

# TLC Summer Challenge - 2011

Reflections on reading *The Horse and His Boy* by CS Lewis

A collection written by members of *The Lion's Call*

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## **Kristi**

### **The Horse and His Boy in limericks**

*Ok so I have not actually done the reading, but wanted to participate (In school we called this cheating.). I thought I'd write a limerick per chapter. When we're done, I'll have The Epic Poem of The Horse and His Boy...in limericks. Well, maybe it will make you smile.*

#### **Chapter 1**

Arsheesh's boy Shasta was fair  
And he didn't fit in anywhere.  
Met a Horse who could talk  
Who said, "Let's take a walk."  
To a place somewhat northish from there.

#### **Chapter 2**

While riding one night with his Boy  
Bree heard lions, which tend to annoy  
Any Horse with good sense  
So he ran--things got tense  
And uncovered young Aravis' ploy

*(Things got tense? Really? \*winces\*)*

#### **Chapter 3**

Thus the lady sat down to regale  
Our good trav-lers with all of her tale  
In the Calormene style  
Which took up quite a while  
But explained why she dressed as a male.

#### **Chapter 4**

Through the city of Tashbaan they rode  
And their well-laid plans seemed to implode  
For young Shasta was took  
By some Narnian kook  
For a prince of the royalest blood.

*Ookay, so I'm not very good at writing limericks. Two assonances (Eustace Clarence would be proud.) and a made-up word in the last one alone.*

*I think I should cut my left hand off...It's causing me to sin.*

#### **Chapter 5**

As he finished his meal Shasta learned  
Of the Prince whom Queen Susan had spurned (or was about to spurn in the very near future but I could scarcely put that because it would have completely destroyed my meter)  
And he thought he'd head north  
When they all sallied forth  
Till his double, Prince Corin, returned.

### **Chapter 6**

Shasta slept midst the Tombs all that night  
Whilst the jackals' howls gave him a fright  
He shrieked "Help! What was that?"  
"Why it's only the Cat!"  
But his words were just partially right.

### **Chapter 7**

Now our erstwhile Tarkheena had been  
In the mansion of Lasaraleen  
Lounging on her divan  
Las constructed a plan  
To extract her from Tashbaan unseen

### **Chapter 8**

While the two girls were crouching unseen  
By a sofa that served as a screen  
They revealed a plan brash  
By the Prince Rabadash  
To recover his Narnian queen.

### **Chapter 9**

So our heroes returned to their course  
As the heat of the morning grew worse.  
They trekked on through the sand  
Pretty much as they'd planned  
With the smell of hot self and hot horse.

### **Chapter 10**

With an army behind them they rode  
And a lion attempted to goad  
Them to far greater speed  
Til in desperate need  
They arrived at the Hermit's abode.

### **Chapter 11**

So Shasta was told to run faster  
To warn good King Lune of disaster.  
He got lost in the fog  
And was left all agog  
At encountering Narnia's Master.

### **Chapter 12**

After all Shasta's news was declared  
Three hospitable brothers prepared  
Bacon, mushrooms and eggs  
While he rested his legs  
Then rode off to a fight unprepared.

**Chapter 13**

Befuddled by battle and spears  
Young Shasta confronted his fears  
He was thrown from his horse  
(But not trampled, of course)  
And surrounded by deafening cheers

**Chapter 14**

Twas revealed he was Lune's son and heir  
(Which explained all his light-colored hair)  
And the Lion returned  
And played "What Have We Learned?"  
With the Tarkeena, Bree, and the mare

**Chapter 15**

So they feasted that night with their peers  
And Prince Rabadash grew out his ears  
All our heroes found home  
And, no longer to roam,  
They lived happily all of their years.

*Yay! Hope you had fun!*

# ***Narnian Steward***

## **Chapter 1**

### **Slavery: Not So Uncommon**

*“And now O my host,” said the Tarkaan, “I have a mind to buy that boy of yours.”*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter One: How Shasta set out on his travels*

At the start of *The Horse and His Boy* Shasta’s life is poor, but simple. His world is small and despite an inquisitiveness about what exactly lies to the North – which can be put down to simple boyhood curiosity – he never seeks to do anything, living out his life, with Arsheesh the Fisherman, the man he calls Father.

This changes and his travels begin however, when a Tarkaan – a great lord – arrives demanding hospitality for the night. And when Shasta is safely out of the way, he also offers to buy him from Arsheesh. And contrary to what we might expect, Arsheesh – after some protestations – begins to haggle over a price.

*“I’ll give you fifteen crescents for him,” said the Tarkaan.*

*“Fifteen!” cried Arsheesh in a voice that was something between a whine and a scream. “Fifteen! For the prop of my old age and the delight of my eyes! Do not mock my grey beard, Tarkaan though you be. My price is seventy.”*

And so the story begins. With Arsheesh – who has been the only father Shasta has ever known – agreeing to sell him into slavery.

Of course this is only a story and in the end it all turns out for the good. Shasta not only finds his real family, but saves his home and gains a crown into the bargain. But that is not how it is for many people in this world right now.

For most people, Slavery is a very foreign and abstract concept. Something that happens only in stories or that was put to an end over a hundred years ago. If asked the majority of people would I believe state that slavery no longer exists. Well sorry to correct you. But it does. And is now a far bigger problem than it ever was before.

I’m not just talking about people who work in what might be called “Slave like conditions”: Those in sweatshops making jumpers or harvesting cocoa for twenty two pence a day. I’m talking about the far more serious crime of People Trafficking. Every day across the world, thousands of people leave their homes in China, Asia, Eastern Europe, South America and Africa and travel to more prosperous countries such as the US and the UK in search of work and a better life for themselves. Some are taken by force, kidnapped and transported against their will. Others travel with the help of what they believe to be “legitimate” organisations, only to learn the truth when they reach the other end.

Stripped of their passports and papers and threatened with being reported to the police as “illegals” they are forced into work for their new owners. Often this is work of a sexual nature. Soon they become the Faceless. Those we pass in the street, but pay no attention to. It is estimated by some organisations that the number of people in some form of slavery in the world today, is larger than those in slavery at the peak of the British Empire.

Fortunately there are organisations attempting to do something about this. The Police and Border Services are aware of this trafficking in human beings and attempt to stop it whenever they can, while groups such as

Stop the Traffic try to bring the situation to the public's attention. Often these groups are of a Christian nature. And as Christians it is our duty to help them whenever we can.

Shasta was lucky. Far, far too many people aren't.

What are you going to do about it?

## Chapter 2

### Us and God: We're His Humans

*"Hold your tongue Hwin and don't be a fool," said the other.*

#### *The Horse and his Boy – Chapter Two: A Wayside Adventure*

In chapter two, we meet the other two main players in this little drama, the Calormene Tarkheena Aravis and her Narnian horse Hwin; two more people fleeing northwards in search of a better life, just like Shasta and Bree. However, the differences between the two pairs quickly become apparent. I'm not just referring to the fact that at this stage Shasta is portrayed as a poor fisherman's son, while Aravis is the daughter of a high ranking Tarkaan. But rather the difference in the relationship between Shasta and Bree and the relationship between Aravis and Hwin.

The relationship between Shasta and Bree is almost paternal. Bree takes Shasta under his wing (or should that be flank?) and not only teaches him how to ride, but helps guide him to a better life. It's also a rather brotherly relationship, the type often created during high stress situations; one forged during a desperate escape attempt. It is a relationship of mutual co-operation – As Bree puts it in chapter one *"If I run away without a rider, everyone who sees me will say "Stray horse" and be after me as quick as he can.....On the other hand you can't get very far on those silly legs of yours.....without being overtaken. But on me you can outdistance any other horse in this country."* – here both of them are equal members in the partnership.

On the other hand, Aravis and Hwin's relationship is one marked by Aravis' upbringing. One of the first questions she asks Bree directly is the rather pointed *"Why do you keep talking to my horse instead of to me."* Despite Hwin giving her not only a reason not to end her own life, but also the keys to a brand new one in a land where in Hwin's own words, *"No maiden is forced to marry against her will,"* Aravis still views the mare as *her* property. Despite the evidence presented that Hwin is a being in her own right, Aravis is still constrained by the traditions and codes of the society she has been bought up in, which at first also colour her relationship with Shasta.

Now what does this have to do with our relationship with God I hear you ask (or at least I hope that's what you're asking)? Well, the way I see it, we often have a relationship with God that mirrors Aravis' relationship with Hwin. That is to say that we view him as *our* God.

Now I'm going to be honest here. There are times when I – and I believe that I am probably not alone – where I treat God not as my Lord and the Captain of my Soul – to quote W.E Henley's *Invictus* – but rather as some sort of supernatural problem solver. I feed all my trials and tribulations to him in an endless stream and expect him to come up with the answers, without giving him anything in return.

This is of course the wrong way to look at things. While God is there to help us through our difficulties – though not to simply solve every problem that we throw at him – as his children we should be honouring our heavenly father and paying proper respect to the almighty creator of the heavens and the earth. Respect that I think is all too lacking from quite a number of us.

At the end of the day, Bree's response to Aravis' question proves my point absolutely perfectly. *"Excuse me Tarkheena" said Bree..... "but that's Calormene talk. We're free Narnians, Hwin and I, and I suppose if you're running away to Narnia, you want to be one too. In that case Hwin isn't your horse any longer. One might just as well say you're her human."*

If we're going to call God our King, we have to accept that we are in turn his subjects. He is not so much *our* God as we're *his* humans.

And we have to act like it.

### **Chapter 3**

#### **The Art of Storytelling**

*"She's telling it in the grand Calormene manner and no story-teller in a Tisroc's court could do it better."*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Three: At the Gates of Tashbaan*

Most of this chapter is taken up with Aravis telling her story to her new found "friends," (or in other words, we the reader get about four pages of exposition and flashbacks). But she doesn't just tell them a story. She does it properly. The way stories are supposed to be told. As Lewis puts it at the end of chapter two:

*"Aravis immediately began, sitting quite still and using a different tone and style from her usual one. For in Calormen story-telling (whether the stories are true or made up) is a thing you're taught, just as English boys and girls are taught essay-writing."*

You see what few people realise is, there is a fundamental difference between simply telling a story and the art of storytelling.

While the majority of stories are written down nowadays (we are after all reading a book that tells a story), before the creation of a written language (or even afterwards when writing was the preserve of the Church and/or the aristocracy) stories were told orally, passed down from generation to generation by word-of-mouth until such time as they could be written down.

In fact the main role of a Bard or Minstrel was to tell stories of their lord's bravery (the equivalent of giving them a write up in the local newspaper) or telling stories that they had learned in their travels. The training of a Bard was also quite difficult, taking up to seven years and requiring the trainees to memorise the legend cycle so they could tell any story at the drop of a hat.

I'm currently reading the Mabinogion (Eleven tales from the Welsh legend cycles), and in the introduction Sioned Davies mentions that one of the difficulties in translating the Mab is making sure to keep the rhythmic structure of the stories. As these were stories were designed to be told orally, they often involve repetition of names and concepts (to help people remember them better) and these often led to the stories having an almost musical quality.

This repetition is common in Aravis' story as well, with repeated references to something being "the light of" or "the sun being dark" in someone's eyes. This type of repetition would make telling the story off-by-heart much easier as it gives you something to fall back on as you try to remember the next part.

The beginning of Aravis tale, where she lists her family's lineage is also interesting.

*“My name,” said the girl, “Is Aravis Tarkheena, and I am the only daughter of Kidrash Tarkaan, the son of Rishti Tarkaan, the son of Kidrash Tarkaan, the son of Ilsombreh Tisroc, the son of Ardeeb Tisroc who was descended in a right line from the god Tash.”*

It’s interesting that she makes a point of pointing out her supposed decent from a deity. In mythological cycles such as those that the tales of the Mab are taken from, where genealogies’ like this are common, decent from a deity is often a necessary part of a hero proving his worth.

Looking back over this, it’s nice to see that the storytelling skills developed by our most distant ancestors are still being used somewhere.

Even if it is a fictional culture in a fictional world.

## **Chapter 4**

### **The Thoughts of Queen Susan**

*“Now Madame,” the King was saying to Queen Susan.... “What think you? We have been in this city fully three weeks. Have you yet settled in your mind whether you will marry this dark-faced lover of yours, this Prince Rabadash or no?”*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Four: Shasta falls in with the Narnians*

Susan stood at the window, surveying the sprawling city of Tashbaan spread out below. Her mind was a whirl of thoughts and feelings and confusion. The same question was rattling around her brain again and again.

She, her royal brother and certain members of their court had come to Calormen at the behest of Prince Rabadash ostensibly so he could show them the same courtesy they had shown him when he had come to visit them only a few months before. But she knew the real reason. Rabadash wished to marry her; to make her one day the Queen of Calormen. And it was that question of whether she wanted to that was bothering her so.

On the one hand she knew that marrying Rabadash would be a good move politically. Narnia was a tiny country compared to Calormen and a marriage such as this would secure support and prevent Calormen from ever going to war with her beloved home. She knew that for Narnia’s sake it was the right thing to do.

She also did not doubt that Rabadash loved her. He paid her numerous compliments, took her out every day and shot beautiful sayings by the poets at her over and over – something which she had to admit was getting a little tiresome. He was handsome, dashing and charm itself. What she had seen during her stay in Narnia had impressed her. If he had asked for her hand then, she had no doubt that she would have said yes on the spot. But now.

But now.

Now she had seen him at home. She had seen him in his own nest as Sallowpad would say; seen him for the tyrant that he was. He insulted and beat his servants, took glee in blood sports and generally acted exactly as he liked every hour of the day. He was exactly the sort of monarch that Susan and her siblings had sworn they would never be. Susan knew that if she married him she would not be happy.

So it came down to the question of whether she was willing to put her own happiness above the good of the Narnian people.

Drifting from the window, she sat down on a couch and put her head in her hands. Then running her hands across her face she breathed out a prayer.

“Oh Aslan. Please. Show me what to do.”

As the sound of footsteps thundered up the steps towards the apartment door, Susan took a deep breath.

She knew what she had to do.

