

NEVER LAND - Pilot

"Except One"

Written by

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Based on the book
"Peter Pan" by J.M. Barrie

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TEASER

EXT. MOUNTAIN TOWN - NIGHT

A full moon hangs over the hunched shoulders of mountains.

DOWN

Toward the flickering lights of a small mountain town.

ZOOMING

Along a darkened road lit by occasional streetlights.

A stoplight steps uselessly through its programmed routine.
There is no traffic here. There are not even any cars.

There is only light and dark, alternating slower as we

SWOOP around the corner of an empty intersection and

CRUISE down a suburban CUL-DE-SAC.

Every doorway lit, every house dark inside.

The whole town is asleep.

Toward the end of the cul-de-sac, we peel off the road and

FLOAT along the side of a large home with attached garage.

RISE UP through the branches of an ancient tree to

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME

A light in the upstairs bedroom.

PUSH IN across a narrow BALCONY and through the window.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - BEDROOM

Bohemian, comfortable, located somewhere in that abyss
between childhood and adulthood. On the walls of her room:
several posters of Oasis and The Beatles' album covers.

A teenage girl sits at a desk. Long hair flows down her back.

This is WENDY. She's about to change her life forever.

WENDY (V.O.)

Everyone has to grow up sometime.

A vanity mirror adorned with photos of friends and magazine cut-outs, evoking both the era-- it is 1993 -- and a teenaged sense of irony.

The word PRETTY hovers over an image of a young Johnny Depp. Nike's JUST DO IT over an image of two hungry Indian boys.

Photos of wild horses. Madonna wearing her signature cones. And Wendy's Senior yearbook photo: big hair and sweater vest.

CLOSE on her hands cutting pieces out of a magazine.

WENDY (V.O.)

At least that's what they say. But no one mentions that for seven lousy years in between, you're a teenager. Too old to believe in fairies, too young to drink.

Wendy picks up a glue stick and goes to work on the cutouts.

WENDY (V.O.)

And for those seven years, you're gonna get asked the same question over and over again..

Satisfied, she picks up the page she's been working on.

FOLLOW

As she carries the note out of the bedroom and into the HALL.

The hallway is in chaos: linens pulled from the closet, stuff scattered across the floor ankle deep.

Passing by her parents' BEDROOM, she glances in to see the drawers all open and the closet ransacked.

INT. LIVING ROOM

Cushions ripped from couches. CDs and VHS tapes scattered across the floor.

From the top of the staircase, she surveys the damage below.

WENDY

"What do you want to be when you grow up?"

The note in her hand. A strange secret smile on her lips.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EPISODE TITLE: "EXCEPT ONE"

EXT. SUBURBAN NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Establishing. The same cul-de-sac we saw in the opening.

A flashlight beam bounces around the street, but we probably don't notice it.

PUSH IN

To the same house we saw earlier.

THROUGH THE WINDOW

To the LIVING ROOM, which is now clean and orderly: floral patterns, pastel walls. A tall CD rack beside the faux-wood entertainment center.

FLOAT

Toward the KITCHEN, where a pot of spaghetti sauce boils angrily, spitting red all over the stove and backsplash.

FOLLOW

The sound of a VIDEO GAME down a short flight of stairs and into--

INT. FAMILY ROOM

Brown wood paneling. Warm lights. Carpeting.

A large TV encased in wood emits a triumphant victory sound.

REVEAL

The ending frame of a level in Super Mario Bros, which says **"Thank you Mario! But our princess is in another castle."**

WENDY

Wait that's it?

Wendy sits by her brother JOHN MICHAEL on the couch. He's a big, awkward fifteen year-old who has never had real friends.

Wendy's hair is red, her skin pale. She's usually the smartest person in the room, but rather than giving her confidence this difference weighs on her.

She longs to be liked but hates to be bored.

JOHN MICHAEL

That was the end of the world.

WENDY

How many worlds are there?

JOHN MICHAEL

Like: six more.

WENDY

Ugh, I thought that was the end of the whole thing! Mom said one hour a night. It's already been two hours.

JOHN MICHAEL

Aw come on! This is a night world.

WENDY

No, it's too much. Come on.

She turns off the TV over his protests.

She goes upstairs and he trudges behind.

Today he would be diagnosed on the autism spectrum. But in the early nineties, autism is a condition reserved for Rain Man-- and John Michael is called "special" or "kinda slow."

We stay downstairs for a moment; just long enough to see a flashlight appear in the basement window and sweep the room.

Followed by the face of a young boy, pressed against the glass. This is PETER.

EXT. SUBURBAN HOME - NIGHT

Peter lies on the ground, shining his light through the window of Wendy's house.

TINK (O.S.)

Peter!

He rises and turns. Tinker Bell (TINK) stands beneath a street lamp with a large black dog, SHADOW.

She wears, as usual: a pixie haircut, dark eyeliner, a pair of combat boots and two plastic fairy wings on her back.

She is a bit younger than Peter and does not like to be told how she ought to smile more, how pretty she is, or how she should behave in any situation, ever.

Peter joins her. His hair is a tangled mess of childish innocence and his smile is all dimples and devilry.

He is impish, impulsive, impertinent. Charming and complex.

Tink points at a darkened house in the next cul-de-sac over.

Peter nods and looks around.

Puts his finger to his lips and addresses his dog, noiselessly whispering shhh.

He flicks off his flashlight and jogs toward the house. Tink and Shadow follow.

EXT. DARKENED HOUSE - NIGHT

Peter approaches a gate on the side of the house. He reaches over and lifts the lock.

He gestures for Tink and Shadow to wait.

FOLLOW

Peter as he slips around the back of the house.

Flashlight playing across a wide open yard: a plastic crate for toys. A Big Wheel. A pair of roller blades. A pogo-ball.

