He didn't notice. That's why I kept getting closer. If I don't teach myself to like boys, it's going to be difficult to be a mother.

MR. DARLING. We're going to change the topic. Somebody tell me something interesting about their day.

WENDY. I saw a boy fly past my window last night.

MR. DARLING. That doesn't count as a change of topic.

MICHAEL. Was it Colin Dear?

WENDY. No.

MRS. DARLING. Wendy, your imagination runs away with you.

(LIZA, the maid, has entered and is clearing the table. She jostles something.)

LIZA. Excuse me.

MR. DARLING. Liza's gotten so clumsy lately. We might need to find a replacement.

MRS. DARLING. George, not in front of her.

MR. DARLING. She can't hear me. I've asked her to tune out my voice.

MRS. DARLING. I think Liza works very hard for a ten-year-old.

MR. DARLING. You know, I'm starting to feel that this house is too big.

MRS. DARLING. You mentioned that yesterday.

MR. DARLING. I get lost.

MICHAEL. Is that why you don't tuck us in?

MR. DARLING. I do tuck you in. After you're asleep.

JOHN. I like it better before.

MR. DARLING. That's what mothers are for.

MRS. DARLING. Oh is *that* what mothers are for?

MICHAEL. Sometimes, when you don't tuck us in, I get scared.

MRS. DARLING. Sweetheart, there's no reason to be scared.

MR. DARLING. I'll tuck you in tonight if I can find your room.

MRS. DARLING. Not tonight. We're going to the Radcliffe's for dinner.

MR. DARLING. Ohhhhhh ...

MICHAEL. Don't go.

MRS. DARLING. It's just down the street.

MICHAEL. Who'll tuck us in?

MRS. DARLING. Nana will take care of you.

(A short series of barks from NANA that mean “Yes, I will.”

We hear a fast-moving buzz, like a determined fly. MRS. DARLING sees something out of the corner of her eye.)

MRS. DARLING (*cont’d*). What was that?

MR. DARLING. What was what?

MRS. DARLING (*unsettled*). Like a dragonfly.

MR. DARLING. Too late in the year.

MRS. DARLING. I saw something. Winged and tiny and ...

MR. DARLING. And what?

MRS. DARLING. Something that shouldn’t be here.

(Now both MRS. DARLING and NANA dart their heads as they see it again.)

MRS. DARLING (*cont’d*). There!

(NANA barks like crazy!)

MRS. DARLING (*cont’d*). Nana saw it too.

MR. DARLING. There’s nothing there.

(NANA has run out of the room.)

MRS. DARLING. George, let’s stay home tonight.

MR. DARLING. We’re going three doors down.

LIZA (*to the audience*). The only clue that something bad was about to happen was the leaves in the nursery. The missus was annoyed about it. She said “Liza, why didn’t you clean up the leaves under the window like I asked you?” And I had. This was on the third floor, above the trees.

MRS. DARLING (*to the audience*). I think everything would have been all right except for the incident with Nana. We'd heard a yell.

(We hear PETER PAN scream in pain.)

MRS. DARLING (*cont'd*). After the yell, there was a shout. Words. But I couldn't make them out.

PETER PAN (*offstage*). She bit off my shadow!

(NANA enters with something black hanging from her mouth. She's still eating it.)

MR. DARLING. Nana, what do you have there?

(NANA turns her head.)

MR. DARLING (*cont'd*). Drop it. Drop it, Nana. DROP IT!

(But she will not.)

MR. DARLING (*cont'd*). Give it to me. GIVE IT. GIIIVE IT!

MRS. DARLING (*to her husband*). What is it?

MR. DARLING. I don't know. It's black and slippery.

(NANA opens her mouth wide. All swallowed.)

MR. DARLING (*cont'd*). Oh, why do dogs eat disgusting things?

BAD DOG! You're not staying with the children tonight.

MRS. DARLING. George, she loves it so.

MR. DARLING. Too bad. (*To NANA.*) You're in the dog house.

(NANA's and MRS. DARLING's eyes snap to the same place.)

MRS. DARLING. I saw it again! She did too.

MR. DARLING. You're imagining things. Goodnight, children.

JOHN. But why can't Nana sleep in the room like always?

MRS. DARLING. Don't worry. I'm turning on the night lights.
Nothing can hurt you while they're on.

(The lights dim, and the night lights come on.)

JOHN. What if they go out?

MRS. DARLING. They never go out. They are the eyes a mother leaves behind to guard her children. Goodnight, children.

