

PETER PAN

PROLOGUE

Overture ends. Darkness. A match is lit, and a light comes up on a woman (DC), seated on a stool and impeccably attired in a nineteenth-century nursemaid's uniform. She is lighting a pipe. She addresses the audience.

STORYTELLER. Have you ever seen a map of a person's mind? Doctors sometimes draw maps of other parts of you, but catch them trying to draw a map of a child's mind, which is not only confused, but keeps going round all the time. If you ever did see a map like that, you would be looking at a map of the Never Land. There are zig-zag lines on it (just like your temperature on a card) and these are probably roads on the island - for the Never Land is always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of colour here and there, and coral reefs, and rakish looking craft in the offing, and lonely lairs, and gnomes who are mostly tailors, and princes with six elder brothers, and a hut fast going to decay, and one very small old lady with a hooked nose.

It would be an easy map if that were all, but there is also first day at school, religion, fathers, the round pond, needlework, murders, hangings, verbs that take the dative, chocolate pudding day, getting into braces, say ninety-nine, threepence for pulling out your tooth yourself, and so on; and either these are part of the island or they are another map showing through.

On these magic shores, children at play are forever breaching their coracles. We too have been there. We can still hear the sound of the surf, though we shall never land there any more. (*Standing, walking DR.*)

All children grow up, except one. (*Exits DR. The nursery begins to appear.*)