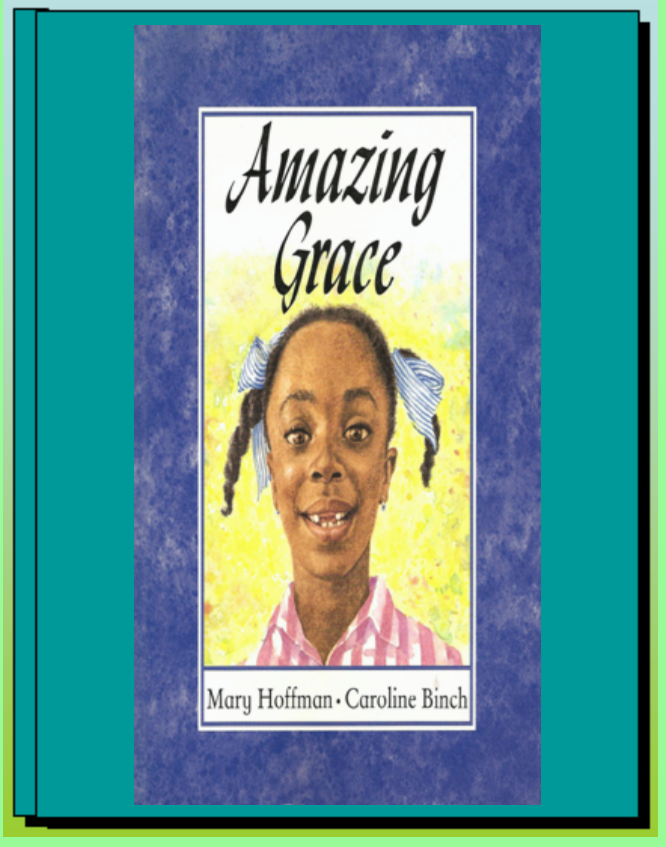
**September 16, 2020**



Grace was a girl who loved stories.

She didn't mind if they were read to her or told to her or made up in her own head. She didn't care if they were from books or on TV or in films or on the video or out of Nana's long memory. Grace just loved stories.

And after she had heard them, or sometimes while they were still going on, Grace would act them out. And she always gave herself the most exciting part.

Grace went into battle as Joan of Arc ...

and wove a wicked web as Anansi the spiderman.

She hid inside the wooden horse at the gates of Troy ...

She crossed the Alps with Hannibal and a hundred elephants ...

She sailed the seven seas with a peg-leg and a parrot.

She was Hiawatha, sitting by the shining Big-Sea-Water

and Mowgli in the back garden jungle.

But most of all Grace loved to act pantomimes. She liked to be Dick Whittington turning to hear the bells of London Town or Aladdin rubbing the magic lamp. The best characters in pantomimes were boys, but Grace played them anyway.

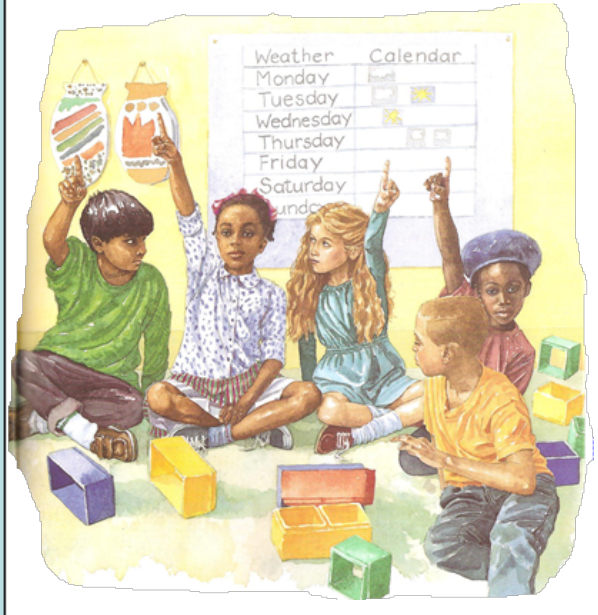
When there was no-one around, Grace played all the parts herself. She was a cast of thousands. Paw-Paw the cat usually helped out.

And sometimes she could persuade Ma and Nana to join in, when they weren't too busy. Then she was Doctor Grace and their lives were in her hands.

One day at school her teacher said they were going to do the play of Peter Pan. Grace put up her hand to be ... Peter Pan.