## Chapter 5

### Why didn't they know?

*“I'm nobody, nobody in particular, I mean” said Shasta. “King Edmund caught me in the street and mistook me for you. I suppose we must look like one another.”*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Five: Prince Corin*

Discussing this chapter in Chat, Ajnos, Kristi and I all found ourselves asking the same question.

Why didn't Susan and Edmund *know who Shasta was*? Or at least figure it out later on.

Now you may think there is no reason for them to know that Corin had a missing twin. But there is evidence to suggest that they probably did.

1: Shasta was born the year the Tisroc's reign began. We know this from what Arsheesh said to Anradin in chapter one:

*“But in the same year in which the Tisroc (may he live forever) began his august and beneficent reign, on a night when the moon was at her fool it pleased the gods to deprive me of sleep.....And shortly after the tide brought in to the land a little boat in which there was nothing but a man lean with extreme hunger who seemed to have died but a few moments before (for he was still warm) and an empty water-skin, and a child still living.*

2: We know from something The Grand Vizier says in chapter eight, that the Tisroc came to the throne the same year the Pevensies did.

*“Know, O enlightened Prince,” said the Grand Vizier, “that until the year in which your exalted father began his salutary and unending reign, the land of Narnia was covered with ice and snow and was moreover ruled by a most powerful enchantriss.”*

Now granted the Pevensies may have been a little too busy wiping out the remnants of Jadis army in their first year to spend much time with neighbouring countries. But then you come to my third point.

3: The Pevensies are quite close to the court of King Lune. As Susan says in chapter four:

*“Oh Corin, Corin, how could you? And thou and I such close friends ever since thy mother died. And what would have I said to thy royal father if I came home without thee? Would have been a cause almost of war between Archenland and Narnia which are friends time out of mind.”*

This suggests not only a close relationship between the Pevensies and the court of King Lune, but a close relationship between Narnia and Archenland.

Of course, there are two reasons why they may not have noticed that Shasta was the missing Crown Prince.

1: They didn't know. As I said the Pevensies were very busy during that first year and by the time they established ties with Archenland, Shasta may already have been taken and King Lune may have chosen not to bring up something that would clearly have been very painful.

2: They were distracted. I mean they were attempting to escape with their lives. Though you would have thought they would have noticed that Shasta was wearing different clothes.

Overall I think they can be forgiven for not realising who they were giving lunch. But if they ever did figure it out, I would love to see how they explained to King Lune that they let his missing son, climb out the window.

## Chapter 6

### Alone

*"Now that Shasta knew he would have to spend the night alone (it was getting darker every minute) he began to like the look of the place less and less."*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Six: Shasta among the Tombs*

This chapter is oddly, the only one where Shasta is really alone. Yes we eventually realise that he had Aslan protecting him, but at the time that we read it, he seems alone. So it makes sense this is the chapter where Shasta is most frightened. It's not by anything physical. Just the sounds of jackals in the distance and the Tombs in the night. He is scared by the unknown.

But isn't that what scares most of us most of the time? The unknown. Not knowing. I mean of course we're scared of specific things as well like spiders and clowns and bridges and the number thirteen. But I think what scares us the most is the things we don't know and therefore have no control over. We can face down spiders and clowns and bridges and the number thirteen. But how can we face down something we don't understand?

That was the scariest thing about the last few months. Cancer wasn't so scary. At least not once it had a name. But it was the time between being diagnosed and starting chemo. What would that be like? How would I cope? What would people say? And now that I'm done with that, I'm worried about things like whether I'll get into Uni or what the results will be every time I meet with my Doctor. Things over which I have no control.

Of course as the story progresses we learn that Shasta wasn't really alone.

*"I was the cat who comforted you among the houses of the dead. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you while you slept."*

And of course we aren't alone either. We have God on our side to support us and comfort us when we are feeling most alone. He never abandons us and he's even there when we don't think he is. It's like in the poem *Footprints in the Sand*:

*One night I dreamed I was walking along the beach with the Lord. Many scenes from my life flashed across the sky.*

*In each scene I noticed footprints in the sand. Sometimes there were two sets of footprints, other times there was one only.*

*This bothered me because I noticed that during the low periods of my life, when I was suffering from anguish, sorrow or defeat, I could see only one set of footprints, so I said to the Lord,*

*“You promised me Lord, that if I followed you, you would walk with me always. But I have noticed that during the most trying periods of my life there has only been one set of footprints in the sand. Why, when I needed you most, have you not been there for me?”*

*The Lord replied, “The years when you have seen only one set of footprints, my child, is when I carried you.”*

The times when we are most alone – when we are “among the tombs” as it were – are the times when God is closer to us than ever, making sure that we don’t stumble.

But that doesn’t stop us from feeling alone.

## **Chapters 7-8**

### **No such thing as Coincidences**

*“I say, it is lucky for you that you came to me. The dear Tisroc (may he live for ever!) is so kind. We’re asked to the palace almost every day and it is like a second home.”*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Seven: Aravis in Tashbaan*

*“Oh my master,” said Ahoshta, “it is not possible that any should know. For that very reason I proposed and you in your wisdom agreed, that we should meet here in the Old Palace where no council is ever held and none of the household has an occasion to come.”*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Eight: In the House of the Tisroc*

I’ve decided to tackle chapters seven and eight at the same time, as they seem to me, more like one chapter that has been split down the middle.

In chapter seven we flash back to see what Aravis was doing while Shasta was having fun with Corin and Co. As luck would have it, the next person to process down the street is an old friend of Aravis, the Tarkheena Lasraleen. Looking up for split second to see what Lasraleen is like now that she is “married and a very great person indeed,” Aravis is spotted and forced to take Las into her confidence. Then in chapter eight, as Las is attempting to smuggle Aravis out through the Tisroc’s palace, they accidentally overhear Rabadash’s plan to kidnap Queen Susan.

Now this may all seem to be a chain of coincidences (Aravis meets up with Las, Las knows a way out through the Tisroc’s palace, Las gets lost forcing them to take refuge in the very room where the Tisroc is meeting with Rabadash), but what you learn quite quickly is that in this story in particular (and it is pointed out quite strongly by Aslan later in the book when Shasta complains about having met so many lions), is that where Aslan (or in our case God) is, there are no coincidences. Just people being in the right place at the right time.

I mean think about it. What were the chances of Las deciding to go down *that* street at *that* time? Or having intimate knowledge of the Tisroc’s palace so that she can smuggle Aravis out? Or getting them lost to such an extent that they just happen to blunder on the Tisroc’s secret meeting with Rabadash and Ahoshta?

Taken separately, the chances of all these happening by accident are phenomenal. But if you factor an all-knowing deity into the equation, it suddenly moves away from the realm of coincidence into the realm of no such things as accidents and being in the right place at the right time.

A personal example: A long time ago, when she was at university my Mum made friends with a person training to be a nurse. That same person later became my Godmother. She's still a nurse specialising in working with Children diagnosed with Cancer. Now what was I diagnosed with at the end of last year? Suddenly I had someone I could go to and ask questions who would actually know what I was going through. I know that that was a great weight off my Mum's mind. That could not have happened if my Mum hadn't made the friends she had.

Another example: As part of his job, my Dad works with several high ranking clergy in the Church of England including the Archbishop of Canterbury. One day Rowan asked my Dad how things were going and upon hearing the news immediately stuck me on his prayer list, meaning I now had the *Archbishop of Canterbury* the most senior person in the Church of England praying for my recovery alongside many others. That could not have had happened if my Dad did not have the job he did.

I guess what I'm trying to say in my long-winded and cavorted way is that once you accept God as your King and hand your life over to him, you find that nothing is coincidental and that things that might previously have seemed random suddenly develop a whole series of connections. When God is in control, nothing is accidental. Everything is part of a wider plan.

And that's a very comforting thought.

## Chapter 9

### Desert Heat

*"At last, after hours of riding, far away on his right there came a single streak of paler grey, low down on the horizon. Then a streak of red. It was morning at last, but without a single bird to sing about it."*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Nine: Across the Desert*

Dawn breaks, the sun rises  
The night has waxed at last,  
The Hours have passed slowly  
But have passed at last

The Great City, smaller now,  
Far, far away behind them  
Time to focus on the mountain  
Up ahead. Showing them the path.

The sand burns, too hot to touch,  
Scorched by the rays of the sun.  
The Desert itself is against them,  
An enemy that must be crossed.

But at last, at long long last  
The scenery turns from gold  
To green. And there, shining  
Is the cool refreshing river.

## Chapter 10

### Sudden Bravery and Excessive Ego

*“Shasta, half mad with horror, managed to lurch towards the brute. He had no weapon, not even a stick or a stone. He shouted out, idiotically, at the lion as would at a dog. “Go home! Go home!”*

*“You’re not quite the great Horse you had come to think, from living among poor dumb horses. Of course you were braver and cleverer than **them**. You could hardly help that. It doesn’t follow that you’ll be anyone very special in Narnia.”*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Ten: The Hermit of the Southern March*

This reflection is going to cover two points. Shasta’s sudden bravery and Bree’s excessive ego, both very important parts of their overall character.

We’ve known that Shasta is at least a little brave since the beginning of the book. He does after all run away from the only home he’s ever known, with a horse he’s only just met. You don’t do that unless you have at least a little backbone. But it’s here in chapter ten that we exactly how brave he is. Not only brave though, but kind. It’s here in fact that we see he has all the qualities necessary to be a good King.

From the first time they met, he and Aravis did not get on – largely due to her snobbish attitude – and we have no evidence that their relationship has improved very much. Yet when she is threatened by one of the supposed many lions that have haunted their steps, he doesn’t hesitate to turn back and try to save her despite not having *“even a stick or a stone”* and never having *“held a sword nor had any good nurture or example in his life”* as Bree put it. He may not like her, but Shasta knows that he can’t let her be killed. The best parts of his nature are revealed during a stressful situation.

That is also often the case with us. It is often said that the best of people is brought out during times of stress and chaos. War especially has a habit of doing this. If you talk to people who were alive during the Second World War in the UK, they will tell you that it forced people to band together and created a real sense of community and comradeship. The classic example being the Little Ships of Dunkirk. No one asked all those fishermen or pleasure boat owners to sail over to France and risk life and limb to save people who they had never met before. But they did it anyway, because it was the right thing to do. Just as Shasta saving Aravis was the right thing to do.

This chapter is also the one that demonstrates just how much Bree cares about his ego. This is first alluded to in chapter three when he tries to veto Hwin’s plan for getting into Tashbaan on the grounds of appearance saying, *“Have you pictured to yourself how very disagreeable it would be to arrive in Narnia in that condition.”* – and is put down by Hwin who points out that *“the main thing is to get there.”*

Here in chapter ten however it really comes to the fore when he claims that he will return to Tashbaan and life as a slave rather than carry on to Narnia because he has disgraced himself and lost everything by running in fear instead of running back.

It is here that the Hermit of the Southern March turns up and basically tells him to shut up and to stop being a fool. The Hermit points out that Bree is not quite the *“great Horse you had come to think, from living among poor dumb horses. Of course you were braver and cleverer than **them**. You could hardly help that. It doesn’t follow that you’ll be anyone very special in Narnia.”*

In short he points out that all of Bree’s belief in his own greatness had come from living among people who

weren't as talented as him and could never hope to match up, but that that wouldn't matter once he got to a place where everyone was like him.

That is true for us as well of course. We may think we are all special – and we all are after the fashion – but we should not assume that our talents make us any more special than our friends and fellows. But one day we're going to enter Heaven at which point all of our talents and achievements will count for very little if for nothing at all as we all become equal in the sight of our Lord.

After all. How can we hope to compete with the being who made the universe?

## Chapter 11

### Shasta's Damascus Moment

*"Who are you?" asked Shasta.*

*"Myself" said the Voice, very deep and low so that the earth shook: and again "Myself", loud and clear and gay: and then the third time, "Myself", whispered so softly you could hardly hear it, and yet it seemed to come from all round you as if the leaves rustled with it.*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Eleven: The Unwelcome Fellow Traveller.*

It is well recognised that Aslan is the most important character in the Chronicles of Narnia. He is after all the only character to appear in all seven books – impressive for a character that was unintentional and unplanned – and it is here in Chapter Eleven that we see that Aslan, the *"King above all High Kings in Narnia,"* has been pulling the strings behind the scenes for practically the whole book. As he says to Shasta,

*"I was the lion...I was the lion who forced you to join with Aravis. I was the cat who comforted you among the houses of the dead. I was the lion who drove the jackals from you while you slept. I was the lion who gave the Horses the new strength of fear for the last mile so that you should reach King Lune in time. And I was the lion you do not remember who pushed the boat in which you lay, a child near death, so that it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at midnight, to receive you."*

Aslan does more in this book to help the characters along than he does in any of the other books. And as we can see from the last bit of the quote he has been controlling Shasta's life since the very beginning preparing him for this moment. It may be this realisation – that this great Lion has been behind everything – Shasta's Damascus moment if you will, that leads to this scene.

*"Luckily Shasta had lived all his life too far south in Calormen to have heard the tales that were whispered in Tashbaan about a dreadful Narnian demon that appeared in the form of a lion. And of course he knew none of the true stories about Aslan, the great Lion, the son of the Emperor-over-the-sea, the King above all High Kings in Narnia. But after one glance at the Lion's face, he slipped out of the saddle and fell at its feet."*

The parallels for us in our lives is obvious. As Christians we know that God is in full control. That our lives have been more or less mapped out before we were even born. And that as long as we trust in him, he will always give us the shove we need, when we need it.

When things get tough, when we can't see the way, we can rest assured that there is a plan. There is a meaning and a purpose behind what we do.

And there is always a lion, ready to push us that last mile.

## Chapter 12

### Coming Home

*“Now we shall have some sport. And isn’t it luck! We only got into harbour at Cair Paravel yesterday morning and the very first person who met us was Chervy the Stag with all this news of an attack on Anvard.”*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Twelve: Shasta in Narnia*

Corin stood at the rail, looking out over the rolling waves. Tumnus’ plan had worked perfectly. They had snuck out of the harbour under the cover of darkness and had been miles away by the time the sun was high in the sky. If any Calormene vessels had tried to follow to them, they had not seen them. Now all he could do was wait, and count the hours till they would be home.

