The Magician's Nephew

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF C. S. LEWIS

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, Clive—who adopted the nickname "Jack" as a young boy—and his brother Warren lived in a house called Little Lea in East Belfast. He 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 Magdalene College of Cambridge University. 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 followed her in 1963.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Although *The Magician's Nephew* is set around 1900, it was written in the decade following World War II and, like the other *Chronicles of Narnia* books, reflects England's continuing efforts to come to terms with the events of 1940–1945. This is seen particularly in Aslan's prophetic remarks to Digory and Polly, warning them that someday, merciless tyrants and destructive weapons will menace their world, too. The character of Digory becomes Professor Kirke in later life, sheltering the Pevensie children on his country estate during the German bombing of London, much as Lewis himself sheltered refugee children during the Blitz as a middle-aged professor. Lewis was a member and sometimes host of an informal but influential Oxford 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

While *The Magician's Nephew* was the sixth of the seven *Chronicles of Narnia* books to be published between 1950–1956—preceded by *The Horse and His Boy* and followed by *The Last Battle*—it is the first in the series chronology. Some of the characters' openness to or rejection of Aslan's call is reminiscent of Lewis's theological views as expressed in *The Great Divorce* (1945), a novel presenting an allegory of heaven and hell. In the first chapter of *The Magician's Nephew*, E. Nesbit's children's novel, *The Story of the Treasure Seekers*, is mentioned as being set during the same time (c. 1899). Nesbit's novel influenced subsequent children's literature in its portrayal of a group of siblings having adventures together. Lewis may also have been influenced by his friend J. R. R. Tolkien's mythology as portrayed in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, which was published around the same time.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Magician's Nephew*
- **When Written:** 1949–1954
- **Where Written:** Oxford, U.K.
- **When Published:** 1955
- **Literary Period:** Modern
- **Genre:** Fantasy Novel, Children's Literature
- **Setting:** London; Narnia
- **Climax:** Digory resists the Witch's temptation and brings the magic apple back to Narnia.
- **Antagonist:** Queen Jadis/The Witch
- **Point of View:** Third Person

EXTRA CREDIT

Parallel Histories. While approximately 40 years are supposed to have passed in the reader's world between the events of *The Magician's Nephew* and those of *The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe* (roughly 1900–1940), C. S. Lewis's manuscript "An Outline of Narnian History" states that 1,000 Narnian years elapsed during the same period of time.

Inklings Inspiration. Lewis was prompted to write *The Magician's Nephew* when Roger Lancelyn Green, another children's author who frequented meetings of the Inklings, asked him why there was a lamp-post in the middle of Narnia in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe*.

PLOT SUMMARY

One day, Polly Plummer, a young girl living in a London row house, is surprised to meet a young boy, Digory, who's moved in next door. He's living with his old, unmarried aunt and uncle, the

Ketterleys, because his mother is dying and his father is away in India. The two children speculate about Digory's "mad" Uncle Andrew and Andrew's mysterious study. Polly and Digory become friends and spend the summer exploring the interconnected attics of the row houses.

One day, the children accidentally stumble into Uncle Andrew's study when they think they're entering a neighbor's attic. Uncle Andrew emerges from a chair and frightens the children by locking them in the room, then flatters Polly with the gift of a shining, faintly humming yellow ring. As soon as she touches the ring, she suddenly disappears.

When Digory demands to know where Polly has gone, Uncle Andrew tells him a story. His strange godmother, Mrs. Lefay—who was rumored to have had fairy blood and to have dabbled in dark magics—bequeathed him a little box. Breaking a promise, Uncle Andrew eventually studied magic himself and opened the box, discovering dust from another world. He used the dust to make magical rings—yellow ones to send his experimental subjects to another realm and green ones to bring them back home. Polly doesn't have a green ring, so Digory realizes he'll have to rescue her, since his cruel uncle is also too cowardly to do it himself.

After Digory puts on the yellow ring, he suddenly finds himself emerging in a light-filled wood with many small ponds. Polly is there, and despite both children being in a dreamy haze, they eventually remember what's happened and make a plan to return home. At the last minute, they decide to explore other pools to see what kinds of worlds might exist there. The children switch to green rings, join hands, and jump into a different pool, which deposits them in a cold, ruined, apparently vacant world called Charn. They wander through crumbling courtyards until they enter a hall filled with the frozen forms of dozens of richly-dressed people. There's also a little golden bell with a hammer beside it. After a heated argument (Polly senses danger and wants to go home; Digory doesn't want to be driven mad with curiosity), Digory strikes the bell with the hammer to see what will happen. Moments later, a fierce, beautiful queen is awakened from her enchanted sleep and approaches them.

The Queen, Jadis, leads the children out of the building and surveys the ruins of her once-great kingdom, explaining that she destroyed Charn herself using a spell called the Deplorable Word, lest her sister wrest her throne away from her. She then cast herself into an enchanted sleep until someone someday came to ring the bell. When Jadis hears Digory mention that the children come from a different, younger world, she greedily demands to visit that world, so that she can subdue and conquer it. Though Polly and Digory try to flee homeward, they discover that the magic rings work like magnets—because the Queen is clutching Digory's ear, she is accidentally pulled back to London with the children.

In London, the once-intimidating Uncle Andrew is dwarfed by Jadis and cowers as she demands that he find her a suitable chariot and rich clothing before she conquers this world. Digory and Polly wait helplessly at home as Jadis wreaks havoc throughout the city. When she returns to the Ketterleys', she has commandeered a hansom cab and its hapless horse, Strawberry, and has a number of indignant merchants, angry policemen, and cheerful onlookers in her train. The Queen—now referred to as the Witch—attacks a policeman with the broken arm of a lamp-post. Digory and Polly manage to grab both the Witch and a yellow ring in order to get the Witch out of London, but they accidentally bring Strawberry, the Cabby, and Uncle Andrew along with them. This time, when they leave London behind, they all find themselves in a perfectly dark world, with the sound of beautiful **singing** in the distance. As this new world gradually fills with light, they see that the Singer is a huge, bright Lion.

The Lion's singing has brought forth the stars, the sun, and now grasses and trees. The Witch hates the music and flees the Lion's presence, but the children long to meet him. Suddenly, countless animals of different kinds burst forth from the ground. The Lion, Aslan, walks among the animals and touches noses with certain ones. The chosen animals gather around him, and he breathes into them the ability to think and speak. Aslan charges these Talking Beasts with the care of those who don't speak.

Digory summons the courage to approach Aslan directly, on Strawberry's back. Aslan asks him how the Witch came to enter Narnia, and Digory, compelled by the Lion's expectant silence, confesses that he is responsible for releasing the Witch from her enchantment. Before dealing with Digory, Aslan speaks with the Cabby and summons the Cabby's wife from her own world. He tells Frank and Helen that they will become Narnia's first king and queen.

Then Aslan explains to Digory that he must undo the harm he's done. Digory has been tearfully thinking of his sick mother, wishing Aslan could heal her, but he agrees to do as Aslan bids: to journey into the Western Wild to find a certain tree in a walled garden. He must pluck an **apple** from that tree and return it to Aslan. Aslan then transforms Strawberry into a flying horse, renaming him Fledge, and charges him to fly Digory and Polly to the garden. The following day, they arrive at the fragrant garden, and Digory enters alone. Digory reads an inscription on the gates: "Come in by the gold gates or not at all, / Take of my fruit for others or forbear, / For those who steal or those who climb my wall / Shall find their heart's desire and find despair."

Inside the garden, Digory quickly finds a silver apple. As he's about to leave, he is startled to encounter the Witch. She, too, has taken an apple and eaten it, granting her immortality. When Digory tries to flee, she tells him that eating one of these apples would cure his mother—and even let her live forever. Digory wrestles with this terrible dilemma, but finally recognizes that the Witch is trying to tempt him and doesn't really care about

his mother. Still, he's heartbroken, and it's only the memory of Aslan that comforts him as he flies back with Fledge and Polly.

When Digory returns to Narnia with the apple, Aslan is pleased. He has Digory plant the apple on a riverbank. After King Frank and Queen Helen are crowned, everyone notices that an entire tree of silver apples has now sprung up. Its beautiful aroma is repellent to the Witch, who will stay away from Narnia for hundreds of years. Aslan reassures Digory that he did the right thing by refusing to take the original silver apple for himself, and then offers him another apple from the tree, which will heal his mother's illness. Digory joyfully picks an apple and returns to his world with Polly and Uncle Andrew. Aslan also warns the children that their own world is susceptible to become a wicked, ruined realm like Charn, and that they must bury the magic rings so that no one else can ever use them.

Back home, Digory cuts up the Narnian apple for his mother. By the next day, she is feeling remarkably better, and within a month, she is healed of her deathly illness. Digory discovers that another apple tree—albeit not a fully magical one—has sprouted up where he buried the apple core in the backyard. He and Polly bury the magic rings at the foot of this tree.

After Digory's mother gets well, his father returns from India with an inheritance, and the family moves to a country estate, where Polly comes to visit often. Narnia enjoys many years of happiness and harmony under King Frank and Queen Helen. In midlife, after Digory has become an accomplished professor, he inherits the Ketterleys' London house. When the backyard apple tree is blown down in a storm, he uses its wood to build a wardrobe, which will become the gateway to later adventures in Narnia.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Digory Kirke – Digory is a young boy who befriends Polly Plummer. He moves in next door to her, with his Uncle Andrew and Aunt Letty Ketterley, when his mother, Mabel Kirke, becomes deathly ill. His father is away in India during this time. Digory is insatiably curious, especially when it comes to exploring unknown worlds. He can also be stubborn and rather mean about getting what he wants, as when he forcibly restrains Polly while he breaks the curse in Charn, releasing the Witch. However, he is different from his cruel Uncle Andrew in that he recognizes his unkindness, apologizes, and grows wiser and less selfish by the end of the story. Digory's growth comes about when he confesses to Aslan that he is responsible for inflicting the Witch's wickedness on Narnia, then undertakes a journey to find and bring back a magical **apple** for Narnia's protection. When the Witch tries to convince Digory to take the apple back to his mother in order to save her life, he is mightily tempted, but he chooses to obey Aslan's call instead. After planting the tree that protects Narnia, Digory is rewarded for his obedience and trust by Aslan, who gives Digory another magical apple that *does* heal his mother's illness. After his father returns from India, Digory, his mother, and Uncle Andrew live contentedly in the countryside, and he and Polly remain lifelong friends. Digory also becomes a wise professor and, in middle age, builds the wardrobe (from the tree with sprouted from the lifesaving apple's core) that transports later generations of children to Narnia.

Polly Plummer – Polly is a young girl who lives in a London row house. She befriends Digory Kirke when he moves in with the Ketterleys next door, and they begin exploring the attics in their houses. Polly is a curious girl who is game for adventure. She is more practical and sensible than Digory, however—for example, accurately sensing that releasing the Witch from her curse will have dire consequences. When Digory is subsequently unkind to her, she demands an apology, but she readily forgives him when he genuinely repents. Throughout the story, she is loyal and trustworthy whenever Digory needs her help in corralling and resisting the Witch. After they return to London from Narnia, Polly and Digory remain good friends throughout their lives.

Uncle Andrew Ketterley – Uncle Andrew is Digory's creepy, secretive uncle. He is Aunt Letty and Mabel Kirke's brother. Andrew is tall, thin, and clean-shaven, with a pointed nose, bright eyes, and a mop of gray hair. When Digory and Polly stumble into Uncle Andrew's mysterious study by accident, they learn that he is a magician and a selfish, cruel man who uses other people for the sake of magical experimentation. Magic was passed down to him by his godmother, Mrs. Lefay. When Uncle Andrew meets Queen Jadis, his powers are clearly dwarfed by hers. He cowers before her, and, when he is accidentally brought to Narnia, is also made uncomfortable by Aslan's goodness. When Uncle Andrew looks at Narnia, he only sees the possibility for commercial exploitation, and its Talking Beasts, including Aslan, are frightful and incomprehensible to him, because he has closed his mind to the reality of such benevolent magic. Following the ordeal of Uncle Andrew's brief visit to Narnia, however, he forswears all magic and spends his later years with Digory and his family, becoming a kinder and less selfish old man.

Queen Jadis / The Witch – Jadis is the Queen of the ancient, ruined city of Charn. She spent hundreds of years in an enchanted sleep, until Digory woke her. In the past, Jadis destroyed Charn herself—and killed all its people—rather than allow her sister to take over its throne. The Queen sees other people either as objects to be used or obstacles to destroy. In this way, she is like an extreme, more wicked version of Uncle Andrew. As her wickedness becomes clear in the story, she is more frequently referred to as "the Witch" than as Jadis. Digory is quite taken at first with the Witch's wild beauty, but Polly sees her as cruel right away. After the Witch's brief, ill-

fated attempt to overtake London, she is transported to Narnia along with Digory and Polly, where she finds Aslan and his **songs** utterly repellent. Spying on the children, she learns of the location of an enchanted garden, where she steals and eats an **Apple** of Youth, thereby dooming herself to an eternal life of despair. Digory uses an apple from the same tree to plant a protective tree in Narnia itself. Because the Witch uses the Apple of Youth illicitly, she comes to despise the tree's sweet aroma and leaves Narnia alone for hundreds of years.

The Lion / Aslan – Aslan is the founder of Narnia, the creator of its creatures, and its King. He is a shaggy, bright, beautiful lion with a sonorous **singing** voice. His song literally brings Narnia and its creatures to life. Aslan is both fierce and gentle—when he confronts Digory about Digory's wrongdoing (bringing the Witch into Narnia), his slightest growl of disapproval elicits the truth, yet when Digory weeps over his dying mother, Aslan's sorrow for her is even deeper than Digory's. Aslan's call naturally summons those who are open to his beauty, yet it's repellent and fearful to wicked hearts. Simple, humble people and creatures tend to trust and love Aslan, while selfish people tend to see him only as a fearsome lion. He breathes the gifts of life and thought into many Narnian creatures and instructs them—and, later, King Frank and Queen Helen—to rule the lesser creatures with justice and mercy. While he himself demands justice (requiring Digory to fetch a magical apple to counteract the Witch's evil, for example), he is also merciful in his actions (providing for Digory's mother's healing).

Strawberry / Fledge – Strawberry belongs to the Cabby, drawing a hansom cab in London in the beginning of the story. Despite his humble station, Strawberry is the son of a fine cavalry horse. After the Witch steals him, he is accidentally transported to Narnia, along with his Cabby, Digory, and Polly. In Narnia, Strawberry's youth is renewed, and Aslan gives him the gifts of speech and, later, wings (at which point he's renamed Fledge). Fledge obligingly flies Digory and Polly across Narnia and the wilderness to enable Digory to complete his errand in search of the **Apple** of Youth.

The Cabby / King Frank – With his horse, Strawberry, the Cabby drives a hansom cab in London, which Queen Jadis commandeers when she is on the loose in the city. The Cabby is kind, brave, and down-to-earth, calmly confronting Jadis when she tries to steal Strawberry. When he's accidentally transported to Narnia along with Strawberry, Jadis, and the children, the Cabby immediately responds joyfully to the beauty of Aslan's **song**. Having grown up in the country, he expresses a desire to stay in Narnia forever, at which point Aslan summons the Cabby's wife, Helen, to Narnia and crowns the two of them as Narnia's first King and Queen. He rules Narnia as a just and wise King for many years.

Aunt Letty Ketterley – Aunt Letty is Digory's aunt and Uncle Andrew and Mabel Kirke's sister. She has a small role in the story and is mainly notable for her refusal to put up with any of Uncle Andrew's nonsense—protecting the children from his magic, refusing him money, and standing up to the Witch. She is even unfazed when the Witch erupts into her London household and hurls her across the room.

Mabel Kirke / Digory's Mother – Mabel Kirke is Digory's mother and Aunt Letty and Uncle Andrew's sister. She and Digory move in with the Ketterleys because she is gravely ill, and her husband is working in India. She doesn't appear directly in the story until the very end, when Digory brings her a healing Narnian **apple**. Upon recovering from her illness, she delights in **songs** and games with Digory and Polly. She later moves back to the countryside with Digory and Mr. Kirke.

Mrs. Lefay – Mrs. Lefay was Uncle Andrew's godmother. She was known to be eccentric and perhaps even had "fairy blood." For unspecified reasons, Mrs. Lefay spent time in prison before she died. Like Uncle Andrew, she disliked "ordinary" people. She passed down a mysterious box to Uncle Andrew, which proved to contain dust from another world. Uncle Andrew used the dust to create the fateful magical rings that transport Polly and Digory to Narnia.

The Cabby's Wife / Queen Helen – After the Cabby decides he would like to remain in Narnia, Aslan summons the Cabby's young wife, Helen, to Narnia with a roar. She appears instantly, covered with soapsuds. Helen is a simple, shy, kind young woman from the country, who joins her husband in being crowned as Narnia's first ruling couple. She, Frank, and their offspring rule Narnia in peace and harmony for many years.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Sarah – The Ketterleys' housemaid.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

CREATIVE MAGIC VS. DESTRUCTIVE MAGIC

While magic is obviously a major theme in *The Magician's Nephew*, magic isn't a singular force. The story's two prominent forms of magic can be summed up as destructive—motivated by the quest for power, even at the expense of other human beings—and creative, which is motivated by the desire for other beings to flourish. The protagonists, Digory and Polly, first encounter destructive magic when Digory's Uncle Andrew, in a selfishly reckless act, transports the children to magical lands using mysterious rings.

In Charn, one of the magical kingdoms they explore, the children meet Queen Jadis (later simply called "the Witch"), who is a far more hardened, ruthless, and deadly practitioner of destructive magic than Andrew. When all four characters encounter King Aslan in the kingdom of Narnia, however, they witness the goodness wrought by creative magic. By contrasting these two forms of magic, C. S. Lewis suggests that wickedness manifests in using others for one's own purposes, while goodness is rooted in a desire for others to flourish, even at a cost to oneself.

