

“No.”

And so the others had to be told.

“Peter isn’t coming.”

Peter not coming! They gazed blankly at him, their sticks over their backs, and on each stick a bundle. Their first thought was that if Peter was not going he had probably changed his mind about letting them go.

But he was far too proud for that. “If you find your mothers,” he said darkly, “I hope you will like them.”

The awful cynicism of this made an uncomfortable impression, and most of them began to look rather doubtful. After all, their faces said, were they not noodles to want to go?

“Now then,” cried Peter, “no fuss, no blubbering; goodbye, Wendy”; and he held out his hand cheerily, quite as if they must really go now, for he had something important to do.

She had to take his hand, as there was no indication that he would prefer a thimble.

“You will remember about changing your flannels, Peter?” she said, lingering over him. She was always so particular about their flannels.

“Yes.”

“And you will take your medicine?”

“Yes.”

That seemed to be everything; and an awkward pause followed. Peter, however, was not the kind that breaks down before people. “Are you ready, Tinker Bell?” he called out.

“Ay, ay.”

“Then lead the way.”

Tink darted up the nearest tree; but no one followed her, for it was at this moment that the pirates made their dreadful attack upon the redskins. Above, where all had been so still, the air was rent with shrieks and the clash of steel. Below, there was dead silence. Mouths opened and remained open. Wendy fell on her knees, but her arms were extended toward Peter. All arms were extended to him, as if suddenly blown in his direction; they were beseeching him mutely not to desert them. As for Peter, he seized his sword, the same he thought he had slain Barbecue with; and the lust of battle was in his eye.