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Opening extract from

Peter Pan in Scarlet

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Twenty years came and went like pirate ships, and stole away their young-ness. But still the adventurers liked to lie in bed and think about Neverland. Though they were all grown up, with children of their own, Wendy and John, Slightly and Curly and the Twins remembered their wonderful adventures with Peter Pan.

Then the dreams began.

'Last night I dreamed he flew in again at the window,' said Mr John.

'I dreamed that I could still fly,' said Doctor Curly.

'I dreamed we were back in the Neverwood,' said First Twin.

'Tinker Bell was there,' said his twin brother.

'I dreamed of the Lagoon,' said Mr Slightly.

'I was fighting Captain Hook and Starkey and Smee and the whole pirate crew!' said John, and everyone shuddered.

'I dreamed of Peter,' said Mrs Wendy. 'It was lovely.'

'Just a dream,' said Judge Tootles with a shrug.

In the sky over London, a flock of children swam and swooped and whooped with joy, perching like birds on the tops of buildings.

Curly had brought his son's puppy along by accident.

'Tootles? Is that really you?' asked John.

'Yeth, and aren't I pretty?' said the girl in the ballet dress, and twirled on tiptoe.

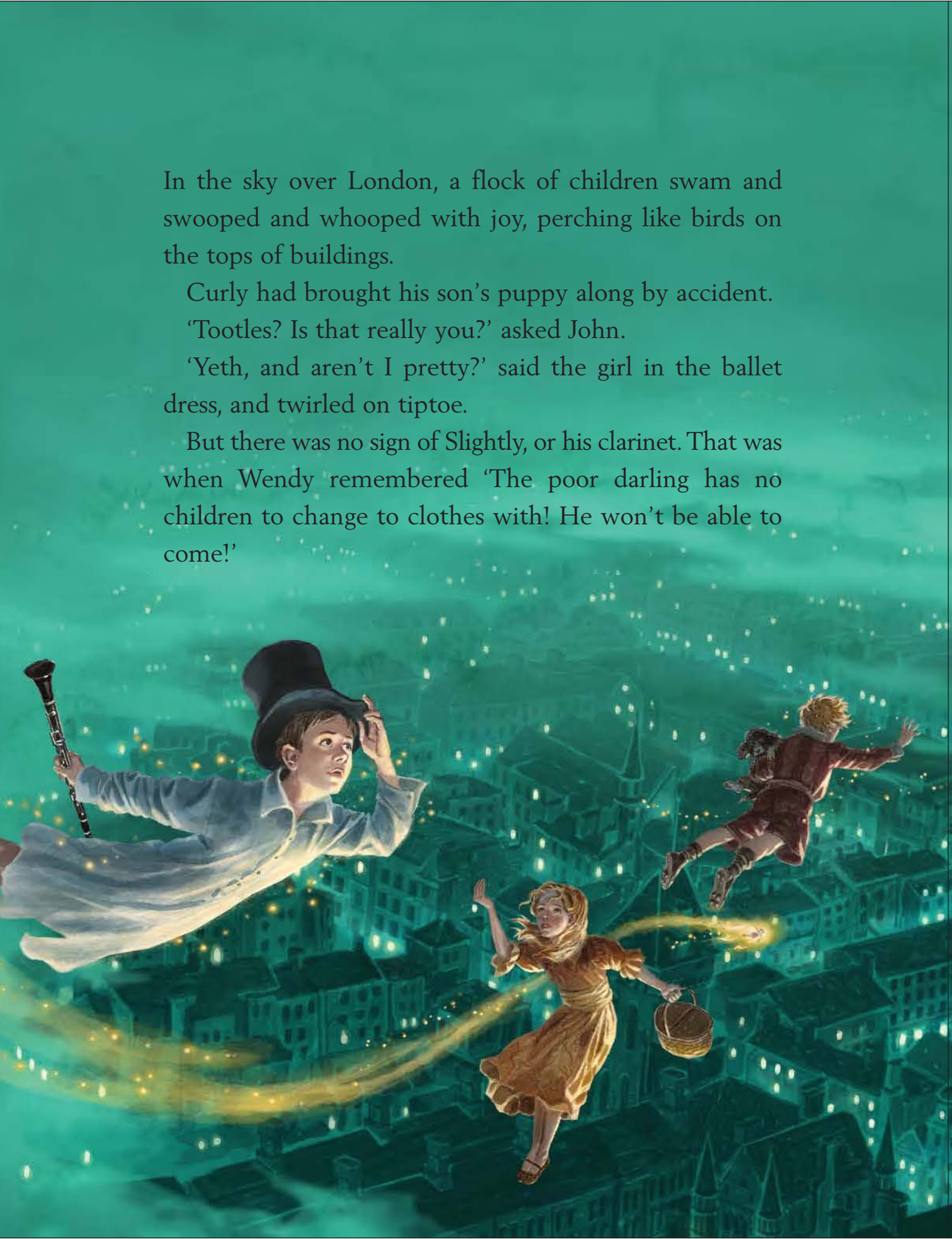
But there was no sign of Slightly, or his clarinet. That was when Wendy remembered 'The poor darling has no children to change to clothes with! He won't be able to come!'