Destructive magic rests on self-centeredness. When Uncle Andrew explains that he broke his promise to destroy the magic passed down to him by his godmother, Mrs. Lefay, he defends himself by saying, "You mean that little boys ought to keep their promises. […] But of course you must understand that rules of that sort, however excellent they may be for little boys […] can't possibly be expected to apply to profound students and great thinkers and sages. No, Digory. Men like me, who possess hidden wisdom, are freed from common rules [.]" Andrew thinks, in other words, that everyday rules about honor and decency don't apply to him; they're for "lesser" people, like children. Digory, however, quickly sees through his uncle's words: "'All it means," he said to himself, "is that he thinks he can do anything he likes to get anything he wants.'" By having Digory see through his uncle's claim that he's an exception to ordinary rules, Lewis demonstrates that even children are capable of recognizing the costs of "destructive" magic—thereby implying that creative magic is innocent, and everything that its destructive counterpart isn't.

Because destructive magic is self-centered, those who practice it see other human beings as things to be used for one's own purposes, and thus ultimately dehumanize others. In Queen Jadis, the children find someone like Uncle Andrew, but even more sinister. She claims that the destruction of Charn was her sister's fault: "She drove me to it […] Her pride has destroyed the whole world […] She even knew that I had the secret of the Deplorable Word. Did she think—she was always a weakling—that I would not use it?" Jadis refuses to take responsibility for her own destructive actions, using her unnamed sister as a convenient scapegoat for her own decision to destroy Charn. Her flippant, self-justifying use of magic suggests that she's grown accustomed to blaming others. When Polly protests, "[What about] all the ordinary people […] who'd never done you any harm," Jadis retorts, "Don't you understand? […] I was the Queen. They were all my people. What else were they there for but to do my will?" When the children refuse to accept this reasoning, she goes on, "You must learn, child, that what would be wrong for you or for any of the common people is not wrong in a great Queen such as I […] We must be freed from all rules. Ours is a high and lonely destiny." Jadis's words show that she sees her people as objects for her own use, and she echoes Uncle Andrew by saying that people like her are not bound by rules. But she is worse than Uncle Andrew—where Andrew was bad enough, the Queen has traveled so far down the path of destructive magic that she willingly wipes out other people, even her own subjects, in order to maintain power. She is so obsessed with her own superiority that she no longer thinks about others' humanity.

Though destructive magic is more prominent in the first half of the book, the characters' encounter with creative magic through Narnia's King Aslan puts destructive magic in perspective. While Digory and Polly listen joyfully to Aslan's voice **singing** Narnia into existence, Uncle Andrew and the Witch react very differently: "Uncle Andrew's mouth was open too, but not open with joy. […] He was not liking the Voice. If he could have got away from it by creeping into a rat's hole, he would have done so. […] [The Witch's] mouth was shut, her lips were pressed together, and her fists were clenched. Ever since the song began she had felt that this whole world was filled with a Magic different from hers and stronger. She hated it. She would have smashed that whole world, or all worlds, to pieces, if it would only stop the singing." This passage suggests that people's character shapes their reactions to Aslan's creative magic. Both Uncle Andrew and the Witch feel a desire to flee from Aslan's singing, but the Witch, provoked by its superior power to create, goes so far as to wish to destroy the magic as its source, as well as everything the singing brings about. The Witch's reaction to Aslan's singing sets up a conflict that isn't fully resolved in *The Magician's Nephew*, but is further explored in *The Lion, The Witch, and The Wardrobe* (of which this story is a prequel). In the (chronologically) later volume, there is a direct confrontation between the conflicting magics introduced here. Aslan hints at that confrontation, however, when he remarks to the Talking Beasts he's created that evil will come of the Witch entering Narnia, but that when it arrives, Aslan "will see to it that the worst falls upon myself." This reinforces Lewis's depiction of Aslan as the one who, in contrast to the Witch, enables others' flourishing, even—eventually—at cost to himself.

HUMAN SELFISHNESS VS. DIVINE SELFLESSNESS

In *The Magician's Nephew*, everyday human choices have immense repercussions for both individual lives and entire worlds. Though epic-scale confrontations between good and evil aren't fully played out in this story (like the hinted coming conflict between the Witch and the Lion), smaller-scale ones are—especially the choice to act selflessly for others' sake instead of selfishly to fulfill one's own desires. Contrary to early expectations, the character who faces the consequences of his selfishness isn't the exaggeratedly wicked magician Andrew, but ordinary Digory, with the help of the good and divine Lion, Aslan. By portraying Digory's initial selfishness and later heroism alongside Aslan's overshadowing

goodness, Lewis suggests that everyday selfishness is one of the most fundamental and devastating human temptations, one that can only be overcome through a divinely-inspired choice to put others first.

The major conflict in the story is unleashed because of small-scale wickedness, namely selfishness. In the mysterious city of Charn, Digory overrules and forcefully restrains Polly when she refuses to ring the bell that ultimately frees the Witch, as she senses it's dangerous. Digory's curiosity is piqued by the poem written beside the bell: "Make your choice, adventurous Stranger; / Strike the bell and bide the danger, / Or wonder, till it drives you mad, / What would have followed if you had." He selfishly disregards Polly's instincts and advice in order to indulge his own curiosity. In doing so, he makes it possible for the Witch to wreak havoc in both his own world and ultimately in Narnia. When Digory meets the personification of goodness in Aslan, he finds that he can't hide the truth about how the Witch wound up in Narnia: "'You *met* the Witch?' said Aslan in a low voice which had the threat of a growl in it. 'She woke up,' said Digory wretchedly. And then, turning very white, 'I mean, I woke her. Because I wanted to know what would happen [...] I think I was a bit enchanted by the writing under the bell.' 'Do you?' asked Aslan; still speaking very low and deep. 'No,' said Digory. 'I see now I wasn't. I was only pretending.'" Digory's instinct is to conceal his culpability, right down to the baseness of his motives; but Aslan sees through him, prompting Digory to face the selfishness at the root of his actions. It's such selfishness, Lewis suggests, that unleashes harmful repercussions, on both individual and cosmic scales.

The evil unleashed by selfishness can be mitigated when people choose to act against their own interests, though they require the wisdom and help of someone higher than themselves. In Aslan, Digory—whose mother is dying—unexpectedly finds sympathy and mercy, as well as an opportunity to set right what his actions have made wrong. "For the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders) great shining tears stood in the Lion's eyes. [...] 'My son, my son,' said Aslan. 'I know. Grief is great. Only you and I in this land know that yet. [...] The Witch whom you have brought into this world will come back to Narnia again. But it need not be yet. It is my wish to plant in Narnia a tree that she will not dare to approach, and that tree will protect Narnia from her for many years. [...] You must get me the seed from which that tree is to grow." Though Digory had hoped Aslan might cure his mother, he must first help Aslan protect Narnia from the Witch's harmful magic, which he helped to unleash. Because he finds tenderhearted empathy from Aslan instead of a cold demand for justice for his wrongdoing, Digory is strengthened to carry out this needful reversal. In a poetic parallel, Digory's quest for the healing **apple** is similar to the one he faced in Charn. A verse next to the apple tree reads: "Come in by the gold gates or not at all / Take of my fruit for others or forbear, / For those who steal or those who climb my wall / Shall find their heart's desire and find despair." The challenge goes straight to the taker's motive—will he act for others' sake or indulge himself? This forces Digory to examine his heart, as he'd failed to do when he chose to free the Witch in Charn.

Unexpectedly, Digory is confronted by the Witch herself in the garden: "[Y]ou are going to carry [the fruit] back, untasted, to the Lion; for *him* to eat, for *him* to use. You simpleton! Do you know what that fruit is? I will tell you. It is the apple of youth, the apple of life." Digory realizes that there's even more to this quest than Aslan had revealed. Trusting Aslan's empathy and wisdom, Digory must bypass the chance to take this healing apple to his dying mother. Unlike the Witch, who's already eaten an apple to make herself immortal, Digory finally does as he was bidden by Aslan, allowing the protective tree to be planted in Narnia and offsetting—if not completely reversing—the evil he brought about earlier. Only after Digory's unselfish act does he learn that Aslan has a greater plan—he *does* send Digory back to London with an apple, which brings his mother back from the brink of death and restores her health. It's important not to miss Lewis's Christian overtones here; the temptation represented by the apple evokes the biblical story of the Tree of Knowledge in the Garden of Eden, and Digory's choice to trust Aslan instead of the Witch represents, in a way, a reversal of the fall of humanity. In all of this, the wisdom and love of the Lion towers above even the best choices human beings can carry out. Thus, in the world of the story, while human selfishness and goodness are truly transformative forces, for good and ill, they are not coldly mechanical ones—in Lewis's view, Aslan's power (and people's embrace or resistance of it) guides, shapes, and elevates those human impulses.

MAGIC, THE ORDINARY, AND INNATE GOODNESS

In *The Magician's Nephew*, there isn't a clean division between the "magical" and "non-magical" worlds. When Queen Jadis is accidentally transported to London and briefly rampages through the city, both hilarity and chaos result. For example, when the friendly Cabby tries to coax Jadis to get off his horse, he implores in his cockney accent, "You're a Lidy, and you don't want all these roughs going for you, do you? You want to go 'ome and 'ave a nice cup of tea and a lay down quiet like; then you'll feel ever so much better." His understanding of the Queen—as a reasonable Englishwoman who's gotten mixed up in some sorry business—reflects his kindly nature. This humorous interlude highlights Lewis's point that people's responses to magic say more about them than their own origins or familiarity with magic do. In more serious scenes, Lewis employs a contrast between the Cabby and his wife, on one hand, and Uncle Andrew, on the other hand, to argue that people's innate goodness, not their understanding of

magic, is what suits them for life in Narnia.

Some "normal" people from the "ordinary" world belong in Narnia, as naturally as if they had been created in the magical realm. Both the Cabby and Strawberry the horse, for example, belong more in Narnia than they did in the "non-magical" universe. Reflecting on his grueling London existence, the horse says, "'It was a hard, cruel country' […] 'There was no grass. All hard stones.' 'Too true, mate, too true!' said the Cabby. "[…] I didn't like it no more than what you did. You were a country 'oss, and I was a country man.'" The cabby's and horse's remarks indicate, in a homely way, that they will flourish better in Narnia than in the place they had known as their home. When the Cabby tells Aslan that he would be happy to settle in Narnia, if only his wife were with him, Aslan arranges precisely that: "Aslan threw up his shaggy head, opened his mouth, and uttered a long, single note; not very loud, but full of power […] [Polly] felt sure that it was a call, and that anyone who heard that call would want to obey it […] [A]ll of a sudden a young woman, with a kind, honest face stepped out of nowhere and stood beside her. Polly knew at once that it was the Cabby's wife, fetched out of our world not by any tiresome magic rings, but quickly, simply and sweetly as a bird flies to its nest." The manner of Helen's arrival suggests that what really makes a person belong in Narnia is not one's origins, or even one's access to magic, but Aslan's call, and one's responsiveness to that call—hence the natural, "nesting" feel of Helen's sudden homecoming. She belongs here, not just because of her husband, but primarily because of Aslan.

By contrast, some people, though ostensibly more magically inclined, can never belong in Narnia because they are unresponsive to its goodness. Because of his wickedness, Uncle Andrew finds Narnia intolerable. "It had not made at all the same impression on him as on the Cabby and the children. For what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing: it also depends on what sort of person you are. Ever since the [talking] animals had first appeared, Uncle Andrew had been shrinking further and further back into the thicket." Where the Cabby and the children experience wonder, Uncle Andrew is repelled. The children's innocence and the Cabby's simplicity incline them to delight in and embrace Narnia's magic, but Andrew's grasping cynicism makes its magic threatening and even unrecognizable to him. Not only is Andrew untouched by the magic, he's basically oblivious to it: "And the longer and more beautiful the Lion sang, the harder Uncle Andrew tried to make himself believe that he could hear nothing but roaring. Now the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider than you really are is that you very often succeed. […] Soon he couldn't have heard anything else even if he had wanted to." No rationalist, Andrew has gleefully tinkered with magic before. His problem is not a refusal to believe in the supernatural, but an inability to accept the moral goodness of the magic he finds in Narnia. Aslan tells the children, "I cannot comfort [Andrew] either; he has made himself unable to hear my voice. If I spoke to him, he would hear only growlings and roarings. Oh Adam's sons, how cleverly you defend yourselves against all that might do you good! But I will give him the only gift he is still able to receive," and he puts the stubborn magician into a deep sleep. Aslan concludes, in other words, that people ultimately hear what they choose to hear. Although a magician himself, Andrew has so effectively walled himself off from Narnia's goodness that he cannot be helped by it. Whereas the Cabby and his wife instinctively recognize and respond to Aslan's beauty, Uncle Andrew is incapable of heeding it.

Other places in the book exemplify a kind of inbreaking of the magical into the ordinary. Besides Cabby Frank and his wife Helen becoming the inaugural King and Queen of Narnia, Digory's mother miraculously recovers from her deathly illness when she eats a Narnian **apple**. Years later, the planted apple core eventually yields the tree that becomes the eponymous Wardrobe of a later volume. In each case, those who are responsive to Narnian magic tend not to be those who've gone searching for magical power for themselves, like Andrew. They tend to be ordinary people who seemingly stumble into magical contacts, yet whose basic kindness and modest ambitions make them open to hearing Aslan's call.

CREATION, CREATOR, AND THE DIGNITY OF LIFE

In *The Magician's Nephew*, Lewis gives a vivid account of the dawn of the kingdom of Narnia, the primary setting in the rest of *The Chronicles of Narnia* series. The burgeoning vitality of this world finds its origin in Aslan's innate, inexhaustible creativity. Those whom Aslan creates, or those who come to share in his world through their gratitude and wonder at his creation, are endowed with dignity and beauty by association with him. By contrast, those who mistrust Aslan resist and seek to exploit the beauty of his world, even failing to see it for what it is. Through this juxtaposition, Lewis suggests that the beauty and dignity of the world and its creatures is upheld by those who honor its creator.

In the story, creation is invested with overflowing life, beauty, and dignity by Aslan, and those who respond in gratitude to Aslan share in that abundance. First, Narnia is sung into existence by Aslan. The children listen in wonder to his various **songs** of creation: "[The second song] was softer and more lilting than the song by which he had called up the stars and the sun; a gentle, rippling music. And as he walked and sang the valley grew green with grass. It spread out from the Lion like a pool. It ran up the sides of the little hills like a wave. In a few minutes it was creeping up the lower slopes of the distant mountains, making that young world every moment softer. The light wind could now be heard ruffling the grass. Soon there were other things besides grass." They observe that this world's

life proceeds directly from Aslan and his song. In this way, the land of Narnia is a piece of Aslan himself.

Not just the land, but the life of its creatures springs from Aslan himself. Aslan sets apart certain creatures as Talking Beasts, whose special vitality—their self-awareness and kindly dominion over lesser beasts—is a gift from their creator: "'Creatures, I give you yourselves,' said the strong, happy voice of Aslan. 'I give to you forever this land of Narnia. I give you the woods, the fruits, the rivers. I give you the stars and I give you myself. The Dumb Beasts whom I have not chosen are yours also. Treat them gently and cherish them but do not go back to their ways lest you cease to be Talking Beasts.'" The sentience of the Talking Beasts reflects the overflowing beauty of Aslan; their sense of self and their ability to receive gifts, to delight in those gifts and in Aslan himself, and to rule all derive from him. Notably, too, a failure to treat lesser creatures justly will result in a fading of this gift.

Those who dislike and mistrust Aslan fail to recognize the beauty of his creation, and they seek to misuse it or are altogether repelled by it. For instance, Uncle Andrew's first instinct is to assume that Narnia can be exploited for material gain: "I have discovered a world where everything is bursting with life and growth. Columbus, now, they talk about Columbus. But what was America to this? The commercial possibilities of this country are unbounded. Bring a few old bits of scrap iron here, bury 'em, and up they come as brand new railway engines, battleships, anything you please. […] I shall be a millionaire. And then the climate! I feel years younger already. I can run it as a health resort. A good sanatorium here might be worth twenty thousand a year. Of course I shall have to let a few people into the secret. The first thing is to get that brute shot." Uncle Andrew's first reaction to Narnia's bursting life is not grateful wonder. Rather, it's a cynical desire to use Narnia to enrich himself—exploiting the land's magical properties to "grow" machines of war, and exploiting people's vulnerabilities to make himself rich through a health resort. Ultimately, he wants to use Narnia as a means to increase his own notoriety. To do all this, Uncle Andrew will have to kill Aslan. His ambitions show that he fundamentally misunderstands not just Narnia, but Aslan as its very source of life. Without Aslan as Narnia's creator and ruler, the kingdom's beauty and value can't continue to exist as it does.

To an extent, Narnia is protected by the obliviousness of those who reject Aslan. "Son of Adam,'" Aslan tells Digory after he plants the protective **Apple** Tree, "'you have sown well. And you, Narnians, let it be your first care to guard this Tree, for it is your Shield. […] [W]hile that Tree flourishes [the Witch] will never come down into Narnia. She dare not come within a hundred miles of the Tree, for its smell, which is joy and life and health to you, is death and horror and despair to her.'" In other words, the overflowing life of this Tree—again, a kind of echo of Aslan's own life—repels those who do not recognize Aslan's beauty. The threat posed by Uncle Andrew can be disposed of more easily, because it's a more naïve misreading of what Narnia is. The Witch's threat, however, will require ongoing vigilance.

