

# Perelandra



## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF C. S. LEWIS

Clive Staples (C. S.) Lewis was born in Northern Ireland to Albert James Lewis, a solicitor, and Flora Lewis, the daughter of a Church of Ireland clergyman. Growing up, Lewis—who adopted the nickname “Jack” as a young boy—lived in a house in East Belfast that his parents and brother Warren called Little Lea. As a child, Lewis loved spending time in his father’s massive library, and he lost his mother to cancer around the age of 10. Lewis entered Oxford University in 1916, but he was soon sent to France to fight in World War I. He was injured in 1918 and thereafter returned to Oxford, where he studied classics, philosophy, and English literature. From 1925–1954, he taught English literature in Oxford’s Magdalen College. Though Lewis had been a staunch atheist since his teen years, he became a Christian in 1931 and remained a committed member of the Church of England for the rest of his life. During World War II, he delivered a series of radio addresses that became the basis for his famous work of apologetics, [Mere Christianity](#). In 1954, Lewis became chair of Medieval and Renaissance Literature at Cambridge University’s Magdalene College. Later in life, Lewis married Joy Davidman Gresham, an American woman with whom he had corresponded. She died just a few years later, in 1960, and Lewis passed away in 1963.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

When Ransom refers to the Earth’s eldils “taking sides” in human events (and also to English boys giving their lives), Lewis is almost certainly referring to the events of World War II, which was well underway by the time he began writing *Perelandra*. Like Ransom’s character, Lewis was also a World War I veteran and no stranger to the struggle with fear and perseverance in the face of death that Ransom mentions throughout. Like the semi-fictionalized “Lewis” in the novel, Lewis was an Oxford (later Cambridge) academic who deeply valued the friendships he forged in that setting: he was a member and sometimes host of an informal but influential literary circle known as the Inklings, which included English writers like J. R. R. Tolkien, Charles Williams, Nevill Coghill, and Owen Barfield.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Lewis’s Space Trilogy was partially inspired by, and written in critique of, the science fiction of H. G. Wells, especially his *War of the Worlds* (1897). *Perelandra* was also preceded by [The Abolition of Man](#), a series of lectures Lewis delivered a few

months earlier; the lectures’ ideas on objective value and the nature of scientific knowledge were expressed in fictional form in the third of the Space Trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*. Several years later, Lewis began writing his widely beloved Chronicles of Narnia series for children, beginning with *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, which, like the Space Trilogy series, incorporates Christian ideas into a fantasy universe. Among Lewis’s nonfiction works, [Mere Christianity](#), which originated as a series of radio broadcasts during World War II, discusses the theological ideas indirectly dealt with throughout *Perelandra*. Though Lewis’s work is science fiction, J. R. R. Tolkien’s *Lord of the Rings* and Madeleine L’Engle’s [A Wrinkle in Time](#) are fantasy works that draw on Christian ideas in a similar way.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *Perelandra*, also known as *Voyage to Venus*
- **When Written:** 1941–1942
- **Where Written:** England
- **When Published:** 1943
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Science Fiction, Christian Speculative Fiction
- **Setting:** England, Perelandra (Venus)
- **Climax:** Ransom destroys the Un-man in the cave.
- **Antagonist:** Weston/Weston’s body/the Un-Man; Evil and Sin
- **Point of View:** First Person and Third-Person Limited

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Wellsianity.** In the Space Trilogy, Lewis critiqued what he referred to as “Wellsianity,” the worldview promoted by the science fiction of H. G. Wells, particularly in [The War of the Worlds](#), which involves a Martian attack on Earth. One of Lewis’s primary critiques of Wells is that, whereas Wells sees human beings as rightfully dominant because of their evolutionary position and scientific achievements, Lewis portrays human beings as sinful and fallen—he sees people’s abuse of science and technology to dominate both other humans and other worlds as clear evidence of this fact.

**Sister Penelope.** The dedication of *Perelandra* is to “some ladies at Wantage.” This refers to a group of Anglican nuns, the Community of St. Mary the Virgin, who lived south of Oxford. Lewis had received fan mail from one of the nuns, Sister Penelope, after he wrote [Out of the Silent Planet](#), and he even gave a talk at the convent in April, 1942, while working on *Perelandra*. He and Sister Penelope kept up a warm epistolary

friendship for decades.



## PLOT SUMMARY

Lewis, an Oxford scholar, sets out one autumn afternoon to the home of his good friend Ransom, a Cambridge philologist. He knows that Ransom has visited Mars, where he met creatures called *eldila*, angelic beings that live in Deep Heaven, or space. Lewis is uneasy about the *eldila* and isn't sure he wants to be drawn in to their business, but Ransom has requested his help. Ransom has explained that Earth is under siege by hostile *eldila* and that the good *eldila* of Deep Space have taken notice. On his way to Ransom's cottage, Lewis feels an almost tangible sense of resistance and fear, but he perseveres for his friend's sake.

That night Ransom explains to Lewis that he's being sent to Perelandra, or Venus. Earth's wicked *eldila* are planning some sort of attack on Perelandra, and Ransom is being sent to intervene, though he doesn't know how exactly. It's Lewis's job to pack Ransom into his space capsule for the journey and then await his return. Lewis does as Ransom asks, and Ransom returns from space a little more than a year later. He then tells Lewis the following story.

When Ransom lands on Perelandra, he finds it to be an oceanic world of rich, muted colors; floating islands; delicious fruits; and tame, delightful creatures. On his second day there, he meets a beautiful woman who looks human in every way, except that she's green. He and the Green Lady spend the next days discussing their different worlds. Both he and the Lady, for example, know Maleldil, or God, but God's purposes on Earth have been different from his purposes on Perelandra. The Lady even knows that Maleldil took a human form on Earth, but because she has no concept of evil, sin, or death, she doesn't understand that Maleldil came to Earth to redeem human beings from their sin. In fact, she has no notion of desiring anything other than what Maleldil sends—everything he gives is good, and she walks with him continually, their wills in perfect harmony. For instance, Maleldil has forbidden the Lady and her King (the only other being of her kind) from dwelling on Perelandra's sole **Fixed Land**. She doesn't know *why* he has forbidden this, but it's nevertheless a joy for her to obey him.

About this point in their conversation, the Lady and Ransom notice something streaking across the sky and falling into the sea, but the Lady thinks little of it; she's looking for her King, so they ride dolphin-like fish to the Fixed Land in search of him. When they reach it, they spot a small spaceship floating on the water, and Ransom realizes that Weston, his past nemesis and captor on Mars, has come to Perelandra. Weston's philosophy of exploration involves enslaving or even destroying other species and planets in the effort to dominate the solar system and evade death. Ransom knows he must have been sent to

Perelandra in order to thwart Weston.

Ransom and Weston meet, and Weston lectures Ransom, claiming he's rethought his approach to interplanetary exploration. His goal in life is now the advancement of something he calls "spirituality." He claims that science has rediscovered the inner meaning of old religious truths, and that he and Ransom hold a belief in "Spirit" in common. However, for Weston, this "Spirit" is a dark force that chose him and guides him. He argues that dualisms like "God" and the "devil" are just two pictures of that same Spirit, or Force. Further, ordinary people always get bogged down in simplistic moralism, misunderstanding and reviling those great ones who are guided by Spirit. When Ransom argues with Weston about all this, denying that their beliefs are remotely the same, Weston becomes enraged, goes into convulsions, and passes out. The next morning, Weston is gone.

Ransom rides a fish to a distant island, where he hears the Green Lady and Weston having a conversation. They're talking about Maleldil's prohibition of living on the Fixed Land. Weston argues that it's a senseless prohibition, and that perhaps Maleldil *wants* the Lady to question his commandments. At first, the Lady isn't interested, and Ransom takes heart. But the next day, he discovers Weston mutilating small, helpless creatures—the first suffering he has ever witnessed on Perelandra. He realizes that some diabolical life-form is inhabiting Weston's body for the purpose of invading Perelandra and bringing about its fall into corruption.

When Ransom next finds the pair, Weston is still arguing with the Lady about Maleldil and the Fixed Land. He twists the idea of obedience, suggesting that sometimes, Maleldil wants his creatures to *seem* to disobey him in order to become wiser. Ransom interrupts, arguing that Maleldil wants to be obeyed simply out of love, not just when his commands seem reasonable. Over the coming days, though, Weston, whom Ransom begins to think of as the "Un-man," tells the Lady lots of stories about misunderstood, persecuted women who undertook glorious risks for humanity's sake. Ransom sees that Weston's strategy is to make disobedience sound like a kind of duty that Maleldil desires from her, even though Maleldil has not told her this directly.

Ransom perceives that the fate of Perelandra—its continued innocence or its fall—rests in his hands. In light of his failed counterarguments, Ransom wonders what he can possibly do to put a stop to Weston. Gradually, as unlikely as it seems, it dawns on him that he must physically fight Weston in order to thwart his attempted corruption of the Lady and her world.

The next day, Ransom finds the Un-man and is quickly provoked into fighting him by his wanton killing of animals and his mockery of Maleldil. Ransom discovers that, despite the demonic form dwelling in Weston, he's physically just another middle-aged scholar—meaning that Ransom has a chance. Indeed, he comes close to beating Weston, but Weston flees,

and Ransom must pursue him for hours, riding a fish over the sea in a strange, lonely chase that tests his faith in Maleldil. Just before the two crash into the coast of a far distant island, Weston pulls Ransom far beneath the surface of the water. They surface on a beach, and Ransom strangles Weston in the darkness. Eventually, he realizes they're inside a vast cavern, and he gropes his way along in the impenetrable dark for a long time. Deep inside the cave, he encounters the battered form of the Un-man once more, bashes it with a rock, and tosses it into a sea of fire. Then, after a dreamlike journey through the cavern, he collapses in exhaustion.

After a long, restorative sleep at the cavern's mouth, Ransom sets out to explore the rest of the vast island. Eventually, he finds his way through a high pass in the mountains. In a clearing sits a familiar space capsule, and Ransom senses that *eldila* are nearby—the Oyarsas of Mars and Venus. The two *eldila* explain that the Green Lady and her King will mount their throne today—it's the first time that two creatures in Maleldil's image have avoided the fall into sin, instead becoming everything they were meant to be. When Ransom sees the King and Queen, he, along with the *eldila*, bows before them.

The King and Queen explain that they now know about evil, but that, thwarting the Un-man's intentions, they did not learn about it by committing sin firsthand but through Maleldil's teaching instead. The King and Queen plan to rule over Perelandra for long ages with great love. But someday, the King and the *eldila* of Deep Heaven will join Maleldil in relieving the siege of Earth and cleansing it of all its evils. That, he explains, will not be the "end," but only the *beginning* of all things as they are meant to be—something he calls The Great Dance. After this, the King and Queen, the *eldila*, and Ransom proclaim Maleldil's greatness and beauty in a long series of speeches or blessings.

At the conclusion of this ceremony, Ransom is astonished to learn that an entire year has passed. The King and Queen help him prepare for his earthward journey in the capsule and bless him, and the *eldila* come to carry him home.

inclined to fall into scholarly reveries, he is also observant and alert to the delights and mysteries of the world around him—both on Earth and on other planets. Because of this, he disapproves of Weston's more imperialistic approach to interplanetary exploration. Ransom is a devout Christian who is honest about his doubts and fears as he struggles to obey Maleldil's (God's) commands. On Perelandra, Ransom befriends the Green Lady and talks with her about the fates of their respective worlds and their shared love of Maleldil. Ransom is compassionate toward other people and other creatures, especially those weaker than himself; he doesn't even wish to harm Weston (whose body has been taken over by some evil force) until Weston's relentless temptation of the Green Lady makes this unavoidable. After he finally succeeds in destroying Weston's body, or what he's named the Un-man, he joins in the celebration of the King's and Queen's reign over an incorrupt Perelandra, and they call him the Savior of their world. As a souvenir of his battles with the Un-man, Ransom bears a bleeding wound on his heel for the rest of his life.

**Professor Weston/Weston's Body/The Un-man** – Weston, an accomplished Cambridge physicist in his 50s, is the antagonist of the novel and Ransom's nemesis. He is an arrogant man who is most at home while lecturing uninterrupted in a Cambridge classroom. His personality is otherwise somewhat whining and irritable; deep down, he is deeply fearful of death and what he suspects is the underlying meaninglessness of the universe. In the first volume of the Space Trilogy, he kidnapped Ransom and took him to Malacandra. According to Ransom, Weston exemplifies the view of conventional science fiction, which focuses on the desire to dominate other lands and species in the vain hope of cheating death—usually with deadly consequences for other species as well as humans. Weston brings this attitude with him to Perelandra, where he disregards the natural beauty surrounding him and instead sets to work trying to erode the Green Lady's faith in Maleldil and tempting her to sin. Through this ordeal, it becomes obvious to Ransom that Weston has allowed a diabolical force to inhabit his body and that, with the exception of lingering fragments of his old personality, he has effectively become an "Un-man." Weston and Ransom become locked in bitter, violent conflict as Ransom fights to prevent Weston from corrupting Perelandra forever; after a couple of attempts, Ransom finally succeeds in killing Weston and disposes of his body deep inside a cavern. He writes an epitaph for Weston on the cave wall.

**The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril** – The Green Lady is the first rational creature whom Ransom meets on Perelandra; she is the biblical Eve figure of that world. Though she looks just like a human being (with the exception of her green skin), she is actually a different species altogether. The Green Lady has a goddess-like beauty combined with a childlike delight in the world and a perfectly poised dignity. Because she is uncorrupted by sin, the Green Lady enjoys a perfectly



## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Dr. Elwin Ransom** – Ransom, the protagonist of the novel and one of Lewis's close friends, is a middle-aged Cambridge professor of philology. As a young man, Ransom fought and was wounded in World War I. More recently, he was kidnapped and sent to Mars (Malacandra); while there, he learned the interplanetary language of Old Solar, fell in love with non-terrestrial creatures, and also encountered his nemesis, Weston, for the first time. Now, he is being sent to Venus (Perelandra) for unknown reasons. Ransom is patient, bookish, and kind, with a special love for epic poetry. Though Ransom is

harmonious relationship with Maleldil (God), whose will is her deepest delight, and she has effortless command over her own desires and emotions. She especially loves tending and teaching Perelandra's creatures and swimming in the **waves** that Maleldil sends. The Green Lady describes growth in wisdom as "growing older." After Weston arrives on Perelandra, he tempts the Green Lady to sin by suggesting that disobeying Maleldil's commands (particularly the command not to dwell on the **Fixed Land**) will allow her to grow "older" still. Though the Green Lady ponders this possibility and even indulges in self-centered imaginings for the first time, she successfully resists Weston and never fully succumbs to temptation. Separated from her husband, the King, throughout most of the story, she reunites with him to reign in love and splendor at the end of the novel. After taking the throne, she is called Tinidril. She will become the mother of Perelandra's children.

**Maleldil** – In the language of Old Solar, "Maleldil" refers to God, or Christ. Maleldil does not appear personally in the story, but his presence is felt everywhere. Maleldil reigns over all planets, not just Earth, though he became a human being during Earth's history. The *eldila*, or angelic beings, reign over the planets under Maleldil's authority (with the exception of the rebellious *eldils* of Earth). Ransom, a Christian, has faith in Maleldil, though he struggles sometimes with doubt. On Perelandra, Ransom finds that when it's resisted, Maleldil's presence is felt as a heavy weight, but when one yields to it, it is nourishing and sustaining. The Green Lady and the King, being sinless, enjoy a close relationship with Maleldil, walking in perfect harmony with his will and being taught by him directly. After Ransom's triumph over Weston (who, when inhabited by a diabolical force, becomes Maleldil's sworn enemy) and the inauguration of the King's and Queen's reign over Perelandra, the book concludes with speeches proclaiming Maleldil's goodness and his centrality to all of existence.

**The King/Tor** – The King is the Green Lady's husband and Perelandra's biblical Adam figure. Although he is renowned as the wisest being on Perelandra, he does not appear in the story until its very end, both because the **waves** have separated him from the Lady and because the action focuses on the Lady's struggle with sin and temptation and not his. Nevertheless, he undergoes his own journey of being taught by Maleldil about the possibility of sin and death, as well as many other things. When Ransom meets the King, he thinks the King looks like Christ. After taking the throne, the King is called Tor.

**Lewis** – Lewis, a version of author C. S. Lewis himself, narrates the story and mainly appears as a character in the novel's opening chapters. A fellow academic, he is a close, trusted friend of Ransom's. He has his doubts and misgivings about Ransom's interplanetary adventures, but when he encounters an *eldil* for the first time, he submits himself to its purposes. Ransom recruits Lewis to pack him into his space capsule and then prepare to receive and unpack him upon his return from

space. Lewis then narrates Ransom's experience on Perelandra as Ransom has related it to him, rarely inserting first-person remarks.

## MINOR CHARACTERS

**Humphrey** – Humphrey is Ransom's trusted doctor who, along with Lewis, awaits Ransom's return from Perelandra and then releases him from the capsule in which he traveled.

## TERMS

**Eldila/Eldils** – The *eldila* are interplanetary creatures that do not have bodies (at least not discernible to the human eye) and do not eat, reproduce, breathe, or die. Their spatial location is hard to pinpoint, and they regard Deep Heaven as their home. Each planet has a head *eldil*, or *Oyarsa*, who rules it. The *eldila* may be likened to angels (or, in Earth's case, demons). They are powerful and intelligent; although the *eldila* of Deep Heaven are good, those inhabiting Earth are bad, having influenced Earth's evil courses for centuries.

**Oyarsa** – An *Oyarsa* is the head *eldila* that rules over a planet.

**Malacandra** – Malacandra is the planet Mars, which **Ransom** previously visited. It was there that he first encountered his nemesis, **Weston**.

**Perelandra** – Perelandra, or the planet Venus, is the perfectly innocent planet where the bulk of the novel takes place.

**Ransom** is meant to save the planet from corruption by keeping **Weston** from tempting the **Green Lady** into disobeying **Maleldil** (God) and thus bringing sin to the planet.

**Deep Heaven** – Deep Heaven is outer space and the home of the *eldila*. **Weston** admits that he's been taken over by a demonic being when he mentions having been to Deep Heaven before.

**Field of Arbol** – The Field of Arbol is the solar system.

**Thulcandra** – Thulcandra is planet Earth. It is known as the "silent planet" because it has been occupied by dark *eldila* for centuries and has therefore been isolated from the other planets.



## THEMES

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## EXPLORATION, WONDER, AND GOD'S PLAN

In *Perelandra*, the second of C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy series, philologist Elwin Ransom is sent to the planet of Perelandra, or Venus, for unknown reasons. While there, Ransom delights in the wonder of this unexplored, uncorrupted planet. His attitude toward Perelandra—and indeed toward reality as a whole—contrasts with that of Professor Weston, the novel's antagonist, who arrives on Perelandra after Ransom does. As the novel unfolds, Weston reveals his desire to subdue the planet for his own villainous ends, as he is caught up in the larger interplanetary battle between good and evil. By contrasting Ransom's and Weston's attitudes about space exploration, Lewis makes a larger claim about the trajectory of the universe. He argues that an attitude of grateful wonder accords with God's ultimately triumphant plan for the universe, while a demanding, destructive attitude resists God's plan and is ultimately ruinous for those who persist in it.

The novel praises those who receive whatever is given to them with an attitude of reverence and gratitude. Soon after his arrival on Perelandra, Ransom becomes enchanted by the fairytale wonder of his surroundings, including creatures like a tame dragon: "The golden beast at his side seemed no longer either a danger or a nuisance. [...] To be the figure that he was in this unearthly pattern appeared sufficient." In other words, Ransom's ability to see this world as "enchanted," with an attitude of wonder and gratitude, transcends fear of the unknown and even his own significance. This attitude allows him to not only delight in Maleldil's creation, but to participate in Maleldil's triumphant plan for this flawless world.

In the novel, the opposite of this kind of openminded wonder plays out as a desire for conquest—a desire to control the universe rather than humbly receiving whatever Maleldil gives. What makes this attitude so harmful is that it both oppresses others and tricks one into thinking that one can attain godlike power. This desire for conquest, argues Lewis, is ultimately rooted in the fear of death: Weston was "obsessed with the idea which is at this moment circulating all over our planet in obscure works of [science fiction]. It is the idea that humanity, having now sufficiently corrupted the planet where it arose, must at all costs contrive to seed itself over a larger area [...] a dream begotten by the hatred of death[.]" Unlike Ransom's attitude of grateful wonder toward Maleldil's creation, Weston is not interested in exploration for its own sake. Rather, he desires to use other planets and their inhabitants for his own purposes. In Lewis's view, that includes proliferating the human species and its corruptions across the galaxies, whether that is what God intends or not.

