

from 'Denity Crisis

by Christopher Durang

(Jane tells her psychiatrist a story from her childhood.)

Jane: When I was eight years old, someone brought me to this... theatre. Full of lots of other children. We were supposed to be watching a production of Peter Pan. And I remember that something seemed terribly wrong with the whole production. Odd things kept happening.

For instance, when the children would fly, the ropes they were on would just keep breaking ... and the actors would come thumping to the ground and they had to be carried off by stagehands. And there seemed to be an unlimited supply of understudies, to take their places, and then they'd just fall to the ground. And then the crocodile that chases Captain Hook, seemed to be a real crocodile, it wasn't an actor. And at one point it fell off the stage and crushed a couple of kids in the front row. And then some of the understudies came and took their places in the audience. And from scene to scene, Wendy just seemed to get fatter and fatter until finally by the end of act one she was completely immobile and they had to move her off stage with a cart.

You remember how in the second act Tinkerbell drinks some poison that Peter is about to drink in order to save him? And then Peter turns to the audience and he says, "Tinkerbell is going to die because not enough people believe in fairies. But if all of you clap your hands real hard to show that you do believe in fairies, maybe she won't die."

So, we all started to clap. I clapped so long and so hard that my palms hurt and they even started to bleed I clapped so hard. Then suddenly the actress playing Peter Pan turned to the audience and she said, "That wasn't enough. You did not clap hard enough. Tinkerbell is dead." And then we all started to cry. The actress stomped off stage and refused to continue with the production. They finally had to lower the curtain. The ushers had to come help us out of the aisles and into the street.

I don't think that any of us were ever the same after that experience. It certainly turned me against theatre. And even more damagingly, I think it's warped my total sense of life. I mean nothing seems worth trying if Tinkerbell is just going to die.