

In Bloomsbury, London, live the Darling children: Wendy (the eldest), John, and little Michael. Their mother sings them lullabies about a magical boy named Peter Pan who lives in the Neverland and never grows up. One night, a strange boy flies into their nursery window, followed by a flickering light—Tinker Bell, a hot-tempered fairy.

Peter has lost his shadow, and Wendy sews it back onto his feet. In return, Peter teaches the children how to fly using fairy dust and happy thoughts. He invites them to come with him to the Neverland, where they can have endless adventures and never have to grow up. Wendy agrees, partly because Peter needs a mother for the Lost Boys—six ragged boys who fell out of their prams as babies and were never found.

Sprinkled with pixie dust, the children fly out the window, over London, across the sea, and to the second star to the right—straight on till morning—until they reach the Neverland.

The Neverland is whatever each child dreams it to be: there are mermaids in the lagoon, Red Indians on the warpath, wolves, and—most dangerous of all—Captain Hook and his pirate crew aboard the Jolly Roger. Hook is a elegant but murderous pirate with an iron claw in place of the hand Peter once fed to a crocodile. The same crocodile swallowed a clock, so it goes “tick-tock” wherever it swims, giving Hook constant terror.

In the Neverland, Wendy becomes mother to the Lost Boys in their underground home beneath a giant tree. Peter is their fearless leader, crowing like a rooster whenever he wins a battle. They fight pirates, play with mermaids, and have marvelous adventures.

But danger is always near. Captain Hook captures Wendy and the boys, planning to make them walk the plank. He poisons Peter’s medicine, but Tinker Bell drinks it to save him (nearly dying until children all over the world clap and declare “I do believe in fairies!”).

Peter flies to the Jolly Roger, fights Hook in a furious duel, and the crocodile finally gets its meal. Hook leaps overboard to his doom.

With the pirates defeated, Peter allows Wendy, her brothers, and the Lost Boys to return home. Wendy begs Peter to come with them and grow up, even offering to let him be adopted as their brother. But Peter refuses—he never wants to grow up. Heartbroken but understanding, Wendy promises never to forget him.

The children fly home to London. Their parents joyfully adopt the Lost Boys. Wendy grows up, marries, and has a daughter named Jane.

Years later, Peter returns to the nursery, expecting to find Wendy waiting. Instead he finds her grown and asleep by the window, with little Jane in the bed. Peter cries real tears for the first time. Wendy wakes and introduces Jane, who is thrilled to meet the real Peter Pan. When Peter asks Wendy to come back to Neverland for spring cleaning, she is too old to fly. But Jane, full of belief and happy thoughts, flies away with Peter and Tinker Bell.

And so it goes: when each little girl in the Darling family grows too old, Peter takes the next one for a week of adventures in the Neverland—always returning before she has to grow up.

Peter remains forever young, the boy who wouldn't grow up, crowing triumphantly over the island where children's dreams come true... and sometimes turn into nightmares.

And they say that on quiet nights, if you leave your window open and listen very carefully, you might still hear the distant sound of fairy bells and a boy's cock-a-doodle-doo echoing across the stars