Weston explains to Ransom that his desire to conquer the universe is guided by a new kind of spirituality that supersedes antiquated categories of right and wrong. As Weston explains,

some vague "Life-Force" directs this striving for greatness, something that small-mindedly "moral" people can't understand within their limited categories. He claims that what ordinary people see as "diabolical" actually transcends categories of good and evil. He even admits to Ransom that he would be willing to lie, betray his country, and commit murder for the sake of such "morality." In other words, then, Weston sees basic morality as obsolete in the quest to explore and subdue the universe. Ransom perceives that, in fact, its selfishness makes Weston's new "spirituality" demonic in essence. This "spirituality" is just a veneer for Weston's old desire to dominate other worlds and creatures.

The novel highlights how a person's basic attitude—whether of wonder or of greed—either goes along with God's triumphant plan for the world or resists it. It's only as Maleldil's (God's) plans for the universe come to fruition that the reasons behind his plans become clear. As the Green Lady (one of Perelandra's first rational beings) realizes when she is crowned Perelandra's first Queen, Maleldil always had a reason for forbidding her from living on the **Fixed Land**, the oceanic planet's only stable landmass—it was to teach her to trust his ways: "[W]hy should I desire the Fixed except [...] to be able on one day to command where I should be the next[?]" It was to reject the **wave**—to draw my hands out of Maleldil's[.] In other words, one must trust Maleldil's goodness and receive the "wave" of life with gratitude, instead of stubbornly desiring what God has forbidden.

In fact, Maleldil's reasons transcend individual destinies. Even the events recounted in the Christian Bible, which took place on Earth, are part of this, and those events are connected to events on Perelandra, too. At the end of the novel, Ransom, the King and Queen, and the good eldila celebrate this confluence of events, proclaiming together, "In the Fallen World [Earth] He prepared for Himself a body and was united with the Dust [humanity] and made it glorious for ever. Blessed be He!" The Christian belief in the creation of the world, as well as Christ's redemption of that world, bears fruit in other worlds in wondrous ways that the inhabitants of both worlds can only celebrate with humble gratitude. With this, the novel again emphasizes that an attitude of wonder goes with the flow of God's work in the world, as opposed to a selfish one which resists that work.

Lewis's argument about wonder accords with his attitude about science fiction more generally. He suggests that Weston's obsession with conquest echoes the tone of much contemporary science fiction, which often showcases a desire to venture beyond earth with the goal of subduing other lands and spreading human life and ideas indefinitely and indiscriminately. This contrasts with Ransom's readiness to die in the cause of space exploration, because he trusts that more important aims are at stake than his own survival or, indeed, even the survival of the human race.



## FEAR, ADVENTURE, AND WILL

In *Perelandra*, Ransom finds himself the unwitting redeemer of a world at risk of satanic corruption.

During his quest, Ransom must reconcile his very real fears with his earnest desire to please God; he also learns that *Perelandra*'s inhabitants, like the Green Lady, obey God fearlessly because their wills are already so perfectly aligned with God's. As he learns to embody a similar obedience, Ransom discovers that, as one's will harmonizes with God's, questions like the difference between predestination and free will fade into insignificance. From his Christian perspective, Lewis argues that obedience to God is a kind of adventure, and one must continue to yield to God even in the face of limitations like unknowing, uncertainty, and fear. However, Lewis also points out that obedience to God neither requires passively abandoning one's will nor permits the assertion of one's will against God's.

Obedying God (Maleldil) is a kind of adventure, which isn't devoid of fear. When Lewis (who narrates the first two chapters) asks Ransom if he is afraid of being transported to an unknown planet by some mysterious divine power, Ransom admits that he *is* afraid: "'Do you feel quite happy about it?' said I [...] 'If you mean, Does my reason accept the view that he will (accidents apart) deliver me safe on the surface of *Perelandra*?—the answer is Yes,' said Ransom. 'If you mean, Do my nerves and my imagination respond to this view?—I'm afraid the answer is No. [...] I think I feel as a man who believes in the future life feels when he is taken out to face a firing party. Perhaps it's good practice.'" Ransom means that it's possible to have a different intellectual versus emotional response to something—he knows in his mind that he'll be safely delivered to *Perelandra*, but his emotional response is nonetheless one of fear and anxiety. To deal with that disconnect, one must simply act in spite of one's feelings; within the world of the story, that means entrusting oneself to Maleldil to direct the adventure.

After arriving on *Perelandra*, Ransom talks with the Green Lady and discovers that she experiences the freedom of her will as a kind of continual adventure: "I thought [...] that I was carried in the will of Him I love, but now I see that I walk with it. I thought that the good things He sent me drew me into them as the **waves** lift the islands; but now I see that it is I who plunge into them with my own legs and arms, as when we go swimming. [...] It is a delight with terror in it!" In other words, the freedom of her will entails no conflict, but a moment-by-moment thrill of yielding to God, and their wills are so harmonious that she can't perceive a distinction between them.

While many people consider free will and predestination to be diametrically opposed—that life is governed by either one or the other—this is not the case in the world of the novel. Obedience to Maleldil doesn't override a person's will, but in a case of genuine obedience, there's no clear distinction between free will and God-given destiny. When Weston arrives on

*Perelandra* and tempts the Lady with the idea that she could want something that God has not permitted, she finds his insinuations to be nonsense: "How can I step out of His will save into something that cannot be wished? [...] To walk out of His will is to walk into nowhere." The Green Lady means that venturing outside of God's will is meaningless to her because, like tasteless fruit or resistance to basic desires like sleeping, drinking, or enjoyment, it has no inherent appeal to her.

When Ransom realizes that it's his task to kill Weston in order to prevent Weston from irreparably corrupting *Perelandra*, he initially tries to talk himself out of it by vaguely leaving the issue in God's hands, but this doesn't last: "Relentlessly, unmistakably, [Maleldil's presence] pressed down upon him the knowledge that this picture of the situation was utterly false. [...] If the issue lay in Maleldil's hands, Ransom and the Lady were those hands. The fate of a world really depended on how they behaved in the next few hours. The thing was irreducibly, nakedly real." In this situation, there is no distinction between Maleldil's action and Ransom's. Maleldil has brought Ransom here as his instrument for the salvation of *Perelandra*; should Ransom shirk that role, Maleldil's plan will not be fulfilled.

As Ransom continues to agonize over his obligation to save *Perelandra*, "gradually something happened to him which had happened to him only twice before in his life. It had happened once while he was trying to make up his mind to do a very dangerous job in [the First World War]. [...] [W]ithout any apparent movement of the will, as objective and unemotional as the reading on a dial, there had arisen before him, with perfect certitude, the knowledge 'about this time tomorrow you will have done the impossible.'" As he comes to understand his role as Maleldil's instrument, then, Ransom also comes to a gradual acceptance of what must happen, even without understanding *how* it will come about. In a mysterious way, God moves within Ransom's will, making him willing and able to obey, even as Ransom consciously yields to him—both God's predestinating and Ransom's will at work. The harmony between the two is such that, as for the Green Lady, there's no clear divide.

For Ransom, then, freedom of the will rests on a trustful yielding to God, neither passively expecting all to be done for him or actively resisting what must be: "You might say, if you liked, that the power of choice had been simply set aside and an inflexible destiny substituted for it. On the other hand, you might say that he had [...] emerged into unassailable freedom. Ransom could not, for the life of him, see any difference between these two statements." As Ransom grows in his understanding of the relationship between fear, adventure, and yielding to God's will, there no longer appears to be an obvious distance between free will and a destiny that's been decided in advance for him.



## INNOCENCE AND INCORRUPTION

When Ransom arrives on Perelandra, part of the planet's beauty, and indeed its foreignness, consists in the fact that it's untouched by sin, suffering, or death. Unlike Earth, it's never been corrupted by those intrusive things which are outside of God's (Maleldil's) original intention for the universe. Even Ransom, himself a sinful human being, finds that Perelandra's sheer purity has a purifying effect on his own appetites, and when he meets the Green Lady, he finds her completely ignorant of such things as sin and death, which are taken for granted on Earth. Perelandra, then, imagines the way an unfallen Earth might have been. By portraying Perelandra as a place where innocence triumphs and contrasting it to the fallen, death-ravaged world of Earth, Lewis argues that sinful desires, suffering, and death are simply not the way things are meant to be, but that, no matter what, Maleldil's will for his creatures is never ultimately thwarted.

Unlike Earth, which is riddled with sin and death, Perelandra remains untouched by those things, its innocence presenting a picture of God's original intention for Earth. Ransom's appetites on Perelandra are curiously different from what they'd be on earth—instead of being distorted by sinful excess, they're seemingly aligned with the way they were originally created to function. On Perelandra, Ransom tastes the juice of a delicious fruit and almost follows the instinct to keep drinking, yet finds he doesn't need to: "As he let the empty gourd fall from his hand and was about to pluck a second one, it came into his head that he was now neither hungry nor thirsty. And yet to repeat a pleasure so intense [...] seemed an obvious thing to do. His reason, or what we commonly take to be reason in our own world, was all in favour of tasting this miracle again [...] Yet something seemed opposed to this 'reason.' [...] Perhaps the experience had been so complete that repetition would be a vulgarity—like asking to hear the same symphony twice in a day." Ransom's appetites are perfectly balanced, in other words. The implication is that, on earth, Ransom would have kept drinking and drinking, gluttonously expecting increasing pleasure from the experience—a "fallen," or sinfully corrupt, form of desire. Yet, in the unfallen world of Perelandra, he is perfectly sated with one drink—implicitly, the way things should be.

Because the inhabitants of Perelandra have no experience of sin, they aren't even familiar with the concept of death (death being, in Lewis's Christian theology, the result of human sin): "'I wonder,' said the woman, 'if you were sent here to teach us *death*.' 'You don't understand,' [Ransom] said. 'It is not like that. It is horrible [...] Maleldil Himself wept when He saw it.' Both his voice and his facial expression were apparently something new to her. He saw the shock, not of horror, but of utter bewilderment [...] [then] the ocean of her peace swallowed it up as if it had never been, and she asked him what he meant.'" From Ransom's perspective as an earthly Christian, death is the

natural result of human sin—the punishment for Adam and Even's sin which was inherited by all their posterity. But because of the Green Lady's innocence of sin, the concept of death is completely *unnatural*. Her happy ignorance of death, in contrast to Ransom's unhappy acquaintance with it, is the state in which humans were meant to have remained.

Even though Earth has lost that innocence and can't possibly regain it, the novel points out that Maleldil's loving intentions for his creatures always prevail. At the end of the novel, Ransom witnesses the "birth" of Perelandra—its inauguration as a world under the King and Queen's reign—and is overcome with wonder by its incorruption. Yet, even this wonderful spectacle pales beside the redemption of fallen Earth: As the Oyarsa of Malacandra explains, "Today for the first time two creatures of the low worlds, two images of Maleldil that breathe and breed [...] step up that step at which your parents fell [...] It was never seen before. Because it did not happen in your world a greater thing happened[.]" In other words, the unprecedented reign of an unfallen pair of rational creatures—achieving what Adam and Eve were meant to have done on earth—is still less wonderful than Maleldil's redemption of his sinful creatures by becoming incarnate in Christ and overturning death's power by dying himself. Ransom feels real grief at what was lost, yet if it were not for that loss, the "greater thing" would never have been known.



## TEMPTATION AND THE NATURE OF EVIL

Ransom eventually learns that he's been sent to Perelandra in order to thwart the satanically corrupted Weston—or, as Ransom calls him, the "Un-man"—from tempting the planet's King and Queen into sin. In other words, Perelandra has not yet experienced a Fall like that depicted in the Old Testament's Book of Genesis. In the Bible, the serpent tempts Eve into wanting to attain the knowledge of good and evil and thus become more like God. He goads her into eating fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil—which God has expressly forbidden. The events of *Perelandra* thus give insight into certain aspects of the temptation to sin as, from Lewis's point of view, it might have happened on Earth had Eve *not* fallen. When Weston tempts the Green Lady (later the Queen), he does so by questioning the goodness of Maleldil's laws and suggesting that the Green Lady could become wiser and more powerful if she chose to go against what Maleldil has commanded. When Weston confronts Ransom, his evil comes across in a less obscure manner, showing that underneath Weston's smooth words to the Lady, his motivations are utterly banal. By allegorizing the temptation of Eve through events on Perelandra, Lewis argues that temptation consists in subtly putting the self before God, and that such temptation leads to evil, which, because of its distance from God, is ultimately meaningless.

Temptation to sin is a subtle process that begins with

questioning Maleldil's commands and gradually elevates the individual ego above Maleldil. The tempter starts subtly by asking questions about the propriety of Maleldil's command not to inhabit the **Fixed Land**: "this forbidding is such a strange one [...] [a]nd so unlike the ways of Maleldil in my world." He suggests that the Green Lady just think about the *possibility* of a different life, because on Earth, "the world is made up not only of what is but of what might be. Maleldil knows both and wants us to know both." The temptation begins with the idea that perhaps Maleldil *wants* the Green Lady to ponder things he has not directly told her. But Weston doesn't stop there. He suggests that maybe Maleldil is waiting for the Lady to venture out of childlike obedience and into a "deeper," more difficult kind that actively goes against what Maleldil has commanded: "Your deepest will, at present, is to obey Him [...] The way out of that is hard. It was made hard [so] that only the very great, the very wise, the very courageous should dare to walk in it, to go on [...] through the dark **wave** of His forbidding, into the real life, Deep Life, with all its joy and splendour and hardness." He twists disobedience, in other words, into a form of obedience by making it sound noble and self-sacrificial.

From here, Weston builds on this twisted idea of obedience by suggesting that it leads to godlike power: "I only meant you could become more like the women of my world. [...] They always reach out their hands for the new and unexpected good, and see that it is good long before the men understand it. Their minds run ahead of what Maleldil has told them. [...] They are, as it were, little Maleldils." In other words, earthly women decide for themselves what is good, effectively taking the role of God—something Weston portrays as desirable. Ransom observes that the tempter's suggestions aren't working because the Lady still primarily desires to obey Maleldil. But the Un-man's words aren't without effect: "The Lady's response to the suggestion of becoming a risk-bearer, a tragic pioneer, was still a response made chiefly out of her love [...] of Maleldil Himself. [...] But mixed with this response, from the moment when the Un-man began its tragic stories, there was the faintest touch of theatricality, the first hint of a self-admiring inclination to seize a grand role in the drama of her world." Mixed up with her desire to obey Maleldil, the Green Lady is experiencing the first, potentially disastrous hint of her own ego.

Ultimately, evil doesn't deliver on its promises—in fact, it's utterly empty and meaningless. After Weston/the Un-Man arrives on Perelandra, Ransom discovers that Weston has been gratuitously tormenting Perelandra's little frogs. When he sees the first frog—the first victim of violence of any kind on Perelandra—Ransom is overcome with grief: "The thing was an intolerable obscenity which afflicted him with shame. It would have been better, or so he thought at that moment, for the whole universe never to have existed than for this one thing to have happened." Part of the horror of the frog's death consists

in the fact that its suffering is so pointless—a mere petty indulgence for Weston. Evil is fundamentally meaningless, as Ransom learns when Weston torments him with pointless crude jokes and mockeries: "For temptation, for blasphemy, for a whole battery of horrors, [Ransom] was in some sort prepared: but hardly for this petty, indefatigable nagging [...] [O]n the surface, great designs and an antagonism to Heaven which involved the fate of worlds: but deep within, [...] an aimless empty spitefulness content to sate itself with the tiniest cruelties[.]" One of the most horrifying things about evil, Ransom discovers, is that at its deepest core, it is completely base and shallow. In other words, it's the opposite of love, which, because of its derivation from God, becomes ever more profound and dignifying.

Because of the sheer vapidness of evil, it's not surprising that Ransom's victory over Weston finally consists not in outsmarting his enemy, but in brute killing. By this, Lewis suggests that there's no redeeming the source of absolute evil, and that Ransom's intervention was necessary so that the people of Perelandra would remain untouched by firsthand contact with suffering and death themselves.



## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



### WAVES

In the novel, waves symbolize the things which Maleldil (God) sends to his creatures—for instance, certain situations, people, or events. The Green Lady often speaks of plunging into the waves, or swimming along with them, as a way of describing the harmony between her will and Maleldil's will. This harmony rests on the belief that whatever Maleldil sends is good and reflective of his own goodness. To "reject the wave" would be to resist what Maleldil sends, instead pursuing one's path apart from Maleldil's will—in other words, sin.



### THE FIXED LAND

On Perelandra, all the landmasses are islands, with the exception of a mountainous continent known as the Fixed Land, which Maleldil has forbidden the King and Queen to sleep or dwell on. Thus, throughout the story, the Fixed Land symbolizes the law of Maleldil. Weston (or the satanic being that inhabits his body) tries to erode the Green Lady's trust in Maleldil by attacking the seeming illogic of this specific law (and hence *all* his commands, and the character of Maleldil himself). Ultimately, the Lady resists the temptation to disobey Maleldil's command, realizing that she only desired to



live on the Fixed Land because it was fixed—its stationery nature suggesting the desire to secure one's own future rather than trusting in the **waves** Maleldil sends, each as it comes.





## QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Scribner edition of *Perelandra* published in 2003.

### Chapter 2 Quotes

“I'll tell you how I look at it. Haven't you noticed how in our own little war here on earth, there are different phases, and while any one phase is going on people get into the habit of thinking and behaving as if it was going to be permanent? But really the thing is changing under your hands all the time, and neither your assets nor your dangers this year are the same as the year before. Now your idea that ordinary people will never have to meet the Dark Eldila in any form except a psychological or moral form—as temptations or the like—is simply an idea that held good for a certain phase of the cosmic war: the phase of the great siege, the phase which gave to our planet its name of Thulcandra, the *silent* planet. But supposing that phase is passing? In the next phase it may be anyone's job to meet them. . . well, in some quite different mode.”

**Related Characters:** Dr. Elwin Ransom (speaker), Lewis

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 22

#### Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, Ransom tries to help his friend Lewis understand the nature of the current interplanetary warfare. Lewis, who is the more skeptical of the two men, has just argued that the Bible's reference to the struggle against “principalities and powers” refers to an internal, moral struggle—it's not about ordinary people encountering literal dark forces. Ransom laughs at this idea. In turn, he argues that just because the struggle has primarily been a moral one throughout history doesn't mean that this will always be the case—after millennia of captivity under the control of the Dark Eldila, he believes, the conditions of warfare are shifting; everyday people are now being called upon to encounter the “principalities and powers” in a more direct way.


Ransom's explanation to Lewis also orients the reader within the world of the novel, defending space travel as having a purpose beyond curiosity or colonization—it's part of a larger cosmic battle between good and evil. Finally,

Lewis isn't necessarily making a literal claim about humans' relationship to demonic forces—perhaps reflecting his World War II context, he's reminding readers not to become complacent about resistance to evil, as it may not look the way one expects.

“Do you feel quite happy about it?” said I, for a sort of horror was beginning once more to creep over me.

“If you mean, Does my reason accept the view that he will (accidents apart) deliver me safe on the surface of Perelandra?—the answer is Yes,” said Ransom. “If you mean, Do my nerves and my imagination respond to this view?—I'm afraid the answer is No. One can believe in anæsthetics and yet feel in a panic when they actually put the mask over your face. I think I feel as a man who believes in the future life feels when he is taken out to face a firing party. Perhaps it's good practice.”

**Related Characters:** Lewis, Dr. Elwin Ransom (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 24

#### Explanation and Analysis

Ransom summons Lewis to his cottage to assist him in his journey to Perelandra, giving him the simple but vital task of securing Ransom in his spaceship and being prepared to release him whenever he returns. After Ransom explains the nature of his journey—he'll be mysteriously conveyed to Perelandra by the power of an Oyarsa, a being who rules a planet—Lewis is alarmed. Ransom acknowledges that he believes the Oyarsa will fulfill his promise to carry him safely to his destination, yet that doesn't mean Ransom isn't frightened. He likens the experience to facing surgery or even execution—one can hold a firm belief about what comes after, but that doesn't mean that one feels fully assured by that belief on a psychological or emotional level. In other words, according to Lewis, doubt, anxiety, and fear do not nullify the validity of belief. This perspective on belief—that it's fundamentally reasonable and can be acted upon even if one struggles with very human doubts or fears—is characteristic of C. S. Lewis's writings more broadly.