(MR. and MRS. DARLING exit.)

WENDY *(to the audience)*. Chapter Two: The Darlings Get a Visitor.

(The children lie down. Then ...

We hear a BUZZ. Then, one by one, we hear a pop of glass as the night lights go out.)

WENDY sits up hard, like she's been stung by a bee. What was that?

Aah! This time at the back of the neck. PETER PAN enters through a window.)

PETER PAN. Tink, stop that.

WENDY. Who are you?

PETER PAN. Come with me.

WENDY. No.

PETER PAN. You have to come quick!

WENDY. I don't know you.

PETER PAN. I know you. That's good enough where I come from.

WENDY. Where do you come from?

PETER PAN. We need you there right now.

WENDY. I can't leave my brothers.

PETER PAN. What could happen?

WENDY. A strange boy could come into the nursery and try to tempt them to their doom.

PETER PAN. I'm not a strange boy. I'm Peter Pan.

WENDY. Peter Pan. I feel like I've heard that name. But under no circumstances am I leaving this house with a stranger.

PETER PAN. We'll see about that.

WENDY. Under no circumstances.

(The LONDONERS pop back in.)

COLIN WHISHAM. The thing about Peter Pan—he's not what you call a pleasant boy.

WILLA MEEKS. He's not nice at all.

M.C. CROWN. Bossy.

COLIN WHISHAM. And vain. He actually crows. As in *crows*.
(A demonstration of the crow.) How many times would you have to hear that before you thought, "I need a different flying friend."

M.C. CROWN. But there was one thing about him.

WILLA MEEKS. I couldn't put my finger on it at first.

COLIN WHISHAM. Peter still has all his baby teeth. And the effect, when you talk to him—

WILLA MEEKS. Like a very persuasive kitten ...

COLIN WHISHAM. It's not just that Peter Pan doesn't want to grow up, it's that when you see him you think, "I don't want him to either."

WILLA MEEKS. I want to squeeze his little cheeks.

M.C. CROWN. I talked with him once and I found myself instinctively raising the pitch of my voice.

(The LONDONERS exit.)

PETER PAN. I'll leave then. I just need my shadow. Your dog took it.

WENDY *(uh-oh)*. What did it look like?

PETER PAN. Like a shadow. Black.

WENDY. And sort of slippery.

PETER PAN. Yes.

WENDY. Oh. I'm afraid Nana ate it.

PETER PAN. No!

(He starts to sob.)

WENDY. Oh, Peter. I still see your shadow.

PETER PAN. That's not my shadow. That's an ordinary London shadow. My shadow could jump across the room and fight.

WENDY. I'm sorry.

PETER PAN. So now will you come with me?

WENDY. I shouldn't. I can give you a kiss if you like.

PETER PAN. A kissssss.

(He holds out his hand.)

WENDY. A kiss. Surely you know what a kiss is.

PETER PAN. I know everything. Hand me a kiss.

(So as not to hurt his feelings, she hands him a thimble.)

PETER PAN. It's been a while since I've been given one of these. A kiss goes on your thumb, yes?

WENDY. That's right.

(He puts it on his thumb.)

PETER PAN. Now shall I give you a kiss?

WENDY. Yes, please.

(She inclines her cheek towards him.)

PETER PAN. Here you go.

(He hands her an acorn button.)

WENDY. This is a button made from an acorn.

PETER PAN. The best kind of kiss.

WENDY. Well, thank you. I'll wear it on the chain around my neck.

(As she puts the acorn button on the chain, the boys wake.)

PETER PAN. Hello boys. I'm Peter Pan. Do you want to go on an adventure?

JOHN. Yes!

MICHAEL. We're not supposed to leave the nursery after bedtime. We might trip on the stairs and never be heard from again.

PETER PAN. What if you didn't have to take the stairs, Michael?

MICHAEL. How did you know my name was Michael?

PETER PAN. Most boys in this neighborhood are named Michael, aren't they, John? Now, let's hurry.

WENDY. Why does it have to be a rush?

PETER PAN. I can't stay long. It puts me at risk of growing up. Every moment I'm here I get older. Tick tock. Tick tock. Tick tock.

JOHN. What was that bit about not having to take the stairs?

WENDY (*to the audience*). Chapter Three: Flight.

PETER PAN. The best way to get where we're going is to fly.

Do you want to fly, Michael?

MICHAEL. Yes!