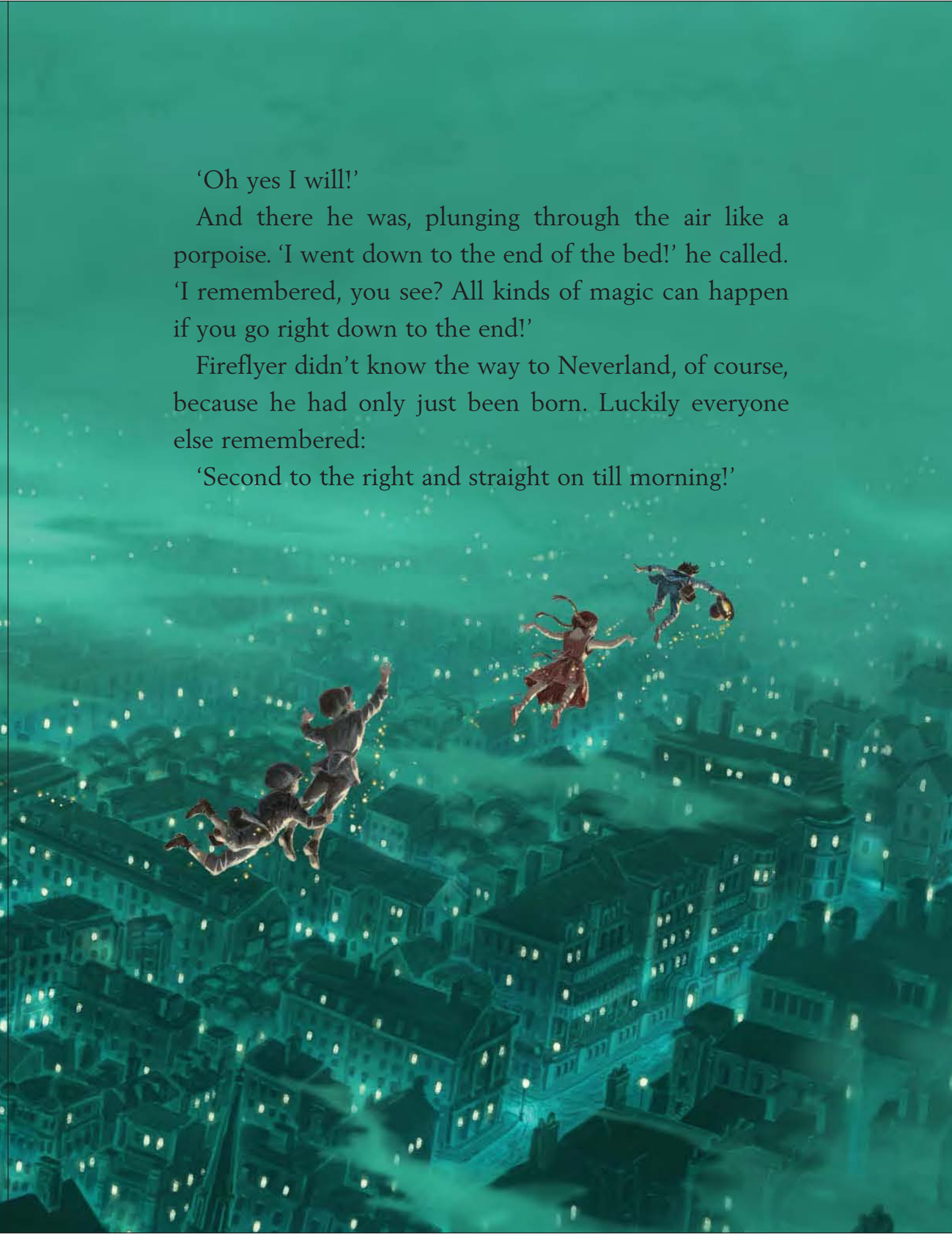
'Oh yes I will!'