## Chapter 3 Quotes

☞☞ He had confidence in those who had sent him there, and for the meantime the coolness of the water and the freedom of his limbs were still a novelty and a delight; but more than all these was something else at which I have already hinted and which can hardly be put into words—the strange sense of excessive pleasure which seemed somehow to be communicated to him through all his senses at once. I use the word "excessive" because Ransom himself could only describe it by saying that for his first few days on Perelandra he was haunted, not by a feeling of guilt, but by surprise that he had no such feeling. There was an exuberance or prodigality of sweetness about the mere act of living which our race finds it difficult not to associate with forbidden and extravagant actions.

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 33

### Explanation and Analysis

Upon first arriving on Perelandra, Ransom discovers that its differences from Earth are not just physical. This quote describes one of its biggest differences: that Perelandra is an entire world untouched by sin and corruption. From Lewis's Christian theological perspective, the Earth and humanity are inescapably stained by sin, which doesn't mean that the material world is inherently evil but that people's desire for material things is corrupted. People want things, in other words, in a way and to an extent that isn't good for them. This is why, when Ransom first arrives on Perelandra, he feels overwhelmed by the intensity of pleasure he experiences in his beautiful environment. Coming from Earth, he's primed to associate such intensity with excessive indulgence and therefore with guilt. In reality, though, Perelandra has never experienced a fall into sin, and although Ransom, as a human, is "fallen," according to the Christian understanding, Perelandra's incorruption is somehow imparted to him through his surroundings, permitting a deeper, purer, more innocent sensory enjoyment than was ever possible for him on Earth. Little does Ransom suspect that his experience on Perelandra will involve that world's own temptation to sin.

## Chapter 4 Quotes

☞☞ Such was the refreshment that he seemed to himself to have been, till now, but half awake. When he opened his eyes—which had closed involuntarily at the shock of moisture—all the colours about him seemed richer and the dimness of that world seemed clarified. A re-enchantment fell upon him. The golden beast at his side seemed no longer either a danger or a nuisance. If a naked man and a wise dragon were indeed the sole inhabitants of this floating paradise, then this also was fitting, for at that moment he had a sensation not of following an adventure but of enacting a myth. To be the figure that he was in this unearthly pattern appeared sufficient.

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 42

### Explanation and Analysis



In this quote, Perelandra is described as a kind of paradise. After a refreshing bath from one of the planet's bubble trees, Ransom feels enchanted by his surroundings and no longer unnerved or inconvenienced by its strangeness. Everything about his experience on Perelandra so far—Ransom's nudity, the appearance of a friendly dragon, and the apparent perfections of the untouched land—points to Perelandra's uncorrupted innocence. In fact, it lulls Ransom into a happy complacency. He doesn't know what he's doing there, but he is content simply to exist in such a setting. Later in the story, though, Ransom's instinct that he is somehow "enacting a myth" proves to be truer than he realizes. At the moment, he's just meeting fairy tale creatures. Later on, however, he will be called upon to kill Satan's emissary in Perelandra, effectively becoming the planet's savior. His early experiences on Perelandra are important because they cause Ransom to fall in love with this world and its inhabitants, realizing how much will be lost if sin and death are permitted to reign there.


## Chapter 5 Quotes

☞☞ "And do you," said Ransom with some hesitation—"and do you know why He came thus to my world?"

All through this part of the conversation he found it difficult to look higher than her feet, so that her answer was merely a voice in the air above him. "Yes," said the voice. "I know the reason. But it is not the reason you know. There was more than one reason, and there is one I know and cannot tell to you, and another that you know and cannot tell to me."

**Related Characters:** Lewis, The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril, Dr. Elwin Ransom (speaker), Maleldil


**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 54

### Explanation and Analysis

Soon after arriving on Perelandra, the first inhabitant Ransom meets is a green-skinned female who closely resembles a human being, although she is a separate species from Ransom. Through the Green Lady, Ransom gains an introduction to Perelandra and Maleldil's rule over it ("Maleldil" is the name for God/Christ in the Old Solar language). To Ransom's surprise, the Green Lady knows that Maleldil came to Earth in the form of a human man (Jesus Christ). According to Christian teaching, the incarnation of Jesus Christ was due to the need for humanity's redemption from their sins. Assuming that the Green Lady knows nothing of sin, Ransom feels ashamed even to broach this subject with her, hence refusing to look her in the eye. While it does turn out that the Green Lady doesn't know *that* reason for the Incarnation—being innocent, she doesn't seem to have a conceptual basis for understanding sin and redemption—she also knows of a reason that Ransom, being sinful, cannot know. Later, Ransom will perceive, albeit vaguely, that Maleldil's coming to Earth was also for the purpose of preventing sin and death from entering Perelandra many centuries in the future. This quote illustrates both Lewis's view of how deep innocence and corruption run within creatures—shaping their ability to perceive the world around them—and his belief that God's plans are much more complex than mere creatures can grasp.

 "I wonder," said the woman, "if you were sent here to teach us *death*."

"You don't understand," he said. "It is not like that. It is horrible. It has a foul smell. Maleldil Himself wept when He saw it." Both his voice and his facial expression were apparently something new to her. He saw the shock, not of horror, but of utter bewilderment, on her face for one instant and then, without effort, the ocean of her peace swallowed it up as if it had never been, and she asked him what he meant.


**Related Characters:** Lewis, The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril, Dr. Elwin Ransom (speaker), Maleldil

**Related Themes:** 



**Page Number:** 58


### Explanation and Analysis

During one of their first conversations, the Green Lady asks Ransom to greet the "Mother" of his own world for her. Ransom, saddened, explains that he can't do this, because the Mother of humanity—that is, Eve from the biblical Book of Genesis—is dead. But because death has never happened on Perelandra, the Green Lady has no way of understanding what he means. She wonders if Ransom has been sent to Perelandra in order to teach her and her husband, the King, what "death" means, innocently assuming that it's something good and desirable to know. Ransom struggles to convey the horror of death—something that God himself was grieved by. (This is a reference to the story of Lazarus in the New Testament's gospel of John, in which Jesus wept over the death of his close friend Lazarus before resurrecting him from the dead—death being an objectively evil thing, even when, in this case, it is overcome.) This quote conveys the sheer extent of the Lady's innocence, as she lacks a mental framework for comprehending evil and remains unshaken by the implication of it.

 "I thought," she said, "that I was carried in the will of Him I love, but now I see that I walk with it. I thought that the good things He sent me drew me into them as the waves lift the islands; but now I see that it is I who plunge into them with my own legs and arms, as when we go swimming. [...] It is a delight with terror in it! One's own self to be walking from one good to another, walking beside Him as Himself may walk, not even holding hands."

**Related Characters:** The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril, Lewis (speaker), Maleldil, Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 60

### Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, the Green Lady, through her conversation with Ransom, arrives at a more mature understanding of the relationship between her will and Maleldil's. She explains that she had always imagined she was being carried along by Maleldil, but now she knows that she has always been

choosing to walk alongside him, step by step. Though walking with Maleldil *feels* effortless, because their wills are so harmonious, the Lady actually “plunges” and “swims”—continually taking her own initiative, in other words.

This quote therefore suggests a few things about what Lewis sees as the ideal relationship between the human will and God’s will. For one thing, before the human will was corrupted by sin (the “fall,” in Christian terminology), the human will was capable of freely choosing to obey God moment by moment. In fact, this is how things were always meant to be—and it didn’t preclude a kind of “terror,” or adventurous thrill, in not knowing how things would unfold. Ultimately, though, obedience to God was always a delight. But the fall has shattered this delight, creating a permanent possibility of division between the human will and God’s will and rendering obedience difficult in a way that it never was before.

## Chapter 6 Quotes

☞ He was a man obsessed with the idea which is at this moment circulating all over our planet in obscure works of “scientifiction,” in little Interplanetary Societies and Rocketry Clubs [...] It is the idea that humanity, having now sufficiently corrupted the planet where it arose, must at all costs contrive to seed itself over a larger area: that the vast astronomical distances which are God’s quarantine regulations, must somehow be overcome. This for a start. But beyond this lies the sweet poison of the false infinite—the wild dream that planet after planet, system after system, in the end galaxy after galaxy can be forced to sustain, everywhere and for ever, the sort of life which is contained in the loins of our own species—a dream begotten by the hatred of death[.]

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), Professor Weston/Weston’s Body/The Un-man, Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 70

### Explanation and Analysis

In this quote, the character of Weston is introduced as an embodiment of contemporary science fiction as C. S. Lewis critiques it. Lewis sees the driving force of much science fiction as an imperialistic desire to take over other planets—not only to take them over, but also to import the modern world’s sin-corrupted ideas to other worlds and species. This desire, he goes on to argue, is rooted in a desire to escape mortality (“the sweet poison of the false

infinite—the wild dream”). Through science, in other words, people try to artificially prolong human life, even if only by exporting humanity across ever farther distances and pushing technological limits in a misguided attempt to outrun what God has put in place—both the natural distance between worlds and the reality of death itself. In a sense, human beings have always been searching for a new “garden of Eden,” a fresh starting-point—but in his portrayal of Weston, Lewis suggests that as long as human beings remain tainted by sin, such a quest is doomed before it starts.

## Chapter 7 Quotes

☞ “My dear Ransom,” said Weston, “I understand you perfectly. I have no doubt that my phraseology will seem strange to you, and perhaps even shocking. Early and revered associations may have put it out of your power to recognise in this new form the very same truths which religion has so long preserved and which science is now at last rediscovering. But whether you can see it or not, believe me, we are talking about exactly the same thing.”

“I’m not at all sure that we are.”

“That, if you will permit me to say so, is one of the real weaknesses of organised religion—that adherence to formula, that failure to recognise one’s own friends. God is a spirit, Ransom. Get hold of that.”

**Related Characters:** Lewis, Dr. Elwin Ransom, Professor Weston/Weston’s Body/The Un-man (speaker)

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 79

### Explanation and Analysis

In this quote the conflict between Weston’s and Ransom’s worldviews is further unpacked. Weston, newly arrived on Perelandra, has been trying to persuade Ransom that their goals—Weston’s scientific and Ransom’s religious—are really no different after all. He claims that religion’s outdated language and timeworn formulas have been rediscovered in newer, better forms by science, and that science and religion are just expressing the same truths by different means. The example he offers is that God is a spirit, a belief that Ransom, as a Christian, doesn’t deny.

But, as their conversation continues, it’s clear that Weston actually means something very different by this than Ransom does. Weston uses the language of “spirit” to champion some vague Life-Force which propels him to new

achievements in interplanetary dominance. Ransom would argue for a far more concrete definition of God's nature than that. This quote is an example of Lewis's view, found often in the novel, that so-called modern uses of language are tend to be more manipulative than older ones and often express a great deal less—hence Weston's attempt to convince Ransom that they believe the same things, when scratching beneath the surface suggests the opposite.

## Chapter 8 Quotes



☞ "I have said already that we are forbidden to dwell on the Fixed Land. Why do you not either talk of something else or stop talking?"


"Because this forbidding is such a strange one," said [Weston's] voice. "And so unlike the ways of Maleldil in my world. And He has not forbidden you to think about dwelling on the Fixed Land. [...] [I]n our world we do it all the time. We put words together to mean things that have never happened and places that never were: beautiful words, well put together. And then tell them to one another. We call it stories or poetry. [...] It is for mirth and wonder and wisdom."

"What is the wisdom in it?"

"Because the world is made up not only of what is but of what might be. Maleldil knows both and wants us to know both."

**Related Characters:** The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril, Professor Weston/Weston's Body/The Un-man, Lewis (speaker), Maleldil, Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 89

### Explanation and Analysis

When Weston meets the perfectly innocent Green Lady on Perelandra, he quickly sets to work tempting her to sin. This intentionally parallels the story of Satan's temptation of Eve in the Garden of Eden, except that in the Genesis story, Satan (in the form of a serpent) tempted Eve to question God's command that Adam and Even not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. On Perelandra, Maleldil has forbidden the King and Queen from dwelling on the Fixed Land—they must only sleep and live on the planet's floating islands—although they may visit the land.



Weston attacks Maleldil's command on multiple fronts. He argues that there's no obvious reason for the command, as it doesn't sound like the commands Maleldil gives on Earth.

He also argues that Maleldil hasn't forbidden the *idea* of dwelling on the Fixed Land and goads the Lady into just *thinking* about dwelling on the Fixed Land as if she were telling a story or writing a poem. By this, Lewis doesn't suggest that stories are somehow wicked. He simply has Weston use the idea of stories as a foothold in the Lady's mind for the concept of falsehood, which is foreign to her. Further, the idea of "what might be" provides a foothold for the idea that Maleldil wants his creatures to consider—and perhaps eventually to *do*—something other than what he has commanded them.

## Chapter 9 Quotes

☞ [...] Ransom had as yet seen nothing dead or spoiled in Perelandra, and it was like a blow in the face. [...] It was irrevocable. The milk-warm wind blowing over the golden sea, the blues and silvers and greens of the floating garden, the sky itself—all these had become, in one instant, merely the illuminated margin of a book whose text was the struggling little horror at his feet, and he himself, in that same instant, had passed into a state of emotion which he could neither control nor understand. [...] It was not merely pity for pain that had suddenly changed the rhythm of his heart-beats. The thing was an intolerable obscenity which afflicted him with shame.

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 94

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes an experience shortly after Weston's arrival on Perelandra. One morning, Ransom walks along the shore and discovers a little froglike creature that has been wantonly mutilated. Weston had simply grabbed and torn the helpless animal for no reason except for the twisted enjoyment it gave him. To him, the creature can be tossed aside like trash. To Ransom, however, it feels like the center of existence—like the main subject in an illuminated manuscript, all of Perelandra's lush beauty being pushed to the margins.

The reason for Ransom's distress is that, first of all, such suffering has never occurred before in the incorrupt world of Perelandra. Now that it has happened, it can never be undone. On top of that, though he doesn't directly say it, Ransom feels shame over what a fellow creature of Earth has wrought on Perelandra. Though Weston has not yet tempted the planet's rational beings (the Green Lady and

her husband) to sin, he has nevertheless caused needless pain and death to its innocent creatures, leaving a trail of corruption.

☛ [The smile] seemed to summon Ransom, with horrible naïveté of welcome, into the world of its own pleasures, as if all men were at one in those pleasures, as if they were the most natural thing in the world and no dispute could ever have occurred about them. It was not furtive, nor ashamed, it had nothing of the conspirator in it. It did not defy goodness, it ignored it to the point of annihilation. Ransom perceived that he had never before seen anything but half-hearted and uneasy attempts at evil. This creature was whole-hearted. The extremity of its evil had passed beyond all struggle into some state which bore a horrible similarity to innocence. It was beyond vice as the Lady was beyond virtue.

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril, Professor Weston/Weston's Body/The Un-man, Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 95

### Explanation and Analysis

When Ransom confronts Weston for killing Perelandra's small creatures, he's greeted with Weston's chilling smile, which is significant because it offers Ransom insight into the nature of deepest evil. The most horrible thing about the smile is that it takes wickedness for granted as normal and desirable, not something to be hidden. It strips away any pretense and boldly invites others to take part in it. While Ransom might have assumed that evil would be calculating and profound, he finds Weston's evil to be terrifying in its shallowness. In this way, it's the mirror image of the Green Lady's innocence, in that it requires no special effort to uphold—it simply is what it is. While Weston (or, as Ransom soon calls him, the Un-man) maintains a veneer of intelligence while talking with the Lady, he shows Ransom his true face, which also gives Ransom the ability to hate and kill him when called upon, since Weston (or the demonic being inside him) has no humanity left.

☛ "And will you teach us Death?" said the Lady to Weston's shape, where it stood above her.

"Yes," it said, "it is for this that I came here, that you may have Death in abundance. But you must be very courageous."

"*Courageous*. What is that?"


"It is what makes you to swim on a day when the waves are so great and swift that something inside you bids you to stay on land."

"I know. And those are the best days of all for swimming."

"Yes. But to find Death, and with Death the real oldness and the strong beauty and the uttermost branching out, you must plunge into things greater than waves."

**Related Characters:** The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril, Professor Weston/Weston's Body/The Un-man, Lewis (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 98



### Explanation and Analysis


In one of his conversations with the Green Lady, Weston offers to teach her about Death, which she has been curious about since she first heard Ransom mention it. Being totally innocent, she has no concept of death as something to be feared and avoided. Preying on this, Weston gives a chilling twist on the words of Christ in the Gospel of John, when he promises that he has come to give his followers abundant life. The Lady, of course, doesn't know any better, and when Weston speaks of the need for courage, the Lady hears this as an invitation to something adventurous and delightful, because that's the only kind of risk she has ever known—plunging into the "waves" Maleldil sends her in his goodness and kindness. Weston also twists the "promise" of death into a kind of mysterious growth that will make the Lady stronger, more beautiful, and wiser than she has ever been. Weston's tactics illustrate how, in Lewis's view, temptation gets its power from the subtle twisting of truth into falsehood.

“Your deepest will, at present, is to obey Him [...] The way out of that is hard. It was made hard that only the very great, the very wise, the very courageous should dare to walk in it, to go on—on out of this smallness in which you now live—through the dark wave of His forbidding, into the real life, Deep Life, with all its joy and splendour and hardness.”

“Listen, Lady,” said Ransom. “There is something he is not telling you. [...] Long ago, when our world began, there was only one man and one woman in it, as you and the King are in this. And there once before he stood, as he stands now, talking to the woman. [...] And she listened, and did the thing Maleldil had forbidden her to do. But no joy and splendour came of it.”

**Related Characters:** Dr. Elwin Ransom, Professor Weston/Weston’s Body/The Un-man, Lewis (speaker), Maleldil, The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril

**Related Themes:**  

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 102

### Explanation and Analysis

This exchange is an example from another stage of Weston’s temptation of the Lady. Weston, or the diabolical being which controls him, has begun by suggesting to the Lady that perhaps Maleldil doesn’t want *all* his commands to be obeyed. Perhaps, he insinuates, Maleldil really wants his creatures to *seem* to disobey what Maleldil has only *seemed* to command (namely, not to dwell on the Fixed Land). The goal of such seeming disobedience is to allow creatures to mature in their wisdom; thus it’s really a fulfillment of Maleldil’s will, Weston claims.

In this passage, Weston builds on this argumentation by suggesting that such disobedience is hard, something that only the few and great manage to achieve. He also sprinkles just enough truth into his argument—for example, that Maleldil desires his creatures’ growth and deeper obedience—to make it sound plausible to the Lady’s innocent ears. Ransom, knowing about the fall of Adam and Eve on Earth, is able to detect this distortion, but the Lady cannot. Weston’s tactics suggest that temptation is often a subtle twisting of the truth which plays on the innocent desires of the tempted.

“If the attack had been of some more violent kind it might have been easier to resist. What chilled and almost cowed him was the union of malice with something nearly childish. For temptation, for blasphemy, for a whole battery of horrors, he was in some sort prepared: but hardly for this petty, indefatigable nagging as of a nasty little boy at a preparatory school. [...] On the surface, great designs and an antagonism to Heaven which involved the fate of worlds: but deep within, when every veil had been pierced, was there, after all, nothing but a black puerility, an aimless empty spitefulness content to sate itself with the tiniest cruelties, as love does not disdain the smallest kindness?”

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom, Professor Weston/Weston’s Body/The Un-man

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 106



### Explanation and Analysis

After the Green Lady falls asleep, Ransom is forced to guard her body for fear that the Un-man will try to hurt her. During this long vigil, Ransom learns more about the nature of evil. The Un-man’s behavior actually surprises him. Ransom, a veteran of World War I, had expected that deep wickedness would be violent, or at least cruelly calculating. Instead, the Un-man’s cruelties—like obscene jokes and relentlessly calling Ransom’s name until he’s forced to respond—are startlingly shallow. This actually frightens Ransom even more. In the case of love, one finds that the deeper it goes, the more profound it becomes. When it comes to evil, however, it seems that the profundity is only on the surface. While the Un-man shows the Lady an appearance of wisdom, it’s all superficial; Ransom sees that the deeper one penetrates, the more banal, childish, and petty evil becomes. Thus there’s a counter-intuitive emptiness to evil. This accords with the views of Christian theologians like Augustine, who believed that evil has no existence in itself; it can only be a corruption of good.