Aslan's warning to the Narnians to guard the Tree is soon followed up with a like warning for residents of the human world. Aslan tells Polly and Digory, "[V]ery soon, before you are an old man and an old woman, great nations in your world will be ruled by tyrants who care no more for joy and justice and mercy than the Empress Jadis. Let your world beware." Lewis would almost certainly have had in mind the outrages against human dignity committed during the World Wars, WWII still a fresh memory when he wrote. But Aslan's command to vigilance is invested with Aslan's special power, too: "[S]uch a sweetness and power rolled about them and over them and entered them that they felt they had never really been happy or wise or good, or even alive and awake, before." By portraying Aslan's wise dominion over Narnia as he does, Lewis discourages both a naïve outlook on the world's evils and hopelessness in the face of them.

SYMBOLS

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

SONGS AND SINGING

In *The Magician's Nephew*, songs and singing symbolize the creative force that forges new life out of nothing. When Narnia is founded, Aslan creates life by singing: his wordless, beautiful song summons the stars, the first sunrise, the sprouting of grasses and trees, and even the appearance of animals. While Digory, Polly, the Cabby, and even Strawberry the horse respond with joy to Aslan's song, others—like frightened Uncle Andrew and the hateful Witch—are repelled by it, suggesting that the attitude of a person's heart conditions their response to the beauty of creation.

APPLE

Narnian apples have the power to bestow unending life—a tempting prospect that reveals the selfishness or unselfishness of characters' hearts. Therefore, apples symbolize the choice to serve others or to satisfy oneself. After Digory releases the Witch from enchantment, allowing her evil to infiltrate Narnia, Aslan commands Digory to undo the harm he's caused by journeying to a remote garden and retrieving a magical silver apple. When Digory does so, he discovers that the Witch has beat him there. She eats one of the apples herself, obtaining endless life, and tempts Digory to

steal an apple to save his ailing mother. Digory ultimately refuses and brings his apple back to Narnia, where it's planted to become a protective tree for the creatures there. Because of his obedience, Digory is allowed to pick another apple to take back to London. Though its magic isn't as potent in the "ordinary" world, it does heal Digory's mother's illness, suggesting that a selfless sacrifice in the short term will ultimately pay off in the long term.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the HarperCollins edition of *The Magician's Nephew* published in 2008.

Chapter 2 Quotes

"Rotten?" said Uncle Andrew with a puzzled look. "Oh, I see. You mean that little boys ought to keep their promises. Very true: most right and proper, I'm sure, and I'm very glad you have been taught to do it. But of course you must understand that rules of that sort, however excellent they may be for little boys—and servants—and women—and even people in general, can't possibly be expected to apply to profound students and great thinkers and sages. No, Digory. Men like me, who possess hidden wisdom, are freed from common rules just as we are cut off from common pleasures. Ours, my boy, is a high and lonely destiny."

Related Characters: Uncle Andrew Ketterley (speaker), Digory Kirke

Related Themes:

Page Number: 21

Explanation and Analysis

When Polly and Digory first discover Uncle Andrew's secret study, Uncle Andrew explains his initial dabblings in dark magic. Digory has just informed Uncle Andrew that he thinks his uncle's refusal to keep his godmother, Mrs. Lefay's, magical secrets concealed was a "rotten" example of breaking a promise. Uncle Andrew responds with remarks that reveal a lot about his character. He argues that elementary "rules," like keeping promises, are only for average or "inferior" people like children, women, or underlings. Uncle Andrew himself, by contrast, is except from such rules because of his supposed "wisdom." Andrew's arrogant claims have a humorous note, because when the Witch's character is introduced later in to the book, it's clear just what a feeble pretender of a magician Andrew is by comparison. Yet, at the same time, his words have a sinister undertone—it's this arrogant sense of being a special exception, exempt from common rules, that lets Andrew use others (like Polly and Digory) to conduct his magical experiments without regard for their safety. The Witch is a far more sinister example of this in her willingness even to kill.

"Very well. I'll go. But there's one thing I jolly well mean to say first. I didn't believe in Magic till today. I see now it's real. Well if it is, I suppose all the old fairy tales are more or less true. And you're simply a wicked, cruel magician like the ones in the stories. Well, I've never read a story in which people of that sort weren't paid out in the end, and I bet you will be. And serve you right."

Related Characters: Digory Kirke (speaker), Uncle Andrew Ketterley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 27

Explanation and Analysis

When Digory realizes that he must be the one to use the magic rings to rescue Polly, he quickly agrees to the dangerous errand. But before heading off on this adventure, he makes a brave—and rather prophetic—speech to Uncle Andrew first. With a childlike frankness, Digory claims to have not believed in magic before, but to now accept its reality. And this realization comforts him, because he realizes that Uncle Andrew exemplifies a familiar type from fairy tales he's heard—a wicked magician who will surely get his comeuppance. Digory turns out to be correct—fairy tale justice *does* prevail, although in a more humorous way than he predicts (Uncle Andrew is frightened half to death by a well-meaning crowd of talking animals). But, more than that, Digory's sense of justice is turned back on himself, too—he later behaves cruelly toward Polly, unintentionally letting chaos into Narnia, a mistake he must be held accountable for, too. In this respect, something beyond fairy-tale justice prevails in the story, as he finds Narnia's King Aslan to be not only just in his dealings, but merciful even toward transgressors like himself.

Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ What it said was something like this—at least this is the sense of it though the poetry, when you read it there, was better:

Make your choice, adventurous Stranger;
Strike the bell and bide the danger,
Or wonder, till it drives you mad,
What would have followed if you had.

"No fear!" said Polly. "We don't want any danger."

"Oh but don't you see it's no good!" said Digory. "We can't get out of it now. We shall always be wondering what else would have happened if we had struck the bell. I'm not going home to be driven mad by always thinking of that. No fear!"

Related Characters: Digory Kirke, Polly Plummer (speaker), Queen Jadis / The Witch

Related Themes:

Page Number: 54

Explanation and Analysis

When Digory and Polly use the magic rings to explore other realms, they first end up in Charn, a ruined, ancient city filled with crumbling buildings and frozen human forms. The only sign of life is a little bell with an inscription beside it—the poem in the passage above. The poem essentially tempts the reader to ring the bell, because if they don't, they'll spend the rest of their life wondering what might have happened if they had taken the chance to do so. In a clear contrast of their personalities, Digory—the future Professor Kirke—finds the promise of adventure impossible to resist, while practical Polly correctly senses the danger involved. Tellingly, Digory also uses the poem as an excuse ("we can't get out of it now") to claim that he's not accountable for whatever follows from ringing the bell. He even goes so far as to aggressively push Polly aside when she continues to protest Digory's choice. Later, when Digory meets Aslan, he has to face the consequences of his actions in Charn—it wasn't an enchanted poem that made him treat Polly unkindly and awaken the Witch; it was his own selfishness—one of the primary forces responsible for chaos and pain in the world.

Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ "It was my sister's fault," said the Queen. "She drove me to it. May the curse of all the Powers rest upon her forever! At any moment I was ready to make peace—yes and to spare her life too, if only she would yield me the throne. But she would not. Her pride has destroyed the whole world. Even after the war had begun, there was a solemn promise that neither side would use Magic. But when she broke her promise, what could I do? Fool! As if she did not know that I had more Magic than she! She even knew that I had the secret of the Deplorable Word. Did she think—she was always a weakling—that I would not use it?"

Related Characters: Queen Jadis / The Witch (speaker), Polly Plummer, Digory Kirke

Related Themes:

Page Number: 66

Explanation and Analysis

After the Witch is awakened from the spell, she overlooks the ruins of the once wondrous realm of Charn and tells the children its history. She is personally responsible for destroying Charn, using the Deplorable Word, but she chooses to place blame elsewhere. She claims that her own sister's unwillingness to yield the throne pushed Jadis to unleash vile magics and destroy the entire realm. Interestingly, the Queen's quickness to blame others finds an echo in other characters' actions, too. Uncle Andrew later blames his godmother, Mrs. Lefay, for involving him in dark magic (though it was his choice, against her wishes, to learn such arts); Digory also blames a magical enchantment for ensnaring him into releasing the Witch from her sleep. Each of these instances provides support for Lewis's argument that selfishness is one of the primary forces for evil in the world, whether one has magical powers at their disposal or not.

❝ "But the people?" gasped Digory.

"What people, boy?" asked the Queen.

"All the ordinary people," said Polly, "who'd never done you any harm. And the women, and the children, and the animals."

"Don't you understand?" said the Queen (still speaking to Digory). "I was the Queen. They were all my people. What else were they there for but to do my will?"

"It was rather hard luck on them, all the same," said he.

"I had forgotten that you are only a common boy. How should you understand reasons of State?"

Related Characters: Polly Plummer, Digory Kirke, Queen Jadis / The Witch (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 67

Explanation and Analysis

After the Queen tells Digory and Polly the narrative of Charn's history, and her complicity in its destruction (which she blames on other people), the children are horrified. They demand to know what became of all the innocent civilians who were destroyed by Jadis's actions. Jadis so seldom thinks about "ordinary" people that she is unsure what they mean at first. At most, she sees them as objects, seen only as advancements or impediments to her own will. Thus, to her, it makes little difference whether they are all destroyed in the interests of maintaining her own pride as Queen. Jadis dismisses Digory's protests as a clueless child's objections, much as Uncle Andrew had told Digory that a mere boy can't understand a wise man's exemption from ordinary decency. Later, Queen Jadis's exploitation of others will be the main characteristic that sets her apart from Aslan. She uses magic at the expense of others, to serve herself; by contrast, Aslan uses magic for the sake of others, even at the expense of himself.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ There was no doubt that the Witch had got over her faintness; and now that one saw her in our own world, with ordinary things around her, she fairly took one's breath away. In Charn she had been alarming enough: in London, she was terrifying. For one thing, they had not realized till now how very big she was. […] But even her height was nothing compared with her beauty, her fierceness, and her wildness. She looked ten times more alive than most of the people one meets in London. Uncle Andrew was bowing and rubbing his hands and looking, to tell the truth, extremely frightened. He seemed a little shrimp of a creature beside the Witch. And yet, as Polly said afterward, there was a sort of likeness between her face and his, something in the expression. It was the look that all wicked Magicians have, the "Mark" which Jadis had said she could not find in Digory's face.

Related Characters: Polly Plummer, Digory Kirke, Uncle Andrew Ketterley, Queen Jadis / The Witch

Related Themes:

Page Number: 74

Explanation and Analysis

After their fateful visit to Charn, the children unintentionally give Queen Jadis a ride back to London when they flee via magical ring. The Queen's unexpected appearance in London is one of the book's most dramatic examples of the magical and non-magical realms colliding and intermixing. Against the backdrop of ordinary humanity, the Queen looks unsettlingly alive and frightful. By contrast, the once intimidating Uncle Andrew is revealed to be the shrinking, cowardly, and decidedly amateur magician he really is. In Queen Jadis, Uncle Andrew gets a taste of the magical world he has so ambitiously sought, and he finds it not at all to his liking. Queen Jadis quickly forces Andrew, an inferior sort of magician, to be her servant, in much the same way that Andrew has used animals and even children to serve his own ambitions. This is part of what the magical "Mark" seems to hint at. Yet the "Mark" does not seem to have identical strength in everyone who bears it, and it does not control those who have it. Where Queen Jadis seems to be quite given over to dark magical power, Uncle Andrew learns from his experiences as Jadis's slave and as a guest in Narnia, and he gives up magic—and his extreme selfishness—in his old age.

❝ I think (and Digory thinks too) that her mind was of a sort which cannot remember that quiet place at all, and however often you took her there and however long you left her there, she would still know nothing about it. Now that she was left alone with the children, she took no notice of either of them. And that was like her too. In Charn she had taken no notice of Polly (till the very end) because Digory was the one she wanted to make use of. Now that she had Uncle Andrew, she took no notice of Digory. I expect most witches are like that. They are not interested in things or people unless they can use them; they are terribly practical.

Related Characters: Polly Plummer, Digory Kirke, Uncle Andrew Ketterley, Queen Jadis / The Witch

Related Themes:

Page Number: 79

Explanation and Analysis

When the Witch and the children are briefly in the Wood between the Worlds, that peaceful place has an uncanny effect on the powerful Queen—she finds herself faint and almost unable to breathe. As soon as they arrive in London,

however, it's as if their short stay in the Wood never happened. The narrator speculates that the Wood's dreamy, peaceful effect on the average person does not have the same effect on the fierce queen—in fact, Jadis seems to be allergic to its quiet, life-giving magic. This suggests that the nature of the Queen's destructive magic is very different from the creative magic that prevails in the Wood (and in Narnia) and is in open conflict with it. The Witch has effectively walled herself off from the healing effects of such magic. Related to this is the Queen's obliviousness to anyone who isn't immediately useful to her. She is unable to see, much less love, anyone who doesn't serve a so-called "practical" use. This suggests that the heart of the Witch's destructive magic is that it's self-serving and thus incapable of giving life to anyone else—and ultimately not even to herself.

Chapter 7 Quotes

"Now, Missie, let me get at 'is 'ead, and just you get off. You're a Lidy, and you don't want all these roughs going for you, do you? You want to go 'ome and 'ave a nice cup of tea and a lay down quiet like; then you'll feel ever so much better." At the same time he stretched out his hand toward the horse's head with the words, "Steady, Strawberry, old boy. Steady now."

Then for the first time the Witch spoke.

"Dog!" came her cold, clear voice, ringing loud above all the other noises. "Dog, unhand our royal charger. We are the Empress Jadis."

Related Characters: Queen Jadis / The Witch, The Cabby / King Frank (speaker), Strawberry / Fledge

Related Themes:

Page Number: 99

Explanation and Analysis

This quote provides another of the book's dramatic examples of the magical and ordinary worlds colliding in surprising ways. When the Witch gets loose in London, she wreaks havoc by robbing a jewelry store and stealing a hansom cab and horse, leading a crowd of policemen and curious onlookers through the streets. When she tries to escape the crowd on Strawberry the horse, the Cabby tries to deal with her reasonably and gently. This humorous yet touching attempt shows the Cabby's very different outlook on the world—despite the Queen's ferocity, the Cabby just sees her as a desperate Englishwoman who's gotten herself mixed up in an unfortunate business; she should revive herself with a nice cup of tea. This uncynical view of the world is the reason that the Cabby ends up being so at home in Narnia, though he is later transported there seemingly by accident. The Witch, by contrast, just sees the Cabby as an animal who's obstructing her rightful reign. This means that the Cabby ends up being far more at home in a magical realm than the Witch herself—though a powerful magician—could ever be in Narnia.

Chapter 8 Quotes

Then two wonders happened at the same moment. One was that the voice was suddenly joined by other voices; more voices than you could possibly count. They were in harmony with it, but far higher up the scale: cold, tingling, silvery voices. The second wonder was that the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars. They didn't come out gently one by one, as they do on a summer evening. One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out—single stars, constellations, and planets, brighter and bigger than any in our world. There were no clouds. The new stars and the new voices began at exactly the same time. If you had seen and heard it, as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves which were singing, and that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing.

Related Characters: The Lion / Aslan, Digory Kirke

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 107

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes one of the earliest moments in the creation of Narnia. Quite by accident, Digory, Polly, and their companions find themselves witnesses to the beginning of that realm, setting the stage and providing backstory for the later Chronicles of Narnia books. It's also one of the first examples in the book of song as the symbol of Aslan's creative power. When Aslan sings, creatures spontaneously appear. The point of the symbol is that Aslan's creations are an expression of their creator, in all their beauty and variety. Not only that, but as they are sung into existence, Aslan's creations instantly join in his music. This also suggests that Aslan's creative music is inherently life-giving, in contrast to the destructive and deadly magics

that cause suffering and harm elsewhere in the story. These first moments of the creation of Narnia, therefore, aren't just a detail of Narnian prehistory, but a revelation of Aslan himself and of the goodness of the world he creates.

❝ But the Witch looked as if, in a way, she understood the music better than any of them. Her mouth was shut, her lips were pressed together, and her fists were clenched. Ever since the song began she had felt that this whole world was filled with a Magic different from hers and stronger. She hated it. She would have smashed that whole world, or all worlds, to pieces, if it would only stop the singing.

Related Characters: The Lion / Aslan, Queen Jadis / The Witch

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 109

Explanation and Analysis

When the group finds themselves witnessing the founding of Narnia, everyone reacts to Aslan's creation song in his or her own way. The children and the Cabby, even Strawberry the horse, are filled with wonder; Uncle Andrew is agitated, forced to encounter thoughts and feelings he'd rather ignore; and the Witch, as described here, is furious. It does not seem that she knows Aslan as either friend or foe; she simply hates his song, instinctively knowing that it represents something which threatens her. That is, it's a kind of warm, benevolent magic that can't coexist with her own dark kind. This supports Lewis's argument that there is a good, creative form of magic and a wicked, destructive type, and that these types inevitably come into conflict. It also supports the idea that a person's moral condition shapes the way they respond to Aslan's goodness. Whereas even Uncle Andrew eventually becomes less selfish, the Witch has been stagnating for centuries in dark magic and can only respond to Aslan's song with hatred and violence.

Chapter 9 Quotes

❝ "That's it! Stupendous, stupendous," said Uncle Andrew, rubbing his hands harder than ever. "Ho, ho! They laughed at my Magic. That fool of a sister of mine thinks I'm a lunatic. I wonder what they'll say now? I have discovered a world where everything is bursting with life and growth. Columbus, now, they talk about Columbus. But what was America to this? The commercial possibilities of this country are unbounded. Bring a few old bits of scrap iron here, bury 'em, and up they come as brand new railway engines, battleships, anything you please. They'll cost nothing, and I can sell 'em at full prices in England. I shall be a millionaire. And then the climate! I feel years younger already. I can run it as a health resort. A good sanatorium here might be worth twenty thousand a year. Of course I shall have to let a few people into the secret. The first thing is to get that brute shot."