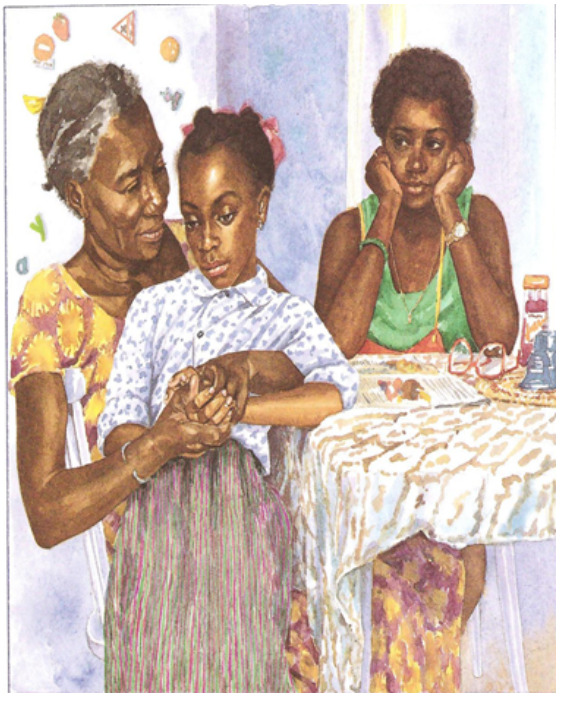
"You can't be called Peter," said Raj. "That's a boy's name."

But Grace kept her hand up.



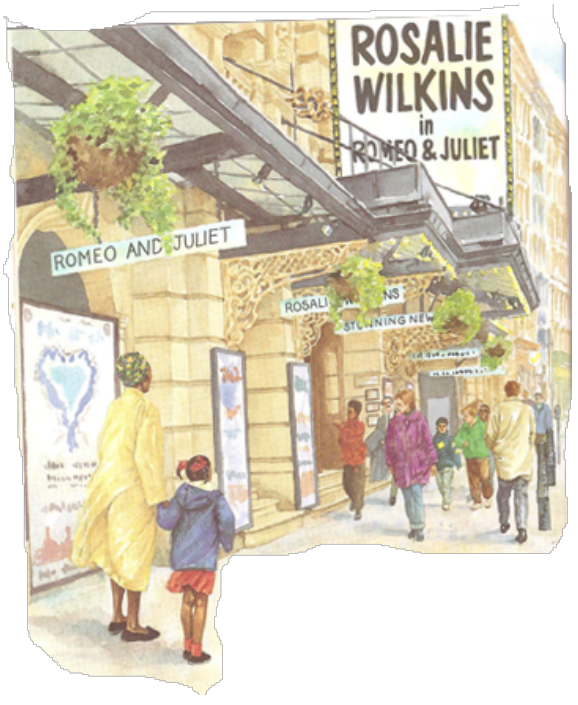

"You can't be Peter Pan," whispered Natalie. "He wasn't black." But Grace kept her hand up.
"All right," said the teacher. "Lots of you want to be Peter Pan, so we'll have to have auditions. We'll choose the parts next Monday."

When Grace got home, she seemed rather sad.
"What's the matter?" asked Ma.
"Raj said I couldn't be Peter Pan because I'm a girl."
"That just shows all Raj knows about it," said Ma. Peter Pan is always a girl!"



Grace cheered up, then later she remembered something else. "Natalie says I can't be Peter Pan because I'm black," she said.

Ma started to get angry but Nana stopped her. "It seems that Natalie is another one who don't know nothing," she said. "You can be anything you want, Grace, if you put your mind to it."




Next day was Saturday and Nana told Grace they were going out. In the afternoon they caught a bus and a train into town. Nana took Grace to a grand theatre. Outside it said,
"ROSALIE WILKINS in ROMEO AND JULIET" in beautiful sparkling lights.

"Are we going to the ballet, Nana?" asked Grace. "We are, Honey, but I want you to look at these pictures first."

Nana showed Grace some photographs of a beautiful young girl dancer in a tutu. "STUNNING NEW JULIET!" it said on one of them.

"That one is little Rosalie from back home in Trinidad," said Nana. "Her Granny and me, we grew up together on the island. She's always asking me do I want tickets to see her little girl dance - so this time I said yes."

After the ballet, Grace played the part of Juliet, dancing around her room in her imaginary tutu.
"I can be anything I want," she thought. "I can even be Peter Pan."

On Monday they had the auditions. Their teacher let the class vote on the parts. Raj was chosen to play Captain Hook. Natalie was going to be Wendy.

Then they had to choose Peter Pan.

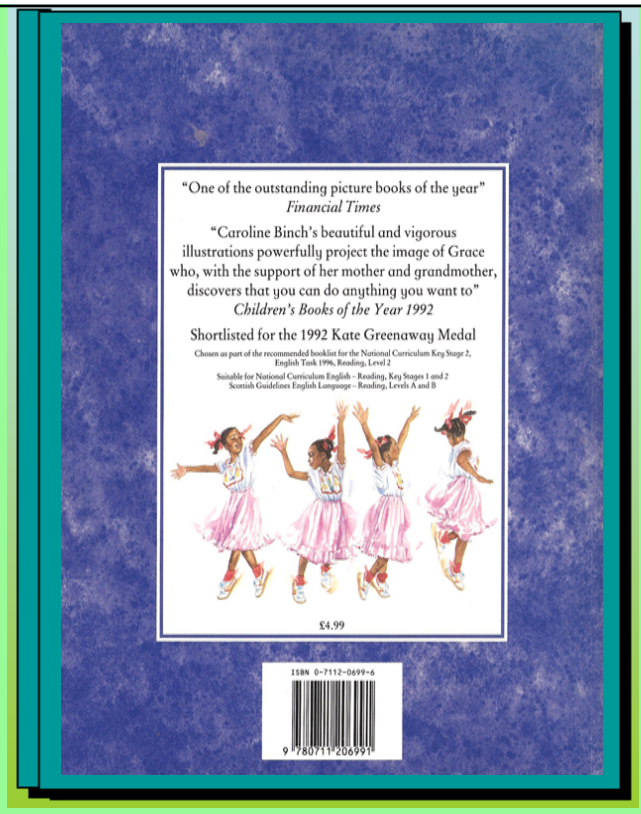
Grace knew exactly what to do - and all the words to say. It was a part she had often played at home. All the children voted for her.