WENDY. Of course. But where are we going?

PETER PAN. If I tell you, you'll be so excited you might race ahead and beat me there.

WENDY. Tell us.

JOHN. We promise to wait for you.

PETER PAN. Are you sure you want me to tell you?

JOHN. Yes.

PETER PAN. You only get to hear it for the first time once.

JOHN. Tell us.

PETER PAN. We're going to the Neverland.

(WENDY, JOHN and MICHAEL get goosebumps.)

JOHN. Ohhh.

MICHAEL. What's on my arms?

WENDY. They're called goosebumps. I have them too.

PETER PAN. That's the island saying "hello."

MICHAEL. Hello.

(Another wave of goosebumps.)

PETER PAN. Let's fly. A little fairy dust.

(He ssprinkles them with fairy dust, from a pouch or maybe just from his fingertips.)

PETER PAN (*cont'd*). And now you think a happy thought.

(They do. Nothing happens.)

JOHN. Nothing's happening.

WENDY. Me neither.

PETER PAN. Keep trying. You'll get the hang of it.

(And then—)

JOHN. I'm flying!

(No wires required or even desired.)

WENDY. What was your happy thought?

JOHN. I imagined Simon Willems falling down stairs.

WENDY. John!

JOHN. It worked!

(Now MICHAEL is flying as well.)

MICHAEL. I'm flying!

JOHN. What was your happy thought?

MICHAEL. Christmas.

(And now WENDY flies.)

WENDY. I did it too!

PETER PAN. What was your happy thought?

WENDY. It's private. *(To the audience.)* To be clear, I knew that my parents would have strongly objected to this journey ...

MICHAEL. I'm great at this!

WENDY. But sometimes your imagination runs away with you, and sometimes ...

PETER PAN. Quick! Out the window.

WENDY. You run away with your imagination.

JOHN (*to the audience*). And so we flew to the Neverland, which was an adventure in itself, and which took somewhere between two and three days. Not that long considering the distance.

WENDY. But that was in 1904. These days we can do better.

JOHN (*to the audience, indicating the blindfolds*). It's time for these. Put them on. All of you. You're going to fly on the miracle of sound waves. You've been sprinkled with fairy dust.

WENDY. Blindfolds on? Good.

JOHN. Now, a safety warning: if you take off your blindfold mid-flight, you will fall screaming from the sky.

MICHAEL. We will not try to catch you.

JOHN. Take a deep breath. Focus on that happy thought ...

(After a moment—)

JOHN (*cont'd*). Up you go.

SURPRISED PLANT. Oh!

JOHN. Good job.

SURPRISED PLANT. I didn't think it would work!

JOHN. Now you!

THRILLED & AMUSED PLANT. OH! Oh my!

SCARED PLANT. Oh oh oh no!

THRILLED & AMUSED PLANT. I love this!

SCARED PLANT. I'm too high!

WENDY. Don't worry that you don't know the way, because while you're looking for the Neverland, the Neverland is looking for you. You'll hear it saying—

WENDY (*cont'd*). This way. THE ISLAND (*V.O.*). This way.

THE ISLAND (*V.O., cont'd*). This way ... this way ... this way ...

(THE ISLAND calmly repeats “this way” throughout the journey.)

JOHN. You may feel you're in two places at once, because the island is so small ...

MICHAEL. I'm great at this!

JOHN. And your mind is so big ...

WENDY. Michael, stay close!

(We start to hear another sound—the ticking of a clock.

We hear THE ISLAND's “this way” and the ticking throughout the sequence.)

SCARED PLANT. I don't like this!

(From somewhere, we hear TINKER BELL.)

TINKER BELL. OH! YOU ARE HIGH UP!

PETER PAN. Tink, stop it.

TINKER BELL. Too high!

SCARED PLANT. I'm scared!

(From somewhere else, we hear HOOK.)

HOOK. My, but that ticking is loud.

MICHAEL. I can do a somersault!

HOOK. Why do you think they call it the Neverland?

(The ticking gets louder.)

HOOK (*cont'd*). IT'S BECAUSE YOU NEVER RETURN.

(And now the ticking goes crazy, from all different sources, both human and recorded. Rapid ticking and erratic ticking. There's also a mournful bell and a cuckoo clock, real or human-made. It all but drowns out THE ISLAND.

After several seconds, the clock commotion slowly subsides.)

WENDY *(to the audience)*. Now you'll start to feel the mist ...

MICHAEL. I can do a flip!