Related Characters: Uncle Andrew Ketterley (speaker), The Lion / Aslan, Aunt Letty Ketterley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 119

Explanation and Analysis

When the group arrives in Narnia, it quickly becomes apparent that the environment is bursting with life. The Witch hurls the arm of an iron lamp-post at Aslan, and after the weapon bounces away harmlessly, it starts to sprout another lamp-post out of the ground. This gives Uncle Andrew an idea—he envisions growing trains and ships out of the ground in order to enrich himself. This shows that Uncle Andrew doesn't really understand the magic of Narnia. He assumes that someone can grow whatever they like, for whatever selfish purposes they choose, and that the magic will bend to that person's desires. Because he looks at Narnia through selfish eyes, he's only capable of seeing it as a place to be exploited, not as a wondrous gift to be received. Foolishly, he also sees Aslan as an obstacle to be disposed of, not as a powerful and benevolent king who must be reckoned with. Though Uncle Andrew's miscalculations about Narnia reveal a lot about his selfishness, they are also relatively harmless and not beyond correction—unlike the Witch's, which are purely destructive.

Chapter 10 Quotes

"Creatures, I give you yourselves," said the strong, happy voice of Aslan. "I give to you forever this land of Narnia. I give you the woods, the fruits, the rivers. I give you the stars and I give you myself. The Dumb Beasts whom I have not chosen are yours also. Treat them gently and cherish them but do not go back to their ways lest you cease to be Talking Beasts. For out of them you were taken and into them you can return. Do not so."

Related Characters: The Lion / Aslan (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 128

Explanation and Analysis

One of the most surprising aspects of Narnian magic is its Talking Beasts, the creation of which is described here. After various species of animals erupt from the earth, Aslan walks among them and breathes into the nostrils of selected creatures, endowing them with the ability to think, speak, and love in something approaching a human way. He then gives these sentient beasts a special charge—to care for the animals who do not speak, without reverting to their ways. This shows that the order of things in Narnia is characterized by a certain hierarchy, but that Aslan intends for it to be a benevolent one: the lesser animals must be tenderly protected because they lack the capacities of their talking counterparts. Aslan seems to impart something of his own happiness, majesty, and wisdom to the Talking Beasts for this purpose, reinforcing the idea that Narnia is a reflection of its creator's own beauty and is thereby endowed with a special dignity that must be cherished and protected.

We must now go back a bit and explain what the whole scene had looked like from Uncle Andrew's point of view. It had not made at all the same impression on him as on the Cabby and the children. For what you see and hear depends a good deal on where you are standing: it also depends on what sort of person you are. […] When the great moment came and the Beasts spoke, he missed the whole point; for a rather interesting reason. […] [The Lion's song] made him think and feel things he did not want to think and feel. […] And the longer and more beautiful the Lion sang, the harder Uncle Andrew tried to make himself believe that he could hear nothing but roaring. Now the trouble about trying to make yourself stupider than you really are is that you very often succeed. Uncle Andrew did. He soon did hear nothing but roaring in Aslan's song.

Related Characters: Polly Plummer, Digory Kirke, The Cabby / King Frank, The Lion / Aslan, Uncle Andrew Ketterley

Related Themes:

Page Number: 137

Explanation and Analysis

This quote sums up Uncle Andrew's reaction to Narnian magic. Whereas the children and the Cabby had reacted to the Lion's song and to the Talking Beasts with wonder and delight, Uncle Andrew feels fear and revulsion. This is because he has actually made himself deaf to the Lion's song, in a way. It's not clear what sorts of things the song made Andrew "think and feel [that] he did not want to think and feel," but by contrasting this with the children's innocent reaction, one can infer that Andrew feels guilt. In response, he tries to repress those feelings by convincing himself that he's not hearing what he thinks he is hearing. Lewis portrays such self-deception as easy to achieve—if someone is determined not to come to terms with his moral state in Aslan's eyes, then he is permitted to remain that way; but he will not be able to perceive Aslan as anything but threatening. This, in turn, causes him to misinterpret Narnia's most potent magic, like the talking animals. Thus this quote sums up the psychology of a person who is determined to resist Narnia's magic—the trouble lies with the individual, and until he addresses his inner state, it will shape everything he sees and hears.

Chapter 11 Quotes

"You *met* the Witch?" said Aslan in a low voice which had the threat of a growl in it.

"She woke up," said Digory wretchedly. And then, turning very white, "I mean, I woke her. Because I wanted to know what would happen if I struck a bell. Polly didn't want to. It wasn't her fault. I—I fought her. I know I shouldn't have. I think I was a bit enchanted by the writing under the bell."

"Do you?" asked Aslan; still speaking very low and deep.

"No," said Digory. "I see now I wasn't. I was only pretending."

Related Characters: Digory Kirke, The Lion / Aslan (speaker), Polly Plummer, Queen Jadis / The Witch

Related Themes:

Page Number: 147

Explanation and Analysis

After the founding of Narnia, Digory summons his courage to approach Aslan, hoping to ask the Lion for healing magic for Digory's mother. But he quickly learns that there is another piece of business to attend to. Aslan confronts Digory for his responsibility in waking the Witch, setting her free to damage Narnia in the future. Digory still tries to dodge the truth, but he finally confesses that he was not only responsible, but he also wasn't bewitched when he rang the bell, as he'd pretended to Polly (who, like Aslan, saw right through this claim at the time). This encounter shows Aslan's power—with as little as the hint of a growl—to shatter a person's pretensions, his own goodness forcing them to face the truth. Yet it also shows something about Digory—unlike Uncle Andrew, who resisted unwelcome feelings, Digory admits to his wrongdoing. While Uncle Andrew continues to flee Aslan and suffers for it, Digory meets Aslan honestly and, painful as it is, ultimately finds restoration.

❝ "You see, friends," he said, "that before the new, clean world I gave you is seven hours old, a force of evil has already entered it; waked and brought hither by this son of Adam." The Beasts, even Strawberry, all turned their eyes on Digory till he felt that he wished the ground would swallow him up. "But do not be cast down," said Aslan, still speaking to the Beasts. "Evil will come of that evil, but it is still a long way off, and I will see to it that the worst falls upon myself. In the meantime, let us take such order that for many hundred years yet this shall be a merry land in a merry world. And as Adam's race has done the harm, Adam's race shall help to heal it."

Related Characters: The Lion / Aslan (speaker), Strawberry / Fledge, Queen Jadis / The Witch, Digory Kirke

Related Themes:

Page Number: 148

Explanation and Analysis

After Digory's admission of guilt, Aslan addresses the Talking Beasts, explaining the threat that the Witch poses to Narnia. She is an intruder in this young, innocent world, brought here because of Digory's selfishness. This harm cannot be entirely undone. Yet Aslan promises that he will absorb the worst of that harm, and that human beings will help to mitigate it. This quote reflects Lewis's Christian perspective, as the Chronicles of Narnia all contain a strong element of Christian allegory. The Witch's presence in Narnia represents something like the fall of humanity in the biblical Book of Genesis, and Aslan's promise that the "worst [evil] falls upon myself" casts him as a Christlike figure who will die for humankind's sins. Yet the allegory isn't a perfect correspondence, either. Narnia is a unique world of magical creatures, and while human beings have a special role in stewarding it, it's ultimately not their world; they are onlookers who recognize and follow Aslan in other ways in their own world.

❝ Aslan threw up his shaggy head, opened his mouth, and uttered a long, single note; not very loud, but full of power. Polly's heart jumped in her body when she heard it. She felt sure that it was a call, and that anyone who heard that call would want to obey it and (what's more) would be able to obey it, however many worlds and ages lay between. And so, though she was filled with wonder, she was not really astonished or shocked when all of a sudden a young woman, with a kind, honest face stepped out of nowhere and stood beside her. Polly knew at once that it was the Cabby's wife, fetched out of our world not by any tiresome magic rings, but quickly, simply and sweetly as a bird flies to its nest.

Related Characters: The Cabby's Wife / Queen Helen , The Cabby / King Frank, Polly Plummer, The Lion / Aslan

Related Themes:

Page Number: 149

Explanation and Analysis

After dealing with Digory, Aslan goes about the business of establishing a King and Queen for Narnia. He asks the Cabby—who was brought here accidentally, after all—if he would like to remain in Narnia to rule its creatures. The Cabby agrees, if only he can have his wife by his side, so Aslan summons Helen with a single call. This series of events reveals much about the way Narnia—and allegiance to Aslan—works. Although the Cabby and his wife weren't directly created by Aslan and don't have innate magical abilities, they belong here, as "simply and sweetly" as if Aslan had just sung them into existence. This suggests that one's inherent goodness of heart, more than one's magical gifts, suits a person to live in Narnia. Helen's quick response to Aslan's call—which Polly is sure that "anyone who heard [...] would want to obey"—also suggests that Aslan's beauty is irresistible to those who are disposed to hear it, though precisely how this works remains a mystery. Finally, Aslan's unlikely choice of a London cabby and housewife to rule

Narnia suggests that earthly status doesn't account for much in Narnia, but characteristics of kindness and justice are valued instead.

Chapter 12 Quotes

"But please, please—won't you—can't you give me something that will cure Mother?" Up till then he had been looking at the Lion's great feet and the huge claws on them; now, in his despair, he looked up at its face. What he saw surprised him as much as anything in his whole life. For the tawny face was bent down near his own and (wonder of wonders) great shining tears stood in the Lion's eyes. They were such big, bright tears compared with Digory's own that for a moment he felt as if the Lion must really be sorrier about his Mother than he was himself.

"My son, my son," said Aslan. "I know. Grief is great. Only you and I in this land know that yet. Let us be good to one another."

Related Characters: The Lion / Aslan, Digory Kirke (speaker), Mabel Kirke / Digory's Mother

Related Themes:

Page Number: 154

Explanation and Analysis

Ever since Digory first set eyes on Aslan, he felt that Aslan could do something to heal his dying mother. When Digory finally gets to speak to Aslan about it, it becomes apparent that Aslan has known about Mabel Kirke's condition all along. At first, Digory is too grieved and ashamed of his role in bringing the Witch to Narnia to look the Lion in the eyes; he can only focus on his fearsome claws. But when he finally looks at Aslan's face and sees his tears, the whole situation takes on a different aspect. The idea that such a majestic creature would express sorrow—even more deeply than what Digory himself feels—is wondrous, showing that Aslan is compassionate and cares about the sufferings of individuals who might not seem important in the grand scheme of things. The exchange also suggests that when one approaches Aslan trustingly, one will find him to be even kinder than one expects. These details reflect Lewis's own Christian beliefs about the character of God. For now, though, Digory and Aslan share an unlikely kinship over grief, since Aslan seeks to keep Narnia innocent of suffering and sorrow for centuries to come.

Chapter 13 Quotes

He knew which was the right tree at once, partly because it stood in the very center and partly because the great silver apples with which it was loaded shone so and cast a light of their own down on the shadowy places where the sunlight did not reach. He walked straight across to it, picked an apple, and put it in the breast pocket of his Norfolk jacket. But he couldn't help looking at it and smelling it before he put it away.

It would have been better if he had not. A terrible thirst and hunger came over him and a longing to taste that fruit. He put it hastily into his pocket; but there were plenty of others. Could it be wrong to taste one? After all, he thought, the notice on the gate might not have been exactly an order; it might have been only a piece of advice—and who cares about advice? Or even if it were an order, would he be disobeying it by eating an apple? He had already obeyed the part about taking one "for others."

Related Characters: The Lion / Aslan, Digory Kirke

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 172

Explanation and Analysis

This quote describes the climax of Digory's quest to pick a silver apple which will help protect Narnia against the Witch. When he arrives at the walled garden which houses the magical tree, he finds a warning poem, much like the one beside the bell and hammer which led to the Witch's release. The poem admonishes visitors that they may only pick an apple "for others," not for oneself. This warning accords with the prevailing Narnian ethic of unselfishness and putting others before oneself. But Digory's subsequent difficulties are, once more, reflective of aspects of the Christian story of the fall of humanity which influenced Lewis. Rather than quickly obeying and being done with the task, Digory smells the apple and is profoundly tempted to take another for himself—launching him into a line of reasoning that risks taking him farther astray from Aslan's simple command (why not take another apple? Was the poem really to be taken seriously?). Genesis tells the story that in Eden, the serpent (Satan) led Eve to question the justice of God's simple command not to eat the fruit of a particular tree. Unlike Eve, Digory ultimately resists and obeys.

Chapter 14 Quotes

"He thinks great folly, child," said Aslan. "This world is bursting with life for these few days because the song with which I called it into life still hangs in the air and rumbles in the ground. It will not be so for long. But I cannot tell that to this old sinner, and I cannot comfort him either; he has made himself unable to hear my voice. If I spoke to him, he would hear only growlings and roarings. Oh Adam's sons, how cleverly you defend yourselves against all that might do you good! But I will give him the only gift he is still able to receive."

Related Characters: The Lion / Aslan (speaker), Uncle Andrew Ketterley, Polly Plummer

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 185

Explanation and Analysis

After Digory returns with the apple and Narnia is duly protected from evil, Digory and Polly plan to return home to London. Polly asks Aslan if he can somehow speak to Uncle Andrew—who has been rather traumatized by the well-intended gestures of the talking animals—to discourage him from returning to Narnia in an effort to exploit its magical resources. Here Aslan explains to Polly why this isn't possible. Uncle Andrew would be unable to understand Aslan's voice even if Aslan tried to address him, because his selfishness and fear have made him utterly resistant to it. This leads Aslan to reflect that "Adam's sons" (human beings) go to great lengths to "defend" themselves against divine goodness—the thing that would ultimately be best for them. This lines up with Lewis's belief (expressed in other, more explicitly theological writings, like *The Great Divorce* and *Mere Christianity*) that human beings often choose to close themselves off from God, who is always willing to receive a humble believer. Aslan casts Uncle Andrew into a merciful sleep to spare him from further terror—and it's worth noting that Uncle Andrew later becomes a better man after he swears off dark, exploitative magic.

Chapter 15 Quotes

"But we're not quite as bad as that world, are we, Aslan?"

"Not yet, Daughter of Eve," he said. "Not yet. But you are growing more like it. It is not certain that some wicked one of your race will not find out a secret as evil as the Deplorable Word and use it to destroy all living things. And soon, very soon, before you are an old man and an old woman, great nations in your world will be ruled by tyrants who care no more for joy and justice and mercy than the Empress Jadis. Let your world beware."

Related Characters: The Lion / Aslan, Polly Plummer (speaker), Queen Jadis / The Witch, Digory Kirke

Related Themes:

Page Number: 194

Explanation and Analysis

Before Digory and Polly journey back home to London, they have a last conversation with Aslan, in which Aslan gives them a warning about their own world. He warns them that their world is on track to become just like Charn, the desolate, ruined realm they saw before Narnia. The Witch had used a spell called the Deplorable Word to eliminate all life in her own realm rather than lose her power. Aslan's words suggest that human beings will come up with their own version of such a spell—perhaps something like atomic weaponry. And Aslan's prophecy points to the fact that, when the *Chronicles of Narnia* were published in the 1950s, Great Britain was very much still recovering from the physical, psychological, and economic drain of World War II, and coming to terms with the fallout from totalitarian rulers like Hitler and Stalin. In other words, the most important Narnian values—like "joy and justice and mercy"—are always under attack and must be zealously guarded in this world as well as others.

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

The narrator says that this story is about "something that happened long ago when your grandfather was a child." The story is important because it shows how "all the comings and goings" between our world and Narnia first began.

The story is immediately situated as a prequel, assuming that the audience is familiar with earlier Narnia books, and that the events of this story took place approximately two generations before the original 1950s audience.

At the time this story took place, Sherlock Holmes lived on Baker Street, and the Bastables were searching for treasure. In those days, schools were more harrowing places than they are now, and sweets were plentiful and cheap. Around this time, a girl named Polly Plummer lived in a London row house.

"The Bastables" is a reference to E. Nesbit's 1899 children's novel, The Story of the Treasure Seekers. *Lewis situates the story alongside other popular works of British literature that would have been familiar to his audience.*

One day, to Polly's surprise, a boy peeks at her from the neighboring garden. Children had never lived there before, just an old, unmarried brother and sister, the Ketterleys. The boy's face is dirty, and he looks as if he's been crying. The children greet each other, and Polly learns that the boy's name is Digory. Digory admits that he's been crying. He's been brought from the country to live in London (which he calls "a beastly Hole"), because his mother is dying, and his father is away in India.

The audience is already expecting a magical element to the story, and the introduction of Digory and Polly shows that the magical will be intersecting with a very ordinary scenario: two average children, one of whom is feeling displaced and suffering from an impending family tragedy.

Digory looks as if he's about to cry again, so Polly changes the subject, asking if it's true that Digory's uncle, Mr. Ketterley, is "mad." Digory explains that Uncle Andrew spends his time in a mysterious study on the top floor, where Aunt Letty warns Digory never to go. Last night, Digory heard a yell as he passed the foot of the stairs. The children speculate about the secrets Uncle Andrew might be hiding.

Polly's delicacy toward Digory shows her sensitivity for the first time, and the children's shared sense of adventure becomes evident: things at the Ketterleys' aren't as they seem.

That's how Digory and Polly became friends. It's the beginning of the summer holidays, and neither of them is going on vacation, so they spend almost every day together. It's a cold, rainy summer, so they spend time exploring their houses. Earlier, Polly had discovered a little dark tunnel adjacent to her attic, where one has to step from rafter to rafter in order to keep from falling through the plaster ceiling below. She's turned this space into a "smugglers' cave," filling it with small treasures and snacks.

Digory and Polly find an everyday sort of magic in their surroundings, suggesting that they're open to more surprising and profound forms of magic, too.

When Polly shows Digory the tunnel, he points out that it runs along the entire length of row houses, meaning that they could get access to neighboring houses, including the reportedly empty one beyond Polly's. Pretending they're not afraid that the empty house might be haunted, they agree to investigate. Digory speculates that it's actually a hideout for a criminal gang and that they'll be rewarded for the discovery.