A concrete patio and a sliding glass door leading to the kitchen.

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - KITCHEN

RIIIING the sound of a telephone jumps the cut.

WENDY (TO PHONE)

Hello? Oh, hey Mom.

She takes the lid off a pot of noodles, which have all stuck together into a single mega-noodle.

WENDY (CONT'D)

We're fine. Everything's fine. Umm?

She pokes her head into the DINING NOOK, where John Michael stares at a Gameboy in his hands.

WENDY (CONT'D)

He's- fine. Everything is fine. How about you? How's the retreat?

She takes the corded phone around the corner, into the stairwell leading to the basement.

WENDY (CONT'D)

When are you coming home?

She shuts the door behind her, blocking us out.

JUMP TO:

EXT. DARKENED HOUSE - NIGHT

Peter tries the sliding glass door but it won't open.

He shines a light inside: the layout is similar to Wendy's house, but the furnishings look much more expensive.

There's even an envelope on the kitchen counter that appears to be filled with bills; presumably for a cleaning person.

PETER

Damn!

He backs up and shines his light along the exterior. Around the side of the house is a small sash window - accessible from the fence - that appears to be open a crack.

Peter looks back at the plastic toy crate.

INT. BASEMENT STAIRCASE

Wendy on the phone.

WENDY

How can you not know? Mom, come on this is totally unfair.

JOHN MICHAEL

(off screen)

Wendy! I'm hungry!

WENDY

(to her brother)

Just a minute!

(MORE)

WENDY (CONT'D)

It's the summer after high school,
I'm supposed to be having fun not
baby-sitting my stupid-- I have
been thinking about other people,
I've been thinking about other
people my whole stupid life and
now...

Anger rises in her throat and she chokes it down.

WENDY (CONT'D)

Yeah, I know. Sometimes I just wish
I could... not be the responsible
one. For once. No, you're right.
I'm sorry. I love you too.

She hangs up the phone. Suppresses a scream.

JUMP BACK TO:

EXT. DARKENED HOUSE

CLOSE on Peter's foot as it lands on a wooden fence post.

PETER

Unh!

He steadies himself against the house. Looks back to see the
plastic toy crate which he backed against the fence.

On the other side, Tink and Shadow look up at him.

He gestures at the window. She nods.

He leans out to wedge his fingers in. The angle is tough. He
has to readjust. Leaning forward, his left hand cocked around
the back of the house. His right foot dangling in space.

He gets his fingers under. Cracks a smile. Winks at Tink.

He starts to lift the window, struggling with the angle.

CLOSE ON a little white box on the inside glass: an alarm.

INT. DOWNSTAIRS STAIRWELL

Wendy sits with the phone in her hand. Silently crying.

JOHN MICHAEL (O.S.)

Wendy!

(pause)

Wendy? WENDY!

All at once Wendy begins screaming back at him, a sudden high-pitched shriek and we

JUMP TO:

EXT. DARKENED HOUSE

The window lifts and an ALARM WAILS.

Shadow starts BARKING wildly.

Tink tries to calm her but she bolts off.

Peter loses his balance.

PETER

Fffuuuh--!

INT. KITCHEN

CLUNK! Wendy drops a plate of noodle and sauce in front of her brother.

Without missing a beat she pulls open a kitchen drawer, digs at the back and withdraws a pack of Virginia Slims.

JOHN MICHAEL

Was that Mom?

WENDY

Yes.

JOHN MICHAEL

How is she?

WENDY

Fine.

JOHN MICHAEL

Did she say hi to me?

WENDY

No.

She slams the drawer shut and walks toward the back.

JOHN MICHAEL

Are those Mom's?

WENDY

Yes.

JOHN MICHAEL
Are you smoking them?

Wendy opens the sliding glass door and steps onto the
PATIO

without answering. She closes the door behind her and lights the cigarette, sucking deep and making a face at the taste.

She smokes for a while, before gradually becoming aware of a WHIMPERING SOUND.

She peers into the darkness but can't make anything out.

Flicks on the back porch light, revealing a hunched-over form by some wooden crates. It's Peter.

He turns toward her. Tears sparkle in his eyes. He looks much younger for a moment; childlike.

WENDY
Hello, boy. Why are you crying?

He stands up and the illusion is gone: he's a young man.

Wendy steps back, afraid.

From Peter's POV she is a backlit silhouette.

PETER
I didn't mean no harm, ma'am I was tryin' to retrieve my mutt from this here contraption is all.

WENDY
You mean my hutch?

PETER
Ma'am?

Wendy moves into the light. Peter's struck by her beauty.

WENDY
Your dog's stuck in my rabbit hutch?

PETER
Well I suppose that's the long 'n short of it, and the reason you find me here scufflin round your yard without permission.

Just then Shadow lets out a mournful yowl.

PETER (CONT'D)
I think she may be hurt.

WENDY
Wait here.

Wendy stubs her cigarette out and goes inside.

John Michael looks up from his pasta.

JOHN MICHAEL
What's going on?

WENDY
Nothing. If you hear me scream lock
the door and call the police.

JOHN MICHAEL
Is everything okay?

WENDY
It's fine. Everything's fine.

CLOSE ON a junk drawer as Wendy opens it and searches through
for a flashlight.

When she finds it, it's not the sleek little LED kind but the
old school C-battery kind. She flicks it on, then thumps it
against her hand a couple times to awaken the light.

JOHN MICHAEL
Who are the people out there?

WENDY
Nobody. Remember, if you hear me
scream--

JOHN MICHAEL
Lock the door and call the police.

Wendy kisses him on the forehead as she passes.

WENDY
It's fine. Everything's fine.

EXT. PATIO

Wendy lingers near her door, shining the flashlight out.

WENDY
So. You live around here?