Someone came to stand beside him, leaning his arms on the guard rail. Looking up, Corin saw it was King Edmund. “Hello Sire,” he said.

“Hello Prince Corin. How do you fare today?”

“I am well Sire. Just thinking about home.”

“So am I. It has been too long since I saw my royal sister Queen Lucy. You will of course stay with us a few days before returning to Anvard?”

“If I won’t be in the way.”

“I don’t believe Queen Lucy would hear of you going before the week is out,” Edmund said smiling, “But I sense there is something else on your mind.”

Corin shook his head, “I was just thinking. I almost wish that the Calormenes had come after us. I can fight as well as any of you. But I want the chance to prove myself.”

Edmund put a hand on his shoulder, “And one day young Prince you will. But you are far too eager for battles and wars. When the time comes for you to succeed your Royal Father you must learn to balance your temper with calm behaviour and rational thought.”

“I know sire. It’s just hard.”

“Indeed it is,” Edmund replied, “But I have no doubt that one day you will make a fine King.” He ran a gloved hand through his hair, “So. What are you looking forward to most about going home?”

Corin laughed, “As strange as it may sound. Some peace and quiet.”

---

A few days later, the Splendour Hyaline slid into the harbour outside Cair Paravel. Standing on the edge of the wharf was a tall, lordly stag. As soon as the landing ramp was lowered and King Edmund had walked down it, the Stag trotted over to him. The pair spoke briefly before suddenly rushing away towards the castle.

“What’s the matter?” Corin asked one of the sailors.

“I’m not sure Sire,” the man said, “But I dare say we’ll find out in time. Perhaps it’s news from King Peter.”

Disembarking, Corin made his way up towards the castle. Surprisingly Queen Lucy was waiting in the entrance. "Corin," she said walking towards him, "Walk with me a moment."

"What's the matter?" Corin asked as they made their way towards the tilt yard.

"Chervy" Queen Lucy said, "That's the stag you saw, had rather grave news. It seems Prince Rabadash is making his way towards Anvard with a force of two hundred men."

"What?" Corin paled, "I have to go home."

"Don't worry," Lucy said, pulling him into an embrace, "My Royal Brother has gone to rally the army," she pulled back and smiled, "Have to provide you with a proper retinue after all."

---

The next day Corin was sat on a small bay pony as the rest of the army began to move. Edmund rode up to him, "Well Corin. I'm sorry this isn't the peaceful homecoming you were hoping for."

Corin looked up and smiled, "No your highness. This is better." Then putting his heels to his horse, he rode off.

## **Chapter 13**

### **A Clash of Steel**

*"The whole ridge, up on the east, is black with horseman. If only the wind would catch that standard and spread it out. They're over the ridge now, whoever they are. Aha! I've seen the banner now. Narnia, Narnia! It's the red lion."*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Thirteen: The Attack on Anvard*

Over the ridge they came,  
Riding, Riding, Riding fast  
Over the ridge they came,  
With the Red Lion flying high.

Cats to the left of them,  
Giants to the right of them,  
To Anvard's aid they rode,  
With the Red Lion flying high.

The Armies met with a clash  
Of swords and spears and shields,  
The Narnians fought bravely  
With the Red Lion flying high.

The Calormens soon gave in,  
There was nowhere for them to run.  
And the Narnians marched into Anvard,  
With the Red Lion flying high.

## Chapter 14

### Understandable Confusion

*“Even a little girl like you, Aravis must see that it would be quite absurd to suppose he is a real lion. Indeed it would be disrespectful. If he was a lion he’d have to be a Beast just like the rest of us. Why.....if he was a lion he’d have four paws, and a tail and whiskers.”*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Fourteen: How Bree became a Wiser Horse*

In this chapter – when we discover exactly who Shasta really is – we also discover a little more about Bree. That is, that his captivity in Calormen has left him with minimal understanding of the country he is going back too. Not just his questions about whether Talking Horses roll, but his lack of knowledge concerning Aslan. Bree admits that he really doesn’t understand why he swears by the Lion, when he doesn’t like lions but can’t imagine that Aslan would really be an actually lion, an actual beast like him.

Of course Aslan is a beast, because how else can he interact with a nation full of talking animals if he does not become one of them? But once again Bree’s confusion mirrors that confusion felt by both Christians and people looking in at Christianity from the outside.

Some people have a hard time believing that Jesus would voluntarily become human and thus give up his position in Heaven. What they fail to understand, is that it was all part of the plan. The only way for the gap between us and God the Father to be bridged was by the sacrifice of God the Son. And the only way for that to happen was for Jesus to become human. Just as Aslan could not interact with the talking beasts of Narnia as some ethereal spirit but rather had to come down to the level, neither could God’s plan for our salvation be put into action without Jesus becoming human. He had to come down to our level, not just to commit the ultimate sacrifice, but also so he could pave the way for the Disciples to spread the message, by teaching them.

Of course some people still have a hard time believing that Jesus was the Son of God. But here C.S. Lewis can help us. He coined a phrase to be used in these sorts of arguments, *“Lunatic, Liar or Lord.”* Basically, Jesus was one of three things. He was either a madman with delusions of divinity, the greatest conman in the history of the world, or he was the Son of God. And as the evidence does not support the first two, he must have been the third. This of course has parallels in Susan and Peter’s conversation with the Professor about Lucy in *The Lion, The Witch and the Wardrobe*.

*“Logic!” said the Professor half to himself. “Why don’t they teach logic at these schools? There are only three possibilities. Either your sister is telling lies, or she is mad, or she is telling the truth. You know she doesn’t tell lies and it is obvious that she is not mad. For the moment then and unless any further evidence turns up, we must assume she is telling the truth.”*

Of course I think that Bree’s confusion is understandable. God and the nature of God is a very confusing thing. Just trying to think about a being that has always been there, that will always be there, that has no beginning and no end is enough to give me a headache. Fortunately I decided long ago to base my life on two simple principles that can be summed up perfectly by this epigram by Alexander Pope.

*“To err is human. To forgive divine.”*

I’m human. I mess up. I sin. There is very little I can do about that. But I have a relationship with a God that – as long as I recognise I’ve messed up – is willing to forgive me and start over.

I don’t think I really need to know more than that.

## Chapter 15

### The End of the Story

*“Aravis also had many quarrels (and I’m afraid even fights) with Cor, but they always made it up again: so that years later, when they were grown up, they were so used to quarrelling and making it up again that they got married so as to go on doing it more conveniently.*

*The Horse and His Boy – Chapter Fifteen: Rabadash the Ridiculous*

So we’ve reached the end of the tale,  
And all of our friends are safe.  
As for Rabadash, who’s been such an Ass,  
Well. He was sent home in shame.

Which brings us to the question,  
Of our friends Aravis and Cor.  
Were they improved by their journey?  
Were cross words never spoken again?

Well unfortunately that isn’t the case,  
They did quarrel again and again.  
But they always forgave each other.  
Until the next time at least.

And then one day years hence,  
They thought it best to get married,  
(To make quarrelling easier you see).  
And in this odd little way the pair,  
They got their fairy tale ending.

## Conclusion

I’m not ashamed to admit that *The Horse and His Boy* is my favourite of *The Chronicles of Narnia*. However I know this is not a view shared by many other fans and I can understand why. Compared to the other six books it is much more grounded. There is very little magic, minimal action – until the very end anyway – almost none of the book is actually set in Narnia and – in a massive change from the successful formula – no human children magically summoned to Narnia’s aid in a time of crisis.

I’m reminded of a quote from *The Last Battle*.

*“Oh this is nice,” said Jill, “Just walking along like this. I wish there could be more of this sort of adventure. It’s a pity there’s always so much happening in Narnia.*

*But the Unicorn explained to her that she was mistaken. He said that Sons and Daughters of Adam and Eve were brought out of their strange world into Narnia only at times when Narnia was stirred and upset, but she mustn’t think it was always like that. In between their visits there were hundreds and thousands of years where peaceful King followed peaceful King till you could hardly remember their names or count their numbers and there was really hardly anything to put into the history books.”*

Now I don't think the unsuccessful invasion of Archenland can really be called "*hardly anything*," but I think that you get my point. HHB is set during one of these peaceful times.

Now in case you're still wondering why I liked HHB so much, there are five principle reasons.

**1: We get to see what the Golden Age was like:**

In this story – set during the Pevensies reign – we finally get to see what they, or at least Edmund, Susan and Lucy were like as adults and what type of monarchs they were, something only alluded to in *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

**2: We get to see more of the World of Narnia:**

As this book is largely set in Calormen and Archenland we finally get more information about these places that have up to this point only been mentioned.

**3: We get a fresh look at Narnia:**

As we follow the four central characters on their journey, we see how Narnia the country is viewed by the inhabitants of that world: As a bastion of hope and freedom.

**4: We get a fresh look at Aslan:**

Through the eyes of Shasta and Aravis, Bree and Hwin we once again see the true power and majesty of the Great Lion. Read the scene with Shasta and Aslan on the mountain. See if you don't get chills.

And most importantly.

**5: It gives us the only canon romance in the series:**

Enough said, really. Shasta/Aravis for the win.

So give *The Horse and His Boy* another chance. I think you'll find it offers us a fresh perspective on our favourite world and – as you'll have seen from some of the things I've written during this challenge – gives us a lot to think about where our relationship with God is concerned.

Give it another chance. You won't regret it.

# Swanwhite

## Chapters 1-2

### Adventure

The very first sentence of the story tells us that this is the story of an adventure. That immediately set me to thinking about adventures and to asking what an adventure really is. It is a word I like to use often, but not one that I have a very clear definition of. The concept of adventure is very prominent in all of the Chronicles of Narnia, but happened to stick out to me in these first two chapters.

I remember one time driving with my family when we'd taken a wrong turning on to a road we seldom or never drove on and then called our little detour an adventure. I wondered what it was that made that part of our drive an adventure while the driving on familiar roads was not? I think it was an adventure because it was unexpected and unpredicted. I think adventures are unexpected.

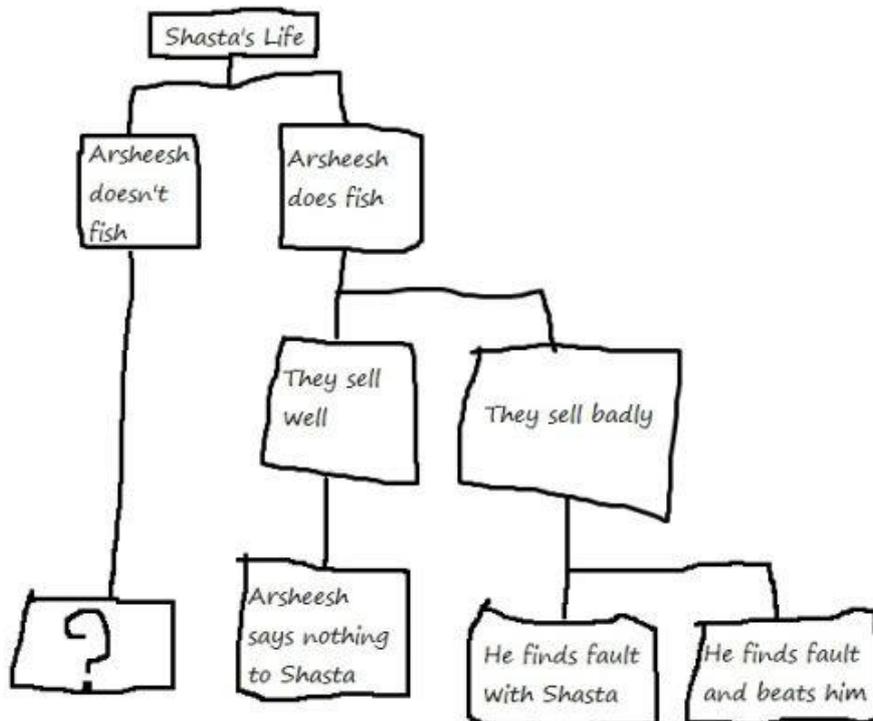
Most adventures I have ever heard or read about have been essentially a going somewhere. Have you ever heard of a stationary adventure? Could you even imagine an adventure where the adventurer stayed in one place? I think adventures go somewhere.

It is very likely that someone somewhere has a much better definition of an adventure, but for the mean time the idea of an adventure I'm playing with is "an unexpected and unpredictable going somewhere".

Upon this contemplation I noticed how perfectly Shasta's life is set up for an adventure.

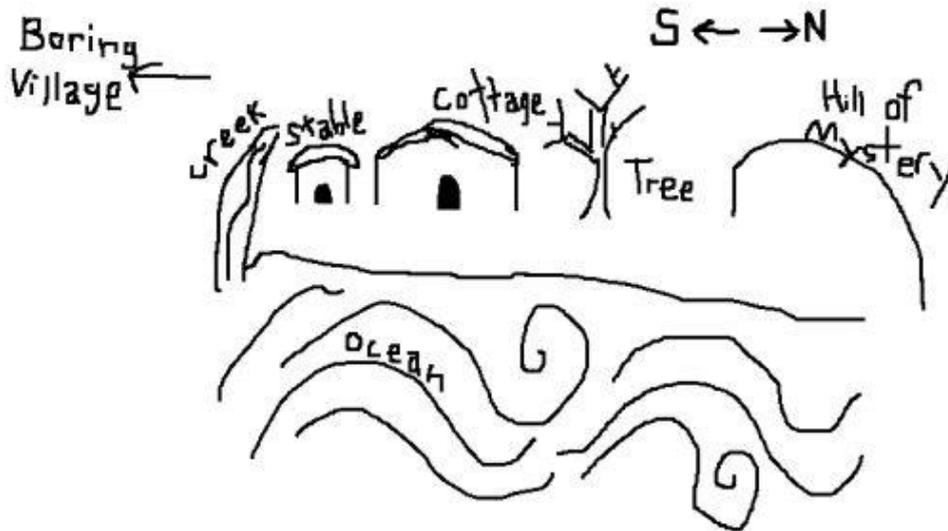
Shasta's life and home are the epitome of predictable and stationary.