Polly and Digory aren't afraid to embark on risky adventures and face the unknown. The exploration of the various attics also sets the stage for their later exploration of different magical worlds.

The children each get a candle and begin stepping carefully along the rafters. Eventually they come to a little door in the wall, and Digory bravely pushes the catch to open it. To their amazement, the room isn't an empty attic, as they'd expected, but a furnished room—complete with book-lined shelves and a roaring fire. The room appears to be silent and deserted.

Even though they haven't left their own homes yet, the children get an initial hint that unknown worlds aren't always what they first appear.

Polly also notices a wooden tray containing four rings—two pairs, with a yellow ring and a green ring apiece. The rings are beautiful and strikingly bright. They seem to emit a faint humming noise. When Polly points out the rings to Digory, he impatiently tries to steer her away, afraid that someone will come into the room. Just then, the high-backed chair in front of the fireplace suddenly moves. Uncle Andrew slowly emerges from the chair. The children realize they've made a mistake—they're not in the neighboring house at all, but in Uncle Andrew's study!

The children have made a faulty assumption about where they really are, reinforcing the sense that even the "ordinary" is full of surprises. The rings are the first hint of tangible magic in the story; so far, the nature of the magic—whether it's benevolent or sinister—remains ambivalent.

Uncle Andrew is tall, thin, and clean-shaven with a pointed nose, bright eyes, and a mop of gray hair. To Digory, he looks more frightening than ever. Andrew quickly shuts the door to the room and smiles at the children, saying that Letty can't get to them now. The children are alarmed by this move, which seems so unlike a grown-up. Uncle Andrew also shuts the door by which the children entered, telling them, "I am delighted to see you [...] two children are just what I wanted."

In this surprising context, Uncle Andrew looks inordinately scary, suggesting that one's environment can shape what one sees. Uncle Andrew's behavior is deeply unsettling; his secretiveness clues the children into his suspect motives right away.

Polly begs to be allowed to go home for dinner, but Uncle Andrew says he needs two children for his experiment. He has experimented on guinea pigs before, but children would serve the purpose much better. When the children continue to make excuses about dinner, Uncle Andrew pretends to relent. But first he offers Polly a present, saying it's not often that a pretty young lady visits his study. He offers her one of the yellow rings, explaining that he can't give her a green one right now. Polly, flattered, examines the "strangely attractive" rings.

Uncle Andrew cynically exploits Polly's interest in the rings, which seem to have an innate attractiveness all their own. Uncle Andrew's self-interested motives become more apparent.

When Polly comments that the rings sound as if they're humming, Uncle Andrew gives a greedy laugh. Digory, noticing his uncle's expression, shouts a warning, but it's too late: Polly has just touched one of the rings. She disappears without a sound.

Uncle Andrew's sinister laugher and Polly's shocking disappearance reveal too late just how dangerous their situation is, as magic erupts unambiguously into the story.

CHAPTER 2

Digory starts to scream, but Uncle Andrew quickly muffles him, warning Digory that his ailing mother might hear. (Digory later thinks back upon the cruelty of that moment.) Uncle Andrew says Digory's shock is understandable—he, too, yelled the first time one of his guinea pigs disappeared. But now he knows his experiment has succeeded; he has sent Polly to "another place." Digory demands to know what he means.

Uncle Andrew's willingness to use Digory's mother's situation in this way shows how selfish he can be—he preys on Digory's grief to advance his own interests. It's a signal of even worse behavior to come.

Uncle Andrew sits down to tell his story. He points to a photograph on the wall—his godmother, Mrs. Lefay. Digory doesn't like the looks of her. He asks Uncle Andrew if there was something "wrong" with Mrs. Lefay. Uncle Andrew says that people are narrow-minded, but it's true that Mrs. Lefay grew strange in later life and even went to prison. He doesn't explain why. Anyway, she was released before her death, and Andrew was one of her only friends—she had come to dislike "ordinary, ignorant people."

A distinction emerges between good and bad magic—or, as will become apparent later in the story, between creative and destructive magic. Here, Mrs. Lefay's strangeness isn't a result of her magic, per se, but of her meddling in magics that lead her to look down on "ordinary" people.

Before Mrs. Lefay died, she entrusted a little box to Uncle Andrew. She made him promise that he would burn it, "with certain ceremonies," without looking inside. But Andrew, intrigued by the box's secrets, didn't obey. Digory says that this was "jolly rotten" of Andrew.

Digory has a strong sense of justice, perceiving that Uncle Andrew cannot be trusted, especially where there's a possibility of exploiting a situation for his own gain.

Uncle Andrew reacts to Digory's words with pretended puzzlement. He claims that it's fine for little boys to be taught to keep promises, or other ordinary people, but that "profound students and great thinkers" must be exempt from such rules. Digory is momentarily touched by this, seeing Uncle Andrew's "noble and mysterious" face, but then he remembers his uncle's expression when Polly disappeared. He realizes that Uncle Andrew "thinks he can do anything he likes to get anything he wants."

An association between selfishness and certain kinds of magic continues to emerge. In this case, it's that Uncle Andrew assumes that ordinary rules don't apply to him, but only to "inferior" kinds of people. Digory recognizes the outcome of such an attitude—such as endangering Polly—and that it's fundamentally selfish.

Uncle Andrew avoided opening the box for a long time, claiming that Mrs. Lefay had "fairy blood" and that the box might have contained something dangerous. Digory keeps trying to return to the question of Polly's disappearance, but Uncle Andrew says that's not what's important right now. The box, he goes on, predated all ancient civilizations, being from the lost island of Atlantis. Uncle Andrew kept studying magic, meeting some strange people and having "disagreeable experiences" in the process, until at last he learned the truth: the box contained dust from another world, a world that could only be reached by magic.

Uncle Andrew persists in making the situation all about him. The type of magic in which he's engaged, besides being dangerous, allows him to flatter himself and inflate his own sense of importance. By contrast, the creative magic that will feature later in the story focuses on doing good for others, even at cost to oneself. As such, it sits more easily alongside "ordinary" life.

Uncle Andrew knew that if he could get the magical dust into the proper form, the dust would draw a person back to the world from which the dust originated. He tried this on guinea pigs, but some of them died. Digory is appalled, but Uncle Andrew retorts, "That's what the creatures were for. I'd bought them myself."

Uncle Andrew's attitude about the guinea pigs is not trivial. It shows that he's willing to use other creatures for his own questionable ends. This attitude will be both echoed and substantially challenged by events later in the story.

At last Uncle Andrew succeeded in making the yellow rings, but then, how would he get back whatever creature he sent to the "Other Place"? Digory wants to know why Uncle Andrew didn't simply go himself, but Uncle Andrew is offended by the question—how could someone at his time of life be expected to undertake such a risk? Digory is furious that Uncle Andrew would send Polly to an unknown place that he's too cowardly to visit himself.

Uncle Andrew continues to demonstrate that he has little concern for anyone besides himself and sees others only as objects for experimentation. Digory, meanwhile, continues to reveal his pronounced sense of justice.

Uncle Andrew refuses to be spoken to like this by a mere schoolboy. He points out that *he* is the great magician; of course he needs subjects to experiment *on*. After all, "no great wisdom can be reached without sacrifice."

Uncle Andrew continues to display his selfishness. His remark about wisdom and sacrifice will be proven later, but not at all in a way that he expects.

Finally, Uncle Andrew explains that he created the green rings in order to draw his "subjects" back from the Other Place. Polly, of course, doesn't have a green ring. Digory is horrified to realize that Uncle Andrew has caught him in a trap. He agrees to go to the Other Place with the green rings in order to rescue Polly, but he points out that if Uncle Andrew were really honorable, he'd do it himself.

The impetus for the adventure is clear now—Digory will have to venture to the unknown world in order to make sure that Polly can return safely. Digory's willingness to do this contrasts with Uncle Andrew's selfish reluctance.

Digory adds that, after what he's seen today, he now believes in magic. That means that the old fairy tales must be true, too—making Uncle Andrew "simply a wicked, cruel magician" like one in the old stories. Digory points out that such characters always get what's coming to them in the end, and he's sure that Uncle Andrew will, too. Uncle Andrew looks briefly horrified, but recovers himself quickly, dismissing Digory's belief in "old wives' tales."

With childlike acceptance, Digory matter-of-factly acknowledges that fairy tales must be true. However, the larger point is that if such stories are true, then he knows that Uncle Andrew will see justice in the end. Uncle Andrew's dismissal of such stories suggests that there's a difference in his mind between fairy tales and the kind of magic he practices.

Uncle Andrew explains to Digory how the magic rings work. They must be touching the skin in order to work. The yellow ring causes the wearer to vanish to the Other Place; and the green ring (he thinks) causes the wearer to reappear in this world. He gives Digory the green rings, with instructions to keep them carefully in his pocket. Then he offers Digory a yellow ring. Knowing that Uncle Andrew can't guarantee that the green rings will work, Digory takes a deep breath and puts on the yellow. He later thought "that he could not decently have done anything else."

Digory's courage and sense of decency continue to contrast with Uncle Andrew's arrogance and willing to use others—even children—to fulfill his curiosity. Digory has no idea what awaits him, yet he's willing to risk everything to find Polly.

CHAPTER 3

Uncle Andrew vanishes from Digory's sight, and for a moment, things are muddled. Then Digory finds himself underwater, in a little pool. He surfaces before he has time to get frightened. When he emerges from the pool, he finds he's perfectly dry. He is standing in a wood, which is filled with warm, green light. It is very quiet. Digory notices that there are dozens of other small pools. The place feels full of life.

Later, this feeling of abundant life, in the wood and elsewhere, will be associated with certain attitudes about magic and the goodness of creation. Though unfamiliar, Digory's surroundings are a benign place, not a hostile one.

Digory feels as if he's always been in this place. He doesn't feel frightened or even curious. Later, he describes it as a place where "the trees go on growing, that's all." A little later, Digory notices a girl (Polly) lying at the foot of a nearby tree, looking sleepy. At last she says dreamily, "I think I've seen you before." She, too, feels as if she's been in the wood forever. After a while, though, the children agree that they remember having adventures together somewhere else.

Digory's location somehow feels as if it affirms who he is and is friendly to the thriving of all sorts of living things. The feeling of comfort and satisfaction is so pervasive that it takes a little while to recall things ever having been different.

Suddenly, they notice a fat guinea pig nosing through the grass. A bright yellow ring is tied to it. Digory notices that both he and the girl are wearing yellow rings, too. He and the girl stare at each other. Then, the girl shouts "Mr. Ketterley," and Digory shouts "Uncle Andrew," and within a few moments, he and Polly have both remembered who they are and gotten the whole story straight.

The fate of Uncle Andrew's guinea pigs—one of them, anyway—becomes clear, and the odd sight provokes memories of what just happened to Digory and Polly. This is one of the first instances in the story of the "ordinary" and magical realms touching.

The children discuss what to do next. Polly is afraid that if they stay for too long in the dreamy woods, they'll never want to go back. They agree that the guinea pig should be left here, since it's happy, and Uncle Andrew will only mistreat it. They make up their minds to jump back into the pool from which they came, but when they join hands and jump, they just find themselves standing in ankle-deep water.

In trying to escape back to their own world, Digory and Polly realize that magical comings and goings will be a bit more complicated than they'd first assumed. The magical world possesses its own logic that must be respected.

Then Digory remembers about the green rings in his pocket. He and Polly each put one on. But just before they leap back into the pool, Digory stops—he's had an idea. What if there are different worlds at the bottom of each of the pools? He thinks Uncle Andrew was wrong—there's not *one* Other World, but many, perhaps dozens. This wood is "just a sort of in-between place." It's rather like the tunnel Polly discovered in her attic, which could be used to access different houses.

Digory is not only brave; his innate curiosity shines through, now that he has the opportunity to explore other worlds. He has a little bit of Uncle Andrew in him after all—reaffirming that magic itself isn't what's good or bad, but one's attitude towards it. The parallel between the attic exploration and the magical portals is another example of contact between the magical and the ordinary.

Polly refuses to explore other worlds until she is sure she can get back to her own—she is as brave as Digory in many ways, but not as adventurous. (Digory, however, likes to know *everything*—which is why he becomes the Professor Kirke who appears in other books.) They argue for a bit, finally agreeing that they'll put on the green rings, travel homeward to ensure it's possible, then switch to yellow when they seem to be arriving back in their own world.

Polly enjoys adventure, too—as her attic exploration has already shown—but she is a bit more grounded in the ordinary than the magical. Polly and Digory are able to compromise about how best to proceed, foreshadowing an upcoming conflict between them that doesn't end so well.


The children don their green rings, take hands, shout "one, two, three," and jump once again. Everything happens quickly—they see bright lights like fast-moving stars, then they begin to see roofs, chimneys, and London landmarks. Uncle Andrew begins coming into focus. Before he becomes "quite real," Polly shouts, "Change," and they quickly slip on their yellow rings. London rapidly fades away, and they're back in the "wood between the worlds." This has all taken place in less than a minute.

The children establish that they're able to transport themselves quite rapidly between the magical realm and their ordinary London existence—there is a fluidity between these very different worlds.

Just as they're about to jump into another pool to explore a different world, Polly suddenly realizes, with horror, that they haven't marked the pool that will take them back home. If they had proceeded to jump into the unknown pool just now, they might never have been able to find their way home. Digory shakily cuts a strip of reddish-brown turf to mark the homebound pool. They quarrel briefly about which of them has more sense, but before long, they're jumping into the unknown pool with yellow rings on. However, once again, they merely create a splash.

Polly, in keeping with her sensible temperament, remembers the importance of maintaining an anchor in the ordinary world. Digory is more inclined to leap heedlessly into danger.

It turns out that Uncle Andrew had had the wrong idea about the magic rings. He thought the yellow rings were "outward" rings and the green ones "homeward"; it turns out, though, that the dust of which both rings were made came from this very wood, and that the material in the yellow rings is always trying to *return* to the wood, while the stuff in the green rings is always trying to *go* from the wood to another world. Uncle Andrew, like most magicians, is working with magics he doesn't really understand. Digory doesn't fully understand the nature of the magic, either, but after some discussion, he and Polly decide to try the green rings instead. They join hands and jump one more time.

Uncle Andrew's miscalculation highlights the fact that magic is tricky—it sometimes defies logical assumptions. Digory and Polly's readiness to adapt to and embrace magic's "logic" sets them apart from others—especially adults like Uncle Andrew—who are less flexible and more inclined to exploit or resist certain aspects of magic.

CHAPTER 4

The children whirl through darkness and indistinct shapes until they're standing on solid ground once again. Polly shudders as she gets her bearings: they are surrounded by a steady, dull, red light, in a courtyard with a blue-black sky overhead. There are many cracked, pillared arches, and the air is cold. The place appears to be in ruins. It couldn't be more different from the Wood between the Worlds, which is full of life.

The new world in which they find themselves contrasts sharply with the lively green wood they've just left. The overwhelming impression is that this place is old, ruined, and dead, not lush, comfortable, and inviting.


Polly is reluctant to linger in this world, but Digory persuades her to explore, pointing out that their rings will allow them to get away in an instant. They go inside the crumbling building, crossing one vast courtyard after another. Just when they feel they've seen enough, they enter a pair of golden doors and find themselves in a hall filled with hundreds of people who are sitting perfectly still. The people are all wearing richly colored, magnificent robes and crowns bedecked with precious stones.

Consistent with the feeling of deadness in this world, Digory and Polly stumble upon the hall filled with curiously lifeless figures, who convey a sense of both rich existence and interrupted life.

Digory examines the people's faces. Many of them look kind, others solemn. Halfway down the room, they encounter unsettling faces—people who look happy yet cruel, and some simply despairing. The last of the hundreds of figures is a fierce-looking, beautiful woman. Digory also examines a table in the middle of the room. On it, there's a small, golden arch with a little bell attached. Beside it is a little golden hammer with which to strike the bell.

A walk through the mysterious hall conveys a sense of a long history—of a completely unfamiliar world, yet one in which people are as complex and variable as in the ordinary world.

Polly notices that there's something engraved in the pillar. Although the letters appear strange, the children find that they're able to read them—some sort of enchantment at work. The engraving reads: "Make your choice, adventurous Stranger; / Strike the bell and bide the danger, / Or wonder, till it drives you mad, / What would have followed if you had."

The engraving is the first of two poems that will feature prominently in the story. This poem has a clearly tempting note—whoever wrote it is hoping that the reader will be the sort of person whose curiosity will get the best of them.

Polly quickly points out that they don't want any danger. But Digory says that if they *don't* strike the bell, they'll spend the rest of their lives wondering what would have happened if they had. Digory even claims that the magic is already working on him, beginning to "send him dotty" with curiosity. Polly is sure he's pretending, but Digory retorts that it's only because she's a girl and so doesn't care about anything interesting. Polly says he's being "exactly like a man."

The two children's reactions to the poem align with their personalities. Practical Polly wants to avoid unnecessary danger; Digory can't bear the thought of letting possibilities go unexplored. They fall into another petty argument. The nature of the argument—though it's a silly one—hints that there's something sinister about the magic at work.

The children's argument intensifies as Digory sees Polly's hand inching toward her yellow ring. Before it can reach her pocket, Digory suddenly seizes her wrist and, while continuing to block Polly, leans over and taps the bell with the hammer. Polly begins to cry from anger.

Though he's was willing to be reasonable earlier, here Digory shows himself to be capable of surprisingly forceful and selfish behavior. His actions will reverberate far beyond the moment.

The bell emits a soft, sweet note that grows steadily louder. Eventually, the room throbs with the noise, and the building begins to shake. The roof begins to collapse, either from magic or from the bell's volume. The children, shaken, assume that the worst is over; "but they had never been more mistaken in their lives."