## Chapter 10 Quotes

☝☝ She stood like one almost dazed with the richness of a day-dream. She did not look in the least like a woman who is thinking about a new dress. The expression of her face was noble. It was a great deal too noble. Greatness, tragedy, high sentiment—these were obviously what occupied her thoughts. Ransom perceived that the affair of the robes and the mirror had been only superficially concerned with what is commonly called female vanity. The image of her beautiful body had been offered to her only as a means to awake the far more perilous image of her great soul. The external and, as it were, dramatic conception of the self was the enemy's true aim. He was making her mind a theatre in which that phantom self should hold the stage. He had already written the play.

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom, Professor Weston/Weston's Body/The Un-man, The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 118


**Explanation and Analysis**

One of the Un-man's final tactics in tempting the Green Lady is to cause her to become preoccupied with her own beauty. He does this by giving her a dress, showing her a mirror, and assuring her that she looks more beautiful than ever. But as Ransom quickly perceives, there's more at stake than the temptation to superficial vanity. What Weston is truly after is to make the Lady conscious of the potential nobility of her soul—to awaken her ego, in other words. This has been his aim all along, ever since he suggested that the Lady just *imagine* dwelling on the forbidden Fixed Land. As she envisions herself as the actor in such a scene, the Lady will begin to see herself as the center of the universe—a place that Maleldil had previously occupied in her heart. This shift in consciousness sets the stage for sin. The line, "He had already written the play," is doubly chilling because it's a reminder that Maleldil isn't the only one who has a plan—so does Satan. But because Ransom sees what's happening, he is able to intervene to thwart Weston's plan before it's too late.

## Chapter 11 Quotes

☝☝ It snapped like a violin string. Not one rag of all this evasion was left. Relentlessly, unmistakably, the Darkness pressed down upon him the knowledge that this picture of the situation was utterly false. His journey to Perelandra was not a moral exercise, nor a sham fight. If the issue lay in Maleldil's hands, Ransom and the Lady were those hands. The fate of a world really depended on how they behaved in the next few hours. The thing was irreducibly, nakedly real. They could, if they chose, decline to save the innocence of this new race, and if they declined its innocence would not be saved. It rested with no other creature in all time or all space. This he saw clearly, though as yet he had no inkling of what he could do.

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), Maleldil, The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril, Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 121



**Explanation and Analysis**

Ransom knows that the Un-man must be stopped and that, somehow, it's his responsibility to stop him. However, all Ransom's attempts to reason with the Lady by offering counter-arguments have failed. Gradually, he realizes that he will have to stop the Un-man through brute force. He tries to evade this thought, hoping that Maleldil will intervene in some other way. But Maleldil's waiting presence prompts Ransom to realize the truth. Much as his friend Lewis reduced spiritual warfare to a psychological metaphor, Ransom has tried to dodge what's at stake now. But he knows he hasn't been sent all the way to Perelandra in order to argue, evade, or simply try his best. The fate of this world really rests on his shoulders. Ransom's struggle with this concept suggests that, according to the author, drawing fine distinctions between divine and human effort is self-defeating. Maleldil alone can bring about Perelandra's salvation from corruption, but at the same time, Perelandra will not be saved if Ransom shirks his responsibility through rationalization or fear.



Long since on Mars, and more strongly since he came to Perelandra, Ransom had been perceiving that the triple distinction of truth from myth and of both from fact was purely terrestrial—was part and parcel of that unhappy division between soul and body which resulted from the Fall. Even on earth the sacraments existed as a permanent reminder that the division was neither wholesome nor final. The Incarnation had been the beginning of its disappearance. In Perelandra it would have no meaning at all. Whatever happened here would be of such a nature that earth-men would call it mythological. All this he had thought before. Now he knew it. The Presence in the darkness, never before so formidable, was putting these truths into his hands, like terrible jewels.

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), Maleldil, Professor Weston/Weston's Body/The Un-man, Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**  


**Page Number:** 122

### Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes Ransom's process of coming to terms with what he must do to save Perelandra. Because Ransom has a philosophical bent, his reasoning can be slightly difficult to follow. Basically, Ransom's experience on Perelandra convinces him that the earthly distinction between "myth" and "fact" is meaningless. Like the soul/body distinction, it only came about because of human sin. Ransom comes to this conclusion after witnessing things on Perelandra—fantastic creatures like dragons, perfectly nourishing fruits, and other fragments of earthly mythologies—that he had previously assigned to fiction. In other words, things which earthbound people would regard as mythological have literal existence here. Ransom sees this as the logical conclusion of an uncorrupted world. On Earth, it took Maleldil's incarnation as a man (Jesus) to begin to heal the body/soul divide (the church's sacraments—tangible signs like baptism and the Eucharist—are an aspect of this healing). On Perelandra, the divide never happened in the first place. Of course, this means that Ransom's effort to save Perelandra must also have a "mythological" dimension, which will take the form of an epic fight with Weston.

The pattern is so large that within the little frame of earthly experience there appear pieces of it between which we can see no connection, and other pieces between which we can. [...] But step outside that frame and the distinction drops down into the void, fluttering useless wings. He had been forced out of the frame, caught up into the larger pattern. [...] Before his Mother had born him, before his ancestors had been called Ransoms, before ransom had been the name for a payment that delivers, before the world was made, all these things had so stood together in eternity that the very significance of the pattern at this point lay in their coming together in just this fashion. And he bowed his head and groaned and repined against his fate—to be still a man and yet to be forced up into the metaphysical world, to enact what philosophy only thinks.

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 125

### Explanation and Analysis

Ransom's surname is derived from "Ranolf's son," or so he has always believed. But as Ransom comes to terms with the fact that he must fight Weston in order to save Perelandra, he realizes that reality is more complex than he knew. Maleldil reminds Ransom that he, too, is called "Ransom"—in other words, Christ is the one whose death pays for human beings' sinfulness and redeems them. Now, Ransom faces the truth that he, like Christ, is called upon to act as a sort of "ransom" by suffering and possibly even dying for Perelandra. While the coincidence seems like a pun, Ransom now believes that his name is simply a reflection of the larger pattern which Maleldil has always planned for him and all his creatures. Ransom is not comfortable in this situation—he's a scholar, and he is happiest when pondering philosophical problems, not engaging in world-saving acts—but he submits to his destiny out of faith in Maleldil's will.

## Chapter 13 Quotes

☛☛ And the dark came. Horror of death such as he had never known, horror of the terrified creature at his side, descended upon Ransom: finally, horror with no definite object. In a few minutes he could see through the jet-black night the luminous cloud of foam. From the way in which it shot steeply upward he judged it was breaking on cliffs. Invisible birds, with a shriek and flurry, passed low overhead.

"Are you there, Weston?" he shouted. "What cheer? Pull yourself together. All that stuff you've been talking is lunacy. Say a child's prayer if you can't say a man's. Repent your sins. Take my hand. There are hundreds of mere boys on Earth facing death this moment. We'll do very well."

**Related Characters:** Dr. Elwin Ransom, Lewis (speaker), Professor Weston/Weston's Body/The Un-man

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 146

**Explanation and Analysis**


After a brutal fight and a seemingly endless chase across Perelandra's oceans, Ransom and Weston seem to be about to meet their death, as they are moments away from crashing on the rocks of an island. Weston, whose true personality has briefly resurfaced from the depths of his demon-inhabited form, is terrified, and he spends his final moments rambling incoherently about the meaninglessness of life and the utter terror of death. Ransom, despite his robust Christian faith, isn't immune to fear, either. However, he deals with it in entirely different way. He urges Weston to show courage, entrust himself to God, and remember that young soldiers on Earth are currently faced with far more terrifying deaths. In other words, he shows that while fear of death is natural, it can be faced with good cheer, rationality, and faith nonetheless. He also shows his compassion, as he tries to comfort and encourage Weston despite the man being Ransom's nemesis and, for much of the novel, the embodiment of evil. It turns out that neither man dies right away, although Weston makes a last effort to drown Ransom, and Ransom must then strangle Weston to death.

## Chapter 14 Quotes

☛☛ "They want to frighten me," said something in Ransom's brain, and at the same moment he became convinced both that the Un-man had summoned this great crawler and also that the evil thoughts which had preceded the appearance of the enemy had been poured into his own mind by the enemy's will. The knowledge that his thoughts could be thus managed from without did not awake terror but rage. Ransom found that he had risen, that he was approaching the Un-man, that he was saying things, perhaps foolish things, in English. "Do you think I'm going to stand *this*?" he yelled. "Get out of my brain. It isn't yours, I tell you! Get out of it." As he shouted he had picked up a big, jagged stone from beside the stream. [...]

"In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, here goes—I mean Amen," said Ransom, and hurled the stone as hard as he could into the Un-man's face.

**Related Characters:** Dr. Elwin Ransom, Lewis (speaker), Professor Weston/Weston's Body/The Un-man

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 155

**Explanation and Analysis**



Unsurprisingly, it turns out that Ransom's strangling of Weston isn't actually the end. Weston, or the demonic being possessing his body, somehow reanimates his battered form and tenaciously pursues Ransom once more into the depths of the ocean cave. As Weston approaches, Ransom is briefly overwhelmed with a horrible foreboding and frightened by the sight of a monstrous insect that Weston drags along with him. But when he gathers his wits, he realizes that Weston is making a last-ditch and almost laughable attempt to scare him. All of Weston's previous tactics have failed him—twisted reasoning, petty torment, and violence—so all he has left is literally a scary bug. Ransom's final killing of Weston is anticlimactic—and even somewhat funny—which suggests that, once the fear of death has been overcome, even a demonic figure can only be so threatening. Also, according to this passage, faith in God always conquers fear of the demonic. Once Ransom smashes the Un-man, his perceptions return to normal, and even the oversized insect appears innocent.

## Chapter 16 Quotes

“The world is born to-day,” said Malacandra. “To-day for the first time two creatures of the low worlds, two images of Maleldil that breathe and breed like the beasts, step up that step at which your parents fell, and sit in the throne of what they were meant to be. It was never seen before. Because it did not happen in your world a greater thing happened, but not this. Because the greater thing happened in Thulcandra, this and not the greater thing happens here.”

“Elwin is falling to the ground,” said the other voice.

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), The King/Tor, The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 169

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Ransom recovers from his long journey through the cave, he eventually finds his way to a mountain clearing where the reign of Perelandra’s King and Queen will be inaugurated. But that’s not the only thing being celebrated. As Ransom learns from the two *eldila* in attendance (the head *eldils* of Mars and Venus), it’s the first time that rational creatures (those who are made in Maleldil’s image and “breathe and breed”) have retained their original purity and innocence. By contrast, Earth’s Adam and Eve fell and could never regain their original splendor, their sin tainting all their offspring. Because Adam and Eve’s fall is a defining narrative of Ransom’s world, he is completely overcome by the new thing he now witnesses on Perelandra—hence his faint. The *eldila* also make the point that Maleldil was not thwarted by the fall of humanity—instead he did a “greater thing,” the incarnation and redemption wrought by Christ. However, a different story is being played out on Perelandra, which is equally Maleldil’s doing. Science fiction is Lewis’s vehicle for imagining what an unfallen world might have looked like.

Gender is a reality, and a more fundamental reality than sex. Sex is, in fact, merely the adaptation to organic life of a fundamental polarity which divides all created beings. Female sex is simply one of the things that have feminine gender; there are many others, and Masculine and Feminine meet us on planes of reality where male and female would be simply meaningless. [...] Their reproductive functions, their differences in strength and size, partly exhibit, but partly also confuse and misrepresent, the real polarity. All this Ransom saw, as it were, with his own eyes. The two white creatures were sexless. But he of Malacandra was masculine (not male); she of Perelandra was feminine (not female).

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 172



**Explanation and Analysis**

While they are waiting for the ceremony to begin, the two Oyarsa decide to transform into shapes visible to the eyes of rational creatures. When they do so, Ransom is overwhelmed by the perception of a fundamental masculinity and femininity—Mars being “masculine” and Venus being “feminine”—which he later haltingly describes to Lewis. He suggests that physical sexual difference, as it’s seen in the distinction between male and female on Earth, is merely an echo or dim expression of a far greater reality embedded in the universe at large. Such things as reproductive function and other characteristics, often regarded as fundamental to sexual difference on Earth, can even obscure this reality more than they reveal it. Ransom cannot say much more than this about the expressions of gender he witnesses on Perelandra—it is simply one more detail of the *eldila* that surpasses human capacity to understand. He does explore this topic in greater detail in the final book of the Space Trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*.

## Chapter 17 Quotes

●● The eyes of the Queen looked upon him with love and recognition, but it was not of the Queen that he thought most. It was hard to think of anything but the King. And how shall I—who have not seen him—tell you what he was like? It was hard even for Ransom to tell me of the King's face. But we dare not withhold the truth. It was that face which no man can say he does not know. You might ask how it was possible to look upon it and not to commit idolatry, not to mistake it for that of which it was the likeness. For the resemblance was, in its own fashion, infinite, so that almost you could wonder at finding no sorrows in his brow and no wounds in his hands and feet.

**Related Characters:** Lewis (speaker), The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril, The King/Tor, Dr. Elwin Ransom

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 177

**Explanation and Analysis**

This quote describes Ransom's first sight of the King, who up to this point has not appeared in the story. His absence is partly because of the story's focus on the Green Lady's struggle against temptation, and because the ocean waves had separated the King from his wife before Ransom's arrival.

But this quote suggests that there's another reason, too. When Ransom sees the King's face, he sees the likeness of Christ. This reflects the Christian belief in Christ as the "Second Adam"—the sinless recapitulation of the first man, Adam as he was always meant to be. On Perelandra, there is no need of a Second Adam because the first Adam-figure, the King, never fell. But because Ransom is a Christian from Earth, Perelandra's King reminds him of the one who came to his own world as a redeemer. This revelation helps draw together the Christian themes that have run throughout the book. Although events on Perelandra don't perfectly parallel those on Earth—the story is not meant to be a one-to-one allegory—the correspondences are a reminder of Maleldil's reign over all worlds.

●● "So this is *hru*," he said at last. "I have never seen such a fluid before. And this is the substance wherewith Maleldil remade the worlds before any world was made."

He washed the foot for a long time but the bleeding did not stop. "Does it mean Piebald will die?" said Tinidril at last.

"I do not think so," said Tor. "I think that any of his race who has breathed the air that he has breathed and drunk the waters that he has drunk since he came to the Holy Mountain will not find it easy to die. Tell me, Friend, was it not so in your world that after they had lost their paradise the men of your race did not learn to die quickly?"

"I had heard," said Ransom, "that those first generations were long livers, but most take it for only a Story or a Poetry and I had not thought of the cause."

**Related Characters:** The Green Lady/The Queen/Tinidril, The King/Tor, Dr. Elwin Ransom, Lewis (speaker)

**Related Themes:**  

**Page Number:** 189

**Explanation and Analysis**

After Ransom's battle with the Un-man, he has a bleeding wound on his heel for the rest of his life. This is practically the only blood that has ever been shed on Perelandra, and the King has never seen the substance before (*hru* in the Old Solar language). Nevertheless, he knows it is the means through which God redeemed the Earth, and thereby indirectly saved Perelandra, too. The bleeding isn't a coincidence; even though Ransom isn't a sinless savior like Christ, he does, in a sense, bleed for the salvation of a whole world. This is a reference to the "bruised heel" mentioned in Genesis 3:15, which is traditionally believed to anticipate Christ's redemption. Tor makes another Genesis reference, too—recalling that early humans were said to have lived for centuries, even after being expelled from Paradise for their sin. Ransom, always fascinated by the correspondences between supposed myths and realities, wonders if this is because death remained somewhat unnatural to them even after Adam and Eve's fall. Regardless of whether this "Story or Poetry" is meant to be read literally, the passage suggests that it communicates something real about humanity's original incorruption.



## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

## CHAPTER 1

Late one autumn afternoon, Lewis sets out from the train station to walk to Ransom's cottage, reflecting on the remarkable man he's about to see. Ransom, he knows, has visited Mars. While there, Ransom met not only Mars' inhabitants, but also creatures called *eldila*, including the ruler of Mars, the Oyarsa of Malacandra. The *eldila* are very different from earthly creatures. They don't breathe, eat, reproduce, or die, and in that sense they resemble "thinking minerals" more than animals. They reside in space, or Deep Heaven.

Lewis has received a wire from Ransom requesting that he come down for a visit to discuss "business." Lewis finds the *eldila* troubling; ever since his return from Mars, Ransom seems to be haunted by these beings. As he walks along, Lewis realizes that he feels afraid of the *eldila*—afraid of meeting one and afraid of being "drawn in" to their business.

Part of Lewis's discomfort with the *eldila* is that they don't fit neatly into a single category—they could be classified as both "scientific" (like H. G. Wells's Martians or Selenites) and "supernatural" (like angels, ghosts, or fairies). Lewis observes that a strict division between these two categories "ease[s] the burden of intolerable strangeness," but that, in fact, such a division is really artificial.

Lewis suddenly realizes that he left his bag on the train. At first, he starts retracing his steps toward the station, but then he comes to his senses; by this time, his bag is miles away, and he's really just trying to avoid his meeting with Ransom. He thinks about the *eldila* again. Ransom had explained that Earth has its own *eldila*, the Tellurian *eldils*, but they're generally hostile to people and to the *eldils* of Deep Heaven. Earth, in fact, is effectively under siege. The hostile *eldils*' occupation of earth explains "that fatal bent" of history. Lewis supposes it's a good thing, in light of this, that the better *eldila* of Deep Heaven are, according to Ransom, beginning to pay attention to events on Earth.

*Here, the author inserts himself into the world of the novel as its narrator. Right away, Lewis emerges as the relatively ordinary character while Ransom, by contrast, is the exciting interplanetary adventurer. A flurry of unfamiliar terms are immediately introduced, too, pulling the reader into a disorienting new world in which Mars—and its creatures—can be encountered.*



*Lewis is also more skeptical than his friend Ransom. He holds Ransom's discovery of the *eldila* at arm's length, not ready to trust these alien beings. Their seemingly attractive, irresistible pull makes them unpredictable and therefore a bit threatening.*



*C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy series is, in part, a rebuttal of certain ideas of English science fiction author H. G. Wells. The "Selenites" that the narrator refers to in this passage are inhabitants of the Moon in Wells's *The First Men in the Moon*. One of his responses to Wells involves reimagining the creatures of outer space—while such creatures certainly show evidence of advanced scientific knowledge, Lewis suggests that there are supernatural mysteries about the universe that transcend the merely scientific. Drawing a hard line between the scientific and the supernatural, he suggests, actually obscures the sheer strangeness of these creatures—and how much humans don't understand.*



*Lewis fears meeting Ransom and perhaps encountering the *eldils* himself, sensing he'll get pulled into something bigger than he's bargained for. However, according to Ransom, the earth is already part of an interplanetary war, whether people realize it or not. By "that fatal bent" of human history, he refers to human wickedness and wrongdoing—in short, sin. In some way, Earth's hostile *eldils* are responsible for ensnaring human beings in sin. This is an offense to the *eldils* of Deep Heaven.*



Briefly, Lewis wonders if Ransom might have been duped—what if something from outer space is trying to invade Earth, and they’re using Ransom as their Trojan Horse? Lewis is struck by a strong urge to turn back and give Ransom an excuse. Then he wonders if he’s having a nervous breakdown.

With difficulty, Lewis forces himself onward, believing deep down that he’s moving toward a friend yet *feeling* like he’s approaching an enemy. His cold, foggy surroundings feel ominous, and he almost screams when a cat darts past, alternately doubting his sanity and the sanity of the rest of the world. He wonders if conventional “sanity” is simply ignoring the truth about the world. Nevertheless, Lewis doesn’t “doubt the reality of that mysterious being whom the eldila call Maleldil and to whom they appear to give a total obedience [...]. I knew what Ransom supposed Maleldil to be.”

Lewis finally reaches Ransom’s cottage, but he sees no sign of Ransom. Feeling a heavy reluctance and an almost tangible sense of resistance, he fights his way to the door. On the knocker he finds a note from Ransom, explaining that he had been called up to Cambridge and won’t return until the late train. Lewis again feels the urge to flee but recoils from the thought of retracing his journey, and despite his fears, he doesn’t want to let his friend down. He enters the unlocked cottage.

