

The Shadow

by J.M. Barrie from Peter Pan

Peter Pan is the story of a boy who would not grow up. He lives in a faraway world called Neverland. Peter can fly. He often goes into London to look for adventures. In this passage, Peter, with his friend Tinker Bell the fairy, has entered the bedroom of the sleeping Darling children during the night. Mrs. Darling has dozed off nearby. She wakes up when Peter comes into the room. Nana is the children's nanny who happens to be a large dog.

Mrs. Darling screamed, and, as if in answer to a bell, the door opened, and Nana entered, returned from her evening out. She growled and sprang at the boy, who leapt lightly through the window. Again Mrs. Darling screamed, this time in distress for him, for she thought he was killed, and she ran down into the street to look for his little body, but it was not there; and she looked up, and in the black night she could see nothing but what she thought was a shooting star.

She returned to the nursery, and found Nana with something in her mouth, which proved to be the boy's shadow. As he leapt at the window Nana had closed it quickly, too late to catch him, but his shadow had not had time to get out; slam went the window and snapped it off.

You may be sure Mrs. Darling examined the shadow carefully, but it was quite the ordinary kind.

Nana had no doubt of what was the best thing to do with this shadow. She hung it out at the window, meaning "He is sure to come back for it; let us put it where he can get it easily without disturbing the children."

But unfortunately Mrs. Darling could not leave it hanging out at the window, it looked so like the washing and lowered the whole tone of the house. She thought of showing it to Mr. Darling, but he was totting up winter great-coats for John and Michael, with a wet towel around his head to keep his brain clear, and it seemed a shame to trouble him; besides, she knew exactly what he would say: "It all comes of having a dog for a nurse."

She decided to roll the shadow up and put it away carefully in a drawer, until a fitting opportunity came for telling her husband. Ah me!

Questions

1. How did Peter and his shadow get separated?
2. Why did Mrs. Darling run down to the street?
3. What kind of shadow did Peter have?
4. What do you think "fitting" means in the phrase "a fitting opportunity came for telling her husband"?