Ringing the bell has alarming consequences, the small earthquake foreshadowing even more consequential events to come. The destruction of the building hints that Digory has unleashed destructive magic.

CHAPTER 5

As the little bell stops trembling, the children hear a soft noise. They turn to see the beautiful, robed queen standing up, revealing herself to be quite tall. She approaches the children, asking who has broken the spell and awakened her. When Digory admits to it, the Queen wonders how a child like him, obviously "common," could even have dared to enter the house. Polly, feeling ignored, explains that they journeyed here by magic.

The queen's reaction to the children—immediately classifying Digory as "common" and implicitly unworthy of being near her—has echoes of Uncle Andrew's attitudes about who is worthy of having access to magic.

The Queen studies Digory for a long moment, then declares that he is no magician, as he lacks the "Mark." Digory explains that their coming here was Uncle Andrew's doing. Just then, the palace begins to shake, and the Queen calmly leads the children out of harm's way. Polly sulks when the Queen takes her hand, sensing that she's a "terrible woman" who must not be told about the magic rings. Digory is enthralled by the Queen's fearlessness as she guides them quickly through the collapsing building.

Though the queen's interest suggests that Digory is not without magical potential, he lacks something that she sees as crucial for a magician. Digory is nevertheless fascinated by the queen, whereas Polly senses that there's something not right about her. Though their reactions register on a childish level, there seems to be a deeper perception at work, too—perceptions shaped by the ordinary world have applicability even in a magical realm.

When they come to a massive, heavily barred door, the Queen casts a spell, causing the doors to crumble. Impressed, Digory whistles. The Queen tells him that he should remember what he's seen, because "this is what happens to things, and to people, who stand in [her] way."

That the Queen doesn't hesitate to destroy anyone who stands in her way—and threateningly informs the newcomers of this—suggests that her magic has a sinister aspect to it.

They stand in the light of a huge, weary-looking red sun, overlooking the ruins of a once-great city. The Queen says that it is Charn, once the greatest wonder of the world. Reflectively, the Queen says that she, Jadis, the last Queen, blotted out Charn forever. But this was her sister's fault, because she pridefully refused to yield her throne to Jadis. Because her sister broke her promise, Jadis then had no choice, she says, but to break her own promise not to use magic, and so she used the Deplorable Word.

The Queen is quick to blame others for her own actions. Even without knowing the full story of what happened in Charn, there is a sense that the Queen is casting herself as the victim.

Jadis explains that the Deplorable Word was an ancient secret which was meant to destroy all living things, except for the one who spoke the Word. But the ancient kings were too "soft-hearted" in their oaths to never speak such a word. Jadis learned the Word at a terrible cost and spoke it only when forced to do so, she claims.

Jadis was willing to go to terrible lengths in order to secure her own power, employing a type of magic that's deeply destructive in nature.

After three days of terrible battle in Charn, the Queen had spent all her soldiers. When her sister approached with rebels in tow, the Queen declared victory and spoke the Deplorable Word. In horror, Polly asks what became of "all the ordinary people." The Queen replies, "What else were they there for but to do my will?"

The Queen's shocking reply is reminiscent of Uncle Andrew's comment about the guinea pigs, only it's far worse. This suggests what the logical consequences of Uncle Andrew's mindset are.

To Digory's reply of distress, the Queen explains that what's wrong for commoners isn't wrong for a great Queen like herself, because, with the weight of the world on her shoulders, she must be free from rules. Digory remembers Uncle Andrew saying something very similar.

The Queen's words, like Uncle Andrew's, suggest that people with immense power will be tempted to justify themselves and exempt themselves from "ordinary" rules.

The Queen explains that she then cast a spell on herself, that she would sleep in the hall of her ancestors until someone came and woke her by striking the bell. When Digory happens to mention that the sun looks different in his own world, the Queen suddenly looks as greedy as Uncle Andrew had once done—she realizes that the children come from a younger world. She tells them that they will leave the end of the ages behind and visit the children's world instead. The children look at each other in horror.

The Queen explains the reason she was found in a hall of lifeless figures—she was preserving herself in the hope of being able to take power again someday. Even if that means taking over somebody else's world—a possibility the children could never have anticipated. Digory has unleashed more trouble than he expected.

The Queen says that it won't be long before she has Polly and Digory's world at her feet. She assures them that she has no intention of fighting Uncle Andrew, however, because he is clearly a great magician. When she asks about Uncle Andrew's realm, Digory explains that he isn't a king. The Queen refuses to believe that a common person could be a magician—such a thing is unheard of. Obviously, she says, Andrew used his magic arts and saw her own beauty from afar, sending the children to fetch her back to his own world.

The queen assumes that a great magician would obviously be a great ruler, too—suggesting that magical ability and powerful dominion go together in her mind. Her arrogant assumptions about her own beauty further underline her selfishness.

When Polly calls the Queen's assumptions "absolute bosh," the Queen furiously seizes Polly's hair, freeing Polly's hands. At once, both children grab their magic rings, and Charn disappears.

Once again, Polly quickly sees through the Queen's arrogance. The Queen, for all her pretensions, has a fragile ego—she can't even let a child's insult go by.

CHAPTER 6

When the children emerge once again in the Wood between the Worlds, they discover that the Queen is still with them, clutching Polly's hair. Now they realize that it's not actually necessary to *wear* a magic ring in order to jump from one world to another; one simply has to be touching a ring, or touching someone who is—the rings work rather like magnets.

The children continue to learn more about the way magic works. Both the practicality and the ethics of magic are complex and only discoverable through the experience of trial and error.

In the wood, the Queen looks pale and struggles for breath. The children struggle with the Queen, and she finally lets go of Polly's hair. The Queen looks terrified; she begs for mercy, asking the children to take her home with them. Polly feels spiteful toward the Queen, while Digory feels a little sorry for her. But Polly prevails upon him to jump together into the home pool. As they do, Digory feels the grip of the Queen's fingers on his ear.

Interestingly, this place that's filled with life—the wood between the worlds—seems lethal to the queen, suggesting that the type of magic by which she operates is incompatible with the magic at work here.

The children find themselves and the Queen back in Uncle Andrew's study. Uncle Andrew stares in wonder at the Queen, who has now recovered her strength. In the midst of the ordinary world, the Queen looks more breathtaking than ever. She is huge, for one thing—as indeed there is rumored to be "giantish" blood in the Charn royal family. She is also beautiful and wild, looking more alive than an average person.

Here is a major clash between ordinary and magical. In the ordinary world, the Queen is no longer at a disadvantage. Her magic stands out sharply against the comparative dullness of London.

Beside the Witch, Uncle Andrew "seemed a little shrimp of a creature." Nevertheless, there is something similar about the two: "the look that all wicked Magicians have, the 'Mark'" which was lacking in Digory's face. Compared to Jadis, Uncle Andrew no longer appears scary to the children.

Though Uncle Andrew is nowhere near the Witch's power, there is a similarity in their inclination to certain types of magic, as well as the effects that said magic has on them.

Queen Jadis demands to meet the Magician who summoned her to this world. Uncle Andrew, bowing and babbling, approaches the Queen, who seizes his hair and studies him appraisingly. Finally she releases him, calling him "a Magician—of a sort," but also a "dog" who obviously lacks royal blood.

Uncle Andrew gets more than he bargained for when Queen Jadis enters his world, and she feels she's getting rather less than she'd hoped for.

The Witch goes on to call Uncle Andrew "a little, peddling Magician who works by rules and books" and has "no real Magic in your blood and heart." But he's suitable, she says, to be her servant. She demands first that he acquire a noble conveyance for her—something like a flying carpet or a dragon. He must also take her shopping for suitable clothes and jewels. Tomorrow she will begin taking over the world.

To the Queen, magic is innate and shouldn't require adherence to written rules. Her insult of Uncle Andrew is ironic, since he has boasted his supposed lack of accountability to rules. Meanwhile, the Queen expects this world to bend to her expectations, showing her self-centeredness.

As Uncle Andrew scurries off, the children fear that Jadis will scold them for the tussle in the wood. However, she says nothing about it. Digory later thinks that the Queen's mind is such that she cannot remember or understand a place like the wood, no matter how much time she spent there. And now she takes no notice of the children, because they're no longer of any use to her.

Unlike the children, who felt embraced by the lush environment of the wood, it has no apparent effect on Jadis. This suggests that her magic—and her character—are at odds with such a life-filled place. Jadis only notices things and people that she can use in some way.

Eventually, the Queen impatiently goes off in pursuit of Uncle Andrew. Polly heads home for dinner, for which she's terribly late. To Digory's protests, she says that if he wanted her help, he'd better apologize for getting them into this mess in the first place, by overruling Polly and setting the Queen loose on them and their world. Digory is surprised and apologizes.

The "ordinary" remains important and pressing, even when magic intrudes—Polly, still an ordinary English child, has to go home for dinner, Witch or no Witch. In contrast to his selfish uncle, Digory quickly acknowledges and apologizes for his poor behavior.

Meanwhile, Uncle Andrew, upon getting his orders from the Witch, goes directly to his bedroom and pours himself a drink. Then he begins putting on his very best clothes and tall hat, even sticking a flower in his button-hole—"Uncle Andrew was beginning to be silly in a very grown-up way," forgetting how frightening the Witch is and focusing only on her beauty. He calls her "a dem fine woman" and feels as if he summoned her from the magical realm himself.

Uncle Andrew, meanwhile, short-sightedly forgets the Witch's nature and the danger she poses to others and thinks only of a highly unlikely match between the two of them. In a way, though, it's also an indication that Andrew still thinks according to the values of the ordinary world.

Uncle Andrew goes downstairs and finds Aunt Letty mending a mattress. He sends Sarah the housemaid to fetch a hansom cab. He asks Aunt Letty to lend him five pounds, which she flatly refuses—Uncle Andrew has mismanaged her money in the past. She doesn't buy his story that he has a special guest to entertain. Just then, the Witch bursts into the room.

A hansom cab is a horse-drawn carriage, first developed in the mid-1800s. They could be hired much like automobile taxis today. Aunt Letty's reactions to Uncle Andrew show that she doesn't put up with nonsense from anyone.

CHAPTER 7

Uncle Andrew cowers as the Witch demands to know when her chariot will arrive. Aunt Letty coldly demands to know who "this young person" might be. Uncle Andrew stammers that the Witch is a "distinguished foreigner," but Aunt Letty tells the "shameless hussy" to leave, thinking she looks like a circus performer. Enraged, the Witch casts a spell to destroy Letty, only to find that her magical powers are worthless in this world.

The exchange between Aunt Letty and the Witch is humorous, but also striking because Aunt Letty, in contrast to Uncle Andrew, is quite unimpressed and untouched by the Witch's magic. Her own goodness is solidly anchored in the same ordinary world that the Witch finds repellent.

Just before the hansom cab arrives, the Witch scoops up Aunt Letty and hurls her across the room, to Uncle Andrew's feeble protests. Digory runs downstairs just as the Witch and Uncle Andrew head off into the streets of London. He and Sarah the housemaid check on Aunt Letty, who has luckily landed on the mattress she was mending and is barely hurt. Aunt Letty sends Sarah to alert the police about the "dangerous lunatic at large."

The Witch's destructive tendencies—even when her magic fails her—become unambiguously clear, though tough Aunt Letty is resilient. The Witch's character reveals more about her than her magical ability does.

Digory tries to figure out how to send the Witch back to her own world as soon as possible—he knows her intention is to conquer this one. Now that he knows that the magic rings work like magnets, it seems easy enough to pull her back to the Wood between the Worlds—but however will he find her? Finally, he decides that his only option is to hover at the front door so that when the Witch and Uncle Andrew return, he can grab her at the first opportunity. He wonders what Polly is doing; it turns out that Polly, after giving vague answers to her parents' questions about her absence, was given a meager dinner and sent to bed for two hours. Now both she and Digory wait anxiously for whatever will happen next.

In a realistic touch, both Digory and Polly have to deal with the limitations of being children in an adults' world—they can't act as freely in the ordinary world as they could in the magical realm, even as they anxiously plot to return to the magical realm in order to set right what's gone awry.

While Digory waits, a small, significant thing happens. A lady stops by with some grapes for his mother, and Digory overhears Aunt Letty admiring the gift and lamenting that Mabel Kirke would need "fruit from the land of youth" to heal her completely. Now that Digory himself has visited another world, this turn of phrase sticks with him. What if there *is* a true "Land of Youth" somewhere, containing fruit that really *would* heal his mother? After experiencing magic firsthand, he can't stop himself from hoping for something miraculous. For a moment, he even forgets all about the Witch.

In a particularly profound moment of the ordinary intersecting with the magical, Digory feels grief and wonders if the magical world might contain a remedy for his dying mother. This moment also introduces an additional motive into Digory's future dealings with the magical realm.

Suddenly, Digory hears a fire engine. He sees a hansom cab coming down the street. On the roof stands the Queen, flogging the horse mercilessly. The horse rears up in front of the Ketterleys' front door, the hansom crashing into a lamppost. The Queen jumps clear of the wreckage and lands on the horse's back, whispering something in the horse's ear which frightens it.

The events of the present disrupt Digory's yearnings—right now, magic is disrupting his world in far more damaging ways. The Queen has no hesitation about selfishly commandeering the things of this world in order to advance her purposes.

A bunch of other things happen at once. Two other hansom cabs arrive, bearing policemen, and are soon followed by a crowd of boys on bicycles and other enthusiastic onlookers. Uncle Andrew emerges shakily from one of the cabs. Amid the commotion, a shopkeeper accuses Jadis of having stolen thousands of pounds' worth of goods from his store, and others accuse Uncle Andrew of having put the Queen up to it all. Digory gingerly makes his way through the crowd in an effort to touch the Queen, fearful of spooking the already harried horse.

The collision between the magical and ordinary worlds has both comic and dangerous consequences, as some people just enjoy the fun, and others are actually harmed by the Queen's presumptuous actions.

A cabby in a bowler hat emerges from the crowd, saying that the Queen has stolen his horse. She mustn't overexcite the horse, which is the offspring of a famous war horse. He tries addressing Jadis directly, suggesting that she'll be happier if she just goes home and has a nice cup of tea. When he speaks soothingly to "Strawberry" the horse, the Queen snarls, "Dog, unhand our royal charger. We are the Empress Jadis."

The cabby's touching innocence shows that, rather like Aunt Letty, he isn't intimidated by the Queen's magical prowess; his innocence, in fact, seems to shield him from it because Jadis's kind of power holds no appeal for him.

CHAPTER 8

At the Witch's words, a crowd of people start cheering for the "Hempress of Colney 'Atch." The Witch looks flattered until she realizes they're mocking her. She reaches up and breaks off one of the lamp-post arms as a weapon. She brings the bar down on a policeman's head, and he crumples. Digory, desperately following the Queen, is suddenly joined by Polly, who's just been released from bed. Digory approvingly calls her a "brick" and tells her to manage the ring while he catches hold of the Queen.

These are the repercussions of Digory's moment of selfishness back in Charn—people in his own world are now being hurt by the Queen. Notably, however, Digory doesn't shrink from taking responsibility for this—he (and now Polly, who might be justified in leaving him on his own) faces up to fixing the situation.

The crowd turns angry as the Queen fells another policeman. But the Cabby, both brave and kind, keeps following her and trying to get a grip on Strawberry. The Queen scornfully warns onlookers that they'll pay for their disloyalty, like Charn did. Digory makes a few unsuccessful grabs for the Queen's ankle and gets only a kick in the mouth for his pains, but finally he holds on and shouts the signal to Polly. Polly touches her yellow ring, and the angry crowd vanishes instantly. But as darkness closes in, Digory still hears Uncle Andrew's voice, wailing that he protests this turn of events and ought never have become a magician—it's all Mrs. Lefay's fault.

Persistent and resourceful, Digory and Polly succeed in interrupting the Queen's path of destruction and pulling her back to the magical realm. Uncle Andrew, in a marked contrast, just keeps complaining about how he can't be blamed for any of this.

When Digory and Polly surface in the Wood between the Worlds, they discover that they've not only brought the Witch along, but unintentionally brought the horse, Cabby, and Uncle Andrew as well. The Queen once again looks sickened by her surroundings. Strawberry, in contrast, whinnies happily and takes a drink from a nearby pool. Within a moment, however, Polly and Digory switch to their green rings, and the entire group slips into darkness once more.

In trying to extract the Queen from their ordinary world, the children accidentally pull some people (and an animal) from their world back into the magical—the two realms are permeable, not strictly separate. The Queen and the horse react very differently to the pleasant atmosphere.

This time, the darkness lasts for a surprisingly long time. They feel as though they're standing on something solid, yet it's as dark as if their eyes are closed—like "Nothing." The Queen assumes that her doom has arrived; Uncle Andrew pants for another drink. The Cabby alone is cheerful. He says they've either fallen into some diggings for the Underground, or else they're dead—and in any case, it seems best that they **sing** a hymn. He starts singing in a strong voice about crops being "safely gathered in," and the children cheerfully join him.

The group is transported to another realm, but it's not yet clear what the nature of that realm is—whether it's characterized by either destructive or creative magic. However, the unflappable cabby seems to find the atmosphere a friendly one (the song he sings is "Come, Ye Thankful People, Come," an English harvest hymn), suggesting that the magic is good.

After the hymn, Uncle Andrew whispers to Digory that perhaps the two of them might use the rings to slip back to London unnoticed. The Queen hears him and protests, and Digory refuses to leave his friends behind in such a place. But suddenly the Cabby hushes them all. In the darkness, someone is **singing**. The song is wordless and beautiful, seeming to come from all directions. Even Strawberry responds happily, as though he recognizes the singer's voice.

Uncle Andrew selfishly wants to leave everyone else in the lurch, while Digory stalwartly refuses. The sudden song seems to echo the Cabby's earlier urge to sing—it's an impulse present in the very air of this new, mysterious world.