Inside, Lewis promptly trips over something. Unable to keep a match lit, he gropes his way around the smooth, cold object, unable to determine what it is. Then he thinks he hears Ransom’s voice, but it doesn’t exactly sound human; it sounds more like a musical instrument, or somehow like light itself, and the sound thrills Lewis. He also sees a faint pillar of light, whose color he is unable to describe. Lewis is certain he is seeing the Oyarsa of Malacandra, the ruler of Mars.

Lewis’s earlier fears about the eldils and about Ransom fade, but he’s still uneasy. He senses that the creature in the cottage is “good,” yet somehow its “goodness” unnerves him. He feels helpless in its presence and suddenly realizes that he’s been “drawn in,” as he feared—yet, now that the struggle is over, he feels relief. Just then, Ransom appears in the door and speaks with the pillar of light in a strange language. Lewis feels a flash of jealousy and resentment at this, but he just greets Ransom, saying, “Thank God you’ve come.”

*Though Lewis is evidently Ransom’s trusted confidant, even Lewis struggles to believe what Ransom has told him about his adventures in space. Lewis’s uneasiness appears almost as a form of temptation, urging him to turn back on his commitment to Ransom.*



*Here, Lewis struggles with the disconnect between his knowledge of Ransom as trustworthy and his more instinctual feeling that this might not actually be the case. That he continues to press on, though, suggests that when faced with fear, people must sometimes go against what they feel and instead rely on their reason. That’s particularly difficult when, as here, fear makes someone feel that their reason is under direct attack. This passage also introduces Maleldil, who appears to be a god figure.*



*Lewis is victorious over the fear that’s dogged him during his entire journey, even when Ransom isn’t there to welcome him. Ultimately, his triumph comes down to his desire to support his friend—suggesting that, sometimes, overcoming fear is not simply a matter of rationality but of acting on the basis of time-tested loyalties despite one’s misgivings.*



*Lewis’s fearful sense of the unknown persists, as his senses are disoriented by the intrusion of completely alien sights and sounds. Eldils, it seems, don’t operate according to human expectations. He also encounters his biggest fear, meeting an actual eldil.*



*Later, on the planet Perelandra, Ransom will encounter a deeper kind of goodness than any he knew on Earth. Here, Lewis gets a hint of such an unsettling goodness—a goodness that’s confrontational and irresistible all at the same time. Without even consciously deciding to, he finds that he’s yielded to that goodness. Ransom’s friendliness with the eldil makes Lewis envious, which is the novel’s first suggestion that wickedness lingers in human beings.*



## CHAPTER 2

Ransom lights a candle, allowing Lewis to recognize the object he'd tripped over as a large, open casket. Ransom apologizes for failing to meet Lewis at the station—he hadn't meant for Lewis to make that journey alone. He explains that Lewis experienced a "barrage" from Earth's *eldila*, who know what's going on and didn't want Lewis to get through. He tells Lewis it's best to ignore the things they try to put into one's head.

As they get supper, Ransom explains that the coffin is his vehicle for the journey into space. He's not returning to Malacandra, though he'd give anything to see it again. Instead he's being sent to Perelandra, or the planet Venus. He reminds Lewis that the Oyarsa of Malacandra had hinted that Earth's isolation from other planets might be ending. This is because the "two sides"—the bad *eldils* occupying earth and the good *eldils* of Deep Heaven—are beginning to reveal themselves more clearly through their influences on Earth's affairs. In addition, Earth's Oyarsa is considering some sort of attack on Perelandra. That's why Ransom has been ordered to go there by someone "higher up." He doesn't know what he'll do when he arrives.

Ransom points out that the Bible refers to people having to fight "principalities and powers." Lewis argues that this refers simply to moral conflict, prompting Ransom to burst out laughing. Ransom replies that, while it's true that people have usually encountered the Dark *eldila* in psychological or moral forms, that doesn't mean the same will hold true throughout every phase of the "war." If indeed Earth is entering a new phase of the conflict, then perhaps the enemy will have to be fought in a different mode.

Ransom's selection for this task, he says, is not for any special reason. It's probably because, when he was previously kidnapped and sent to Malacandra, it gave him the chance to master the Old Solar language, the old common speech of the solar system. Otherwise, he knows very little about Perelandra—just that it's hot (he'll be naked for the duration of his trip), and that details of the planet's movements, like the length of its days, remain a mystery. He's excited to find out more.

*The resistance Lewis felt on his way to Ransom's cottage wasn't just his own fear or doubt; hostile beings were besieging him—a hint that, in the story, resistance to temptation will not simply be a matter of mastering one's own emotions but of fighting against external forces, too. Sometimes, this is simply a matter of recognizing such forces to be liars.*



*The good *eldils* are something like angelic beings, and the bad ones are like demons. Ransom suggests that these two sides are directly affecting earthly events—this is the first implicit suggestion of World War II, which was raging while Lewis wrote the novel. This isn't to suggest a purely black-and-white, good-and-bad dichotomy between, say, British and Germans—Lewis would say that everyone is corrupted by sin—but to suggest that one side furthers the goals of the bad *eldils* more than the other. Also, despite Earth's isolation and most humans' obliviousness to worlds beyond, earthly events have repercussions far beyond this world.*



*Here, Ransom refers to a verse in the Book of Ephesians from the New Testament: "For we wrestle [...] against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of darkness." Lewis, in keeping with his eminently reasonable character, takes this language metaphorically. Overturning expectations, though, Ransom sees Lewis as the naïve one for holding this view, which he suggests is a sign of complacency in the fight against evil.*



*Ransom's point is that, when a person is chosen to carry out some task in accordance with God's will, often there's little room for pride in having been so selected; the reasoning is often mundane or mysterious. One must simply trust in the higher power (Maleldil in the world of the novel), accepting that this involves unknowns and adventure.*



Now Ransom explains that it's Lewis's job to pack Ransom into the coffin and then stand by to await his return and unpack him. The Oyarsa of Malacandra will propel the coffin to Perelandra—Ransom doesn't know how exactly. Lewis feels frightened again, and Ransom agrees that although he believes, objectively, that the Oyarsa will do as he's promised, Ransom still feels afraid. Ransom doesn't know how long he'll be gone—it could be as little as a few months, or it could be decades. Part of Lewis's burden, then, will be to choose a trustworthy successor in case he should die before Ransom's return.

The two men spend the rest of the night going over practical details to be taken care of in Ransom's absence. Lewis is presented to the Oyarsa and "sworn in." Then they lug the big casket into the chilly dawn. Lewis ties a black bandage around Ransom's head to protect his eyes from the sun and then fastens the lid onto the casket. The next thing Lewis knows, he's alone—the casket has vanished. He goes back inside and vomits.

A little more than a year later—a year filled with war and cruelties—Oyarsa comes to Lewis. Then he and Humphrey, Ransom's trusted doctor, find themselves once again in Ransom's garden. The casket descends from the sky and quietly lands between them. They hastily pry the lid off. After a moment, Ransom, covered with red flowers, sits up and greets them. He looks 10 years younger. He's also bleeding from one of his heels. After Ransom washes up and dresses, Lewis pours tea, and Ransom begins his story.

### CHAPTER 3

Ransom never says much about his journey to Perelandra, only revealing that his experiences were not too *vague* for words, but rather too *definite* for words. Eventually, Ransom becomes conscious of falling rapidly into a warm, golden twilight, then entering a green-tinted darkness and beginning to move upward again. Suddenly he realizes that the casket has dissolved. As he struggles to get his bearings, Ransom soon discovers that he's been unconsciously swimming, moving through a green, subtropical ocean. Its water is deliciously drinkable. There's no land in sight.

*Ransom's reaction to Maleldil's plan suggests that, besides wonder, there's often fear involved in the adventure of following Maleldil's will. But fear, Ransom argues, isn't antithetical to faith. Faced with such unknowns, it's natural for a human being to feel afraid, because they lack Maleldil's perspective on what will happen. But even a fearful person can still authentically trust in Maleldil and act on that trust by obeying him.*



*Ransom's preparations for departure, what with setting his affairs in order, the bandage, and the coffin-like conveyance, feel jarringly similar to his death. This reinforces the sense that he's embarking on an unprecedented kind of adventure and won't return the same, if he does return at all. Even Lewis's simple role makes him feel complicit in that "death," which is why he vomits.*



*Ransom's adventure takes place against the backdrop of ongoing world war, implying that, even though he's not directly engaged in warfare, his actions elsewhere aren't irrelevant to struggles on Earth. The contrast between Ransom's renewed youth and his wound is jarring—signs of brokenness and renewal side by side—creating a sense of expectation for the story to come. From this point forward, Lewis will narrate Ransom's story as Ransom relates it to him.*



*Ransom suggests that, while otherworldly experiences are sometimes described as ineffable, they're actually too concrete to be explained. By using space exploration to illustrate his spiritual ideas, then, he suggests that heavenly realities are quite tangible, not vague. This is further shown by the strong sensory experiences Ransom undergoes as soon as he surfaces on Perelandra: rich colors, warmth, and quenching waters.*





Riding the **waves** of this ocean and savoring its muted, green and gold light is a pleasant experience. In fact, this world as a whole seems to be filled with a rich sensory pleasure that, on Earth, Ransom would normally associate with a feeling of guilt. Here, though, there's no sense of excess. A thick rain begins to fall, but there's still no land in sight, and Ransom feels a little frightened for the first time.

As the rain and **waves** subside, Ransom, exhausted, notices something like a floating island and swims toward it. Grabbing a trailing vine, he manages to pull himself onto its surface and finds, to his relief, that it supports him. After resting awhile on the mattress-like surface, Ransom explores the strange floating country, its contours constantly changing with the waves. He spends a couple of hours teaching himself to balance and walk, falling often.

Eventually Ransom reaches a kind of forest, whose rich scent prompts an almost enjoyable hunger and thirst, making breathing itself a wondrous experience. At one point, he plucks and accidentally punctures a balloon-like yellow fruit. When he samples its juice, he soon empties it, finding a new depth of pleasure in the indescribable taste. He considers drinking another, but he finds there's no need—it would be “like asking to hear the same symphony twice in a day.” As Perelandra settles into an impenetrable darkness, Ransom falls into a comfortable sleep.

## CHAPTER 4

When Ransom wakes up, at first he thinks he's dreaming. A small, reddish-gold dragon is curled around the trunk of a nearby tree. The scene reminds him of the garden of the Hesperides. On Malacandra, Ransom had met the original Cyclops. Now he wonders if so-called mythological creatures are actually scattered throughout other worlds.

The seas are calm. Ransom cautiously tries addressing the dragon in Old Solar, introducing himself and asking if he's welcome. The dragon doesn't respond. When Ransom stands up, the dragon slowly uncoils, shakes itself, and bleats. It noses at Ransom for a moment and then turns away to eat some grass. Ransom decides it isn't a rational creature and begins heading off into the woods. Soon the dragon follows, sticking close to his side.

*On Earth, such intense pleasure might be associated with too much indulgence. But on Perelandra, these sensations seem just right. This suggests that Perelandra is a place that's not corrupted by malformed desires (sin). Even though Ransom is a human being and is thus inclined to sin, the innocent atmosphere impacts his senses.*



*In this strange new world, seemingly made up of floating land, Ransom has to relearn the basic functions of survival, like standing and walking. All his normal reference points are missing, and an attitude of wonder—coupled with a willingness to learn—is key to navigating his environment.*



*On Perelandra, even normal human cravings don't seem to carry the same sense of emptiness and insecurity that they do on Earth. In such an apparently innocent world, just to exist and experience one's environment is satisfying. And pleasures are so thoroughly satisfying that they don't require an encore. Again, this contrasts with life on Earth, where the temptation to overindulge can mar even good desires.*



*In Greek mythology, the Garden of the Hesperides belonged to the goddess Hera. The Garden contained a tree of golden apples, which were guarded by a dragon. The Cyclops were one-eyed creatures in Greek mythology. On Perelandra, part of the wonder is the reality of certain aspects of earthly mythology.*



*This charming scene shows that one really doesn't know what to expect on Perelandra—a dragon could be a talking creature, or it could be just an animal. Still, its friendliness expresses something of this world's enduring innocence.*



Ransom explores one of the many shimmering, spherical objects hanging from the nearby trees. When he gently touches one, the bubble bursts, giving him a cold shower and releasing a refreshing smell that sharpens all Ransom's senses. The whole world seems "re-enchanted," and with the dragon at his side, Ransom feels as if he's "enacting a myth."

Ransom resists the desire to go through an entire cluster of the refreshing bubbles—rather he feels as he did yesterday when he turned down a second drink from the gourd. He wonders whether the desire to "have things over again" is linked to the love of money and the desire to ensure that life unfolds in a certain way rather than receiving it as it comes. The dragon interrupts his lofty thoughts, resting its head on Ransom's knees until Ransom obligingly scratches its belly.

After a satisfying meal of berries, Ransom wonders what he's been sent here to do. Knowing he's part of a bigger plan, he doesn't feel lonely, as he did on Mars. For a while there's nothing to do but admire the shifting landscapes of the islands. Then he sees the dragon flying to a neighboring island, and this draws his attention to a fleet of silver, dolphin-like, spouting fish in the distance. Suddenly, noticing something on the back of the foremost fish, Ransom begins shouting—it's an unmistakable human form. He despairs when the form disappears, fearing that he's hallucinating and feeling his solitude more painfully than before.

Gradually, Ransom figures out that the other human-like figure might see him while he's on the crest of a **wave**, silhouetted against the sky. Eventually, this works—he waves while riding a crest, and he spots the other figure in a trough, waving back from its own island and beginning to run. As the figure gets nearer, Ransom sees that the person is green. Ransom is terrified that the two islands will get pushed apart by the heaving sea, but soon the islands draw close together. As the figure reaches the shore of the opposite island, Ransom sees that it's a woman. She looks disappointed.

Ransom sees that the green lady is accompanied by all sorts of beasts and birds, which are assembled expectantly around her. Ransom starts to address her in Old Solar, but to his surprise, the woman points at him and breaks into peals of laughter. The animals frolic along with her. Ransom is baffled but then realizes that, due to his partial exposure to the sun during his space voyage, his body is half white and half brownish-red, giving him a ridiculous appearance.

*Enchantment—an innocent delight in the world around a person, as opposed to a desire to use it in exploitative ways—seems to be a characteristic of life on Perelandra. Again, to someone from Earth, that innocence carries a sense of unreality about it, like participating in a fairy tale.*



*Like yesterday, Ransom finds that his desires are curbed—not in the sense of needing to engage in self-denial, but in enjoying something so thoroughly that he simply doesn't have the appetite for more. It's implied that this is what earthly appetites were meant to be like. Excessive appetite, Ransom thinks, is a kind of grasping for security, as opposed to trusting receptiveness.*



*Ransom's growing expectancy and eager desire to encounter another person suggests that, even in an innocent world, idleness and solitude aren't the goal—people are meant to have purpose and to desire companionship.*



*Ransom is about to make his first encounter with an apparently sentient alien creature. Their prolonged efforts to draw near to one another heighten suspense for the meeting, and the green woman's evident disappointment adds to the mystery around her, raising the question of who she was expecting to find.*



*The lady's accompaniment by animals suggests that she lives in total harmony with her natural environment, untouched by strife between different kinds of creatures, as one finds on Earth.*



When Ransom next looks at the Green Lady's face, she appears perfectly poised and calm. Noticing that evening is falling, Ransom tells her that he comes in peace, and he asks if he may swim to the Lady's island. She looks at him curiously and asks, "What is 'peace'?" Impatient at the growing distance between the islands, Ransom jumps into the water and swims desperately for the other island; after a brief, confusing struggle in the deepening dark, he finally grips a vine and pulls himself ashore.

*The Green Lady appears to have perfect mastery over her emotions at all times. She also lacks a sense of urgency, in contrast to Ransom's anxiety, and is curious about new ideas. The Green Lady, in other words, is an example of a creature who's untouched by sin and fully exercises her emotional and mental faculties.*



## CHAPTER 5

After an exhausted sleep, Ransom awakes to fresh daylight. To his surprise, he sees that several islands have drifted together overnight, creating a temporary continent. Across a narrow bit of water walks the Green Lady, singing to herself and braiding some flowers. Seeing her again, Ransom is overwhelmed by her beauty; even the greenness of her body seems perfectly fitting for this world. Nothing of sexual desire or shame enters his thoughts.

*As earlier when he felt no urge to gluttonously consume the delicious blossoms, Ransom finds that he doesn't feel lustful towards the Green Lady despite her unparalleled beauty. On Perelandra, in other words, he's able to enjoy beauty and pleasure with frank innocence, the way, Lewis implies, these things are meant to be enjoyed.*



The Green Lady says that yesterday, she was young, and she didn't know that people of Ransom's world don't like to be laughed at. She explains that she gets "older" each day. For her, the days change appearance as they approach, while they are here, and when they are past—much like **waves**. She nicknames Ransom "Piebald."

*Throughout the novel, the Green Lady refers to gaining knowledge in terms of aging—learning something new is getting "older," while her less knowledgeable state is associated with youth. She likens waves to the passage of time and the experience of change, suggesting that the past is like a swell in the distance, the present is a breaking wave, and the future is a shallow-water wave lapping against the shore.*



Ransom asks the Green Lady what she knows of other worlds, since Perelandra's sky is so dense that other planets can't be seen from here. At this, the Lady claps her hands with childlike delight. She realizes that in Ransom's world, one can look out directly toward space. She marvels at Maleldil's creativity in inventing so many different things.

*In her innocence, the Green Lady finds learning new things to be delightful—it's not something that creates a sense of lack, envy, or fear in her. Rather, it always prompts renewed gratitude for Maleldil's doings. It's another example of the Lady's innocence and the incorruption of her will.*



Ransom is puzzled that the Green Lady looks so much like an earthly woman, even though she is a different species entirely. The Lady says that Maleldil, right now, is telling her that it's because Ransom's world is older than hers. (Ransom notices that the world suddenly feels full of pressure, and he sinks to his knees.) The Lady says it's all because Maleldil first took human form on Earth. This caused time to turn a corner. Since then, creatures possessing Reason always take a human form.

Hesitating, Ransom asks if the Lady knows *why* Maleldil came to Earth. He feels ashamed to look at her. She says yes, but that it's a different reason than Ransom knows. Likewise, there's a reason *she* knows, but which Ransom cannot know. Ransom feels a bit overcome by this conversation and needs a rest. He asks if he can come over to the Lady's island, and she welcomes him.

Ransom sleeps a while and then wakes to find the dragon and a furry yellow wallaby at his side. The animals herd him in a particular direction, guiding him through some woods and a flowery field, until Ransom realizes they're leading him to the Green Lady. Ransom is struck anew by the Lady's stillness and goddess-like beauty. The animals frolic around her, and she speaks to them with both warmth and authority, sending them back into the woods.

Ransom asks the Green Lady if she knows for what purpose Maleldil has sent him to her world. She doesn't. He then asks if she can take him to her King, but she doesn't know where he is. The Lady tries to explain to Ransom that the King is the only other being of her kind, and that they were separated at one point when their islands drifted apart. Ransom, frustrated, asks who the Lady's mother is. She says that she is the Mother, and the King will be the Father of their children.

When the Green Lady understands that Earth contains many more of Ransom's kind, she instructs Ransom to convey her greetings to his own Mother. Ransom admits that the Mother of his world is dead. The Lady wonders if Ransom has been sent to Perelandra in order to teach her what *death* means. Ransom tries to explain that death is horrible. The Lady looks briefly bewildered by this idea, and even by the thought that anyone would *not* desire something which Maleldil sends.