"You were great," said Natalie.

The play was a great success and Grace was an amazing Peter Pan. After it was all over, she said, "I feel as if I could fly all the way home!"

"You probably could," said Ma.

"Yes," said Nana. "If Grace put her mind to it - she can do anything she wants."



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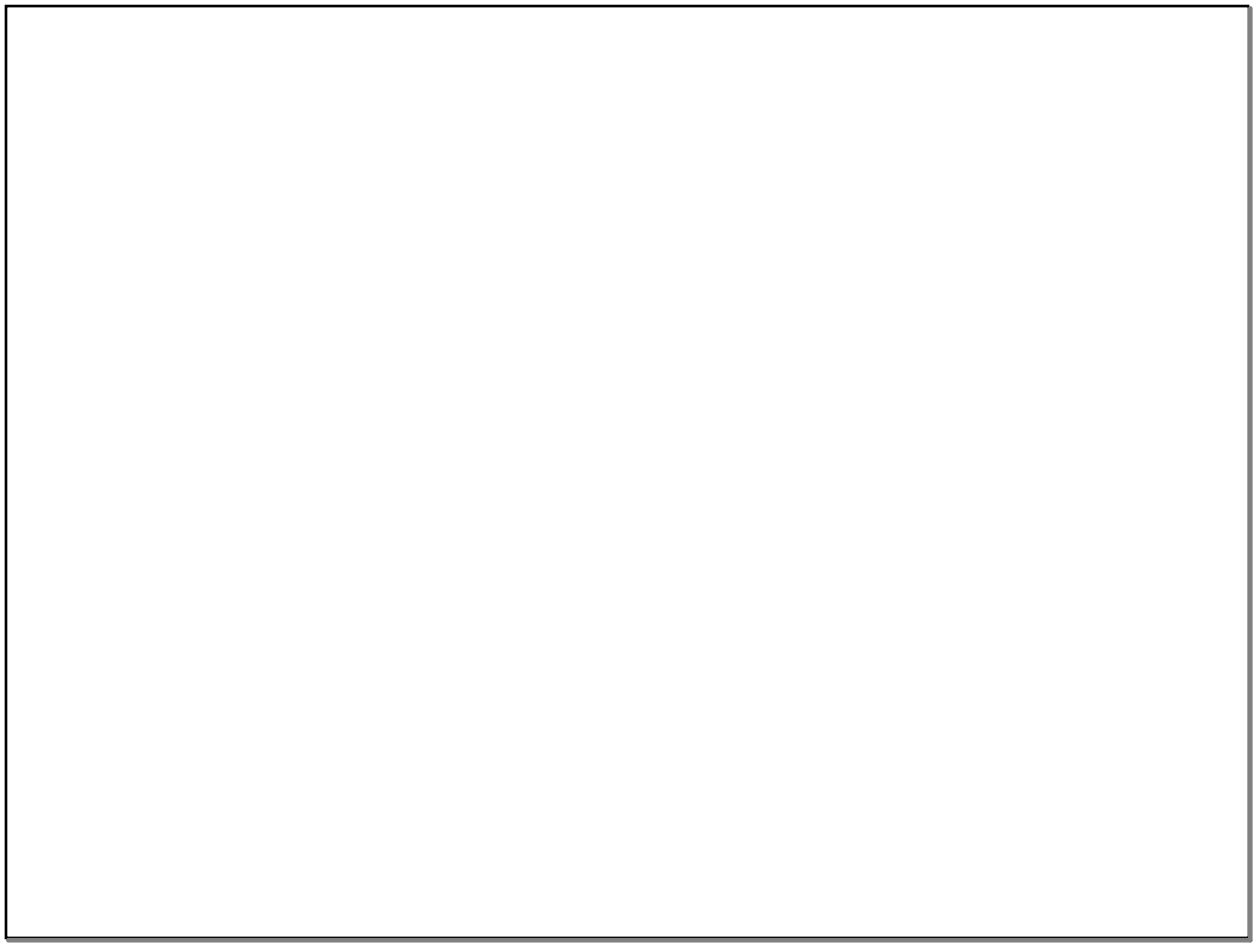
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