Suddenly, the **singing** voice is joined by innumerable harmonizing voices. At the same time, the black sky is pierced by thousands of blazing stars, all at once. Digory feels as if the First Voice made the stars appear, and that now the stars themselves are singing. The sky is slowly lightening, too. They begin to see each other's faces. The Cabby and children are beaming, Uncle Andrew looks frightened, and the Witch looks furious.

The singing seems to have created the stars, which perpetuate its song. The members of the group have very different reactions—either the singing is beautiful and welcome, or else it's repellent and offensive, further suggesting that there are competing magics at work.

Listening to the Voice's **song**, the Witch perceives that this world is filled with a magic that's different from hers—a magic that she hates. She wishes she could destroy it.

The Witch, in particular, hates what she hears, suggesting that she sees perceives this world's magic as a direct threat to her power.

As the Voice continues to swell, the sun rises. To Digory, this sun looks younger than the earthly sun he knows: "you could imagine that it laughed for joy as it came up." The group is now able to take in their surroundings: a valley with a river flowing through it, and mountains in the distance. The plain on which they stand is filled with vivid colors. But when they see the Singer of the **song**, everything else pales in comparison.

The song appears to create the sun, too, revealing a newly created world that's filled with color and life. But the creator of that world is even more compelling and beautiful than the creation itself, suggesting that the creation is meant to be reflective of its creator's beauty.

The Singer is a Lion: "huge, shaggy, and bright." It stands about 300 yards away from the group. When the Witch sees him, she immediately wants to flee. Uncle Andrew agrees, instructing Digory to put on his ring at once. When the Witch hears this, she almost springs on Digory herself, but Digory is too quick. He promises that if either the Witch or Uncle Andrew get too close, he will grab Polly and his ring and vanish, leaving them here helpless. But the Cabby interrupts, wanting to hear the music—which has now changed.

Those who engage in destructive magic feel exposed and fearful of the Lion's presence, wanting to flee-further proof of the conflict between the different forces at work. Others are drawn to the beauty of the song and what unfolds as a result.

CHAPTER 9

The Lion paces back and forth, **singing**. This song is "softer and more lilting" than the song that accompanied the emergence of the stars and sun. It draws forth grass and a light, ruffling wind; soon, trees start to appear.

The song's variability, and the range of beautiful things produced by the song, highlights the Lion's creativity.

Though the children long to watch new life springing forth, they keep getting interrupted. Uncle Andrew keeps trying to steal Digory's ring. The Witch, seeing this, menaces him with her lamp-post arm. Uncle Andrew summons his courage and complains that the Witch has disgraced him by robbing a jeweler, demanding an ostentatious lunch, and assaulting the police. The Cabby interrupts, saying that now is the time for watching and listening, not talking.

People's differing reactions to the sing continue—some are going to great lengths to ignore and avoid it, while others want to savor it. This contrast will become more and more stark as the story goes on.

The children watch as trees and wildflowers continue to blossom; Strawberry eagerly dines on the fresh new grass. The Lion gradually prowls closer and closer to the group. Polly is thrilled as she observes that the emergence of different living things correspond to the varying notes of the Lion's **song**; this wondrous discovery takes away her fear. Digory and the Cabby feel nervous about the Lion's approach, however, and Uncle Andrew is downright scared.

Polly is the most attentive and sensitive to what's happening during the song, as she observes how the changing notes create different things. The beauty is such that it overwhelms other emotions. This suggests that even among those who are favorably disposed to such creative magic, different people are more or less sensitive to it.

Suddenly the Witch hurls the iron bar she's holding right at the Lion. It strikes him between the eyes, but he keeps walking toward them at a steady pace. The Witch and Uncle Andrew start to run, but the children stand still—they're apprehensive yet curiously eager for the Lion to acknowledge their presence.

The Witch strikes back at the Lion in the best way she knows—through destructive violence, which has no apparent effect on him.

Uncle Andrew picks himself up from the stream into which he's fallen and, spluttering, demands that Digory put on his ring immediately, but Digory stands firm, explaining that he and Polly want to stay and experience this world. Uncle Andrew says that perhaps he'd enjoy it if he were younger and had a gun handy.

Uncle Andrew appears to be oblivious to the beauty that this world has to offer; he just perceives it as a threat, whereas the children find it delightful.

Just then, Polly notices a little lamp-post that's sprouted out of the ground and is growing just like a tree. Digory points out that the lamp-post sprouted from the bar that the Witch had unsuccessfully thrown. This excites Uncle Andrew. He daydreams about the "commercial possibilities" of this world. If one buried scrap iron, he speculates, they would be able to grow trains or battleships. And the climate would be ideal for a health resort. In order to achieve any of this, of course, he'd first have to kill the Lion.

Narnia is so abundant with new life that new growth sprouts up unintentionally—even where harm was intended. Uncle Andrew doesn't even understand the logic of Narnia, however, seeing it as something to be exploited instead of enjoyed.

When Uncle Andrew refers to this place as "the land of youth," Digory's interest is piqued, too, as he recalls Aunt Letty's conversation with the visitor. When he asks Uncle Andrew if he thinks something in this land might cure Mabel, Uncle Andrew replies that it "isn't a chemist's shop." Digory is disgusted by Uncle Andrew's lack of regard for his own sister. He resolves to ask the Lion for help directly. Uncle Andrew trails after the children at first, but is afraid to get too close.

The differences between Digory's and Uncle Andrew's motivations become clear in this exchange. Where Uncle Andrew is preoccupied with how he might gain from Narnia, Digory thinks of how his mother might be helped.

As Digory approaches the Lion, he notices that the Lion's **song** has changed once again. It sounds wilder, making the hearer "want to rush at other people and either hug them or fight them." It also causes the surrounding land to swell into mounds of varying sizes. When the mounds burst, animals emerge. Dogs, stags, frogs, and panthers burst from the earth; birds, butterflies, and bees fill the air; even an elephant comes forth, creating a small earthquake as he does so. Now the Lion's song is practically drowned out by various animal noises.

Now living creatures begin to populate Narnia in response to the Lion's ever-changing, constantly fruitful song. Narnia possesses in irrepressible vitality.

Strawberry the horse trots up and joins the crowd of other beasts, looking much livelier than the downtrodden cab-horse of London. Digory watches as the Lion, now silent, walks among the animals, occasionally stopping to touch noses with two animals at a time—two leopards at a time, for instance. The animals he touches walk away from the other animals of their species and stand in a circle around him, gazing at the Lion. At last, there's a solemn silence.

The air of Narnia has a reviving characteristic that seems to draw creatures—even Strawberry the horse—closer to their natural state, whether for good or ill. But there's even deeper magic about to be revealed.

The Lion stares unblinkingly at the animals. Eventually, the animals change—smaller ones (like rabbits) growing much bigger, and bigger ones (like the elephants) getting a bit smaller. Many animals cock their heads as if they're trying to understand something. The Lion gives a long breath. The animals sway like wind-blown trees, and there is a "pure, cold, difficult music" overhead. There is a flash, and everyone hears a deep, wild voice saying, "Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak."

The Lion imbues certain animals with a special magic that makes them sentient—able to reason, feel, and love in a manner much more akin to human beings.

CHAPTER 10

Other kinds of creatures emerge from the trees—fauns, dwarves, naiads. All the creatures respond to Aslan, the Lion, saying, "We are awake. We love […] We know." The children are startled when they hear a horsey voice adding, "But please, we don't know very much yet." They are delighted to see that it's Strawberry. The Cabby says he always knew the horse had a lot of sense.

The animals respond to Aslan, recognizing him as their creator. Even Strawberry is elevated to a special dignity beyond his existence in the ordinary world.

Aslan addresses the animals again, in a "strong, happy voice." He grants them themselves, the land of Narnia, and himself. He also charges them to take care of the beasts who don't talk—to treat them kindly, but not to return to their ways, or else they will lose their status as Talking Beasts. The animals all say, "We won't," but a jackdaw is the last to stop speaking, its voice echoing awkwardly in the silence. All the other animals laugh merrily at this, and Aslan encourages them, saying that "jokes as well as justice come in with speech." Soon the embarrassed jackdaw shares in the delight of the first joke.

Aslan instructs the talking animals to treat the lesser animals with kindness. Aslan's realm has room for levity, not just solemnity—his creative magic, then, has a fundamentally joyful aspect to which the animals naturally respond.

Narnia is now established. Aslan summons certain creatures into a council to provide for the safety of Narnia, since "an evil has already entered it." The rest of the Talking Beasts are baffled, wondering what a "Neevil" could be. Meanwhile, Digory resolves to approach Aslan directly regarding his mother. Polly accompanies him, and the Cabby comes along to talk with Strawberry.

The setting for subsequent Narnia books has now been brought into being. Lewis echoes the biblical creation account in the book of Genesis—the primordial goodness of creation is quickly interrupted by evil (which the innocent animals so far have no capacity to understand).

When the three humans appear before the crowd of Talking Beasts, the animals are puzzled and speculate about what sort of food they might be, or perhaps another joke. Strawberry doesn't recognize the Cabby at first, but he recalls a sort of muddled dream of a previous life. Little by little, he remembers his grueling life of pulling the cab. The Cabby agrees that he didn't love that life, either: "You were a country 'oss, and I was a country man." He would rather have stayed in the country and sung in the choir. Strawberry agrees to give Digory a ride over to Aslan, though he's slightly disappointed that Digory doesn't have any lumps of sugar on him.

Strawberry and the Cabby are examples of creatures who seem naturally disposed to love and thrive in Narnia, even though they were not originally created in this realm. In contrast to the repulsion and fear experienced by characters like the Witch and Uncle Andrew, their innocence and contentment suggest that one's innate character has a lot to do with how one experiences Narnia's magic.

Meanwhile, another group of animals notices Uncle Andrew in the distance and decides to go investigate. This whole time, Uncle Andrew has been having a very different experience than the children and the Cabby have been having. This is because what one sees and hears depends a lot on one's character. Uncle Andrew has been watching the animals, but, being "dreadfully practical," he hasn't been noticing the magic so much as worrying about whether they're going to attack him.

Uncle Andrew's dread and self-concern eclipse his awareness of the beauty and wonder of what's occurring. He is unable to be receptive to the creative magic in the same way as the children and Cabby are.

When the Beasts were endowed with speech, Uncle Andrew missed it altogether. This was because the Lion's **song** made him so uncomfortable—making him think and feel things he'd rather ignore. So he tried to convince himself that the Lion wasn't singing at all—it was merely roaring. Very soon, he was actually unable to hear the Lion's song, or the other animal's speech and laughter. He is annoyed with the children for approaching the animals instead of caring about him and his own predicament.

The description of what happened to Uncle Andrew during the Lion's song provides allegorical insight into Lewis's understanding of human beings' responses to God. Uncle Andrew would rather turn inward and nurse his own fears and grievances than embrace what the Lion offers—sooner or later, he will actually be deafened to the Lion's call.

As the crowd of curious animals approaches Uncle Andrew, he turns and runs. Narnia has made him younger, and he can run quite fast, but it's no use. The animals decide he must be the "Neevil" Aslan spoke about, and they team up to surround him. Soon Uncle Andrew is surrounded by a crowd of, to him, fierce- and hungry-looking animals. Since he's spent years doing experiments on animals, he's all the more frightened of them now.

Because he's closed himself off to Aslan's creative magic, now Uncle Andrew can only perceive danger where he might have been delighted by the magically endowed animals' friendliness. He actually digs himself into deeper trouble through his own stubbornness.

CHAPTER 11

The animals don't understand about human clothes, so Uncle Andrew, in his black suit, and with his greater height, doesn't look like the same sort of creature as the children and the Cabby. He also doesn't talk like they do—only saying, "Good Doggie," to the inquisitive Bulldog. Then he swoons. From this, the animals conclude that Uncle Andrew must be an odd sort of tree—meaning that it must be planted. So two moles dig a hole, the animals debate about which end is up, and finally they agree to plant Uncle Andrew feet-first in the earth. The elephant fills her trunk at the river and "waters" him. Uncle Andrew has a great shock when he finally revives.

This comical scene reinforces the sad situation in which uncle Andrew finds himself. He can't communicate with the talking animals, so he ends up in a helpless predicament, albeit well-meant on the animals' part.

Meanwhile, Digory approaches Aslan on Strawberry's back. Aslan looks both more beautiful and more terrible than Digory had thought. He slips off Strawberry's back and haltingly asks Aslan if perhaps he could have some magic Narnian fruit that will restore his mother's health. Aslan doesn't reply right away. He looks at his animal councilors and says, "This is the Boy who did it."

While Uncle Andrew struggles through his comical interlude with the animals, Digory faces a more solemn errand. Up close, he realizes that Aslan's beauty is neither entirely fearful nor simply benign.

Aslan turns to Digory. He tells Digory to tell the other Beasts how the evil Witch came to Narnia. Though Digory thinks of many excuses, he feels compelled to tell the truth. He explains that he was trying to bring the Witch back to her own world. Aslan's silence signals that he needs to elaborate. He explains how he and Polly first came to Charn, where he "met" the Witch. Aslan's faint growl warns him to be honest. He didn't merely "meet" the Witch; he was responsible for waking her, over Polly's protests, and he was only pretending to be acting under the influence of an enchantment.

Aslan obviously already knows what happened in Charn, but it's important to him that Digory own up to his responsibility for setting the Witch free. The Lion's majesty and beauty seem to compel honesty from those who are already responsive to the Lion's beauty. Digory has to admit that, regardless of his protests to the contrary, it was his selfish willfulness that led him to wake the Witch, not any spell.

There's a long silence, and Digory is sure that he's ruined everything for himself and his mother. But Aslan is now addressing his councilors. He explains to them that this "son of Adam" has brought evil into Narnia before it was more than a few hours old. But they must not be downcast—Aslan will make sure that, someday, the ultimate evil falls upon himself. Meanwhile, Narnia will be "a merry land," and "Adam's race" will help to heal the harm they've caused.

Digory's situation mirrors the traditional Christian account of the fall and redemption of humanity—Digory's selfish choice (paralleling the biblical Adam's) looses wickedness in the world, and the divine figure himself (in Narnia, Aslan) ultimately bears the brunt of that evil. However, in this allegory, the transgressor has an opportunity to correct the harm he's caused.

Aslan now summons Polly and the Cabby to come closer. Aslan tells the Cabby that he has known him for a long time; does the Cabby know him? The Cabby doesn't, but he feels as if they've met before. Aslan tells him that the Cabby knows him better than he thinks. He asks the Cabby how he likes Narnia. The Cabby says that he'd be pleased to stay here always, if he weren't married. At this, Aslan lets out a powerful roar. In response, a young woman suddenly appears, wearing an apron and covered with soapsuds.

Aslan is attentive to the other humans in the story, too—those who wouldn't seem to be very important, according to the world's reckoning. The implication in this scene is that the Cabby is a "God-fearing" man who, as such, already knows Aslan under a different guise. The Cabby's wife's immediate appearance suggests that she, too, is responsive to Aslan's call.

The young woman thinks she's dreaming, until she sees the Lion. She gives a small curtsey and takes the Cabby's hand. Aslan looks at the two and tells them, "My children [...] you are to be the first King and Queen of Narnia." He instructs the astonished pair that they will name and rule over the Narnian creatures, protecting them from the evil Witch who has entered the world.

Though the Cabby and his wife would seem to be an unlikely King and Queen of Narnia, their appointment to this role aligns with the idea that the humble and ordinary people are often more responsive to Aslan's magic than those who seek out status and power for themselves.

The Cabby haltingly thanks Aslan but explains that he's not fit for the job—he hasn't much education. Aslan asks him if he can farm, and treat the Talking Beasts with dignity, and raise his offspring to do the same. The Cabby agrees, his accent becoming less cockney and more country. Aslan says that if he can do all this and also lead Narnia in war, then that is all that can be asked of a King. His coronation will occur shortly. Finally, Aslan turns to Polly to ask if she's forgiven Digory for the violence he did in Charn. When she says yes, Aslan turns to Digory himself.

Aslan attends to the business of the kingdom—ensuring that it will be justly ruled—before he turns to Digory's situation. The Cabby's elevation to the kingship seems to elevate him, much as Strawberry was endowed with new dignity upon arrival in Narnia.

CHAPTER 12

Digory is determined not to cry in front of Aslan. Aslan asks Digory if he's ready to undo the wrong he's done to Narnia. Digory begins to protest that the Queen has run away, so he doesn't know what he can do. However, Aslan just cuts him off with, "Are you ready?"

There is no arguing with Aslan. One can only choose to agree or disagree with his plans and to obey or not.

Digory had momentarily entertained the thought of bargaining with the Lion for his mother's sake, but quickly realized that the Lion isn't someone you bargain with. But at the thought of his mother, Digory starts to cry. When he looks at Aslan's face, he's shocked to see Aslan's own eyes filled with tears. Aslan tells Digory that he understands his grief, but that nobody else in Narnia knows about grief yet, so Digory must help him protect Narnia against the Witch's return.

Digory learns something important about Aslan—he isn't simply a strong, majestic Lion; he is also tender, merciful, and empathetic, and these traits do not conflict with his fierceness. In fact, these characteristics seem to make up an important aspect of the Lion's creative magic.

Aslan explains that Digory must help him plant a protective tree in Narnia that the Queen will never dare approach, allowing Narnia to enjoy "a long, bright morning" before any clouds appear. Aslan takes a deep breath and gives Digory a kiss that sends strength and courage flowing into him. Then he instructs Digory to look westward. Digory does, seeing mountains, forests, and waterfalls. Aslan tells him where to find the border between Narnia and the Western Wild. Digory must journey through the mountains there until he comes into a green valley. At the end of a lake in the valley he will find a garden. Digory must pluck an **apple** from a tree in the center of the garden and bring it back to Aslan.

