

“Lot of little boys,” sneered Liza.

“There were several adults today,” he assured her with a faint flush; but when she tossed her head he had not a word of reproof for her. Social success had not spoilt him; it had made him sweeter. For some time he sat half out of the kennel, talking with Mrs. Darling of this success, and pressing her hand reassuringly when she said she hoped his head would not be turned by it.

“But if I had been a weak man,” he said. “Good heavens, if I had been a weak man!”

“And, George,” she said timidly, “you are as full of remorse as ever, aren’t you?”

“Full of remorse as ever, dearest! See my punishment: living in a kennel.”

“But it is punishment, isn’t it, George? You are sure you are not enjoying it?”

“My love!”

You may be sure she begged his pardon; and then, feeling drowsy, he curled round in the kennel.

“Won’t you play me to sleep,” he asked, “on the nursery piano?” and as she was crossing to the day nursery he added thoughtlessly, “And shut that window. I feel a draught.”

“O George, never ask me to do that. The window must always be left open for them, always, always.”

Now it was his turn to beg her pardon; and she went into the day nursery and played, and soon he was asleep; and while he slept, Wendy and John and Michael flew into the room.

Oh no. We have written it so, because that was the charming arrangement planned by them before we left the ship; but something must have happened since then, for it is not they who have flown in, it is Peter and Tinker Bell.

Peter’s first words tell all.

“Quick, Tink,” he whispered, “close the window; bar it. That’s right. Now you and I must get away by the door; and when Wendy comes she will think her mother has barred her out; and she will have to go back with me.”

Now I understand what had hitherto puzzled me, why when Peter had exterminated the pirates he did not return to the island and leave Tink to escort the children to the mainland. This trick had been in his head all the time.