On the very first page Lewis mentions four different kinds of days that have made of the entirety of Shasta's life and which vary little from each other.



The only other variations in his life that we know of is that Shasta has been once or twice to the village with Arsheesh and that Arsheesh does sometimes have company. Of course there is nothing told about days on which Arsheesh does not fish, but my guess is that those were almost exclusively due to bad weather or illness on the part of the old fisherman and they probably still retained much of the same routine for Shasta.

Now for location; Shasta has an incredibly small known world. He has been to the village once or twice, but all the rest of his life before adventure is lived in a very small area as illustrated below.



“Then, still at a walking pace, it went Northward till the cottage, the one tree, the donkey’s stable, and the creek – everything, in fact, that Shasta had ever known - had sunk out of sight in the gray summer-night darkness.”

This life and setting of monotony makes a perfect setting to break out an adventure. And so after encountering “A stranger unlike anyone (he) had ever seen before” and other surprises, Shasta sets out on his travels.

And just as our heroes start to settle into a new routine we have our next chapter titled “A Wayside Adventure”



Adventures in the unknown involve risk and danger and this adventure is no exception. However much it frightened them, a lot of good comes out of this wayside adventure and, since this isn't actually my first time reading the book \*gasp\*, I know that this adventure was crafted by the master adventure crafter for the purpose of bringing about this good. It is awesome to know that the master adventure crafter is crafting my adventure also.

So these are a few of my thoughts after two chapters and I'm excited to continue reading this "story of an adventure".

### Chapter 3

#### Alone

Aravis was alone. Of course she was alone. She had threatened the servants with elaborate tortures should they dare to disturb her. She wanted to be left alone. But now the dark loneliness of her chamber weighed on her heavily. She kicked at the silk sheets that clung about her and buried her tear stained face in her pillow.

How long had she lain there? A whole day perhaps. It was difficult to tell the passage of time in this inner room. It must have been at least a day. That is how she would tell the story anyhow, she decided. *The sun appeared dark in my eyes and I laid myself on my bed and wept for a day*, she thought to herself. But who would she ever tell the story to? Not her betrothed. She almost laughed at the thought. She had no one. No friends. Not here. Not now. She would never dream of confiding in the servants, her Father did not care anymore, her stepmother certainly did not care and Ashran was just a child. He would never understand.

She turned over again and looked around the room. A lamp in the doorway cast a gleaming light on her fallen brother's armour. He would have listened, but was not here to hear her story anymore. If only she could go to him. Her eyes rested on his dagger where it hung by his armour. She had nowhere else to go; nothing else to do. It would be better than marrying Ahoshta. Her father would regret his decision once they found her body.

She got up suddenly, splashed cool water on her face from a copper basin and dried her face with a soft towel. She took up her brother's dagger and a dark blue cloak, wrapping it tightly about her to be sure of concealing the dagger. Her face was like stone and she drifted through the house like a ghost. The stable hands were afraid of her and hastily obeyed her order to saddle her mare. She did not notice them.

"But on the second day..." Aravis spoke softly to the wind as she galloped away from the house of her Father, "I rose up and washed my face and caused my mare to be saddled and took with me a sharp dagger which my brother had carried in the western wars and rode out alone." She came to a stop in an open green place and looked around to be certain there was no one in sight. Her mare seemed to look at her curiously and nervously as if wondering why they were there. Aravis dismounted and drew the dagger. She felt her heartbeat increase. She swallowed hard. *No one of my lineage ought to fear death more than the biting of a gnat*, she reminded herself. She closed her eyes and held up the dagger with only a slight tremor in her fingers.

"Don't!" came a voice beside her. "Don't do it. Whatever it is...If you stay alive good may still happen, but death is just...the end," the voice stammered. Aravis turned sharply. She was not alone.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Tashbaan**

It rose from the mist in majestic array  
And shone like a jewel in the first light of day

The city of kings and the city of slaves  
Its great gleaming wall, standing tall breaking waves

A city of splendour and squalor and stone  
A city of feasting and famine and bones

Chaos and crowding fill up all its streets  
Shoving and shuffling of thousands of feet

A city of secrets and intrigue and fear  
A city that makes the poor fisher-boy stare

## **Chapters 5-6**

### **Nobody in Particular**

I'm nobody, nobody in particular I mean

One more poor peasant boy insignificant, unseen

Nobody you need notice

Nobody you need see

Just one more nobody that just happens to be me

Guess I could be anybody from prince to demi-god

But for now I'm just nobody on this weary road I trod

Over-hearing secrets that I wasn't meant to hear

I'd be better as a shadow or I'd better be elsewhere

I'm the boy nobody noticed running barefoot through streets

The boy who no one's waiting at the ancient tombs to meet

## Chapters 7-8

### Alliterative Poems

Lavish luxurious lounging around  
Lasaraleen laughing and chattering loud

Pomegranates, pomp and pampering  
Silly spoiled monkey still scampering

At one point in time all these things used to be  
Natural, normal and native to me

### Definitions

The secret council has a lot of big words in it. There are a few that I still wasn't sure what they meant. Although these can be understood pretty well by context, I decided to look them up and share that with you lot.

**Illimitable** (*to describe Calormen*): without limits in extent or size or quantity

**Loquacious** (*to describe the Vizier*): Tending to talk a great deal; talkative

**Maleficence**: doing or causing evil

**Sapient** (*to describe the Tisroc*): Wise, or attempting to appear wise

**Inexorable**: Impossible to stop or prevent

**Prognostics**: An advance indication or portent of a future event

## Chapters 9-10

### Quotes

*I figured I'd take up my role as Petra's quoting apprentice once again and dig up quotes that show Aravis's changing opinion of Shasta.*

"You're probably only a boy: a rude, common little boy- a slave probably, who's stolen his master's horse."

"I did not do any of these things for the sake of pleasing you."

"During these conversations Aravis became a little, a very little, less unfriendly to Shasta"

"This wasn't quite true but it rather impressed Aravis (though at the moment in annoyed her also)"

"Oh it's all very well for you!' whispered Aravis rather savagely. "What would you care about Tashbaan."

"And with a peasant boy too," said Lasaraleen. "Darling, think of it! It's not Nice." Aravis had thought of it a good deal, but she was so tired of Lasaraleen's silliness by now that, for the first time, she began to think that traveling with Shasta was really rather more fun than fashionable life in Tashbaan. So she only replied, "You forget that I'll be nobody, just like him, when we get to Narnia. And anyway, I promised."

"And of course the boy wouldn't; he's had no decent training."

"I know," said Aravis. "I felt just the same. Shasta was marvellous. I'm just as bad as you, Bree. I've been snubbing him and looking down on him ever since you met us and he turns out to be the best of us all. But I think it would be better to stay and say we're sorry that to go back to Calormen."

"Shasta- I mean Cor," said Aravis. "No, shut up. There's something I've got to say at once. I'm sorry I've been such a pig, but I did change before I knew you were a Prince, honestly I did: when you went back, and faced the Lion."

*And now this isn't very good poetry, but it is what it is. Also about Aravis's changed view of Shasta.*

### **What is a hero?**

He said I was only a girl  
I said he was only a rude little boy  
I didn't think he mattered  
Just along for the ride to annoy

What is a hero?

Once I thought that I understood  
A hero was my brother with his sword  
A strong fearless man  
Like a Tarkaan or great lord

What is a hero?

When the moment came  
The runaway slave  
Came back to save me  
Showed me he was truly brave

He is a hero.

Of all my misjudgements this one is the chief  
When I met him I called him a slave and a thief  
Only now to discover a hero beneath

## **Chapters 11-15**

### **Run**

Run, run always run  
Never falter never stray  
Run, run just begun  
A horrid, hot, grey day

Run, run always run  
Always straight ahead  
Run, run still not done  
No time now for dread

## **A Short Compilation of the Onomatopoeia in The Horse and His Boy**

“Breehy-hinny-brinny-hoohy-hah!”

“‘Broo-hoo!’ snorted Bree”

“Heigh-ho- broo-hoo”

“Broo-hoo-hah”

(And many other similar ones from Bree)

“Propputty-propputty” (Hooves on the normal road)

“Thubbudy-thubbudy” (Hooves on sand)

“Ti-ro-to-to-ho” (The Trumpets of Archenland)

### **King Lune**

In this reading I especially noticed how King Lune is the voice of reason and honour.

Firstly in what he had to say concerning Rabadash:

“Your royal Highness, if you had given that challenge a week ago, I’ll answer for it there was no one in King Edmund’s dominion , from the High King down to the smallest Talking Mouse, who would have refused it. But by attacking our castle of Anvard in time of peace without defiance sent, you have proved yourself no knight, but a traitor, and one rather to be whipped by the hangman than to be suffered to cross swords with any person of honour.”

He still treated Rabadash with respect and courtesy, but did not honour him as a knight or allow him the privileges that a knight would receive.

And secondly, what Lune had to say to Cor about kingship:

“No. The king’s under the law, for it’s the law that makes him a king. Hast no more power to start away from thy crown than any sentry from his post.”

“This is what it means to be a king: to be first in every desperate attack and last in every desperate retreat, and when there’s hunger in the land (as must be now and then in bad years) to wear finer clothes and laugh louder over a scantier meal than any man in your land.”

He sees it much more as a responsibility than a privilege and that is part of what makes him such a good king. I also liked how when Aravis meets him he isn’t what she pictured a king to look like because he is wearing old clothes, but his actions and manners show him to be a king.

### **Be Still**

Psalm 46:10 “Be still, and know that I am God”

“After one glance at the Lion’s face he slipped out of the saddle and fell at its feet. He couldn’t say anything, but then he didn’t want to say anything and he knew he needn’t say anything.”

### **Rabadash the Ridiculous**

A clay model of Rabadash which I made:



### **The Lion Print Stream**

Was it all just a dream?  
But it couldn't have been  
For the deep set paw print  
And the clear glassy stream

Bubbling up from the earth  
A great gift for his thirst  
Glimmering diamond-like  
Chuckling merry in mirth

Could he be sleeping still?  
But his heart gave a thrill  
At the bright running stream  
And he drank with a will

Living water, if he'd known  
Where that water also flowed  
Eastern edge, the Silver Sea  
Waves grow sweet beneath the throne

But the water there  
And the water here  
Was all watered down  
From a Lion's tear

# Ajnos

## Chapters 1-2

### Of cultural differences and belonging

*A common theme which struck me while reading is that of cultures and belonging. There is a broad mix of cultures and norms thrown into these first two chapters. Both prejudice, and lack of understanding/respect for those who are different, are expressed throughout these chapters. Here are my thoughts:*

*The Horse and His Boy* is a unique book in the *Chronicles* as it immediately thrusts us into a new world and culture, hitherto unknown (except for a brief mention in VDT, when reading in published order). The Calormene culture has a very different flavour to that of the Narnia which we are familiar with. Without getting too caught up on the niceties of their culture or their resemblance to certain cultures in our world, I will simply say that we are given a very unique setting. Here is a young boy, who lives with only his "father". They live very simple lives, that of fishermen, and both hard work and harsh discipline make up the main part of this boy's life.

This boy, however, is dissatisfied with his life. He wants to know more, and has a yearning to learn what lies beyond his isolated world. When he discovers he is not Arsheesh's son, but was simply rescued by him at birth and considered something of a slave, the description of how he felt is telling:

The story about his own discovery in the boat had filled him with excitement and a sense of relief. He had often been uneasy because, try as he might, he had never been able to love the fisherman, and he knew that a boy ought to love his father. And now, apparently, he was no son of Arsheesh at all. "Why, I might be anyone!" he thought.

As a Christian, I sense in Shasta the same response we feel (and it is one I feel particularly acutely when I look around me) "I don't belong here". This world is not my home. I am made for some other place. CS Lewis phrased it beautifully in *Mere Christianity*:

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world...I must keep alive in myself the desire for my true country, which I shall not find until after death...I must make it the main object of life to press on to that other country and to help others do the same.

And the relief when we discover it is powerful. It is blessed relief. Unlike Shasta, however, it is not yet time to leave this world. I must live in it for some time longer. But the day will come, when I can leave it all behind – and head for my true home. I love Shasta's response to Bree's suggestion that they travel North in their flight: "I have been longing to go to the North all my life!" *To Narnia and the North!*

In a way, I am a little more like Bree. Bree too is far from home, living in a land that is not his. He is forced to live like this for many years. And he is forced to hide who he truly is. I thank God, that, though I am a stranger in a foreign land, I do not have to hide my true identity. I live in a country where I am free to express and confess my faith. I think and pray for those many Christians in the world who are not able to do so. They, like Bree, risk unwanted public attention, and must practice their faith in secret.

There is another way in which Bree expresses the issue of cultural belonging and identity. He knows that he is a Narnian horse, but does not know exactly how Narnian horses behave. After Shasta laughs at him rolling on the ground, he says with fear, "It would be dreadful to find, when I get back to Narnia that I have picked up a lot of low, bad habits." He worries here (and in other places in the book) how Narnian horses will judge his behaviour. This may be seen both positively and negatively.

While on the one hand, we as Christians should not conform to the behaviour of the world, but be recognised by the fact that we are different, Bree's attitude also brings up a more negative theme found in various places in the book – the question of prejudice and cultural superiority. When certain behaviour is practised simply because it is "tradition" and not for a moral purpose, we run the risk of feeling culturally superior, which leads to prejudice and judgemental attitudes – both things that do not reflect the example of Christ which Christians try to follow.

Not only does Bree fear the judgement of Narnian horses, but he too shows some prejudice in his attitude towards Shasta. He laughs at him for having only ridden the donkey, and cannot understand why humans can't eat grass, "I suppose, like all humans, you won't eat natural food like grass and oats...you're rum little creatures, you humans." Elsewhere, he says to Shasta, "You can't get very far on those two silly legs of yours (what absurd legs humans have)."

Another passage I enjoyed, which relates somewhat to the issue of prejudice is the quips between Shasta and Bree when they first share names with each other. Shasta declares, without trying too hard, that Bree's full name is far too difficult to say and immediately gives him a nickname. Bree responds to Shasta's name with: "Well now, there's a name that's *really* hard to pronounce."