With his commands, Aslan also bestows a special power to follow through and obey. Digory's journey, again, has certain resonances with Christian accounts of the story of the fall and redemption of humanity, though Lewis does not follow this account with precise, one-to-one correspondences; Digory must pick an apple (in the Bible, the eating of such a fruit led to the fall of humanity) in order to protect Narnia from wickedness.

Next, Aslan promises Digory help. He turns to Strawberry, who's quietly listening nearby. He asks Strawberry how he would like to be a winged horse. Strawberry shakes his mane and taps his hoof with delight. Though Strawberry modestly points out that he isn't the most clever horse, Aslan pronounces Strawberry "the father of all flying horses" and renames him Fledge. Massive wings sprout from Fledge's shoulders, and he makes an awkward but delighted first flight above them.

It's in keeping with Aslan's own delight in his creation that he chooses an ordinary (albeit talking) horse to help Digory fulfill his quest, even giving him the gift of flight to help speed the journey.

Fledge agrees to bear Digory to the mountain-valley with the garden, and Queen Helen speaks up to say that Polly would love to come along on the journey, to which Fledge agrees. King Frank boosts the children onto Fledge's back, and Aslan sends them off with his blessing, promising that "there will always be a way through." Soon Fledge and the children are flying high above Narnia, and the King, Queen, and Aslan are only faint dots below.

Aslan sends the children and Fledge off with the promise that where he has demanded something of them, he will also clear the way for the task's fulfillment. This further shows Aslan's caring superintendence over his creation.

Once they've flown beyond the boundaries of Narnia, the sun begins to set, turning the sky golden. Fledge's wings are beginning to tire, and they haven't yet spotted the lake Aslan spoke of, so they decide to stop for the night. They settle in a warm valley in the midst of snowy mountains. Fledge immediately tucks into a supper of grass, while Polly and Digory realize that they've made no arrangements regarding their own meals. Fledge says that Aslan would have arranged, and surely knew of the need, but would probably have liked to be asked.

Fledge's comments about Aslan suggest that, while Aslan is not stingy and loves to provide for his creatures, he also likes to be trustfully approached with his creature's needs, not taken for granted. There is meant to be an intimate, ongoing relationship between creator and creatures.

Digory thinks of sending Polly home via ring to get something to eat, but she refuses to leave him. In the end, Polly finds a sticky bag of toffee in her pocket, so the children each eat four toffees and plant the last, figuring it will yield a toffee-tree by morning. Then they nestle under Fledge's wings for the night, watching the stars come out and talking over all that's happened. Just as they're about to fall asleep, they think they hear something; Polly thinks she sees a tall figure heading westward. But finally they crawl under Fledge's wings again and fall asleep. Fledge stays awake for a while, keeping watch.

Even in this relatively safe, secure outpost of the Narnian realm, there's a sneaking sense of vague danger—highlighting the reality of destructive magic set loose even in this newly created world.

CHAPTER 13

Polly wakes up Digory and Fledge the next morning—a toffee-tree has indeed grown where they planted the piece of candy; it has papery leaves and little toffee-fruits that look like dates. After the children have taken turns bathing in the nearby river, they have a breakfast of toffee-fruits, then clamber onto Fledge's back for the remainder of the journey. In the morning light, the green valleys and tumbling glacier-streams below them look like "gigantic pieces of jewelry." But before long, they all notice a delicious smell, which seems to be coming from the valley below. They see the lake Aslan had mentioned.

Narnia is so filled with energy and life that the toffee-tree blooms as expected—the land is seemingly filled with delights for anyone who is open to believing in them, showing Aslan's kindness even in the midst of an important and no doubt perilous journey.


Fledge alights on a green slope, and the children tumble off. Atop the hill, there's a high wall made of turf, inside of which is a garden. They find that the garden is enclosed by high, golden gates. When they see the gates, Fledge and Polly realize that Digory will need to enter the garden alone.

The remote garden is meant to be reminiscent of the biblical Garden of Eden. Though Digory is faithfully supported by his friends, he is solely charged with undoing the wrong for which he is responsible.

When Digory approaches the golden gates, he sees a silver inscription: "Come in by the gold gates or not at all, / Take of my fruit for others or forbear, / For those who steal or those who climb my wall / Shall find their heart's desire and find despair." Digory supposes it means that he can't take any fruit for himself. He wonders why anyone would try to climb a wall if they could enter by a gate. When he simply touches the gates, they swing open.

The poem on the gates echoes the one beside the bell which Digory rang in Charn, unleashing the Witch. The warning is quite different: it enjoins the reader to take, but only for others' sake; and it's important to enter the garden in the right way. Aslan's gifts are meant to be enjoyed in a particular way, not just in the way that seems best to the taker.

The interior of the garden is solemnly quiet and filled with a lovely smell. Digory immediately recognizes the tree Aslan had spoken of—it's loaded down with shining silver **apples**. He immediately plucks an apple and can't help smelling it before he puts it in his pocket. Immediately, he's overcome by hunger and thirst and longs to taste the fruit. He wonders if it would be wrong to do so—what if the inscription on the gate was merely advice?

Even hypothetically savoring the apple for oneself—taking its scent, even if one refrains from eating it—is dangerous, because it deepens the temptation to eat the fruit for oneself. The temptation prompts Digory to question the poem's warning words, forcing him to wrestle with his selfishness more than he might have otherwise.

While Digory is considering these things, he notices a large bird roosting in the branches above him. It's saffron, scarlet, and purple, and it appears to be almost sleeping, but one eye is open just a slit. Digory later tells people that you can never be too careful in magical places, because you're probably being watched. Yet perhaps "Do Not Steal" was sufficiently impressed upon him that he wouldn't have eaten the **apple** anyway.

Aslan's servants are watching everywhere in Narnia, yet there's a sense that Digory (like the biblical Adam) had a real choice to eat or not—to obey what he innately knew to be right or to second-guess it.

As Digory is heading out the gates, he's shocked to see the Witch standing just a few yards away. She has just eaten an **apple**. Digory realizes she must have climbed over the wall. She looks proud, triumphant, and as white as salt. Digory thinks of the poem saying that despair comes of getting one's heart's desire. Digory runs for the gates, calling for Polly and Fledge, but the Witch catches up with him somehow by climbing over the wall.

Just when Digory thinks he's dodged the peril of temptation, it appears in a worse form. The Queen herself has both taken an apple for herself and attained it illicitly, and already appears to be suffering the ill effects.

The Witch says that Digory shouldn't run—she has some knowledge for him that will bring him lifelong happiness. She explains that she heard them talking in the woods last night. She understands his errand. She tells him he's foolish for taking the **apple** back to Aslan, untasted: it is "the apple of youth." She herself has tasted it and can feel that she will never age or die. If Digory eats his apple, he can join her in becoming a ruler of this world.

The Witch here symbolizes the figure of the tempting servant in the biblical story. She presents herself as understanding what's best for Digory even better than Aslan does. She seeks to plant a doubt in Digory's mind as to the best course of action.

Digory refuses that offer, but then the Witch points out that one bite of the **apple** would cure Digory's mother. All he has to do is use his ring to return to his world—the Lion isn't here to stop him. Within minutes, his mother might be enjoying a pain-free sleep, and within days, she will be recovered. Digory gasps, pained by the weight of the choice before him. The Witch argues that the Lion has made him heartless and willing to let his own mother die. Surely Digory didn't understand what he was promising. And his mother never needs to know that Digory broke a promise. Nobody needs to know how he got the apple; even Polly can be left behind in this world.

Endless life doesn't hold much appeal to Digory, but then the Witch goes straight for his heart by reminding him of his mother's plight. She tries to plant a doubt in Digory that the Lion really knows what's best, suggesting that in fact the Lion's kindness is cruelty. While Digory has narrowly avoided the temptation to selfishly eat the apple himself, he is far more tempted to pit his mother's wellbeing against the protection of Narnia.

The Witch makes a great mistake by saying this. She doesn't know that Polly could get away by herself by using her own ring. But more to the point, the cruelty of the suggestion snaps Digory back to reality. He realizes that the Witch doesn't really care about his mother after all, and must have some ulterior motive.

The Witch's comments tap into Digory's innate sense of justice and loyalty and make him second-guess her supposed "kindness." He is able to see clearly to make the right decision.

Digory and Polly scramble onto Fledge's back and are airborne before the Witch's mocking voice fades. During the flight back to Narnia, Digory is sad and silent. He keeps wondering if he's done the right thing, but the memory of Aslan's tears convinces him that he has. They reach Narnia at sunset. A crowd of creatures makes way for Digory as he approaches Aslan with **apple** in hand.

Even though Digory appears to have passed the test, that doesn't mean his sorrows are over. He just has Aslan's own tenderheartedness to trust in.

CHAPTER 14

"Well done!" Aslan tells Digory in an earth-shaking voice. Though the story of Digory's deed will be passed down for generations in Narnia, Digory doesn't think about that. He just feels content in Aslan's approval. Aslan instructs Digory to toss the **apple** onto the soft ground along the riverbank, and he does so.

Aslan seems to have known all along what Digory was up against. After facing these tests, Digory doesn't care about his own notoriety; he's realized that Aslan is trustworthy and that obedience to Aslan is its own reward.

Now it's time for the coronation of King Frank and Queen Helen. The children notice the rich robes that the two are wearing; dwarfs and river-nymphs walk in their train. Their faces have changed even more than their clothes. Frank no longer looks like a quarrelsome London cabby; he looks kind and brave. It's hard to tell if it's Narnia or Aslan that have made the difference.

The atmosphere of Narnia hasn't so much transformed the Cabby's ordinariness as elevated it, or restored the Cabby to his natural, though humble, majesty. Narnia's magic, again, is creative and healing rather than destructive.

Aslan tells the animals to undo a kind of cage that they've made out of the tangled branches of four trees. In the cage are three things: a golden tree, a silver tree, and a muddy Uncle Andrew. Uncle Andrew's furious protests had persuaded the animals to dig him up from the ground where they'd "planted" him, so they'd secured him in the cage until Aslan could decide what to do with him. The animals have become fond of this "pet" and have kept trying to offer him the food they like best—thistles, nuts, worms, and a whole honeycomb filled with bees. But Uncle Andrew just kept making noise. The animals decided to call him "Brandy" because they kept hearing him make that noise.

The outcome of Uncle Andrew's adventure with the talking animals is that they've regarded him as a lower animal than themselves. This humorous irony makes the point that those who've closed themselves off to Aslan's magic won't thrive in its healthy atmosphere.

Aslan tells the animals to bring Uncle Andrew to him. Polly asks Aslan to "unfrighten" Uncle Andrew and convince him never to return to Narnia. Aslan tells Polly that he can't comfort Uncle Andrew, because Uncle Andrew can't hear his voice; he only hears "growlings and roarings." Therefore, the only gift Aslan can offer him is sleep. He sadly says that the sons of Adam "cleverly [...] defend yourselves against all that might do you good."

Because Uncle Andrew persists in fearing and hating Aslan's voice, Aslan can't override Uncle Andrew's own will to make him be receptive to the magic of Narnia. This accord with Lewis's perspective that human beings often stubbornly resist the very things (like, in his view, the goodness of God) that are best for them.

Meanwhile, Aslan tells the Dwarfs to make crowns for the new King and Queen. Eagerly, they use the Golden Tree and the Silver Tree (which sprang up from the coins in Uncle Andrew's pocket) to create beautiful, delicate crowns with precious stones set in them. Aslan crowns Frank and Helen as they kneel before him, blessing them and charging them to rule with justice and mercy. The animals cheer in their varying voices.

Aslan establishes Narnia's first ruling couple, setting the stage for the later Narnia books. The essence of Frank and Helen's rule is to show kindness, and a very ordinary, humble English couple are portrayed as being best disposed to do that—not someone with noble blood or outward status.

Just then, everyone notices that a sweet-smelling tree laden with silver **apples** has quietly spring up. Aslan charges the Narnians to guard this tree, which is their shield from the Witch. The Witch has fled into the north, where she is growing stronger in dark magic. But as long as the tree flourishes, she won't come near, because its joyous, life-giving smell reeks of death and despair to the Witch.

The apple Digory planted has yielded the protective tree Aslan promised. The tree's sweetness is antithetical to the Queen's preferred magics.

Polly speaks up to explain that the Witch has already eaten one of the **apples** from the tree. Aslan explains that this is why the Witch now finds the tree repellent: "this is what happens to those who pluck and eat fruits at the wrong time and in the wrong way." She will still live endlessly, but because her heart is wicked, her days will be filled with misery.

Aslan explains that the Witch now suffers because she grasped a good thing (the apple) illicitly—against the commands posted on the garden gates. This accords with the biblical creation account as well, in which an inherently good thing was seized contrary to God's explicit command.

Digory confesses that the Witch tempted him to eat an **apple**, too. Aslan says that the same fate would have befallen Digory—and that if he had taken the apple home unbidden for his mother, then both he and his mother would have lived to regret that day, even if she *had* been healed.

Aslan explains that the natural working of the apple would have applied in a similar way to Digory and his mother, if Digory had disobeyed the commands and succumbed to the temptation to take an apple for himself.

Digory weeps, believing that there's no hope left for his mother, but trusting Aslan's words. But Aslan quietly gives Digory permission to pluck another **apple**. It will not give his mother endless life, but it will heal her for now. Digory can't understand for a moment, but soon he's walking to the tree while the Narnians cheer him. After plucking an apple, he asks Aslan if he and Polly may go home now.

Just as Digory begins to despair, he discovers that there is more to Aslan's plan that he had known—that Aslan did, in fact, know better than Digory what was best.

CHAPTER 15

Once more in the Wood between the Worlds, Aslan tells the children that they no longer need rings, because he is with them. But first he gives them both a warning and a command. He tells them that Charn has now been brought to an end, as if it had never existed. He warns them that their world is becoming more like Charn—perhaps someone will figure out a secret as evil as the Deplorable Word. And soon, their world will contain rulers who care no more for "joy and justice and mercy" than Jadis does. He also commands them to bury the magic rings so that they can never be used again.

Aslan prophesies destruction for the children's world, a reference to the sufferings of World Wars I and II, especially the latter—the "Deplorable Word" is perhaps a symbol for atomic warfare, and sufferings under Nazism and other totalitarian regimes would have been in Lewis's mind.

All of a sudden, as the children gaze at Aslan's face, they feel themselves to be in "a sea of tossing gold," filled with "sweetness and power" that make them feel more alive than ever before. For the rest of their lives, the memory of this moment comforts them in all sadness and trouble. Then they (and Uncle Andrew, now awake) find themselves once again outside the Ketterleys' front door

Even in the midst of sorrow and difficulty, Aslan's goodness—from which all good, creative magic and life derives—is an enduring comfort to those who believe in it.

Except for the broken lamp-post and wrecked hansom cab, everything is as they have left it. A crowd is gathered around the injured policeman, who is returning to consciousness. Digory realizes that this whole adventure has taken only moments in his world's time. Nobody takes any notice of the children, who hurriedly get Uncle Andrew inside. Polly takes charge of the magic rings while Digory goes to see his mother.

The ordinary world is oblivious to what's taken place in Narnia, yet the effects are very real—both in the remnants of the Witch's destruction and the promise of Aslan's healing goodness.

Digory sits by his mother's bed. When he takes out the **apple**, its brightness overpowers everything else in the room. He peels and slices the apple for his mother, who eats it and quickly falls into a natural, smiling sleep. Digory kisses her and leaves, still doubting, but feeling hopeful whenever he recalls Aslan's face.

The results of Aslan's promise regarding Digory's mother aren't instantly apparent, yet the memory of Aslan's own goodness renews Digory's faith.

That night, Digory buries the **apple** core in the Ketterleys' garden. The next morning, he hears the Doctor telling Aunt Letty, "It is like a miracle." That afternoon, he and Polly meet in the backyard to bury the magic rings, discovering that a small tree is already growing where they core had been buried. They bury the four rings at its foot.

Even though the ordinary world can't sustain the same type of magic that exists in Narnia, Narnian magic still has a ripple effect even in the ordinary world, such as the nearly instantaneous growth of an apple tree.

A week later, Digory's mother is certainly getting better, and within a month, the Ketterley house is transformed. Mabel has begun **singing** and playing with the children again. Within six weeks, she is quite healed. They also receive news from India—Digory's father has received an inheritance from Great-Uncle Kirke and can retire and move back to England. He and Mabel and Digory can move to the family estate in the country.

Digory's mother heals, as Aslan had promised, and Digory's whole life takes an unexpected turn for the better.

Polly and Digory remain close friends, and Polly often visits the Kirkes in the country. Narnia enjoys harmony, with no further trouble from the Witch for hundreds of years. King Frank and Queen Helen reign happily, and their children intermarry with Narnia's magical peoples. The Witch's unwittingly planted lamp-post shines in the forest, appearing in a later Narnian adventure.

For now, things remain harmonious in both the ordinary and natural worlds. Certain landmarks, like the lamp-post, set the stage for later Narnian adventures.

The tree in Digory's backyard grew into a wonderful tree, though its **apples** aren't fully magical. When Digory later became a learned professor, he inherited the Ketterleys' house. When he was middle-aged, the tree was blown down in a storm. He had its timber made into a wardrobe, which he put in his country house.

The famous wardrobe in The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe *originates from the Narnian apple tree in the Ketterleys' backyard—a final example of the way that the magical and ordinary worlds intermix with one another.*

Uncle Andrew lived with the Kirkes in their country estate, so that he wouldn't get into any trouble and would be off of Aunt Letty's hands. He never tried magic again, and he became nicer in his old age. But he always liked to tell stories of the "dem fine woman" he'd once taken on a tour of London.

Even Uncle Andrew enjoys a relatively happy ending. Though he was wicked in the story, he never went to the Witch's depths of dark magic, and his contact with Narnia seems to have gone a long way toward redeeming him and ridding him of selfishness.

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