

“Boat ahoy!” again came the cry.

Now Wendy understood. The real Hook was also in the water.

He was swimming to the boat, and as his men showed a light to guide him he had soon reached them. In the light of the lantern Wendy saw his hook grip the boat’s side; she saw his evil swarthy face as he rose dripping from the water, and, quaking, she would have liked to swim away, but Peter would not budge. He was tingling with life and also top-heavy with conceit. “Am I not a wonder, oh, I am a wonder!” he whispered to her; and though she thought so also, she was really glad for the sake of his reputation that no one heard him except herself.

He signed to her to listen.

The two pirates were very curious to know what had brought their captain to them, but he sat with his head on his hook in a position of profound melancholy.

“Captain, is all well?” they asked timidly, but he answered with a hollow moan.

“He sighs,” said Smee.

“He sighs again,” said Starkey.

“And yet a third time he sighs,” said Smee.

“What’s up, Captain?”

Then at last he spoke passionately.

“The game’s up,” he cried, “those boys have found a mother.”

Affrighted though she was, Wendy swelled with pride.

“O evil day,” cried Starkey.

“What’s a mother?” asked the ignorant Smee.

Wendy was so shocked that she exclaimed, “He doesn’t know!” and always after this she felt that if you could have a pet pirate Smee would be her one.

Peter pulled her beneath the water, for Hook had started up, crying, “What was that?”

“I heard nothing,” said Starkey, raising the lantern over the waters, and as the pirates looked they saw a strange sight. It was the nest I have told you of, floating on the lagoon, and the Never bird was sitting on it.

“See,” said Hook in answer to Smee’s question, “that is a mother. What a lesson. The nest must have fallen into the water, but would the mother desert her eggs? No.”