I can relate to this name issue very well. When you live in a country with 11 official languages, the issue of names and the difficulty in pronouncing them, is very real. In the bad old days (which didn't end that long ago), the speakers of European languages didn't even try to learn the names of their African-language servants and domestic workers. They would simply give them a European name to which they must respond. Thankfully times are changing. I do not have too much trouble pronouncing the names of my African language students (except when they have clicks, but I'm starting to get that too). The problem still remains, however, and names with which you are not familiar will always have a strange ring to them. Though I might be able to read and pronounce them, I certainly find them harder to remember.

In this brief exchange of names, CS Lewis touched on a world-wide, centuries-long phenomenon. The question of different sounding names (often as an extension of different languages) has and will continue to be an issue of cultural difference, which can in turn lead to complications in inter-cultural relations.

Bree is not the only one with cultural prejudices. Just as Bree thought humans strange with their two legs and inability to eat grass, so the humans had the view that talking horses were possessions, like slaves.

"Why do you keep talking to my horse instead of to me?" asked the girl. "Excuse me Tarkheena" said Bree..."but that's Calormene talk. We're free Narnian's, Hwin and I, and I suppose, if you're running away to Narnia, you want to be one too. In that case, Hwin isn't *your* horse any longer. One might just as well say you're *her* human."

Part of the reason Shasta and Aravis get along so poorly at the beginning is that they are on opposite sides of the cultural spectrum. Bree and Hwiny, who are both Narnian talking horses, kidnapped in the North in their youth, and in the ownership of a wealthy Tarkaan in Calormen before their escape, get along right from the start. Shasta and Aravis, however, despise each other. She is a wealthy Tarkheena; a member of the Calormene nobility, supposedly able to trace her descent from Tash himself, and used to luxury and getting her way all her life. Shasta is the slave of a poor fisherman and had recently discovered that he was probably not Calormene at all. She despised his poverty, he her wealth; he her nobility, she his slavehood.

Apart from the obvious destinies for which Aslan brought these four together, he almost seems to have had a secondary purpose. Through their journey, and all they have to go through together, they are able to overcome their prejudices and change some of the stubborn beliefs they clung to so hard at the beginning.

And so I can draw two lessons from these chapters. The first is the reminder that those of us who are Christians are strangers in a foreign land. The second deals with a phenomenon that occurs amongst all human cultures and groups; that of judging others who are different – be it the different food they eat, the different way they walk, the fact that they are poor or rich or that they view things slightly differently. As citizens of the heavenly country and not of this world, we must not behave like the world. One way we can do this, is by analysing our prejudices and attitudes. I'm not saying that we should compromise our faith, or water it down. We simply need to ask ourselves, when we have opinions and practices that are different from those around us – what is our motive? Do we have a moral or scriptural reason for disapproving of certain behaviour (example theft or murder) or is it simply tradition that determines our attitude? And even if there is a moral reason – we are still (as runaway slaves from sin, who were once as sinful as the next person) not to judge them with arrogance.

### Chapter 3

#### Hwinny: An unsung hero

Of the four main characters, Hwinny is by far the one given the least attention. As the four set off on their journey together, she is the quietest and shyest. And yet this chapter reveals that behind this quietness lies wisdom, common sense and humility. Although, like Bree, she has lived much of her post-Narnian life in the company of the Calormene nobility, and although both horses get along quite well at the start with their common Narnian origin, it is Aravis and not Hwinny who becomes Bree's partner in conversation during their travels.

Shasta thought it had been much pleasanter when he and Bree were on their own. For now it was Bree and Aravis who did nearly all the talking...he knew a great many of the same people and places that Aravis knew...Bree was not in the least trying to leave Shasta out of things...People who know a lot of the same things can hardly help talking about them, and if you're there you can hardly feel that you're out of it.

We don't know how Hwin felt about all this, and how much of the conversations she could follow. While she must have been familiar with much of the places and people Aravis and Bree discussed, I imagine she also felt a little left out when they were discussing wars and warriors. It says of her "Hwin the mare was rather shy before a great warhorse like Bree and said very little."

And yet Hwin was just as much a hero in her own right. It was she who had saved Aravis from killing herself twice, and who provided her with a means and place of escape – Narnia. She had risked all and given away the secret that she could speak before a girl who could have abused that knowledge and make a spectacle of her. I imagine that it was only love for Aravis (who may have treated her kindly, but would have treated her as a possession and possibly even lashed her at times) that made her speak up. She could easily have let Aravis kill herself then and there and, and then made a run for it on her own. Of course she was at risk riding alone through Calormen, but I dare say that was a lesser risk than giving away her secret.

It almost seems in this passage, that Aravis does not fully appreciate what Hwin had done for her. Again, it was probably not an intentional neglect (as Bree did not intentionally exclude Shasta), but Hwin seeks no extra praise for herself. She is the example of a true servant.

At the end of this chapter, it is Hwin who comes up with a plan for them to get through Tashbaan. Bree and Aravis are reluctant to adopt the plan because it means humiliating themselves by dressing like beggars. They criticise her too for not thinking it through. Her reply reveals her character so well:

I know it's not a very good plan...but I think it's our only chance. And we haven't been groomed in ages and we're not looking quite ourselves (at least I'm sure I'm not).

Later when Bree objects to them arriving in Narnia looking bedraggled with cut tails:

"Well," said Hwin humbly (she was a very sensible mare), "the main thing is to get there."

Unlike Bree and Aravis, Hwin is willing to suffer a little humiliation for the sake of security. She really is a very sensible mare. Her plan also reveals that beneath her shy and humble exterior lies a firm courage. She is not at all afraid to take risks (as we had already seen when she first spoke to Aravis).

Finally, I see in Hwin, a strong sense of concern for the underdog. Shasta had been having a hard time since the four met up, yet she is the one who reaches out to and encourages him. As they approach the ridge of the last hill before Tashbaan, Shasta turns to her and says "I do wish we were safely past it". Like a gentle mother, in a similar way to how she had comforted Aravis in her most desperate hour, she says fervently back to him: "Oh, I do, I do."

Sweet Hwin is an example to all of us. She represents humility, courage and comfort. She seeks no glory for herself, but watches out for others. She is wise and practical. She really is a sensible mare.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Stuck in Tashbaan**

For this chapter I'm going to write something a little different. Some of you may have heard this story before, but I repeat it for those who have not, and tell it in a slightly different way.

In the same way that Tashbaan becomes the "spanner in the wheels" of our heroes' journey to Narnia, Tashbaan (and this chapter in particular) was the cause of delay on my early childhood trip to Narnia.

When I was in Grade 4, we read *The Magician's Nephew* and *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* in class together. I enjoyed them so much, that I took out the next book, *The Horse and His Boy* from the school library. I got as far as Chapter 4 and got stuck in Tashbaan. For some reason (I can't say for sure what it was), I got no further.

I found the crowded streets and the complex maze of terraced roads terribly confusing. I couldn't picture what was happening and got lost in the business and crowdedness of the city. At that point, I gave up on the book, and on the series.

It would take another five years, before I would resume my journey to Narnia. After watching the BBC LWW one day in Grade 9, I returned to the series, read it and fell in love with it. Three years later, Walden Media began to make books into films.

I often wonder what my life would have been like had it not been for that delay in Tashbaan. I can't answer that. As Alsan would say, "You can never know what would have happened, only what will happen." But I believe there was some reason for that delay. Perhaps I was too young (I know it sounds odd for a children's book series). But perhaps my appreciation of Narnia today would have been spoiled had I become familiar with it too soon. I can well imagine I would have scorned it completely, when I went through my "everything with the slightest hint of magic in it (yes everything, from *the series that will not be named* to *The Wizard of Oz*) is evil" phase in Grade 7. The delay meant that Narnia was spared from, and perhaps helped to bring about an end to that phase of my life.

Thankfully, for Shasta and his friends, their delay in Tashbaan is a lot shorter than mine was. And from that delay came at least two good things - they learned of the short route to Archenland via Mount Pire, and of Rabadash's plan to invade Archenland and then Narnia.

Delays and seemingly unnecessary hold-ups occur often in our lives. And often we can't see the reason for them. But God is perfect in his will and timing – and a hold-up might be just the thing we need at that moment in our lives.

## Chapter 5

### The Lost Prince

Corin watched as the boy's hand disappeared from view. "What a strange boy," he thought to himself, "What a strange city this is." He was looking forward to returning home.

Just then, he heard the clop of Mr Tumnus' hooves as he entered the room. "My young prince, you should be lying—" His sentence was cut short when the boy turned to face him and he saw his eye. He stared at Corin for a moment, taking everything in. His first suspicion was that the boy had run off into the streets the moment he had left him, but then he noticed his clothes.

"What, by the Lion's Mane, is going on young man? Poor Susan was worried enough about your condition. Either my eyes are deceiving me, and I am bewitched or you are not the same Prince Corin that was here earlier! I do hope the Grand Vizier did not have my food laced with some poison!" The faun sat down in despair and gripped his horns in frustration for the second time that day.

Prince Corin walked over to him, and smiling, placed a hand on the faun's shoulder. He had been tempted to let his Narnian escort wonder for a while, before revealing the whole truth as he had promised the other young boy he would. He was most disappointed the boy had not stayed so they could pull off a few pranks.

Seeing Tumnus in such a state, he realised how this city was working on everyone's nerves and understood that now was not the time for games. "It's okay, Mr Tumnus," he said, as the faun raised his head and looked into his eyes. "I am not the same Prince Corin you saw earlier today. Your eyes do not deceive you."

Instead of the expected sense of relief in the faun's face, he saw instead further puzzlement. Corin sat down next to his dear friend and told him the whole story; how he had snuck out of the place they were staying, his adventures in the streets of Tashbaan, his waiting through the night, and his arrival back into that very room, only to find a young boy who looked almost exactly like him waiting there. He explained how the boy had been in a hurry to leave and of how he had some crazy idea of crossing the desert. Corin had not had time to inquire any further before they had heard Tumnus' approach and the other boy had made good his escape.

Tumnus sat quietly and listened. He could tell from the Prince's tone that he spoke the truth and was not up to some trickery. "How strange," he finally said, "that we should find a boy who so closely resembles your Highness amongst all the dark faces and heads of Calormen."

"He said he *thought* he was Narnian," answered the Prince, "Although he didn't seem entirely sure or even convinced of that fact. He also claimed to have some or other talking horse. Say, you don't think he was a spy, do you?" He added the last comment as it suddenly occurred to him, his young mind running wild. What's to bet he wasn't sent by Rabadash to make sure Susan marries him. That prince is crazy, I saw it in his eyes when we met him the other day."

"Calm down, your Highness," answered Tumnus, trying to stay calm himself. His suspicion was that the young boy was simply a beggar, overwhelmed by being mistaken for the prince. Tumnus had seen no malice, only confusion in the boy's eyes. But something told him that there was more to it. The resemblance to the Prince was uncanny. In fact, that boy almost looked more like the Prince Corin he knew than the one that

stood before him now. But he knew for certain that this was the real prince from the way he spoke. The other one had not spoken enough to reveal his identity.

“Come, your Highness,” said Tumnus finally, “We must work out this puzzle at some other time. We must make our way to the ship.”

So as not to arouse suspicion, the various members of the Narnian contingent were to take different routes to the ship. Tumnus led Corin through a tangle of streets and past some vendors where they collected the oranges and apples he had ordered earlier that day. “Did you know that they imported Narnian apples here?” he said, by way of conversation, “How appropriate for our feast to honour the prince.”

The remainder of the trip was completed in silence. Once on board the *Splendour Hyaline*, Tumnus took the prince to Susan's quarters, explaining briefly what had happened. Susan's eyes opened wide with wonder, and she hugged the prince, ordering an attendant to fetch ointment for his eye. She also bade Tumnus bring Edmund and Peridan to her cabin.

When the men arrived, she asked Corin to retell his story of the strange boy again. He told them everything.

After a while, Edmund spoke up, “There's nothing to it,” he said. “We will have to trust that the boy was not a spy, we cannot change our plans now.”

“But what if he was,” said Susan, worriedly. You yourself said the Prince was getting suspicious. What if he planted him? Perhaps the boy did not even know he was hired as a spy, and now they'll beat him to get the truth out of him. He heard our entire escape plan! And the secret of crossing the desert to Archenland!” For the second time that day she regretted her decision to come to Calormen and felt that this was all her fault.

“Your Highness need not fear the boy,” spoke up Lord Peridan. Everyone turned to look at him, but despite the subtle hint in his smile that he might know something the others didn't, he gave nothing away. “I believe that he was correct in telling young Corin that he is of Northern stock. Why ever would he make up the story of having a talking horse?”

“But if he spoke the truth, and really has befriended a talking horse,” said Susan, a new worry in her face, “how dare we leave a fellow Northerner in this forsaken city. He stands little chance of making it out alive. What if someone else mistakes him for one of our party and harm comes to him on discovering our escape?”

“I hear you, your majesty,” replied Tumnus, but what could we do? If we were to send out a search party now, we would have to delay our escape, and our attempt at escape might be discovered. We would be putting the whole Narnian party at risk for a young boy that would have us believe he was Prince Corin, and made a fast departure the second the real Prince appeared. The boy said he had a plan, is it worth us interfering at the risk of our own?”

Peridan had been watching this exchange closely, uncertain of what to do. He turned now to Edmund, deciding to risk a few moments discomfort. “May I have a word with your highness in private,” he whispered. Edmund looked up at him in surprise, but nodded and stepped outside the room with him.

“Your majesty, I do not mean to exclude any of the present company, and your royal sister deserves to hear this as well as you. But I fear to upset her further in her present state, especially unnecessarily. There is something I think you should know...”

Peridan began to tell the king, who was at this time completely ignorant of the matter, of Prince Corin's twin brother. The boys were born a couple of years before the Pevensies first arrived in Narnia. At this time, Archenland had been long isolated from her northern neighbour, cut off by the power of the White Witch

and her perpetual winter which made the mountain pass into Narnia impossible, despite the fact that Archenland herself was largely spared from the harsh weather. It was not long after Prince Cor's capture that the Pevensies came to power, but by the time contact was made between the two nations it had been decided that it was prudent that Corin's brother, the lost prince, never be spoken of in Archenland or elsewhere.