*Because the Green Lady is sinless, she's able to communicate directly with Maleldil through her thoughts and perceptions. Ransom can't; for him, communication with Maleldil often takes the more cumbersome form of a heavy, irresistible presence. The Lady's explanation references Christian theology—because God became human in Jesus Christ, any creature possessing a rational nature (made, in other words, in the image of God) will now also take a human, or human-like, form. This might be an indirect critique of H. G. Wells—while Wells's science fiction suggests that humanity's position in the universe is because of humans' inherent superiority, Lewis argues that it's because the human form imitates God.*



*In Christian theology, the Incarnation (God becoming man) was a result of human sin. Because of her sinless state, the Lady is unable to comprehend this. Likewise, Ransom's sin makes him unable to comprehend other aspects of God's plan.*



*The Green Lady's kindly authority over the animals is another example of the uncorrupted harmony that prevails on Perelandra. The creatures are under the Lady's dominion and they respect her superiority as a rational creature unlike themselves, but she doesn't behave toward them in a dominating or cruel manner.*



*Until this point, Ransom has not fully realized that in talking with the Green Lady, he is dealing with one of the first rational beings (human equivalents) to exist in this world. In other words, he has arrived on Perelandra at the dawn of this world. This helps explain the fact that so much is new and unknown to the Lady—how “young” she is.*



*The “Mother” of Ransom's world is the biblical Eve, wife of Adam, from the Book of Genesis in the Christian Old Testament and the Hebrew Bible. According to the biblical account, when Eve was tempted, both she and Adam subsequently fell into sin and therefore died, bringing about the same corruptions for all their offspring. But Perelandra's Lady has no inkling of all this—not even a notion of something undesirable, much less of death.*



Ransom points out that when the Green Lady first saw him, she reacted with disappointment. She walks off to contemplate this, and Ransom realizes that her peace isn't a settled thing—it could be broken or lost. He feels terrified by this, but when the Lady looks at him again, the thought of “precariousness” transforms to “Adventure” in his mind.

When the Green Lady speaks again, she offers an example. If someone goes into the forest, she says, they might intend to pick a certain fruit, but they find a different fruit instead—meaning one joy has been given instead of the one someone expected. It had never occurred to her before that someone might hold onto the thing they *previously* desired—to “send your soul after the good you had expected, instead of turning it to the good you had got.”

The Green Lady goes on that she had always thought of herself as being carried along by Maleldil's will, but now she sees that she walks *with* it—“a delight with terror in it.” The walking along is itself the path; there's no predetermined path.

Ransom begins to find the Green Lady's words a bit off-putting. The Lady notices his frown and asks him what it means. He says it's nothing, but even this small lie feels like a great offense in this world. The Lady regards him thoughtfully and decides their conversation is over for now.

## CHAPTER 6

Even after the Green Lady leaves, Ransom continues to feel the weight of someone else's presence, as he'd first noticed during their conversation. When Ransom tries to resist that weight, it feels like a burden. When he gives himself up to it, however, it's no longer burdensome but a nourishing presence that seems to carry him. Gradually, he learns to yield to the presence instead of fighting it.

*Ransom uses the Lady's disappointment as a basis for explaining the notion of not wanting something which Maleldil sends. At this point, Ransom realizes that the Lady could be corrupted one day—in other words, she could undergo a “fall” equivalent to Adam and Eve's earthly one. Yet this unsettled aspect of her will—because of her innocence—is delightful, not fearful.*



*In the Lady's world, everything received from the hand of Maleldil is good. If she doesn't get what she expects (like when Ransom showed up instead of the King she sought), she receives the unexpected thing as just another good gift from Maleldil rather than dwelling on the thing she didn't receive. Because of Maleldil's goodness and the goodness of all he gives, it doesn't make sense to her that one would continue to pine for a good that wasn't given.*



*The Green Lady's will is in perfect harmony with Maleldil's—such that there's no perceptible difference between the two. Lewis portrays this harmonious walking as a kind of continuous adventure.*



*Ransom, unlike the Lady, isn't innocent of sin. Her perfect goodness—her harmony with Maleldil—is therefore somewhat unpalatable to him (reminiscent of Lewis's uncertainty whether he really liked the eldil's fierce goodness back in Ransom's cottage.)*



*Ransom's experience of Maleldil's presence differs from the Green Lady's in that Ransom, unlike her, has an ingrained reflex of trying to resist Maleldil's will. His experience suggests that human beings bring unnecessary burdens upon themselves through resistance, rather than yielding themselves to God's care.*



The island on which Ransom is floating is drifting near a large, craggy, mountainous piece of land—*fixed* land, he realizes. He longs to explore it. The next day, he and the Green Lady discuss the Fixed Land. The Lady is shocked to hear that on Earth, *all* the lands are fixed. She thinks for a while and then explains that Maleldil has bidden her and the King never to sleep on the **Fixed Land**, though they may walk on it. This means that there are different laws in different worlds.

The Green Lady feels overwhelmed by the knowledge that goodness is not the same in all worlds. And Maleldil has not told her *why* he forbids things on Perelandra that he does not forbid on Earth. It makes her feel as though her life had previously been the stem of a tree, whose branches are now shooting widely in every direction. But for her, it's no hardship to obey Maleldil, because "all His biddings are joys."

Their conversation is disrupted by something streaking noisily across the sky and falling into the sea. The Green Lady observes this with wonder, but she isn't distracted from her purpose: she is searching for the King. She proposes that they visit the **Fixed Land** in search of him and summons the silver fishes to carry them there. Ransom copies her in mounting and riding a fish, and the rest of the fish follow them.

They reach the **Fixed Land**, and Ransom is delighted to find it similar to the terrestrial world he knows, including a deep valley, Earth-like trees, and a stream. They walk to the top of the valley, and Ransom finds fluffy, black-dotted creatures called Piebalds—the Green Lady named him after them. They climb onto a rocky promontory, but the Lady scales it much more gracefully and deftly than Ransom, who scrapes his knee. The Lady, fascinated by the concept of blood, wants to try scraping her own knee, but Maleldil tells her not to.

From the top of the island, Ransom and the Green Lady examine the sea and the surrounding islands. A couple of miles away, they spot a small round object. Ransom recalls seeing something like it before. Previously, Ransom had visited Mars. He'd been kidnapped by men who thought that Mars's rulers would demand a human sacrifice. Of course Mars's Oyarsa wanted nothing of the kind, but Professor Weston, Ransom's main captor, had a less benign nature.

*The prohibition of sleeping on the Fixed Land can be compared to God's command, in the Old Testament Book of Genesis, that Adam and Ever are not to eat fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. At this point, it isn't clear what the reason is for this law about not sleeping on the fixed land, if indeed there is a reason.*



*Right now, the Green Lady doesn't feel the need to inquire into Maleldil's reasons. To her trusting disposition, both Maleldil's biddings and his forbiddings are all reflections of his own goodness. This suggests that, to Lewis, innocence resides in trusting God's character above all else.*



*Something has invaded Perelandra, though at this point, that's not in itself a sign of anything either good or bad. The Green Lady has a childlike ability to remain single-minded in her desires and focus, another sign of her innocent nature.*



*Injury is a feature of life in a world that's corrupted by sin and death. In Lewis's view, an incorrupt world would be free of even minor injuries. The Green Lady doesn't associate blood with pain and suffering and regards the concept with simple curiosity, but Maleldil puts a stop to even this relatively harmless loss of innocence.*



*Weston, a physicist who wanted to colonize Mars, was the main antagonist in [Out of the Silent Planet](#), the first volume of Lewis's Space Trilogy. A believer in human superiority who cared nothing for Malacandra's creatures, he poses an immediate threat to this world's unscathed innocence.*



Weston is obsessed with modern ideas of “scientifiction,” chiefly that humanity needs to spread itself over an ever broader area. This desire is fueled by a dread of death, and it doesn’t mind destroying or enslaving other species in the effort to escape mortality.

Ransom realizes this is why he was sent to Perelandra. Weston failed to achieve his goals on Malacandra, so he’s trying again here. Ransom wonders if, like Malacandra, Perelandra’s *eldila* might help him foil Weston. He asks the Green Lady about them. The Green Lady listens to Maleldil’s gentle counsel and then explains: in Perelandra, the first world to awaken after “the great change,” the *eldila* do not exercise the same kind of power that they did on Mars. In other words, on Perelandra, there’s nothing between rational creatures and God. It has been the joy of the *eldila* to decrease so that “things of the low worlds” may increase.

Ransom tells the Green Lady that, in his world, an *eldil* didn’t consider it joyful but instead clung to the older way rather than welcoming the new. But there isn’t time to explain. They watch as a little boat detaches from the spaceship below. At the same time, the sea begins to rise, and the Lady wishes to greet the newcomer before she must leave the island for the night. Ransom rushes past her, not wanting her and Weston to meet. But the Lady is fast and strong enough that she’s never more than a pace or two behind him. When he reaches the beach, he shouts, “Go back!” at the Lady, but he’s too late. Behind him, Weston’s voice asks, “What is the meaning of this?”

## CHAPTER 7

Weston stands there scowling authoritatively, as if he belongs here, and Ransom can’t help admiring the man’s egoism. He’s then shocked to hear Weston addressing the Green Lady in Old Solar. On Malacandra, Weston had no proficiency in the language. Ransom feels that his sole advantage has been taken away. Nevertheless, Weston and the Lady don’t seem to be understanding each other very well.

*“Scientifiction” is an archaic term for science fiction. Coined by sci-fi publisher Hugo Gernsback in 1926, the term was displaced by “science fiction” over the course of the 1930s. Lewis is a bit of an outlier for using it when he wrote the Space Trilogy in the 1940s. In any case, Lewis portrays Weston as a representative of what he critiques as science fiction’s inherent flaws.*



*At last, Ransom perceives why he was sent to Perelandra, although he doesn’t yet know exactly how he’ll achieve that—especially since the *eldila* don’t occupy the same role here as they did on Malacandra. Malacandra was an older world; on the younger Perelandra—which arose after God’s incarnation as man on earth (what the Lady calls “the great change”)—there are no intermediary beings between reason-possessing creatures and Maleldil. In other words, angelic help won’t be forthcoming.*



*Ransom’s comment means that on Earth, Satan and demons oppressed human beings rather than being willingly subjected to them and to God. Though Ransom doesn’t yet know why, he senses that Weston’s meeting with the Lady risks exposing her to such diabolical influence and thereby corrupting Perelandra forever.*



*From his first introduction, Weston has the look of a man who, unlike Ransom, doesn’t consider himself a guest but rather intends to make this world his own. His attitude about exploration completely lacks the sense of wonder that has marked Ransom’s time on Perelandra.*



But when Ransom begins to follow the Lady off the island, Weston stops him by holding up a revolver. Ransom urges the Green Lady to go. Weston accuses Ransom of seducing a native girl, and Ransom finds the accusation so ludicrous that he hardly deigns to respond. He tells Weston that he'd better just get on with "whatever butcheries and robberies you have come to do." Weston puts his revolver back in his holster and tells Ransom that he does him an "injustice." Since his visit to Malacandra, he claims, he has rethought the whole "interplanetary problem."

Ransom is inclined to laugh at Weston's arrogance, but he figures that any show of humility, even one that's mostly false, should be encouraged, so he asks Weston to explain. They sit down at Weston's campsite on the beach, and Weston begins to lecture. Ransom finds the feel of a Cambridge lecture room to be quite ludicrous under the circumstances, but Weston appears to be utterly fixed on his goal.

Weston begins by explaining that he never took an interest in the field of biology until he reached his 50s. He has never been interested in knowledge for its own sake, he explains; he always sought "utility"—and now his object is the utility of the human race, which necessarily involves interplanetary travel. After his time on Malacandra, Weston reflected that he had always drawn an arbitrary distinction between Man and non-human Nature. Now, he has begun to see all things as one. And all things are part of an "unconsciously purposive dynamism."

Realizing this, Weston concluded that his devotion to Man was a dead end. By himself, Man is nothing, but "Life," or "spirituality," is everything. Weston's goal now is the forward movement of spirituality. He works for "Spirit"—or, to use language Ransom might prefer, the Holy Spirit. When Ransom asks for clarification, Weston claims that there's really no difference between him and Ransom except for "a few outworn theological technicalities." But Weston claims to have broken through those technicalities to penetrate their inner meaning.

Ransom objects that for a Christian like himself, "blind, inarticulate purposiveness" is not at all what's meant by "the Holy Spirit." But Weston brushes this off, arguing that it's difficult for Ransom to understand that science is rediscovering the so-called inner truths of religion, but that in fact, they really are talking about the same thing. He says that the "failure to recognize one's own friends" is a weakness of "organized religion."

*From the threatened use of a gun to the assumption that Ransom's only business with the Green Lady could be sexual in nature, Weston's sensibilities feel totally out of place in the innocent world of Perelandra. Especially compared to Ransom's attitude toward the planet, Weston's very presence seems to taint its atmosphere.*



*Weston seems quite oblivious to Perelandra itself, taking little notice of the practically unexplored world on which he's just landed. Ironically (and humorously), he's totally focused on teaching Ransom a lesson about the nature of interplanetary exploration instead.*



*Weston's attitude toward knowledge is itself a departure from that of C. S. Lewis, who, in writings like [The Abolition of Man](#), criticized utilitarian approaches to education and knowledge. Weston's view of humanity and exploration typifies such approaches, in that he sees people and other planets as means to an end—though what end he envisions is still unclear.*



*Weston uses language in a vague, imprecise way that mostly serves to obscure meaning rather than clarifying it. It allows him to gloss over major differences in belief with the claim that both he and Ransom are ultimately talking about the same thing when they refer to "spirituality." In actuality, their views couldn't be more different—Ransom is talking about God, while Weston is talking, somewhat incoherently, about human potential.*



*Ransom points out that for a Christian, the Holy Spirit is one of the persons of the Trinity, not the source of a vague "spirituality." Weston just classifies this as outdated religious talk, a failure to acknowledge that modern science is an ally to traditional faith rather than an enemy.*





The “spirit” Weston is talking about, he goes on, is something like “mind,” “freedom,” or “spontaneity,” which he claims is the goal toward which the entire cosmos is moving. Ransom asks if this “spirit” is personal in any way. In response, Weston assumes a secretive tone. He says that this is what most people don’t understand—while it shouldn’t be anthropomorphized, there is a dark “Force” that pours into its chosen instruments. He, himself, has been chosen and guided by this force all along.

Ransom cautions Weston that not all “spirits” are good. Christians worship God, he explains, because they believe God is good, not primarily because he’s a “spirit.” The devil is a spirit, too, after all. Weston seizes on this point—popular religion’s “dualism” between opposites, like God and the devil, is unnecessary. He argues that such dualisms are more like two-sided “portraits” of “Spirit,” so the “devil” and “God” are just two pictures of the same “Force.”

Ransom says that if Weston really means all this, then it seems to him a terrible mistake. He hopes that Weston is really speaking metaphorically after all. How does Weston know, he asks, that he’s really being guided by some external Force? Weston says he’s surrendered himself to the guidance of this Life-Force, allowing himself to become a conductor of it. People who do this are always reviled and rejected. Ransom asks if this means that the Force is making Weston do things that ordinary people would consider to be “diabolical.” Weston says that Ransom is being too simplistic, and that ordinary people always misunderstand the great, who always transcend mere moralism.

Ransom ponders how far this really goes. If this “Life-Force” told him to, would Weston murder him? Or sell England to the Germans, or publish lies in a reputable scientific journal? Weston says “yes” to all these and maintains that Ransom’s problem is that he can’t conceive of “a commitment to something which utterly overrides all our petty ethical pigeon-holes.”

*Weston’s understanding of “spirituality” doesn’t really become clearer. In fact, it becomes increasingly dark and obviously not the same thing Ransom means by the Spirit.*



*Weston continues to sail past Ransom’s efforts at clarification, arguing that this vague spiritual “Force” is somehow both good and evil at the same time and that old-fashioned religious distinctions are meaningless.*



*Weston portrays himself as a kind of misunderstood martyr to the cause of the so-called Life Force, whose ways transcend the mundane views of the simple and ignorant.*



*Through his questions, Ransom demonstrates that Weston’s so-called Life Force must be diabolical, as it would readily demand lies, betrayal, and death. Weston continues to claim that Ransom’s misgivings can be chalked up to small-mindedness. On another note, the mention of England and Germany is another subtle reference to World War II, which was raging on while Lewis was penning this novel.*



Ransom seizes on this point, trying to find common ground in the shared sense of “commitment” to something bigger than oneself. This enrages Weston. He tells Ransom he is an idiot who insists on making a distinction between self and the universe. As a conductor of the Life-Force, Weston is the universe, and as such, he is Ransom’s God and Devil. “I call that Force into me completely,” he says, and at this, his face contorts horribly, and he vomits. For the briefest moment, Ransom thinks he sees the old Weston’s eyes looking at him, but then Weston goes into convulsions and collapses. Ransom, not knowing what else to do, picks up Weston’s revolver and flings it into the ocean. Then, lonely, discouraged, and confused, he settles down for the night. The **Fixed Land**, which seemed at first like a paradise, now seems nothing but forbidding.

*Ransom’s subordination of the self to a greater power triggers Weston’s fury because, it seems, the Force inside him doesn’t want to be second to anyone else. Whatever remains of Weston’s personality, it’s apparently now consumed by that Force to which he’s surrendered himself—there’s nothing left but evil, showing that Weston’s attempt to erase the distinction between good and evil was nonsense. Protecting the Green Lady and her world from this wicked creature is now Ransom’s burden.*



## CHAPTER 8

The next day, Ransom wakes up feeling sore and out of sorts, unlike every previous morning on Perelandra. He looks around for Weston, and it gradually dawns on Ransom that Weston, despite his condition the night before, has vacated the camp. He doesn’t understand what Weston’s plans are, but his ravings didn’t give Ransom a good feeling. He finds no trace of Weston over the course of the morning and wonders if he could have possibly left the **Fixed Land** behind. At last, when he wades into the ocean to cool himself, one of the big, silvery fish approaches. Ransom realizes the fish was sent to him, and he gets on its back. The fish carries Ransom for a long time, into the night. Eventually, the fish delivers him to a floating island, where he soon falls into a deep sleep.

*Previously, Perelandra has proven to be a restorative place, a reflection of its unsullied environment. Now, with Weston on the loose, it’s like waking up in a different world, where pain and trouble lurk. Weston’s presence on the planet also injects fear into an atmosphere where the unknown was generally a delightful adventure.*



When Ransom wakes up, still in darkness, he hears a man and woman speaking nearby. It’s Weston and the Green Lady. The Green Lady is perplexed that Weston keeps talking about the **Fixed Land**—she’s already told him that it’s off-limits. But Weston points out that this is a strange prohibition, unlike Maleldil’s ways on Earth. And wouldn’t it still be okay to *think* about dwelling on the Fixed Land—like composing a poem or story about what *might* be? Perhaps the Fixed Land is forbidden so that there is a “Might Be” to ponder, Weston suggests.

*To the Green Lady, this ongoing debate is unnecessary—Maleldil has forbidden the Fixed Land, her will accords with Maleldil’s, and that’s that. But Weston finds an angle of attack, hoping to plant questions in her mind: Why not just imagine dwelling there? Surely this is harmless. This interaction is meant to evoke the Genesis story, in which the serpent questions Eve about God’s prohibition of certain fruit.*



Weston suggests to the Green Lady that Maleldil is “letting go of [her] hand a little”—by introducing new ideas to her through Ransom and himself instead of through himself or through the King, he’s “making [her] older.” Maleldil, he suggests, is making the Green Lady “a full woman” who can now teach the King things instead. In that way, he’s making her more like the women of Earth.

*Weston further insinuates that such imaginings—not given to the Lady directly by Maleldil, as she’s always learned before—are a way of maturing in wisdom. This recalls the serpent’s remark that eating of the forbidden tree would bestow Godlike knowledge.*



The women of Earth, Weston explains, “always reach out their hands for the new and unexpected good,” running ahead of what Maleldil has revealed to them. In that way, they’re like “little Maleldils.” This makes their beauty even greater than the Lady’s, and it makes them more desirable to men. This merely prompts the Lady to remark that Maleldil’s ways are wonderful. Weston, in turn, withdraws from the conversation rather crankily.

Listening all this time, Ransom notices that Weston’s tone has sounded oddly unlike himself—too patient and persistent. The figure speaking is somehow both Weston and *not* Weston. As monstrous as this is, Ransom also feels a sense of victory in the air, a “festal revelry and [...] splendour,” as if some disaster has been averted. Simply witnessing this fills Ransom with hope, and he goes back to sleep.

## CHAPTER 9

The next day, Ransom wakes alone, to calm seas. As he walks peacefully along the beach, he suddenly comes upon a horrifying sight: a brightly colored, froglike creature has been injured. Its back has been torn open, and its legs are damaged so badly that it can no longer hop. It’s the first time Ransom has witnessed any suffering on Perelandra, and it shocks him. He is filled with pity and also with a feeling of shame.