WENDY *(to the audience)*. You'll hear seabirds.

(We start to hear the sea birds, and then waves crashing.)

JOHN. There's the shore!

PETER PAN. This way! THE ISLAND *(V.O.)*. This way!

THE ISLAND *(V.O., cont'd)*. I can sense you ...

JOHN. Now all you have to do is ...

(From off to one side, we hear SMEE.)

SMEE. Land ho!

PETER PAN. Land!

JOHN. Land. THE ISLAND *(V.O.)*. Land.

THE ISLAND *(V.O., cont'd)*. There you are. Hello again.

JOHN. You're here. Take off your blindfolds.

(The audience takes off their blindfolds, and the theatre is transformed. The three darling children are in Neverland, which is all color and whimsy.)

JOHN *(cont'd)*. You made it, all but one of you.

WENDY *(to the audience)*. Welcome to the Neverland! If you have a dog, and I hope you do, you've noticed that if you

have been away, and you return quietly so as not to wake her, your dog is likely right where you left her. While you were gone, she wasn't the lively friend that you know, barking and chewing on sticks.

When you're gone, your dog shuts down, saving her energy, the better to greet you. The Neverland is like that. It's not fully itself until you arrive.

Unfortunately, sometimes the first to wake up are the worst to wake up.

(SMEE, a pirate, enters holding a green cake.)

SMEE. People ask me, why is Peter Pan still alive? The Captain's been fighting him for years. Is it weakness? No. It's bad luck. But that's about to change. Something about this glade . . . what is it about this glade that draws him? This is Peter Pan Central. So the Captain had me bake this. Psychology tells us that lost people can't resist cake. I know what you're thinking—can I have the recipe? It's so simple—flour, butter, sugar, arsenic and love. The trick to a trap is to make it not seem like a trap. If I set this on a table they'd be suspicious. But a cake on the forest floor? Who would suspect?

(He sets it down, tempting, on the ground. SMEE exits. JOHN enters with SLIGHTLY and interviews him.)

JOHN. I'm here with one of the Neverlanders—

SLIGHTLY. And you won't ask me about my dark secret?

JOHN. No, I already promised that. So what you're going to do is put your mouth close to that *(A microphone.)*—not too close—and then speak clearly just as though we're having a regular conversation. What's your name?

SLIGHTLY. Slightly.

JOHN. And how long have you lived in the Neverland, Slightly?

SLIGHTLY. Oh it's ... I would say it's sometime between twelve minutes and forty years, more or less.

JOHN. Do you like it?

SLIGHTLY. Oh yes. Very much. Only lately there's been some arguing. We had this problem at bedtime. (*Confidential.*) Peter hates it when you say there's a problem. But—story time had gotten a little tense.

JOHN (*to the audience*). The Neverland, three days earlier:

(Story time! NIBS enters and joins SLIGHTLY, listening to PETER PAN tell a bedtime story.)

PETER PAN. Where were we?

NIBS. Cinderella was about to go to the ball, and her evil stepmother threw lentils in the ashes and said you can't go to the ball until you've picked all of them out.

PETER PAN. That's right.

NIBS. What's a stepmother?

PETER PAN. It's a mother who steps on you.

SLIGHTLY. I'm not sure that's right.

PETER PAN. OF COURSE IT'S RIGHT! The mother stepped on Cinderella and said, "You can't go to the ball until you've picked all of them out." Cinderella reached into the ashes and found a lentil and pulled it out. Then she found another lentil and she pulled it out. Then another lentil and another. And what do you know? Another lentil. And then there was another one. And another one.

NIBS. I love this story.

SLIGHTLY (*exasperated*). Then there was another lentil.

NIBS. Don't spoil it!

SLIGHTLY. It's like the story with the breadcrumbs.

NIBS. That's good too!

SLIGHTLY. Handsome was in the woods with his sister and he didn't want to get lost. So he dropped a breadcrumb. And then he dropped another breadcrumb.

SLIGHTLY (*cont'd, bored*). NIBS (*overly excited*). And
And then he dropped then he dropped another
another breadcrumb. And breadcrumb. And then he
then another one. dropped another breadcrumb.

SLIGHTLY (*cont'd*). You're a terrible storyteller!

PETER PAN. The secret to stories is for one thing to happen again and again!

SLIGHTLY. Last time, the lentils went on for an hour! What happens *next*?

NIBS. *I* know!

SLIGHTLY (*to PETER PAN*). Where are you going?