And there he was, plunging through the air like a porpoise. 'I went down to the end of the bed!' he called. 'I remembered, you see? All kinds of magic can happen if you go right down to the end!'

Fireflyer didn't know the way to Neverland, of course, because he had only just been born. Luckily everyone else remembered:

'Second to the right and straight on till morning!'







'Out of my way, clouds!' cried John. 'I can't wait to see Neverland again.'

'Will Tinker Bell be there?' demanded Fireflyer impatiently. 'Tell me!'

'Are we nearly there yet?' said the Twins, as night turned to morning.

The clouds parted, and there it lay below them: Neverland, totally, and absolutely and utterly… CHANGED.

Summer had turned to autumn. The sea was stormy and black. Shadows were long, the wind was bitter.

The Wendy House now perched high in the branches of the Nevertree. Cold and weary, the travellers landed on its roof and clung to it, knocking and calling . . . 'Peter! Peter Pan!' But nobody came. So Wendy pushed open the door.

There stood Peter Pan, sword drawn. His leafy clothes – once summer green - were the colour of autumn now, and he scowled with rage.

'Have at you, Nightmares!'

Wendy put her hands on her hips. 'Is that any way to greet your old friends, Peter?'

'I have no friends who are old!' cried the boy with the sword.

Wendy's eyes filled with tears, to think that Peter could have forgotten them.

'Don't be silly,' she said crossly. 'I am Wendy and we have come . . . we have come . . .'

Unfortunately, now that Wendy was a girl again, she could not quite remember why she and the boys had come.

Peter looked at her more closely. 'Oh. Is it you?' he said uncertainly. 'I thought I was dreaming you. I dreamed you a lot lately. You were much too big.' (Dreams had been leaking into Neverland as well, you see.) 'But now you're here, we can have the best adventures!' And he put back his head and crowed for joy:

'Cock-a-doodle-doo!'



Could it really be twenty years since Peter Pan had fought the villainous pirate captain Hook and sent him overboard into the jaws of the waiting crocodile?

‘Where are we going to sleep tonight?’ whined Tootles, but no one answered.

They had just noticed the bears coming towards them along the beach. Behind them came a man with a whip.

‘Please do not let my cubs frighten you,’ said the man.

‘Nothing frightens me!’ boasted Peter Pan.

The Great Ravello smiled and bowed very low. ‘Of course not. You are the marvellous Peter Pan, the One-and-Only, the Boy-who-Never-Grows-Up. I have longed to meet you. But is it not rather late and chilly for young people to be out? Let me offer you a bed for the night. Follow me to Circus Ravello: some of my animal cages are empty and the straw is soft and dry.’

Peter scowled. ‘We don’t go about with grown up people – nor we don’t sleep in cages.’

‘But you will come to see the show, at least!’ said the Great Ravello. ‘My lions and acrobats and clowns? Everyone loves the circus.’

‘Oh yes, Peter, a circus!’ cried the others.

But Peter scowled. ‘I don’t like clowns. You can’t tell what they’re thinking.’

Sadly the Great Ravello bowed again and turned away. His bears went dancing after him into the fog.

Cold and tired now, the explorers began to complain and quarrel. ‘That ravelling man might have given us eggy and toast,’ said Fireflyer and Peter knocked him into a rock pool.

‘ “Travelling man”, not “ravelling man”,’ said Wendy and pulled him out again.

Then Peter sniffed the air. ‘Is that smoke?’ he said.

For twenty years, Captain Hook's ship had floated empty over the sea. For twenty years, no one had walked its decks. No one had opened the door of the captain's cabin. No one had opened the sea chest inside. That was where Peter found the telescope —

'Curly, you can be look-out.'

— the ship's compass —

'John, you can navigate.'

— the white tie —

'Stand still while I tie it for you, Peter.'

— and the scarlet coat.

'Hook's second best coat,' said Peter, putting it on. 'He was wearing his best one when the crocodile got him.'

Then he climbed the mast and crowed so loudly that the stars blinked. 'I shall be Captain Pan and sail the seven seas!'