Ransom feels that the creature must be put out of its misery, but the task takes longer than anticipated and sickens him. But as he finally continues his walk, he realizes that more mutilated frogs are littering the ground—dozens of them. Then he sees Weston, matter-of-factly cutting open frogs with his sharp nails. When they look at each other, Ransom is frightened by the dead look in Weston’s eyes. He realizes that some other life form is occupying Weston’s body, but it isn’t Weston himself.

Whatever it is, the figure that looks like Weston smiles at Ransom. Though Ransom has seen a “devilish” smile before, this is something different. It’s not merely wicked, but it invites Ransom unashamedly into its own world—“it did not defy goodness, it ignored it,” transcending simple vice. Ransom faints. As he revives, he realizes he has seen a hint of the “Miserific Vision,” the tormenting vision of hell.

*Earthly women, Weston explains, are essentially like little gods unto themselves. So far, this concept isn’t inherently alluring to the Lady. She’s still innocent, inclined to see Maleldil’s goodness everywhere she looks, instead of desiring greater things for herself.*



*The sense of “revelry” Ransom perceives signals that—for the moment, at least—the Lady has successfully rebuffed Weston’s attempts to tempt her. She remains incorrupt, her will attuned to Maleldil’s.*



*Ransom’s sense of hope is shown to be premature—a creature has been cruelly injured, marring the incorruption of Perelandra. Though it’s not yet clear what has caused the frog’s injuries, it’s reasonable to assume Weston has something to do with it. Such suffering entails a loss of innocence, no matter its cause.*



*The ordeal of the mutilated frog becomes a nightmare as Ransom finds that Weston is indeed responsible for this wanton cruelty against Perelandra’s innocent creatures. With this Ransom finally realizes what he had previously only suspected: that Weston is being controlled by a diabolical force.*



*Lewis coins the term “Miserific Vision” to convey the opposite of the “Beatific Vision,” the Christian concept of seeing the face of God in heaven, a sight which gives eternal joy. By contrast, the very sight of Satan bestows torment, and a mere glimpse of Satan’s servant in the person of Weston overpowers Ransom.*



Weston, or the thing that looks like Weston, is gone, so Ransom goes in search of it. He's shaking, and he doesn't know what to do when he finds it, but he doesn't want it to find the Lady—he now knows that some demonic or even satanic being has invaded Perelandra through Weston. After hours of walking, he sees two figures on the horizon. As he draws near, Ransom is surprised that the Lady doesn't turn to acknowledge his presence.

The Lady is telling Weston's body that she doesn't mind the idea of stories or poetry about things that don't exist. Rather, she resists the particular story he's telling her—one about living on the **Fixed Land**. The Lady says that a story about living on the Fixed Land cannot, at the same time, be a story about Maleldil. If it were, it would mean that Maleldil had altered his command concerning the Fixed Land, or else it would mean living there against Maleldil's will. Neither option makes sense, and she sees no point in such a story.

Weston's body says that the point is to make the Lady "older," or wiser. He claims this is how earthly women have become great and beautiful. Ransom interjects, urging the Lady not to listen to this. When the Lady finally looks at Ransom, he sees a "hint of something precarious" in her expression. Ransom also realizes that the Lady has never held a conversation with multiple speakers before—that's why she didn't seem to notice him at first.

While Ransom is struggling with how to explain the idea of "bad" or "evil" to the Lady, Weston's voice jumps in, arguing that Ransom's goal is to keep the Lady from getting any older. He says that Ransom "always shrinks back from the **wave** that is coming" and would prefer to "bring back the wave that is past." He further claims that Ransom wishes to return to the world before Maleldil became a man. Ransom, he concludes, is what's called "Bad"—one who "rejects the fruit he is given for the sake of the fruit he expected."

The Lady replies that, in that case, they must simply make Ransom older. She asks Weston's body if he will teach her "Death," and he replies that he's come for the purpose of giving her "death in abundance." But to receive death, she must be courageous. The Lady is intrigued by his words, asking Weston to continue making her older. Ransom cuts in, imploring the Lady to let Maleldil make her older in the way and timing that He chooses.

*Ransom's visit to Perelandra has transformed from a paradise to a hellish quest as he tries to thwart Weston—or the being operating through Weston—from wreaking further damage to the planet.*



*From this exchange, it's clear that the matter of fictional stories is not itself the problem; these are not wrong in and of themselves. Because the Lady's will is aligned with Maleldil's, she can't conceive of a story about living on the Fixed Land that neither questions Maleldil's character nor involves disobedience to him. Neither of these holds any appeal to the Lady in her innocence.*



*The hint of precariousness is a reminder that the Lady isn't inevitably, unchangeably innocent. In other words, even if she remains innocent for now, that doesn't mean that Weston's words are having no effect. It is possible for her to step aside from Maleldil's will.*



*Weston's body uses the Lady's ignorance of humanity's fall to his advantage. Ransom resists Weston's reasoning because he knows that on earth, such temptation as Weston is using ultimately led to sin. Weston, however, twists Ransom's words in order to pretend that Ransom is just fearful of new knowledge. He also twists the very idea of wickedness by using the Lady's innocence of true evil to his advantage.*



*The phrase "death in abundance" is a pointed reference to the New Testament's Gospel of John, in which Jesus says, "I am come that they might have life [...] more abundantly." Falling into sin through temptation would lead to death, though the Lady doesn't know what this means and remains ignorant of the danger.*



Ignoring Ransom, Weston assures the Lady that Maleldil wants her to learn not directly from His own voice, but from Weston's—allowing her to become her own person. But Ransom, he says, is trying to hold the Lady back from this. To wait on Maleldil, instead of walking on one's own when Maleldil wishes it, would be a form of disobedience—meaning that certain kinds of obeying are actually *disobedient*. The Lady compares this to what would happen if she chased an animal for fun and the animal allowed her to catch it.

Building on this, Weston's body asks whether perhaps Maleldil doesn't always want to be obeyed. He suggests that the Lady's growing older won't be complete unless she *seems*, at some point, to disobey Maleldil by doing what Maleldil merely *seems* to forbid. This kind of "branching out," Weston argues, is what Maleldil *really* desires. However, after thinking about this, the Lady objects that one can't step outside of Maleldil's will without stepping into something that can't be desired: "to walk out of His will is to walk into nowhere."

Weston's body continues arguing that this particular command—not to live on the **Fixed Island**—is an exception. After all, the Lady cannot see any obvious goodness in the command. And Maleldil wouldn't forbid something just for the sake of forbidding, would He? The command only exists to be broken. It's a test—an expression of Maleldil's longing to see something besides His own image in His creatures. Maleldil can't tell the Lady this directly, though, because then the Lady wouldn't be acting out of her own reason and courage.

When Ransom interrupts again, the Lady agrees to hear him out. Ransom argues that Maleldil has established such a law out of love—because He desires obedience for its own sake, and not just because something seems good to the creature, too. The Lady is delighted by this thought and is surprised that Weston is so "young" that he doesn't know this. At this, Weston speaks up to say that he is in fact older than Ransom by far—he has even been with Maleldil in Deep Heaven. Ransom cannot deny this, though it makes him shudder.

Weston continues that, although the Lady's deepest will is currently to obey Maleldil, only the great and courageous venture beyond this, into a deeper, harder life. Ransom warns the Lady that all this has been tried before in his own world—the first woman of Earth listened to such claims and did what Maleldil had forbidden, but it did *not* make life more joyful, only more difficult. Weston's voice argues that while life may have become harder, it also became more glorious, and those who excelled in knowledge became more beautiful and beloved. But at this, the Lady suddenly yawns, saying she wants to go to sleep.

*Weston continues to twist the idea of disobedience by making it seem a convoluted form of pleasing Maleldil, which Weston knows the Lady still desires more than anything else. The Lady's continued innocence is shown in the fact that she can conceive of no worse "disobedience" than a playful game being thwarted.*



*Weston continues to exemplify the biblical serpent's question, "Did God actually say...?" He correctly perceives that he'll get nowhere with the Lady unless he makes disobedience look like a form of obedience. But the Lady still can't picture a world in which she walks apart from Maleldil.*



*Weston tries another line of attack, suggesting that Maleldil's command simply doesn't make sense, and that Maleldil expects the Lady to show initiative by rejecting it on those grounds.*



*Ransom still has the upper hand with the Lady, in that he successfully appeals to love for Maleldil—something that the Lady instinctively understands. Meanwhile, the spirit inhabiting Weston's body openly admits its demonic origins for the first time.*



*Weston now argues that there's something better than obeying Maleldil, but he makes a critical mistake—assuming that the Lady will find the idea of greater beauty and attractiveness to be appealing. The idea seems rather to bore her. She is still more interested in what Maleldil wants from her than in being desirable to other creatures.*



First, however, Weston tells the Lady that if it weren't for this original disobedience, Maleldil would never have come to earth and become man. Though momentarily shaken, Ransom agrees with this. Maleldil, after all, can make good out of anything. But the original good He intended has been lost forever; the first disobedience was not good in itself, and it brought great harm.

*Christian teaching is that God became incarnate in Jesus Christ in order to save humanity from their sins. Therefore, if it weren't for human sin, then the incarnation would not have occurred. In other words, Weston tells a partial truth—disobedience indirectly brought about a greater good; yet that doesn't mean disobedience is itself good.*



Ransom turns to Weston and asks if he is happy that Maleldil became a human being. What happened when he “made Maleldil and death acquainted?” At this, Weston’s body gives a great howl. The Lady is unfazed by this and lies down to sleep. Weston’s body sits down near the Lady; it moves in an unnatural way that makes Ransom think of it as “the Un-man.” He realizes he must keep watch over the Lady for as long as the Un-man remains here.

*Here, Ransom briefly gains the upper hand. He attacks Weston by reminding him that after Christ died, he soon conquered death by rising again, overcoming sin and Satan in the process. This defeat is still keenly felt.*



After hours of sitting silently, the Un-man speaks: “Ransom,” it says. When Ransom asks what it wants, it replies, “Nothing.” It then proceeds to call Ransom’s name again—and again, every minute, until it has said “Ransom!” a hundred times. But each time Ransom responds, the Un-man simply says, “Nothing.” In this way he torments Ransom all night long, nagging him in an almost childish, petty manner.

*Earlier, Ransom had gotten a taste of the pettiness which can be exhibited by pure evil. Now, the Un-man uses this to its advantage, trying to wear Weston down. At the same time, this suggests that Ransom, by pointing out God’s ultimate victory over Satan, has struck a real blow.*



## CHAPTER 10

Ransom can't stay awake indefinitely. Eventually, he falls asleep and wakes to hear Weston speaking to the Lady again. But he's no longer talking about Maleldil. Instead, he's telling poignant stories—stories of women from history, all of them women who had been oppressed and rejected by society. Each story features a woman who undertakes a great risk and is misunderstood or persecuted for it. The stories all have happy endings, or at least endings in which the women are vindicated. Ransom perceives that through these stories, the Un-man is trying to convey some sense of “Death and Sorrow” to the Lady.

*Weston is trying a different approach. Rather than attacking the Lady’s loyalty to Maleldil, he subtly weaves a narrative of rebellion. Instead of calling it that, he hints that the Lady should emulate these women, who were reviled for doing the supposedly noble thing. It’s an indirect way of acclimating her to the idea of death and suffering.*



A rainstorm begins, and during a flash of lightning, Ransom gets a glimpse of the Lady’s face as she listens to Weston. She looks somehow more like an earthly woman. She is gazing off into space, with a look almost of grandeur, as if she’s imagining taking on a tragically heroic role. Compared to the peace, innocence, and lack of self-consciousness the Lady’s face had shown before, she now appears almost vulgar to Ransom.

*Weston’s temptation is having some effect on the Green Lady. Before, the Lady wasn’t interested in thinking about herself; she was too fixed on Maleldil. Though she hasn’t fallen yet, her face reveals that she is beginning to imagine a scenario in which such an outcome is thinkable (the Un-man’s introduction of stories was apparently effective in this regard). Her ego is taking shape—something that earthly humans take for granted.*



The next few days continue in much the same way. Though Ransom stays awake as much as he can, he often dozes and wakes to hear Weston's voice tirelessly droning on to the Lady. Whenever the Lady departs from their presence, the Un-Man sets aside the veneer of intelligence and contents itself with trying to hurt animals or tear up plants. It also torments Ransom by making obscene gestures or just repeating his name. Every so often, Ransom sees Weston's old expression and hears his voice pitifully asking for help. He's never sure if this is a trick or if it's really some surviving fragment of Weston's personality.

The Green Lady refuses to end the conversations with Weston until she's certain that she doesn't have to undertake some great deed for the King's and their future children's sake. Weston has at least succeeded in presenting disobedience to her as a kind of duty—a duty of which the King would certainly not approve.

Little by little, Ransom begins to understand the Un-man's strategy. So far, the Lady's sense of duty is still bound up with her love for the King and even for Maleldil. But as the Un-man keeps droning on with his stories, there's a tiny element of self-admiration, self-conscious nobility, and "veiled egoism" in the Lady's attitude. Ransom sees that there's always a certain amount of truth in what Weston says. The Lady's maturity and ever freer obedience must be part of Maleldil's plan. That's why Weston's approach sounds so compelling and plausible. Ransom keeps arguing against Weston, trying to remind the Lady of concrete facts—like Maleldil's clear command and the happiness of her life—instead of Weston's vague ideas and images.

One morning, Ransom finds the Un-man and the Lady dressed in robes made of bright feathers, wearing crowns woven from leaves. Weston appears to be teaching the Lady about becoming more beautiful—about vanity. The Lady asks Ransom if she looks more beautiful now, but he doesn't know what to say. She almost looks like a woman that an earthly man would find desirable, and Ransom can't stand that.

Weston even pulls out a pocket mirror so that the Lady can see her reflection. This frightens her—admiration of oneself doesn't make sense to her. Weston tells her that she must experience Fear on behalf of her entire race. It isn't long, though, before the Lady's startled expression gives way to a noble one. Then Ransom knows that Weston's goal was not just to make the Lady admire her outward appearance but to admire the nobility of her own soul.

*The temptation grinds on—part of Weston's strategy is apparently just to wear down the Lady's will, putting the same ideas in her head over and over. With Ransom, though, Weston content to let his true character show.*



*Weston also tempts the Lady by getting her to consider acting alone, not only without Maleldil's direct approval, but without consulting her husband, the King. An aspect of evil, then, is elevating one's own will to greatest prominence.*



*The Un-man gradually gets the Lady to think about herself instead of about Maleldil or the King—even by persuading her that her disobedience would please them and be in their best interest. Ransom notices that some degree of truth is often mixed in with falsehood, which is what makes it so difficult to combat. For example, Maleldil does desire his creatures to mature in obedience. In other words, Weston showcases how evil can be very subtle. The Lady isn't used to thinking along these lines and lacks a natural defense against such subtlety, which is why Ransom keeps trying to recall her to what she does know by experience.*



*To Ransom, the Lady's adornment seems like a degradation of her natural beauty, because she's conscious of her beauty and using it as a means to an end (trying to be attractive). Weston has also apparently used innocent creatures (the birds) to adorn the Lady, though she seems oblivious to this fact.*



*The Lady has never seen her own image before, and it's a profoundly unsettling experience. The use of the mirror makes Weston's intentions clearer. It's not that physical beauty, or even its enjoyment, is a bad thing. However, it increases the Lady's consciousness of herself—including the potential of self-admiration. This has been the key to Weston's strategy all along.*



## CHAPTER 11

Ransom is sure that the Lady's resistance will be worn down eventually. He wonders why Maleldil doesn't intervene to work a miracle. Yet even as he wonders this, he perceives that fullness in the atmosphere which signals Maleldil's presence. As "blasphemous" as it seems, he realizes that *he* is Maleldil's representative. In other words, his coming to Perelandra at this time is itself a miracle.

Ransom wonders what else he can possibly do to stop the Un-man—his arguments have failed over and over. He comforts himself with the belief that as long as he does his best, Maleldil will work out the final result—Perelandra's fate, in other words, is in God's hands. But just as quickly, Maleldil's presence weighs on him again, and he knows he's making excuses. "God's hands" means himself and the Green Lady; the planet's fate rests on their behavior. Even though this seems deeply unfair to Ransom, he remembers that, at this very moment, young men on Earth are fighting and dying in a war.

It suddenly occurs to Ransom that he might be called upon to physically *fight* the Un-man, which perhaps terrifies him more than anything. Briefly, he tells himself that any such fight would "degrade the spiritual warfare" of the situation, but just as quickly, he reconsiders. He knows that whatever the conflict involves here on Perelandra, it might be of the character that people on Earth would call "mythological."

As Ransom continues to engage in mental arguments, the Presence silently waits. Ransom realizes that the story of the Incarnation is far more complicated than he knew. One of its purposes was the future salvation of Perelandra—and somehow, he was the person chosen through whom Maleldil would do the saving. Looked at from this perspective, Earth is not the center of the universe but merely a preparation for what would later take place on Perelandra.

Already, what's happened on Perelandra is different from what happened on Earth. For one thing, unlike Eve, the Lady has so far resisted temptation. Here, it seems, Maleldil envisions an altogether different story—one in which it's up to Ransom to put an end to the Un-man's relentless assaults. Ransom keeps looking to Genesis for clues, but Maleldil seems to keep drawing him back to the present.

*Ransom knows some kind of intervention is needed to stop Weston's relentless temptation. He thinks it presumptuous to take this role, assuming it requires a miracle, but at last realizes this is exactly why he's been brought to Perelandra.*



*At first, Ransom assumes that his defeat of the Un-man will involve logic and argument. As an academic, that's where he typically shines. But this is an example of Ransom's own remark to Lewis at the beginning of the novel—God's choice of someone for a task isn't necessarily for an obvious reason. Ransom realizes that, for whatever reason, God has appointed him to defeat Weston by other means, no matter how ill-equipped he feels. This passage also reminds readers that World War II is still raging on—both in the world of the novel and in the real world at the time Lewis was writing.*



*Again, Ransom's earlier arguments to Lewis are thrown back in his face. He'd teased Lewis for describing the warfare in overly spiritual terms, but that's exactly what he's tempted to do here, shrinking from a literal fight as somehow unsuitable. But that sense of mythic literalness—which he'd first noticed when he met the dragon upon arriving on Perelandra—is still in play.*



*Here, Ransom adjusts his perspective. Unlike Weston, who sees humanity as rightfully dominant, Ransom realizes that though Earth's inhabitants play a crucial role, they aren't the center of Maleldil's work in the universe as a whole.*



*Despite his adjustment in perspective, Ransom keeps reverting to the reference points he's familiar with, like the biblical story of humanity's fall and redemption. But Perelandra's fate isn't simply a recapitulation of what happened on Earth.*





Ransom wonders how a middle-aged scholar like himself could possibly defeat an immortal enemy. He figures that Weston's body is the Enemy's foothold in Perelandra, and if that body is destroyed, then the Enemy will be expelled. The thought is still horrifying—Weston has never won a physical fight in his life—but he supposes it's a winnable match. He wishes Maleldil would offer him some assurance, but he doesn't.

The Voice of Maleldil tells him, "It is not for nothing that you are named Ransom." Though this seems like a mere pun to Ransom—whose name derives from "Ranolf's son"—he realizes that it's not an accidental resemblance at all. In fact, he's caught up in a larger pattern in which there's no meaningful distinction between "accident" and "design." The Voice adds, "My name also is Ransom."

Ransom comes to understand that, if he fails in his task, Maleldil will redeem Perelandra in some other way. Yet it won't happen exactly as it did on Earth; Maleldil doesn't repeat things. Before, Ransom had merely felt like Peter; now he feels like Pilate.

Ransom feels no reassurance from Maleldil to relieve him of this thought. Yet, gradually—even as he feels "psychologically incapable" of facing what must be done—he feels an objective certainty that, by this time tomorrow, he will have accomplished what seems impossible. Ransom no longer asks "Why me?" He knows it might as well be him as anyone else. Following Maleldil's direction, he retreats into the woods to sleep.

## CHAPTER 12

Ransom wakes the next morning feeling fully alert and as physically sound as he's ever been. He enjoys a refreshing breakfast and admires the sleeping form of the Lady for what he assumes will be the last time. Then he goes in search of his Enemy. Most of Perelandra's creatures appear to have been cast into a deep sleep, but when he finally encounters the Un-man, he finds Weston's body strangling a bird. Without a thought, he punches the Un-man's jaw.