PETER PAN. You mean where am I going *next*?

(PETER PAN leaves. SLIGHTLY starts to head off in the other direction.)

NIBS. Where are you going?

SLIGHTLY. To the stream. I'm thirsty.

NIBS. You're always thirsty.

(SLIGHTLY sees the cake.)

SLIGHTLY. A cake!

(Which brings NIBS over.)

NIBS. Where did that come from?

SLIGHTLY. It was just here! Half a cake each! I'll cut it and you can choose.

NIBS. Wait.

SLIGHTLY. What?

NIBS. Doesn't it seem strange? A green cake on the forest floor.

SLIGHTLY. What color should it be?

NIBS. It's so close to the underground house. What if it's some kind of trap?

SLIGHTLY. Nobody knows we live here.

NIBS. I say we throw it away.

SLIGHTLY. We already decided to eat it. It's too late to change.

(A buzzing, like a very loud fly.)

NIBS. Tinker Bell! Hide the cake.

(They move the cake offstage. TINKER BELL enters, full-size now.)

TINKER BELL. We have an emergency! Peter is coming back but there's a horrible giant bird attacking him in the air. A Wendy bird. Which one of you is the best shot?

(They both raise their hands.)

NIBS. I am.

SLIGHTLY. Right here.

TINKER BELL. Both of you shoot it. It's Peter's only chance.

(TINKER BELL buzzes off. The Lost Ones spot the WENDY bird.)

NIBS. There it is!

SLIGHTLY. I see it.

NIBS. I don't see Peter.

SLIGHTLY. Ready, aim ... shoot!

(They shoot their arrows.)

SLIGHTLY *(cont'd)*. Me! I got it! Right in the heart!

(We hear WENDY fall, screaming, and a THUD.)

SLIGHTLY *(cont'd)*. Go make sure it's dead.

(NIBS exits, crossing paths with MISS, who enters.)

MISS. I was looking for a wolf to pet, but I didn't find one.

SLIGHTLY. There was a giant bird attacking Peter in the air, about to bite his head off, when I shot it down.

MISS *(anguished)*. And I missed it?

NIBS *(enters, panicked)*. OH NO! Oh no no oh no!!

SLIGHTLY. What's wrong?

NIBS. The Wendy bird! It fell on the cake!

MISS. There was cake?

SLIGHTLY. Is it dead?

NIBS. She has an arrow in her heart, and she fell from a hundred feet.

SLIGHTLY. She?

NIBS. It looks more like a girl than a bird.

(A crow from off.)

SLIGHTLY. Peter!

(PETER PAN enters.)

PETER PAN. I'm here! I am returned.

(He tweaks SLIGHTLY's ear.)

SLIGHTLY. Ow!

PETER PAN. Why do you not cheer?

SLIGHTLY. We just saved your life.

PETER PAN. How?

NIBS. We shot down the bird you were fighting.

PETER PAN. There was no bird.

SLIGHTLY. The bird that looked like a girl.

(PETER PAN looks around. Where's WENDY?)

PETER PAN. Let me see it.

(NIBS and SLIGHTLY exit, then re-enter carrying/dragging WENDY. The front of her dress is covered in green frosting, and she has an arrow in her heart.)

PETER PAN *(cont'd)*. Wendy! Who did this?

SLIGHTLY. I did, sir!

PETER PAN. You've killed her!

SLIGHTLY. You're welcome!

PETER PAN. Why would you do that?

SLIGHTLY. We were told to.

PETER PAN. By who?

SLIGHTLY. It's a bad thing?

PETER PAN. It's terrible!

SLIGHTLY. Then I can not say, sir. It would be tattling.

PETER PAN. When I find out who it is, I'm going to banish them from the Neverland forever.

NIBS. The cake got smashed, but it probably still tastes good.

PETER PAN. We don't eat cake off dead people. I've been clear about that.

MISS. She moved!

NIBS. Impossible.

PETER PAN. See this. It's the kiss I gave her. It blocked the arrow.

SLIGHTLY. And the cake broke her fall.

PETER PAN. Get better, quickly!

(We start to hear sobbing from off.)

NIBS. What's that?

PETER PAN. Tink! What's the matter?

(TINKER BELL enters, crying.)

PETER PAN *(cont'd)*. Why are you crying?

TINKER BELL. I'm sad that the Wendy lives.

PETER PAN. You! It was you who had her shot down?
Listen, Tinker Bell. I am your friend no more. Begone from me forever!