This was by the advice of the same centaur who had predicted Cor would one day rescue Archenland. Lune made his way with Peridan's father (one of his most trusted advisors) back to the centaur after Cor's kidnapping. The centaur said that the future of the boy had become dark and he did not know whether the prophesy could still reach fulfilment. King Lune always believed that his son was not dead and would one day return to fulfil his prophesy. The centaur bade them never to speak of missing prince openly again.

"Since joining the young Archenlander volunteers who came to serve in your court, your majesty," concluded Peridan, "I have never once thought of the lost prince until this day. There is a fair chance that that young man we mistook for Corin, was in fact his lost brother Cor, though neither boy would have known it."

Edmund was speechless, "A well-kept secret indeed. I have heard not the slightest rumour of it before. But was it prudent, I wonder? Had we known this, we could have prevented his escape."

"We might still not have known the boy was not Corin until it was too late," countered Peridan. "Also, we do not know that this is the lost prince. We have no guarantee the boy ever survived."

"Oh dear," sighed Edmund, "Whatever shall we do? I want not a word of this whispered to my sister, she is too emotionally vulnerable as it is. In fact, we will keep this between ourselves for the time being."

"What are you going to do?" Peridan could see that the king had some plan. "We will go ahead with our escape as planned. Summon Lord Reilaf immediately. He is trustworthy, but has been little enough seen in public that he will not be recognised. With his dark hair, he can disguise himself as a Calormene. I shall leave him in the city to scout for the boy. If he can by any means find him, he will do so. If the boy is no spy, but indeed a northerner, prince or not, he will contrive a way of escape for them both. It is the best I can do at such short notice. If he truly is the prince, and has survived this long unscathed, I do believe that he can take care of himself. Who knows but that he might be safer in the city than on board our fleeing vessel. Aslan be with us all this night and in the days that lie ahead!"

## **Chapter 6**

### **Fear among the tombs**

Reflecting on chapter 6, I find that this is a chapter about fear. Not that I'd call Shasta a coward, but this chapter, as he sits alone among the tombs, brings to light both his ignorance of how the world works, and with that, the things he fears most.

As I said, Shasta is no coward. He would never have gotten this far if he were. And if anyone is in doubt of his bravery, one need only continue to read the book to see how courageous he really is. But with the knowledge of the rest of the book and what is to happen next (knowledge Shasta does not have) he really appears quite foolish in this chapter.

But when you are alone, in a place steeped in superstitious rumours, even the bravest soldier may fear. The irony of this chapter, however, is that Shasta fears the things he need not fear, and does not fear the things that he should. These are a result of his ignorance about the world – something that is really not his fault, so much as a consequence of his isolated life.

He fears the rumours of ghouls among the tombs. Despite the fact that Bree had dismissed these rumours as "Calormene nonsense." But Shasta has grown up as a Calormene and so, what might be considered "nonsense" to a Narnian horse, is a real fear to this young boy who has lived among Calormenes his whole life.

The second thing he fears is betrayal. Twice he fears that the others may have gone on without him: when he first arrives and finds no sign of them, and the next morning, while washing in the river. This second time, his fear makes him foolish and he sprints back to the tombs "so that he was all hot and thirsty when he arrived and so the good of his bathe was gone".

The third thing he fears is the lion. On the one hand, this lion, revealed later in the book to be Aslan himself, should be feared as God should be feared (he is not a tame lion). But what Shasta does not realise is that of all lions, he need not fear being eaten alive by this one. As a matter of fact, the lion whom he fears has actually just saved his life from the jackals howling in the distance.

And here we see his folly – where he does not fear something he should fear. Not knowing exactly what these beasts were, he did not realise his real danger. He feared the thing he did know about (ghouls) more than the thing he knew nothing about (jackals).

I suppose that if he had been an entirely sensible boy he would have gone back through the Tombs, nearer to the river where there were houses. But then there were...the ghouls...It may have been silly, but Shasta felt he would rather face the wild beasts.

The final thing which reveals his ignorance is the desert itself. Convinced that the others have either gone on without him, or will never come, and afraid of spending another night among the tombs, he decides to brave it alone in the dessert.

It was a crazy idea and if he had read as many books as you have about journeys over deserts he would never have dreamed of it. But Shasta had read no books at all.

Ignorance is a dangerous thing, as is letting our imaginations and rumours take hold of us. We run the same risk as Shasta of being quite foolish by fearing the things we need not fear and not fearing the things we should.

We, however, have the privilege Shasta did not have. Although we do not know the future any more than he, we do have access to far more knowledge than he had had in his isolated life. More importantly we have the knowledge that we are not – never – in this alone. Had Shasta only known that the cat which brought him comfort was Aslan himself, and had he known that Aslan was in control of everything, he would have been a far more sensible boy.

We have that knowledge, and the Bible. It teaches us what we ought to fear and what we should not fear. And it teaches us that we have someone with us every step of the way – there to protect us from the jackals and to comfort us in the dark. And that someone is not, as Shasta thought, simply a warm but unintelligent someone – but someone with all the wisdom in the world, who understands our greatest fears more than we do.

Let us make use of the knowledge and not behave foolishly as Shasta did.

*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. 2 Tim 1:7*

## Chapters 7-8

### Narnia's Trojan War

Chapters 7 and 8 are particularly interesting because we get a small window into world of the Calormene nobility – from the inside. In these chapters, we get to see exactly what kind of life Shasta, had he become a slave to a Anradin, and Aravis, had she married the Grand Vizier, are escaping from. We get to meet Aravis' colourful and dizzy friend, her potential husband, and both Prince Rabadash and the Tisroc himself – in their own nest, as Sallowpad would say.

These characters are cleverly developed by Lewis (even if they are a little stereotypical) and their conversations cleverly crafted. Even though we sigh with relief that our heroes (along with Susan herself) will be spared from this life, the chapters are enjoyable to read. The Calormene characters, though hardly loveable people or the kind we would ever want to emulate, are likeable in their ridiculousness. We laugh at their silliness, and perhaps tremble a little at what disasters they might bring about through their foolishness.

At the university where I did my undergrad degree, not many people major in Classics. Quite a few, however, take individual classical subjects as electives. As a result, those few (like me) who take a full major's worth of courses must suffer a fair amount of repetition. This is never more true than for the Trojan War. In almost every course I took, including not only Greek 101, but also Latin 101, we learnt about this most famous of Greek legends. And I suppose it is hardly surprising, since this is the legend that makes up the theme of the first-ever book to be published in the history of European literature.

2 500 years later, this story still enthralled the world, and was last made into a major motion picture as recently as 2002, and in many books even after that.

It is not a stretch, therefore, that CS Lewis (a man well versed in the Classics, and who himself began to write a novel covering events after the end of the Trojan War, and a translation of the Roman epic, *The Aeneid*) had this great legend, The Trojan War, in mind, when penning chapter 8 of *The Horse and His Boy*.

Thankfully, CS Lewis was more interested in writing an original story for children than retelling the age-old classic, and what we have is a very different story. But bear with me as I present some evidence that the Trojan War may have been at the back, if not the front of his mind, as he penned this chapter. There is more similarities between these two stories than simply that both have something to do with Horses.

***"Nothing, I say, will seem as pardonable, if not estimable, in their eyes as this - er - hazardous attempt, especially because it is undertaken for the love of a woman..."*** Ahošta - HHB

Some key events in lead up to the Trojan War could be summarised as follows: A Trojan Prince goes to visit the King of Sparta in Greece. The visit is successful, and it would seem that ties between the two countries, and bonds of friendship, will be strengthened by this visit. But while there, the Prince falls in love with the Queen of Sparta. He contrives to have her kidnapped and sails away with her in a daring escape back to his city of Troy. Queen Helen's husband Menelaus is incensed. He convinces his brother, King Agamemnon of Argos and the other kings and leaders of Greece to join him in battle as he sets out to reclaim his lost queen. To many, this is seen not just as an act of love, but an excuse to subdue the city of Troy, an "unseemly blot" to the might of Greece.

Our Narnian story bears a few similarities. A Calormene Prince goes to visit the Royal Court of Narnia. He is received well and his behaviour is lauded by the Narnians. But while he is there, he falls in love with Queen Susan of Narnia. Unlike Paris, he does not have her kidnapped immediately, but sends messengers requesting her hand (she is, after all, free to marry and not another man's wife). She and her brother King

Edmund travel to Tashbaan as she considers the suit. In Tashbaan, they see the Prince for who he truly is. Susan not only makes up her mind not to marry him, but they realise that the Prince will not easily allow her departure. In a daring escape she, with Edmund and their entourage, sail back their castle at Cair Paravel. When Rabadash realises she is gone, he is incensed. He convinces his father to let him march to Narnia and take her by force. His move is not only because of his passionate love (or should I say lust) for the Queen, but also seen as an excuse and means for subduing Narnia, "an unseemly blot on the skirts of [the] empire."

Obviously the differences between the two stories are apparent. As I said before, Lewis was writing his own story. While in the Trojan account, the Queen is already married, in the Narnian one she is not. In the Trojan story she is immediately kidnapped, in the Narnian one she is not. In the Trojan story, it is her husband and his allies that launch a rescue attack, whereas in the Narnian one, it is the spurned lover who launches an attack by which he plans to kidnap her.

But I think you will agree, there are a few similarities. This may be stretched, by an over-active mind swamped with far too much teaching on the Trojan War than any one person should endure. But I find the few links as they are interesting.

With a few changes, some of the words spoken between Rabadash and his father may pass as those spoken between Menelaus and his brother as an argument for launching the Trojan War:

"Compose yourself, O my **brother**," said **Agamemnon**. "For the departure of guests makes a wound that is easily healed in the heart of a judicious host."

"But I *want* her," cried the King, "I must have her. I shall die if I do not get her **back** - false, proud, black-hearted daughter of a dog that she is! I cannot sleep and my food has no savour and my eyes are darkened because of her beauty. I must have **my** Queen."...

"I desire and propose, O my **brother**," said **Menelaus**, "that you immediately call out your invincible armies and invade the thrice-accursed land of **Troy** and waste it with fire and sword...killing the **King** and all of his **house** except the Queen **Helen**. For I must have her **back** as my wife, though she shall learn a sharp lesson first."

Of course, in the Narnian story, the Tisroc declines giving aid in open war and the Prince must win her back with his own small force. It is interesting that the Tisroc fears Narnia because of the legends around it. Troy had some legends of its own – the walls had been built by Poseidon himself and would never be conquered from without (though these were not quite so powerful legends in the minds of the Greeks so as to prevent their war).

Thankfully, the outcomes of the two wars are also very different. During the Trojan War, the Olympian gods are said to have played an important role. Olympus was divided with half the gods favouring the Trojans and the other half the Greeks. This is part of the reason the war remained a deadlock for ten years. The Narnian situation is different. Rabadash thought he had the gods of Calormen on his side, but we read nothing of them (for we know that, though limited in power, there was some real creature or spirit behind at least one of their gods). Tash however has no interest, so far as we can tell, in Rabadash's affairs. And even if he had, I doubt he would dare to take on an attack on Narnia and Archenland, knowing that Aslan was behind its kings and queens all the way.

And therein lies the difference. Rabadash had not factored in Aslan, and Aslan's use of a runaway slave boy and Calormene girl. As something seemingly harmless, the Trojan Horse, was what brought about the destruction of Troy, so Aslan used the most unlikely of people to accomplish his plan and save Narnia from sharing Troy's fate. In a sense it was Shasta and Aravis, with the aid of the horses that served as Narnia's "Trojan Horse".

Rabadash would have done well to heed his father's warning, mistaken though it may have been in part:

*"It is commonly reported that the High King of Narnia...is supported by a demon of hideous aspect and irresistible maleficence who appears in the shape of a Lion."*

He was no demon, but something far more dangerous to any who would seek to destroy Narnia – he was the creator of Narnia and Archenland and Calormen himself!

## **Chapters 9-10**

### **Going beyond our strength**

The theme of refreshment was the first that struck me as I read these chapters; the refreshment of the stream and later relaxation (at least for three of the characters) at the Hermit's place.

But there is another theme that I noticed. I'm not sure exactly how to phrase it, but these chapters are packed full of "lessons" about physical ability and what is expected of us.

It is interesting to note, that the stop for water and refreshment is not the end of the journey or a reward for their hard work. It is simply an opportunity for the characters to catch their breath and refuel for the last leg of the journey – which will be even harder and more demanding than the rest (be it in the hills of green Archenland and not the desert).

The children and horses make the mistake of thinking it is an excuse to slow down and take things easy. They oversleep and don't travel as fast as they could, and barely make it in time. They suffer for this. Shasta has no time to rest before setting off on the next leg of the journey. Aravis comes out wounded, and the horses suffer extreme exhaustion. Had they carried on at a sensible pace, Aslan would not have had to push them so hard at the end of their journey.

We too must not allow times of refreshment to make us lazy. I know many a time that I have been working so hard at something. I convince myself that I "deserve" a break (or maybe am even granted a break – for example an extension on an assignment). I regard this as my due, and stop working as hard as I was beforehand. As a result, I still end up finishing late the night before the deadline.

That is a minor example. I think there are times in life when we are like that too: I've been to Church every Sunday in the last month – I deserve to sleep in for once; I've been helping out with Friday Night Youth, why should I sacrifice another evening for Bible Study? I've worked so hard for the Lord on this mission's trip or that bible holiday club, that I can afford not to help out at the church fundraiser.

I'm not saying that it's wrong for us to take a break now and again, and we should not over-tax ourselves to the point where our lives, or relationships with God and others suffer. But I think there are times, when it's easy, like the characters in the story, to feel that we have done what we can and worked hard and now we can either rest or take it slow.