*This is an example of an occasion when Ransom must act faithfully despite his fear and distaste for the task at hand. Maleldil does not promise him that things will work out as he hopes. He has to trust Maleldil and act anyway.*



*Ransom's point is that everything is part of a greater plan, with small, seemingly coincidental things—like his surname—reflecting a much bigger reality. The New Testament sometimes refers to Christ's death as a ransom, or payment, for humanity's sin. In some way, Ransom's role on Perelandra identifies him with Christ.*



*Even if Ransom fails, evil won't ultimately win. But that's not a safety net for Ransom. He'd felt like Jesus's disciple Peter who denied knowing Jesus multiple times and was forgiven, but now he feels like the Roman governor Pontius Pilate who condemned Christ to death, which is a much heavier burden.*



*Again, fear remains a heavy burden, yet it's not an obstacle to genuine faith—Ransom obeys Maleldil despite his fear and his inability to know exactly how things will work out. He also overcomes his preoccupation with self in order to trust Maleldil's will. In the novel, this is the essence of faith.*



*Maleldil is apparently protecting his creatures' innocence by preventing them from seeing what's going to happen. This also seems to remove any further pretense in Ransom's behavior—he can't stand Weston's wanton cruelty and will put a stop to it by any means necessary.*



The Un-man taunts Weston for daring to fight him. Many have believed that God would help them, he says, but God couldn't even help himself. The Un-man quotes Christ's words on the cross: "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani." Ransom realizes that the Un-man isn't just quoting, but *remembering*. This sickens Ransom, giving the Un-man time to attack. Soon they're locked in a slow, seemingly endless grappling, interrupted by occasional scratching and tripping.

Ransom had expected the Un-man to be much stronger. He realizes that it's just "one middle-aged scholar against another," and that Ransom actually has the physical advantage. They continue alternately boxing and grappling in a drawn-out, delirious fight. At last, when Ransom feels he can go on no longer, he attacks once more with a feeling of pure hatred. He feels he's no longer attacking a corrupted creature, but corruption itself. He feels joy in finally discovering the purpose of hatred.

The Un-man manages to slip out of his grasp, and soon Ransom is chasing it through the woods, among the peacefully sleeping creatures. Ransom can't catch up, and eventually they both splash into the sea, where each mounts a waiting fish. The Un-man had not realized that the fish always follow their leader, meaning that the Un-man will never escape Ransom's sight. Ransom laughs with delight at this. However, it's a painful ride, as Ransom discovers how mercilessly the Un-man has shredded his body. The strange chase goes on for hours.

## CHAPTER 13

Night falls, and Ransom sleeps on his fish's back as best he can. Once, he wakes up and sees mer-people feeding on seaweed; this reminds him that he is hungry. He samples some of the seaweed that floats on the surface of the water, and it briefly makes him feel like a merman himself. He discards the seaweed. Around this time it dawns on him just how long the chase is taking and how very vast Perelandra is. Some of the fish are even getting tired and giving up their pursuit. The sheer strangeness and solitude of Ransom's experience overwhelms him and makes him begin to doubt Maleldil.

Absorbed in these thoughts, Ransom is startled when Weston's body speaks to him; its fish is moving towards him. Weston's body looks battered; he's in tears as he says Ransom's name. Ransom suspiciously asks the figure to identify himself, and the voice responds with Weston's characteristically irritable tone. He doesn't know where he is and fears being left here alone. Ransom assures him that dying on Perelandra is better than many fates that could befall them on Earth.

*The Un-man gains the upper hand by mocking Christ's dying words in Aramaic ("My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"), which the demonic being inhabiting Weston apparently heard in person. This is a horrible offense to Ransom, being yet another wanton mockery of innocence.*



*Ransom's hatred is aimed not at Weston's personality, but at the pure evil that has overtaken him, suggesting that this is the only truly appropriate outlet for pure hatred, which is otherwise evil itself. The fight itself is bloody and brutal, suggesting that pure evil must be overcome in a matter-of-fact, face-to-face way.*



*The innocence of Perelandra's creatures works to Ransom's advantage and against the Un-man. The Un-man can't just use the fish as he wants, the way he's used to exploiting other creatures. Instead, he must operate according to Perelandra's own logic—a triumph of innocence over evil.*



*Ransom endures a dark night of doubt. His disorienting attempt to eat seaweed reinforces the alienation he feels—he has no familiar points of reference in this vast ocean, just as he has no precedent to fall back on in fighting the Un-man. Where Perelandra had once felt like a wonderland, overflowing with signs of Maleldil's creativity and care, it now feels like an empty wasteland. The lack of evidence of Maleldil's continued presence assaults Ransom's faith.*



*Strangely, Weston's true personality seems to resurface. Ransom suspects that this reappearance of humanity could be a last attempt to trick and tempt Ransom away from his intended course of action.*



Weston tells Ransom it's all very well for *him* not to fear death. But Weston knows death is real and there's no escaping it. That's why it's important to live for as long as one can. Life is like the thin rind on a fruit; the only important thing is to thicken that rind by whatever small amount one can, lest one plunge into the "real" universe beneath, which goes on forever.

Ransom tries to argue with Weston, but Weston argues that even reasoning is only valid within the "rind." Underneath the surface, there's nothing rational; even real or unreal, true or false, don't exist. Ransom just feels maddened by Weston's continual mumbling. He keeps trying to draw Weston back to basic facts—like where Weston has been over the past few days.

As the **waves** begin to pick up, Weston panics. They're approaching a rocky coast, and he's terrified that they will crash into it in the growing darkness. Ransom, too, feels an overpowering, indefinite horror. Yet he tries vainly to cheer Weston, telling him his ramblings are nonsense and that it's time to pray and prepare for death—they'll end better than the young men facing worse deaths on Earth at this very moment. But then Weston clutches Ransom, powerfully pulls him off his fish's back, and drags him deep below the surface of the water.

## CHAPTER 14

Ransom is so desperate for air that he almost just lets go, observing, almost abstractedly, that he is about to die. But he suddenly finds himself surfacing on a pebbly beach, cursing and fighting with Weston's body once more. Soon he's astride Weston's body, desperately gripping its throat. He counts to a thousand before he dares let go, long after the body has gone limp. He has no idea if the voice that had been speaking to him for the past few hours was really some fragment of Weston or not, but at this point, there's nothing else he can do.

Ransom decides to wait until the morning to examine the body by daylight, so he passes the time by reciting all the epic poetry he can remember. But eventually, he discerns that it's no good waiting for light—somehow, he and Weston surfaced within a massive cavern. Fighting despair, he inches his way along a cliff face in the pitch blackness, and he gropes along in this way for a long time. He judges distances by shouting and eventually finds and follows a stream.

*Weston's personality—if indeed that's what it is—fears death. His fears echo Ransom's suspicions about Weston's scientific goals—that they're motivated by the desire to cheat death.*



*Weston fears that there's no stable, enduring meaning in the universe. Ransom feels that under the circumstances, these philosophical ramblings are rather out of place. He's more concerned with figuring out whom he's talking to—if it's really Weston or just another temptation.*



*Ransom, again, feels fear in the face of death, but it doesn't dissuade him from his faith—it's possible to take courage and be thankful that they're dying less dreadfully than the young soldiers of World War II. Ransom's character also comes through in that, under great strain, he shows compassion even to someone as horrible as Weston.*



*Ransom finally appears to put an end to Weston's body once and for all, though it's not yet clear whether the evil inside him will be rendered powerless, as Ransom has hoped.*



*After all this, Ransom isn't yet safe—he has to find his way out of the darkness, his physical blindness symbolizing his uncertainty of the path ahead. He has to press forward despite his fear and ignorance, trusting in Maleldil just as before.*



Eventually, the stream leads Ransom toward a reddish, dim light. The light comes from an upper cavern, accessed by a narrow fissure. Hungry for the light, he gathers a pile of rocks and eventually manages to jump, climb, and claw his way through the opening into the larger chamber above. He finds himself in a vast hall filled with firelight, a shallow river running through it. When he sits down to collect himself, he is once again struck with a feeling of despair, fearing that Weston's view of the world is right. In fact, he's hardly surprised when the broken, corpse-like form of the Un-man soon drags itself through the hole, too, followed by a massive, many-legged, insect-like creature.

Ransom is angry, realizing that the Un-man is trying to frighten him, both with the despairing thoughts and with this crawling creature. He yells rather foolishly at it to get out of his brain, then, with a desperate prayer, smashes a stone into the Un-man's face. At this, the strange creature seems to lose its horrible appearance, and it retreats awkwardly back into the lower cave. Ransom drags the Un-man's body to the edge of a cliff and pushes it into the sea of fire below. Too exhausted to move further that day, Ransom drinks deeply from the stream and falls asleep.

## CHAPTER 15

Ransom travels through the seemingly endless cavern in a dreamlike, weary daze, expecting death at any time. At one point, a river carries him to a shallow pool, and then he emerges onto soft turf at the mouth of the cavern. He spends days or weeks alternately sleeping and, when awake, eating clusters of grapelike fruits he finds nearby. All the time, he hears a mysterious, birdlike song overhead.

Eventually, as Ransom returns to consciousness, he sees that the turf on which he's sitting slopes downward to a wooded valley, and beyond that lie steep red mountains. Golden mists drift above it all. During this time, Ransom's body steadily heals, except for a wound on his heel that won't stop bleeding. But he doesn't feel inclined to worry about the future. One day, he carves an epitaph for Weston into the translucent wall of one of the cliffs. A few days later, he's ready to set out.

*In Ransom's solitary struggle through the cavern, he is again tempted to doubt the goodness of Maleldil's plan and the belief that there's any meaning in the universe. At last, it appears that the Un-man has sufficiently animated Weston's broken body to follow and threaten Ransom once more.*



*Ransom finally destroys Weston's body once and for all, its attempt to manipulate and frighten him seeming childish and silly in the end. This almost anticlimactic passage suggests that, in the end, steady, persevering faith will outlast the worst that evil can throw at it.*



*As Ransom escapes the cave, he undergoes a kind of rebirth, with Perelandra itself restoring his spent strength.*



*Ransom continues to let Perelandra nurture him back to health, and the planet regains the sense of wonder for Ransom that it had lost during his ordeal with Weston. His bleeding heel seems to be a reference to Genesis 3:15: "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." This biblical reference has traditionally been interpreted to refer to the Redeemer (an offspring of Eve) who would someday bruise Satan's head, though he himself would also suffer ("bruise his heel").*



When he descends into the forest below, Ransom finds it inhabited by little, bee-sized mammals like horses. He decides to pursue the source of the singing, and after much cautious hunting, he comes upon a massive, black, doglike creature sitting on its haunches and singing joyfully. When it sees Ransom, it darts away at first but then allows itself to be petted, only to bashfully bury its head in its paws. Ransom stops following it, and as he goes on his way, he hears it singing even more joyfully than before.

Ransom begins climbing into the mountains again, without weariness or loneliness, feeling content except for the wound in his heel. Finally, he sees a secretive-looking pass through the near mountains and feels compelled to enter it. In the pass he finds a valley with a pure pool in its center. Near the edge of the pool sits something coffin-like, and he suddenly realizes—with a feeling of grief—that it's the ship in which he is to return to Earth. Then, a strange feeling pervades the atmosphere, and Ransom realizes he is in the presence of two eldila.

## CHAPTER 16

Ransom hears the eldils speaking in their bell-like voices and realizes that one of them is the Oyarsa of Malacandra. The Oyarsa is telling its companion about Ransom and his world. Ransom asks to be introduced, and the other *eldil* identifies itself as Perelandra, the creator of this planet and all that's in it. Yet today, everything he made is being taken from him, and he blesses Maleldil for this.

The Oyarsa of Malacandra explains that today is the “morning day,” the birth of this world. It's the first time that two creatures in Maleldil's image will “sit in the throne of what they were meant to be”—an unprecedented thing. At this, Ransom nearly faints.

The King and Queen of Perelandra are climbing up the mountain even now, so the eldila—who have come to do them honor—decide to prepare visible shapes in order to make it easier for them to be seen. They try out various forms on Ransom. At first these are rather horrifying—pillars of eyes, pulsing flames, and other alarming figures—and Ransom asks them to stop, explaining that these appearances overwhelm his senses. Finally they manifest as two immensely tall human figures burning white-hot, with a halo of indescribable colors. The Oyarsa of Malacandra shines with colder colors, that of Perelandra glows with warmer ones.

*As he did when he first arrived on Perelandra, Ransom enjoys the wonder and uniqueness of this beautiful planet. The happiness of its creatures demonstrates that its innocence and incorruption have, thanks to Ransom, been preserved.*



*Ransom, fully restored and victorious in his task on Perelandra, can now return to Earth. The eldila, noticeably absent from Perelandra during Ransom's time there, appear once more.*



*Earlier in Ransom's acquaintance with the Lady, the Lady explained to Ransom that the eldila would not occupy a prominent role in ruling Perelandra. In this younger world, rule will pass into the hands of rational creatures—that is, the King and Queen.*



*The Oyarsa means that this is the first time that two rational creatures (basically, human-equivalents) have remained unfallen when faced with temptation. In essence, then, the King and Queen are what the earthly Adam and Eve were originally intended to be.*



*The eldila aren't used to interacting directly with rational creatures, so they try to assume forms that will be tolerable and comprehensible to mortal eyes, with mixed success.*



Despite the fact that neither of them has sexual characteristics, there is a discernible difference between the eldila which Ransom is nevertheless powerless to describe. He grasps at it by saying, for example, that Malacandra is something like “rhythm” and Perelandra like “melody.” (None of these comparisons helps Lewis very much.) The creatures explain to Ransom, as far as he can understand it, that only Maleldil can see them as they really are.

All the beasts of Perelandra have entered the valley by this time, making a great noise—presided over by four of the dog-like singers that Ransom had seen back in the forest. All the creatures arrange themselves expectantly; it feels like a ceremony is about to begin. As a perfect morning light settles over the valley, the King and Queen appear, and the eldila bow before them.

## CHAPTER 17

Ransom, too, falls before the King and Queen, calling them his Father and his Mother. It’s his first time seeing the King, and later, he can hardly describe the King’s face to Lewis—it feels almost “idolatrous” to look upon him. Yet, at the same time, it’s impossible to mistake the King for the One he resembles.

Ransom is so lost in wonder that he almost misses what the Oyarsa of Perelandra is saying. The Oyarsa grants all of Perelandra and its creatures into the keeping of the King and Queen. They should name the creatures, guide them, and rule over them with love. The King asks the Oyarsa to remain with them to counsel them for the time being, and Perelandra agrees.

The King speaks again, saying that their children will always speak of Ransom, and he tells Ransom that in a certain sense, he is their Lord, because he has been the chief of Maleldil’s instruments, ensuring that they went up into perfection instead of down into corruption. He and the Queen insist that Ransom sit near them, facing the assembly.

*The eldila are somehow archetypes of male and female, essences which the human sexes only dimly reflect. Though he only hints at it here, Lewis explores his speculations about gender in greater detail in the third of the Space Trilogy, *That Hideous Strength*.*



*Here, the King and Queen receive the honor of those over whom they will reign, including the eldila. This is the King’s first appearance in the novel, and it’s the Queen’s first reappearance since Ransom fought Weston.*



*For Ransom, seeing the King and Queen is like seeing Adam and Eve at the beginning of Earth. Because the New Testament calls Christ the Second Adam, the implication here is that the King looks something like Jesus, which is why it’s an overwhelmingly powerful and humbling experience for Ransom to even look at him.*



*The King and Queen are charged with the rule of Perelandra, and they welcome the continued presence and assistance of their planet’s Oyarsa.*



*Though Ransom isn’t a perfect parallel to Christ (after all, he’s a sinful human who is in need of redemption himself), his role on Perelandra nevertheless recalls Christ’s saving role on Earth.*



The Queen speaks, saying that now she understands why they were never permitted to live on the **Fixed Land**. The only reason she ever desired to live there was because she wished to “reject the **wave**”—to determine her own course instead of accepting what Maleldil sent. The King adds that now he and the Queen understand what evil is, but that they learned of it in a different way, not as the Evil One wanted them to learn. The Queen learned as Ransom saw, and the King’s journey was a separate one of learning from Maleldil on a faraway island.

The King, Tor, proclaims that the **Fixed Land** will become a place dedicated to the splendor of Maleldil. He and the Queen, Tinidril, will fill Perelandra with their children, ennoble the beasts by teaching them, and someday tear the curtain of the sky asunder so that Deep Heaven can be seen. At that time, Maleldil will make them different creatures, something like eldila. When Ransom asks if that will be “the end,” Tor is surprised. Rather, he explains, they will only be approaching the *beginning* of all things.

At that time, however, the matter of Thulcandra will have to be dealt with. Its siege must be relieved. Maleldil himself will go down to the planet, along with many others like the King. All the evils of the world will be shown plainly for what they are, and they will be completely cleansed so that the world is made new. The false start, Tor explains, will be cleared away so that the world can begin as it was meant to.

Ransom is baffled by all this. He had always understood that when Maleldil became man, that was the central happening of all the universe. And what does this mean for all the other worlds, like Malacandra? Ransom wonders what it’s all driving toward. Tor explains that it will be “The beginning of the Great Game” or the “Great Dance.”

At this point, the five of them—the eldila, the King and Queen, and Ransom—enter into a series of speeches. They speak of the Great Dance which has always existed; the endless beauty of Maleldil’s creation and Maleldil’s plan for every creature; and the fact that wherever Maleldil is, *that* is the center of all things. All of Maleldil’s plans interlock in the Great Dance, each small part a microcosm of the whole of the design. Each speech concludes with the acclamation, “Blessed be He!”

*The Queen, having resisted temptation, finally has her questions answered about the Fixed Land. Much as Eve was tempted to eat the forbidden fruit because of a desire for Godlike knowledge, the Lady wished to enjoy the unchanging security of life on the Fixed Land. Unlike Eve, though, the Lady comes to understand this in a sinless way. The King has a parallel experience, though it isn’t part of the story.*



*The Fixed Land will now occupy the place of greatest importance on Perelandra, a place of Maleldil’s worship. Despite all of the King’s and Queen’s plans for their world, these are only a prelude to Maleldil’s greater plans for the universe as a whole.*



*Perelandra will someday play a role in the rescue and restoration of Thulcandra, or Earth. Much as events on Earth laid the groundwork for Perelandra’s preservation, Perelandra will someday contribute to Earth’s reclaimed innocence.*



*Ransom struggles to grasp the vastness of Maleldil’s plans for the universe. All of it—Mars, Venus, the life of Christ on Earth—is part of a greater cosmic plan of which Ransom has gotten only glimpses.*



*Seemingly orchestrated by Maleldil himself, everyone present proclaims Maleldil’s goodness—a worshipful ritual that brings the ceremony and the story’s events to a climax. The blessedness of Maleldil is the point of all that happens.*



Ransom thinks that, at this point, he didn't just hear but actually saw a glimpse of the Great Dance in many cords of interwoven light. He is never able to fully describe the sort of vision he experiences, but when he comes back from it, the *eldila* are gone, and so are the animals. He and the King and Queen are still in the valley. They tell Ransom that an entire year has elapsed since they first met in this valley.

The Queen says that soon the *eldila* will be coming to take Ransom back to his world. The King notices Ransom's bleeding foot and insists on washing it for him in the pool. Soon, the *eldila* arrive, in the form of barely discernible lights. Ransom climbs into the casket, and Tor and Tinidril gather red lilies which they use to cover his face. They kiss him goodbye and bless him. Then the lid is fixed onto the coffin, and Ransom loses consciousness.

*The speeches go on for a long time, actually taking up the bulk of Ransom's time on Perelandra, though Ransom isn't conscious of it. Ransom's ecstatic, visionary experience hints that in eternity—Maleldil's realm—time doesn't pass in the same way as it does on Earth, and creatures like Ransom won't be subjected to its limits.*



*The King's insistence on washing Ransom's foot, an act of loving servanthood, recalls Christ's washing his disciples' feet in the Gospel of John. The character of the King and Queen is exemplified by their tenderness and kindness to a creature lower than themselves. These events—a glimpse of a world untouched by selfishness—are Ransom's final memories before he is carried back to Earth to resume the spiritual battle by other means.*







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