TINKER BELL. But Peter—

PETER PAN. We will never speak again.

TINKER BELL. Peter, please.

PETER PAN. Never again. Go.

(TINKER BELL exits. WENDY stirs, then sits up.)

SLIGHTLY. Hello. My name is Slightly. I have a dark secret that I won't ever talk about.

WENDY. Where are my brothers?

PETER PAN. Who?

WENDY. My brothers. John and Michael!

PETER PAN. Oh right. I'm always forgetting people. If I forget who you are just keep saying "I'm Wendy."

WENDY. They were right behind you, they don't know the way and they don't know how to stop!

PETER PAN. The Neverland's not that big. Slightly, go find the lost boys.

SLIGHTLY. Right away.

(SLIGHTLY exits.)

PETER PAN. This is Wendy. I brought her here to tell us stories and be our mother.

WENDY. Your mother? I'm eleven.

NIBS, PETER PAN & MISS. Oooh. / Wow. / Oh my.

MISS. You're very well preserved.

WENDY. How long have you all lived here?

MISS. Three weeks.

PETER PAN. Fifty years.

NIBS. Time is a little hazy here. We have a clock but it wanders around the island snapping its jaws.

PETER PAN. This is Nibs. We call Nibs the professor because all he does is read.

WENDY. What do you read?

NIBS. My book.

WENDY. What book is that?

NIBS *(produces a mostly picture book from somewhere)*. The yellow book with the picture of the horse and the boy.

WENDY. May I see it? "Alexander and the Sturdy Pony."

NIBS. Who's Alexander?

WENDY. That's the name of the boy.

NIBS. The boy's name is Nibs.

WENDY. So it is. Maybe when it gets quiet you can read me your book and I can show you some things about this part here. *(By which she means, the words.)*

MISS. I'm Miss.

WENDY. How do you do, Miss? You're called Miss because you're a girl.

MISS. No. Because I miss things.

PETER PAN. So many of the adventures.

NIBS. She just steps around the corner ...

MISS. Everything will be quiet and I'll go to take a swim or gather some firewood and ...

NIBS. And suddenly a whole adventure will happen while she's gone.

MISS *(a sad list)*. The attack of the bears. The wolf stampede.

NIBS. The volcano escape.

SLIGHTLY. By the time she comes back we're already sweeping up the blood. We offer to let her help but she never wants to.

MISS. I'm always too sad.

NIBS. You know how you're not supposed to eat cake off of dead people?

PETER PAN. Yes.

NIBS. She's not dead. So I was wondering if I could get one little scoop.

WENDY. No! Absolutely not. It's crumbly and the icing is runny. This was made by someone with no idea how to bake. Where do you do your laundry?

(This is a stumper. No one will meet WENDY's gaze.)

WENDY (*cont'd*). I said, where do you wash your clothes?

PETER PAN. Nibs, where's the washing area? I ordered you to set up a laundry place!

NIBS. When?

PETER PAN. I'm too busy giving orders to remember when I give my orders.

MISS. I set up a laundry area but it ran away.

WENDY. Laundry areas do that sometimes. It's a famous problem. We'll just have to set up another one. But it's not just laundry. The stumps need sweeping. Your faces need washing. Nibs, your sleeve is covered in dirt.

NIBS. It's not dirt. It's blood. I was attacked by an army of tigers.

PETER PAN. I saved his life. Drove them away at the exact moment they were about to rip him apart.

WENDY. But you didn't clean his sleeve. Why do boys lack follow-through? You do need a mother.

MISS. So you'll do it?

WENDY. I'll think about it.

NIBS. Hooray!

WENDY. I said I'll think about it.

(From above, a terrifying sound—a ferocious sounding bird.)

PETER PAN. Down!

(They fall face down. WENDY follows suit.

The sound gets fainter. They watch the bird recede.)

WENDY. What was that?

NIBS. The Never Bird. Like a vulture but less patient. It doesn't wait for you to die, just to get a little dizzy.

SLIGHTLY (*offstage*). Found them!

(*SLIGHTLY enters with JOHN and MICHAEL.*)

WENDY. You're safe!

JOHN. Hello!

PETER PAN. Hello! What are your names?

WENDY. *John and Michael.*

PETER PAN. That's right.

SLIGHTLY. Let's show you around the house.

WENDY. I don't see a house.

MISS. Look around. You can't tell?

WENDY. No.

MISS. Good.

