

Tink and Wendy

Kelly Ann Jacobson

Three Rooms Press (Oct 26, 2021)

Softcover \$14.00 (192pp)

978-1-953103-13-0

In Kelly Ann Jacobson's dark, contemporary retelling of Peter Pan, Tinker Bell's unrequited love leads to bitter tragedy.

Tink is a squatter at the abandoned Darling homestead. Peter Pan and Wendy are long dead, and Tink is a ghost of her former self. She drinks, haunts the house, and maintains Peter and Wendy's graves. When Wendy's granddaughter, Hope, arrives to claim the homestead, Tink relates how she and Peter first met the Darlings, their grand adventures, her heartache, and her role in Peter and Wendy's untimely demise.

The narrative jumps between the past and present. In the now, Tink wrestles with guilt and regret. In the past: Peter and Tink face the world with youthful abandon, much as in the original; they draw the Darlings into their adventures. But Peter's reckless behavior, and Tink's uncomfortable attempts to control Peter's urges, create conflict; the two also clash because of Tink's experience with the real world, and Peter's lack of it.

Tink's devil-may-care attitude and sarcasm hide her worry, disappointment, and self-loathing. She grows from a lovesick fairy into a mature and measured one—a hands-off mother figure, the yang to Wendy's yin. But Peter's real-world persona mirrors his Neverland self: he is selfish, “a brash boy with a careless heart” who “was always cruellest when he least intended it.” He acts before he thinks, and he never truly grows up.

Tension and anticipation build when Peter's playfulness turns deadly, and Tink is faced with ethical conundrums. How she reacts to each ensuing crisis heightens the tension. There are no big reveals until the very end; its surprise is satisfying.

Tink and Wendy is a masterful reinvention of the classic. Full of teenage angst and yearning, it is poignant, relatable, and full of contemporary appeal.

NANCY POWELL (September / October 2021)

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