Of all the characters, it is Hwin who understands this fully. When they have refreshed themselves at the river and are ready to sleep, she is the one who says:

*"But we mustn't go to sleep. We've got to keep ahead of that Rabadash."*

The next morning, when Bree says he needs a break from his saddle and some breakfast, she says,

*"I feel just like Bree that I can't go on. But when Horses have humans (with spurs and things) on their backs, aren't they often made to go on when they're feeling like this? And then they find that they can."*

Lewis, through Hwin, is making an important point here. Sometimes we think that we are incapable of doing something – but it is only our fear or self-doubt that prevents us. Given enough reason to do something, given no choice, we find that we can – because we have to. "Necessity is the mother of invention" goes the saying. There should be another like it (and may well be, though I can't think of it) that expresses this idea: that when we are forced to do something we normally would refuse to do – we find we can do it.

I hate speaking on the telephone – but have to sometimes (especially know with sorting out my scholarship and move to Oxford). My mother struggles working with computers, but I hope, and am sure, that she will be able to work with emails and skype once I am overseas. When we have no choice but to do the impossible – we often find that it was never so impossible in the first place.

This is an encouragement but also helps us to understand the unexpected troubles we face. It is encouraging because it means that we need not fear the impossible. When I say that "we find a way" to do things we thought we couldn't, it is often rather that God grants us the ability and strength to do it ("his strength is made perfect in my weakness"). On the other hand, it may explain some of the struggles we go through in life. Sometimes, we may not understand why we are suddenly in a difficult or uncomfortable situation. Like Hwin and Bree, running for their lives from the Lion. That pressure may be God's way of pushing us to do that which we thought we could not do.

Look at how pressure is required for Bree to race at his full potential. When they first set out from their sleeping place by the river, it says

*"Bree took things much more gently than yesterday".*

Later, when they see how close Rabadash's army, it says:

*"And certainly both Horses were doing, if not all they could, all they thought they could; which is not quite the same thing."*

Finally, when the Lion is chasing them down, it says:

*"And Bree now discovered that he had not really been going as fast – not quite as fast – as he could."*

Sometimes we need a bit of pressure to show us just what we are capable of. Shasta is taught a similar lesson. He arrives at the Home of the Hermit, only to be told that the journey is not over, and he must advance alone to Anvard.

*Shasta's heart fainted at these words for he felt that he had no strength left. And he writhed inside at what seemed the cruelty and unfairness of the demand. He had not yet learned that if you do one good deed your reward is usually to be set to do another and harder and better one.*

Despite this his sheer exhaustion, he finds a way to do it. He simply puts one foot in front of the next, and runs in a straight line as commanded.

And so let us not be like Bree, thinking that is our "right" to take things slowly, but let us be like Hwin, ready to do whatever is required (regardless of our feelings). Let us be like Shasta, and put one foot in front of the other until our mission is complete.

## Chapter 11

### On first meeting Aslan – Shasta

*The Horse and His Boy* is a unique book in the *Chronicles of Narnia* series. In this book, all four main characters (two children and two horses) have spent most of their lives in Calormen, the pagan land to the south of Narnia. As a result, they have grown up knowing very little, if anything, about Aslan. When each of them meet him, their response is different, and yet meaningful. These scenes shed light on who Aslan is, and by extension, on the One he represents.

#### The meeting

Shasta is the first of the four main characters to meet Aslan. He has been sent alone on a mission to warn King Lune of Archenland that his country is about to be attacked by the Calormene prince Rabadash. After meeting Lune on a hunting party and passing on the warning, he is separated from the party by a sudden mist. Left to wander alone through these foreign mountains, he suddenly realises that someone is walking beside him...

Terrified, he eventually plucks up the courage inquire who it is that is following him:

*"Who are you?" [Shasta] said, scarcely above a whisper.*

*"One who has waited long for you to speak," said the Thing. Its voice was not loud, but very large and deep...*

*"You're not – not something dead, are you? Oh please – please do go away...Oh I am the unluckiest person in the world!"*

*...He felt the warm breath of the Thing on his hand and face. "There," it said, "that is not the breath of a ghost. Tell me your sorrows."*

He goes on to tell the creature of all his adventures since he left Calormen. Of how he met Aravis, of the adventures in Tashbaan and the crossing of the desert. Of the numerous times they were chased by lions.

*"Don't you think it was bad luck to meet so many lions?" said Shasta.*

*"There was only one lion" said the Voice...but he was swift of foot...I was the lion. I was the lion who forced you to join with Aravis. I was the cat who comforted you among the houses of the dead. I was the lion who gave the horses new strength of fear for the last mile so you should reach King Lune in time. And I was the lion you do not remember who pushed the boat in which you lay, a child near death, so that it came to shore where a man sat, wakeful at midnight, to receive you."...*

*"Who are you?" asked Shasta.*

*"Myself," said the voice very deep and low so that the earth shook: and again "Myself," loud and clear and gay, and then a third time, "Myself," whispered so softly you could hardly hear it...*

As they had been walking and talking, the mist had begun to rise. Shasta saw Aslan for the first time and was not afraid – or at least not afraid as one would be of a lion though he did experience the fear of another sort.

*Their eyes met for an instant, and then He was gone.*

At first Shasta thought it was all a dream. But then he spotted a large deep paw-print in the ground. The paw-print began to fill with water. The water overflowed from it and became a small and refreshing stream.

*Shasta drank from it and washed his face. He knew it was not a dream.*

### What we can learn

There are a number of things about this passage that remind us of our Lord.

When people first meet Him, they are not always sure what to make of Him. He can be something of an enigma. Like Shasta, the disciples, on seeing Jesus risen from the dead, were slow to believe it was really him. Some, like Shasta, feared that He was a ghost – something insubstantial and mysterious. Something not of this world, and perhaps even dangerous.

Jesus, like Aslan to Shasta, comforted them by showing them that he was Real. God though he was, he was still human – physically human; not some insubstantial spirit:

*Then the two from Emmaus told their story of how Jesus had appeared to them...And just as they were telling about it, Jesus himself was suddenly standing there among them. "Peace be with you," he said. But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost!*

*"Why are you frightened?" he asked. "Why are your hearts filled with doubt? ...Touch me and make sure that I am not a ghost, because ghosts don't have bodies, as you see that I do." Still they stood there in disbelief, filled with joy and wonder. Then he asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he ate it as they watched. (Luke 24:35-41)*

The second part that reminds us of our Lord, is the part where Shasta asks Aslan who he is. His triple reply, among other things, is a direct echo of what the Lord says to Moses, when he asks him his name:

*And God said to Moses, "I Am Who I Am." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I Am has sent me to you...This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.'" (Exodus 3:14-15)*

Thirdly, the passage where the paw-print becomes a flowing stream, speaks to us of Jesus as our living water:

*Jesus replied, "If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water...those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life." (John 4:10, 13-14)*

But of all these little links and suggestions, there is one aspect of this scene, that above all others, speaks to us about who God is and how he works in our lives: It is the part where Aslan reveals that he was the only Lion in the whole story, and that he was there with Shasta throughout his journey, even though he did not realise it.

Everything that had happened in Shasta's journey, even some of the apparently bad things, was ordained and overseen by Aslan. Though they thought they were fleeing lions, Shasta and Aravis were brought together to accompany one another. Though they thought that they were running for their lives, the horses were actually being urged on to save the lives of the Archenland people.

I think this passage, and the story as a whole, reminds us that God is with us throughout life; every step of the way. And sometimes, what seems like the worst misfortune is actually a blessing of immeasurable value (ask me, I know a little about that).

And it is not only for the important and scary events that the Lord is with us. Sometimes the smallest, seemingly insignificant thing, like a cat to comfort you when you are alone in a scary place, has been placed there by God to get you through the night.

*And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and has determined their pre-appointed times and the boundaries of their dwellings, so that they should seek the Lord, in the hope that they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us... (Acts 17:26-27)*

## **Chapter 12**

### **A poem**

#### **Why the fuss?**

Oh Narnia fair is safe and warm,  
Since the day that the Kings and Queens came.  
They defeated the Witch on a fair spring morn,  
And we need never fear the harsh winter again.

So why is this boy, alone in the wild,  
So worried and speaking of armies?  
He speaks of strange lands, the poor dazed child.  
Much travel has made the boy balmy.

He speaks of the land of rich Calormen  
Many miles o'er a great sea of sand  
He's says that an army of wild savage men  
Is attacking our friends Archenland.

Why the fuss, why the fuss, on this bright summer's day?  
I would much rather snuggle in bed,  
Why worry 'bout things that are so far away?  
Let the great people worry instead.

We are now at peace, and the land is at rest,  
And King Peter's in northerly realms,  
Trouncing giants he is, doing what he does best,  
We care not for weapons or helms.

Don't come interfere and mess up our lives,  
Don't disturb our good happy dwelling  
We live and we play with our children and wives,  
As the old folk great stories are telling.

Armies and wars, belong to those tales  
And to places that are far away,  
Not in our lifetime will the peace ever fail,  
We shan't live to e'er see that day.

And so, dear boy, though you story is grand,  
It is time for a comfy day's nap.  
I'll leave you to tell those who do understand,  
Fare thee well, neighbour, there's a good chap.

## Chapter 13

### Anvard Besieged

King Lune glanced around him. He sat in his council chamber, with his chief advisors seated and watching.

"What are your orders, Sire?" asked Lord Darin.

The King sighed. It was not like the jolly king of Archenland to feel so miserable and be without a plan. He hadn't felt so lost since the day the news came that his son Cor was not on board that traitor Bar's ship. Until then he had had everything under control. But the moment he realised that his plan had failed and his son would not be so easily returned, he had despaired. He remembered still the depression he had felt.

But he had recovered from that tragedy. The joy watching of his other son, Corin, grow up, had eased the hurt. Even his wife's unexpected death had been bearable as he saw her smile in the eyes of his son. He had learnt to deal with loss.

But this time...this time it was different. His own castle was under attack. The castle at Anvard had not been built to withstand a siege. The treaties with its neighbours and its isolation by desert and mountain meant that a siege was never a real risk. If war were ever to come to this peaceful mountain kingdom, they had their fort in the mountains and there would be plenty of time to retreat.

But now this. An unexpected attack from the Calormene Empire. Not an attack led by the Tisroc himself, but by his son Rabadash. None of it made sense to the king.

The last he had heard, ties were good between the northerly kingdoms and Calormen. Why, the Prince himself had asked for the hand of Queen Susan. Lune had allowed his son to accompany her on her visit to the capital – had he been a fool to let him go?

His son...where was he now? No news had reached him other than that of this strange boy whom he had met while hunting yesterday, and who had commanded them to flee to Anvard just in time for Rabadash to engage them in battle before the castle.

What had happened to the Narnian expedition? He could only hope and pray that out of love for Susan, the Narnian delegation had been spared from whatever mad frenzy had caused the prince's attack on Archenland. His heart, however, told him that he was wrong – and that their visit had had something to do with this unwarranted attack. Though what might have gone wrong, he could not imagine.

And to make matters worse, there was now the boy in the mountains to worry about. He felt so foolish for letting a strange boy ride along without an escort, on the pack horse too – which was known for being lazy. It was because of that mist that he had gotten lost; a very strange mist which had come on them as unexpectedly as the attack by Rabadash. That poor boy probably didn't make it through the night. And what was worst of all was that boy's face.

It wasn't the first time he'd met a boy Corin's age and wondered if he was not his lost son. Almost every time he caught sight of a golden head, he had allowed himself to hope. But that was at the beginning, and he'd since learnt it was better not to get his hopes up. While he always held that his son was not dead and would one day return to fulfil the centaur's prophesy – he was sure it would be as an adult; probably long after he had handed the throne down to Corin. Then, as a man, he might return to save Archenland, but now was too soon.

Nevertheless the eyes of that boy haunted him, and he tried to brush away the pang of guilt and regret.

The feeling of hopelessness was overwhelming and as he perceived the eyes of his lords on him, he knew he needed a plan. They had fought off Rabadash's forces well enough last night. Could they hold out a few more days for the messenger to reach Cair Paravel? It was possible, but he had no idea who was at Cair to receive the message.

Edmund could be locked up in Calormen – or worse. Peter was away in the North. Lucy was Valiant, and would do what she could, but it might take time for her to gather a force. And what was going on in Narnia anyway? For all he knew, the Tisroc could have sent a larger force there by sea. The whole request to marry Susan might have been a ploy so that Cair Paravel would be empty of all but its youngest ruler.

He couldn't rely on Narnia to bring aid immediately. He had to assume the worst and that they were in this alone.

His thoughts were interrupted by a deafening boom that shook to the heart of the palace. What was that? Thunder? A quake? A chill ran up Lune's spine.

BOOM, BOOM, BOOM

There it was again. Whatever it was, it did not bode well.

"My Lord!" One of the guards from the gate tower came rushing into the chamber, not waiting for permission to enter. "My Lord," he repeated, panting. "It's the Calormenes. They're ramming the gate."

## Chapter 14

### On First Meeting Aslan – Bree (Breehy-hinny-brinny-hoohy-hah)

#### The meeting

Unlike Shasta, Bree has some knowledge of Narnia and Aslan, having been brought from Narnia to Calormen when he was still a young horse. He knows the name Aslan, and thinks he knows who he is, but is largely mistaken in his understanding. A meeting with Aslan reveals to him just how little he understands and humbles his misplaced pride in his knowledge.

Aravis asks Bree why it is that he swears "by the Lion" and "by the Lion's Mane" when in fact he hates lions. Bree replies:

*"So I do...but when I speak of the Lion, of course I mean Aslan, the great deliverer of Narnia who drove away the Witch and the Winter. All Narnians swear by him".*

*"But is he a lion?" [asks Aravis]*

*"No, no, of course not," said Bree in a rather shocked voice.*

*"All the stories about him in Tashbaan say he is," replied Aravis. "And if he isn't a lion, why do you call him a lion?"*

*"Well, you'd hardly understand that at your age..."*

While Bree is speaking, a large lion, Aslan himself, appears from behind. Bree cannot see him, but Aravis and Hwin do.

*"No doubt," continued Bree, "when they speak of him as a lion, they only mean he's as strong as a lion or (to our enemies) as fierce as a lion...Even a little girl like you, Aravis, must see that it would be quite absurd to suppose he is a real lion. Indeed, it would be disrespectful. If he was a lion, he'd have*

*to be a beast, just like the rest of us. Why!" (and here Bree began to laugh) "If he was a lion he'd have four paws, and a tail and Whiskers!...Aie, ooh, hoo-hoo! Help!"*

*For just as he said the word 'whiskers' one of Aslan's had actually tickled his ear...*

Bree got such a fright he ran quickly as far away from him as he could, till he was stopped by a high wall. Hwin was the first to address Aslan, whose conversation I will discuss in a later post. After that, Aslan turned to Bree.