(*All but WENDY exit.*)

WENDY (*to the audience*). Chapter Four: Pirates.

(*Captain HOOK enters.*)

HOOK (*to the audience*). Years ago, Peter Pan cut off my hand and flung it to a crocodile that happened to be passing by. There was a moment, while the croc was eating my arm, that our eyes locked. I felt we shared a certain predator understanding. In his eyes, I could see "I'm sorry to do this. It's just who I am." But when I looked closer, I saw something different. A chill at the middle of his pupil. Evil where there should be eyelids.

He wasn't sympathizing with me. He was memorizing me. By a lucky chance, it swallowed a clock that goes tick tock, tick tock inside it. Now not a day goes by when I don't hear him following me.

(SMEE enters.)

HOOK *(cont'd)*. Smee. Did you watch the cake as I ordered?

SMEE. I did! The Lost Ones found it, but before it could be eaten, it splattered.

HOOK. DELICIOUS CAKE EVERYWHERE!

SMEE. Yes! On the moss and the rocks and the leaves.

HOOK. The Lost Ones. Were they there?

SMEE. Yes.

HOOK. What a picture! Children frolicking in a meadow speckled with poison. Scooping it up! Touching it to their tongues, moaning in pain, gasping! Where did you bury them?

SMEE. Well, unfortunately, there was no one to be buried.

HOOK. But how? *(A terrifying realization.)* Oh no.

SMEE. Yes.

HOOK. The worst possible news.

SMEE. Yes.

HOOK. They have a mother.

SMEE. Her name is Wendy.

WENDY *(in her own space, to the audience)*. When it came to the pirates, I could never keep them straight. There was—

HOOK. Hook. Black hair. Black heart.

WENDY. And there was—

SMEE. Smee. The Captain's right-hand man ever since he lost his right hand.

WENDY. And then there were—

A.T.O.P. *(enters, indicating herself)*. All the other pirates.

WENDY. Basically indistinguishable.

HOOK. Pirates, gather 'round! Hurry up!

SMEE. Good morning, Skylights.

A.T.O.P. (*as Skylights, a human foghorn*). As fine a morning as I've ever seen.

SMEE. Good day, Jukes.

A.T.O.P. (*as Jukes, the meanest voice in the world*). Good day to kill something.

SMEE. Were you napping, Gentleman Starkey?

A.T.O.P. (*yawning, as Gentleman Starkey, perpetually sleepy*). Never while on duty, sir.

SMEE. Hello, Barbecue.

A.T.O.P. (*as Barbecue, a high squeaky voice*). Hello hello!

SMEE. Are we all here? (*Points at A.T.O.P. with each number.*) One, two, three, four. Who's missing?

A.T.O.P. (*as sleepy Gentleman Starkey*). It's Noodler, sir.

SMEE. NOODLER!

A.T.O.P. (*as Noodler, always a little panicked*). I'm here, sir! I have trouble buttoning my doublet on account of my hands are fixed on backward.

HOOK. Today is the day.

SMEE. Weapon day!

HOOK. Yes. For years I've worked on a weapon that would finally destroy Peter Pan. It's time to unveil ... the PAN CRUSHER. The most powerful weapon ever devised.

A.T.O.P. (*as Noodler, hands affixed wrong*). More powerful than your hook?

HOOK. And just as deadly.

A.T.O.P. (*as Jukes, the meanest voice in the world*). Is it more powerful than a canon?

HOOK. Canons sometimes miss. Here is the weapon.

(From somewhere, he produces a map. A.T.O.P. as Barbecue emits a high-pitched laugh.)

HOOK. What's funny, Barbecue?

A.T.O.P. (*as Barbecue, high-pitched*). Nothing, sir. It's just, I thought perhaps you were having a bit of fun.

HOOK. Have you ever known me to have a bit of fun?

A.T.O.P. (*as Barbecue*). Where does it shoot from?

HOOK. Step toward me, Barbecue.

A.T.O.P. (*as Barbecue*). Yes sir.

(He takes a reluctant step forward.)

HOOK. You're new I believe. How many days have you served on my ship?

A.T.O.P. (*as Barbecue*). Two years, sir.

HOOK. Come closer. I want to look into your eyes.

A.T.O.P. (*as Barbecue*). Oh?

HOOK. I want to watch the light leave them.

(The hook shoots forth. There is a tearing sound and a screech. Barbecue falls to the ground. Immediately, A.T.O.P. pops back up to be the other pirates, whose expressions register, respectively, horror, sadness, a look the other way as though it didn't happen, and a too-big smile.)

HOOK (*cont'd*). As I said, the weapon.

(A.T.O.P. cycles through three quick double claps. High. Low. Accompanied by a yawn. And using the backs of hands from Noodler.)

HOOK (*cont'd*). It's a map. For years, anytime one of you has spotted one of the Lost Ones, I've put an X on this map. See how few dots there are out on the sides. More as we get closer to this spot. More, more. And right here, this black spot. Something about this deathly little glade draws them. Isn't it remarkable?

SMEE. It is. Remarkable, but ...

HOOK. But what?

SMEE. Well, if I'm not mistaken—and I often am—this glade ... you've had this idea before. You had me put the cake there.

HOOK. I had the *idea*. Now I have certainty.

SMEE. But we've searched there already. We did a slow walk through the glade. We stared at the treetops with a spyglass.

HOOK. Which do you trust more? My map or your own eyes?

SMEE. Your map.

HOOK. As you point out, the Lost Ones are not at ground level.

SMEE. No.

HOOK. They're not in the trees.

A.T.O.P. (*as Gentleman Starkey, sleepy*). We looked and looked.

HOOK. Well then, it's obvious, isn't it?

WENDY (*to the audience*). Chapter Five: The Home Under the Ground.

(The pirates exit as the Lost Ones enter.)

WENDY (*cont'd*). Darn the socks. Wash the clothes. Make sure the little ones change their flannels and take their medicine—it was really just water—and to bed, precisely at 6:30.

The house consisted of one large room, as all houses should. To understand it you have to understand the trees that surround it. They're hollow. One of the first things Peter did upon our arrival was to measure me and John and Michael, so as to fit each to a tree. Once you fitted, you drew in your breath at the top, and down you went at exactly the right speed, while to ascend you drew in and let out alternately, and so wriggled up.

JOHN (*to the audience*). It took a little practice, but it was worth it.

NIBS (*to the audience*). The trees are too narrow for a grown-up to fit in, so we're always protected when we're here.

WENDY (*to the audience*). Every parent has a secret favorite child, but every good parent rotates the honor. Sometimes my favorite was Nibs.

NIBS. Mother, I'll teach you to read. Yellow means that everyone is happy.

WENDY (*to the audience*). Sometimes it was Slightly. (*Exasperated, to SLIGHTLY*.) Slightly, Nibs tells me that you jumped over a pit of snakes for no reason.

SLIGHTLY. Not for no reason. I was being chased.

WENDY. By what?

SLIGHTLY. Nibs.

WENDY. And sometimes, maybe just a touch more than her fair share, it was Miss.

MISS. Even though I don't have adventures, I like hearing about them. It's confusing, though. If Slightly is telling it, then Slightly is the hero. And if Nibs is telling it, then Peter is the hero. And if Peter is telling it, then the other two weren't even there.

WENDY. We loved the underground house because it was warm. And safe.

(SMEE and A.T.O.P. enter, each holding staffs. Perhaps A.T.O.P. has multiple staffs.

They move forward and double-thump them on the ground.)

A.T.O.P. (*as Jukes, the meanest voice in the world.*) Move over. You're crowding me.

(As Gentleman Starkey, the sleepy one.) I'm going in a straight line.

SMEE. All of you, spread out.

(A.T.O.P. "spreads out.")

A.T.O.P. *(as Noodler, holding his staff with his hand upside down.)* And what is it we're looking for?

SMEE. A sound different from this sound.

(He double-thumps his staff.

They move forward. Double-thump. Again. Again.)

WENDY. Peter, I just made dinner. What are you eating?

(PETER PAN is eating imaginary food.)

PETER PAN. Bread and honey.

WENDY. Make-believe bread and honey.

PETER PAN. Delicious.

WENDY *(to the audience)*. Make-believe was so real to him that during a meal of it, you could see him getting rounder.

(SMEE double-thumps the ground, and it echoes in a way that the earlier thumps had not. SMEE motions to A.T.O.P., who lies down to listen to the ground.)

MISS. Mother, will you come with us to Marooners Rock tomorrow?

SLIGHTLY. Please do!

NIBS. You'll love it.

WENDY. Perhaps if I finish my chores.

(Another double-thump. Below ground, the others hear it. They look up.)

WENDY *(cont'd)*. What's up there?

PETER PAN. It's nothing.