*"Now Bree," he said, "you poor, proud, frightened Horse, draw near. Nearer still my son. Do not dare not to dare. Touch me. Smell me. Here are my paws, here is my tail, these are my whiskers. I am a true beast."*

*"Aslan," said Bree in a shaken voice, "I'm afraid I must be rather a fool."*

*"Happy the Horse who knows that while he is still young. Or the Human either."*

### What we can learn

There are a couple lessons we can learn from Bree. To begin with, we like Bree often have our own ideas of who God is and what he is like. These may be based on half-memories of things we've heard about him. Or, like Aravis, they may be based on rumours we have heard (the rumours of Aslan in Tashbaan of which she speaks make him out to be a dangerous demon in the shape of a lion).

When we come face to face with the truth about God, as revealed in his Word, and as we experience Him in our lives, we learn that most of what we thought we knew or assumed about him is untrue or only half true. He is something much greater, wilder, safer and more wonderful than we ever imagined.

When we realise this, we, along with Bree can only confess: "I'm afraid I must be rather a fool."

Aslan's reply to that is equally revealing. It echoes the words of Scripture that speak of foolishness and wisdom.

*For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong... so that no man may boast before God. (1 Cor 1:27-31)*

Happy the human who realises their foolishness in the eyes of an all wise God while he or she is still young.

The other thing this passage points to and reminds us of is what, from a human point of view, is the most foolish thing God could have done. And yet "the foolishness of God is wiser than the greatest wisdom of men". Like Bree, we would never have guessed it, but like Bree it is because we don't really understand God.

For Bree, it was unthinkable that the Lord of all Narnia could be a beast like him. For us, it is unthinkable that God would leave his power and throne in heaven, and come to earth as a mortal man. But that is exactly what he did. Jesus put of all his godhead, and put on full flesh and mortality, knowing he would suffer the most brutal form of suffering in that flesh.

*Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Phil 2:5-8)*

I mentioned in the post on Shasta the scene where Jesus appeared resurrected to his disciples. They doubted that it was really him risen in a new human body. But he convinced them that he was not a ghost or some insubstantial human-like spirit. He proved this to them by eating food in front of them.

Thomas was missing from that reunion. In the same way that Bree refused to believe that Aslan was a real Lion, Thomas refused to believe that Jesus was really risen. I'm fairly sure CS Lewis had this passage in mind when he wrote the words "Here are my paws, here is my tail, these are my whiskers. I am a true beast."

*And after eight days His disciples were again inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came...and said, "Peace to you!" Then He said to Thomas, "**Reach your finger here, and look at My hands; and reach your hand here, and put it into My side. Do not be unbelieving, but believing.**" And Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:26-29)*

## Chapter 15: Rabadash the Ridiculous

### Humility

A number of characters in the story are taught humility. We have discussed Bree and Aravis in a number of previous posts. What differentiates these two from the third character, is that they are willing to learn their lesson.

It is a hard battle, and Bree takes time to overcome it, forgetting his lessons occasionally (not long after the Hermit's speech about him not being quite so important as he thinks he is, he goes back to worrying about his tail, and whether he can roll and what the other Narnian horses will think about him).

But he and Aravis accept their lessons, Bree summing up in the words "I'm afraid I must be rather a fool."

But Rabadash is different. Beaten in his own foolish plan, he refuses to admit defeat. He is so proud that he will not even accept a gracious conditional pardon. But would rather fight to reclaim his honour (a right Lune says he had lost with his unsolicited and cowardly attack).

Having refused the pardon of the Archenlanders, he even refuses pardon from Aslan himself. Unlike the other two who – the moment they met Aslan – realised their folly and submitted humbly, he continues to rage and even curses Aslan.

Aslan gives him 3 chances, before meeting out his punishment:

*"Rabadash...take heed. Your doom is very near, but you may still avoid it"*

*"Have a care Rabadash...The doom is nearer now: it is at the door: it has lifted the latch"*

*"The hour has struck!"*

And even then, he does not treat him as his sins deserved

*"Now hear me Rabadash, justice shall be mixed with mercy. You shall not always be an ass."*

This story about Rabadash being turned to a donkey has always reminded me of that other great ruler of an Empire (in our world) who was humbled by being made like an animal.

*“But all these things did happen to King Nebuchadnezzar. Twelve months later he was taking a walk on the flat roof of the royal palace in Babylon. As he looked out across the city, he said, ‘Look at this great city of Babylon! By my own mighty power, I have built this beautiful city as my royal residence to display my majestic splendour.’*

*“While these words were still in his mouth, a voice called down from heaven, ‘O King Nebuchadnezzar, this message is for you! You are no longer ruler of this kingdom. You will be driven from human society. **You will live in the fields with the wild animals, and you will eat grass like a cow.** Seven periods of time will pass while you live this way, until you learn that the Most High rules over the kingdoms of the world and gives them to anyone he chooses.’*

*“That same hour the judgement was fulfilled, and Nebuchadnezzar was driven from human society. **He ate grass like a cow, and he was drenched with the dew of heaven. He lived this way until his hair was as long as eagles’ feathers and his nails were like birds’ claws.** Dan 4:28-33*

In the same way that Rabadash learned something (only something - he was still too proud to allow others to go to war on his behalf) and became a better kind for it, so Nebuchadnezzar learned his lesson – in part anyway. He probably lapsed at a later stage, but for a while at least, he acknowledged God for who he was.

*“After this time had passed, I, Nebuchadnezzar, looked up to heaven. My sanity returned, and I praised and worshipped the Most High and honoured the one who lives forever.*

## ***Aslan's Lamb***

### **Chapters 1-2**

#### **A reflection**

Rereading this for the sixteenth or seventeenth time, I found myself wondering, why did Aslan have to be so mysteriously behind the scenes? Why chase the frightened horses towards each other and cause the children to meet in a seemingly accidental fashion? Wouldn't it have been easier for Aslan to appear before Shasta and say, "Hello, I am Aslan and I will be your guide for the rest of the journey. Tomorrow, I will introduce you to a girl your age with a temper but a faithful heart and you will continue the journey together. She will irritate you at times but, trust me, I know what I'm doing when I bring the two of you together."

Of course, that would have been a much more boring story that way. But wouldn't it have been more logical and less scary for the people involved?

And applying the allegory to us, why can't God reveal our story to us in advance? Even a little bit? But then, there is a beauty in discovering Aslan where you thought there were nothing but problems. I signed up for a Jewish History class last semester. Once tragedy hit me, all my classes became difficult to sit through, but this one was the last class of the day, so I came to it carrying the collected pain of the last six or seven hours. The professor rambled on and on, about how so-called Christians persecuted Jews throughout the centuries, the Inquisition and other lovely themes. He had a particular interest in Jewish beliefs about death and mourning, so he often touched on that topic as well, while I fought back tears and doodled furiously in my notebook.

But two weeks later, a Hispanic girl came into our class, a girl who happened to be a sincere Christian and so I opened up to her about my struggle. It turned out that she had lost somebody too last year, also in a very tragic way, and she was able to understand me. I mean, really understand me. She prayed for me. I prayed for her. And I began to look forward to seeing her face in class, which meant I looked forward to the class.

In all the college classes I took in the past three years, I met a committed Christian in class ONCE prior to this semester (we just have a very secular, liberal kind of population). So, of course, I have no doubt that God brought us together (like Aravis and Shasta). And it was a beautiful thing, that it happened so "accidentally."

Had I known it would happen, I might have taken it for granted.

### **Chapters 3-4**

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Years later, Aravis still dreamed of it.

Her venture into the woods that early morning, shouting at poor Hwin to gallop faster, taking out her brother's dagger, desperate, desperate, desperate, to the point of gasping for breath. At the time, she thought she was being brave.

She now saw that she had been simply terrified and acting in her wild terror.

One morning, over breakfast, King Lune told them that there had been a suicide in Archenland. "Terrible!" he said. "It makes me wonder if I failed as a king when one of my subjects does such a thing."

"Surely, you don't think it's your fault, father," said Cor quietly.

Aravis was stunned. "Did this man have family?"

King Lune nodded. "A wife, a daughter, a son. A twin brother too."

"A twin?" Corin stared, serious for once.

"I...I'd like to visit them," said Aravis suddenly, "In a day or two."

King Lune gave her a careful look. "Certainly, if you like."

"Don't you think they might want some privacy?" Cor asked her later.

Aravis already felt one of their fights coming on. "No," she said, "I want to go and help."

"How can you help?"

Aravis had no idea. Still, she stuck to her plan. "I'm going."

"Then I should go too."

"You don't understand, Cor. I...I could have been like that man. That could have been my family."

Cor shuddered. "But telling them that...it doesn't really help much, does it?"

Aravis lost her temper. "I don't know if it helps! But something tells me I should go!"

She went.

The burial had already taken place. The family and friends sat quietly by the grave. Aravis joined the crowd and sat with them in silence for a while.

The wife was small and pale. Sometimes, she would close her eyes, as if in pain, then open them again and smile, as if to say, *I'm all right. It really isn't so bad.*

The son was a little thing, hardly ten, and seemed preoccupied with counting people.

"You're guest number twenty two," he was saying, seriously. "You're guest number twenty three."

He reminded Aravis of her own little brother back in Tashbaan.

The man's twin brother broke the silence with a loud sob. His wife rose to comfort him. Aravis felt out of place. Cor had been right, she thought. She did not understand their pain. She should have given them some time instead of intruding like this. Why must Cor ALWAYS be right? Suddenly, the daughter, a girl of Aravis' own age, rose and walked away from the group, a little bit into the woods.

Somebody ought to go with her, Aravis thought. Nobody did.

So she followed at a distance and watched as the girl stopped by an oak, leaned against it and burst into tears.

Aravis tried to remember how Lucy and Susan would comfort people (they were both so good at that.) She could think of nothing.

"I'm sorry," she said.

The girl turned to look at her through tear-filled green eyes. "Thank you. Did you know him?"

"No."

"He was wonderful." The girl swallowed. "And I am very confused."

"Confused?"

"How could someone so good do something so terrible?"

Aravis swallowed. "Sometimes, we mean well but...we don't really think things through."

"But he had to know it would hurt us!" A sudden fury came into the girl's eyes. "He abandoned us! And what is the point in anything he did before if he chose to destroy us like this in the end?"

"I don't think...he meant for things to end this way," said Aravis. "There are times when...well, fear takes hold so much that it is hard to fight it. I was there. I almost did the same."

"You didn't have children," said the girl. "My father poured his life into raising my brother and me. Then once we grew to love him, he left us. I can't forgive him for that." And she hid her face in her hands.

Aravis looked at the girl and before she knew it, she was crying with her. They sat under the oak holding each other, crying, for quite a while.

"I don't want to go back to the others," said the girl presently. "We don't help each other. We only multiply the pain by sharing it."

"Then stay here."

"I hate being alone."

"I'll stay as long as you need me to."

"What is your name?"

It seemed such a funny question after all that had been said that Aravis laughed and so did the girl. She introduced herself.

The girl looked at her wide-eyed. "I had no idea."

"It doesn't matter," said Aravis. "I could be you and you could be me, for all that it matters."

"Sometimes, I wish I was somebody else."

"Yes."

“But in the end, I always decide I'd rather be myself.”

“Even after what happened?” Aravis asked.

The girl considered. “Even after what happened. Because...because despite what happened, my father was wonderful.”

Aravis thought about herself. Had Hwin not stopped her that day, would anybody remember her as wonderful? She doubted it. It was only during their difficult trip across the desert that her character began to be gradually moulded into something worth admiring...and she knew she still had quite a way to go.

“You'll tell me about him someday, won't you?” she said.

The girl nodded. “Someday.”

Aravis wrote a letter to Cor that evening, with the words, “I *was* right, after all. I can help and they *do* want me here, so, if your father permits, I will stay for as long as I am needed.”

Aravis didn't know why it had to be that way, why her own story had the happy resolution that was denied to somebody else. She only knew that she must try to do as much good as possible using the experience that she had been given. A month later, they went back to the same spot next to the oak. Aravis spoke words of forgiveness and the girl repeated them (because it would be just too difficult alone). And she would never forget the sense of peace that enveloped them in that moment.

Only then did she feel like she could return home.

# ***Knight of Narnia***

## **Chapters 1-2**

Bree heard the sand shifting slightly with each step of his hooves; Shasta had gone quiet for once. He must have grown sick of Bree's refusing to relate the same stories of the Tisroc's violent wars over and over. For the first time in their day-and-a-half-long journey, Bree's mind left the present. He daydreamed:

*Staring at the beautiful hills on the horizon, young Breehy-hinny-brinny-hoohy-hah walked slowly to the bright blue skies of the south. Squinting in response to the sun's rays, he knew that each and every hoofstep was a step away from his mother and her wishes.*

*"As a Narnian horse, you are free to explore the beautiful country nearby," Bree could remember the soft voice of his mother saying. "But you must never venture beyond the pair of tall trees that mark the border of Archenland."*

*Bree had never understood this instruction. Everyone he'd ever talked to claimed Archenland was a friendly country, on good terms with Narnia. And so, adventurous like every young horse, Bree took it upon himself to prove to his mother that it was equally safe to explore the beautiful country belonging to Archenland as well as Narnia's.*

*Once Bree discovered the truth, there was no going back. Soldiers – Calormene, he soon realized – were raiding northern Archenland in search of valuables that could be used to gain favor with the Tisroc.*

*And, apparently, a horse counted as a valuable.*

Now, trotting to Narnia and the North, Bree realized that this journey would never have been possible if he hadn't made the mistake of exploring too far to the south and breaking his mother's commands. The years of captivity in Calormen led up to this boy Shasta. He was supposed to take him to Narnia – he knew that in his heart. Despite his decision years ago, he was now being used for something greater.

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Reading these two chapters, especially the section where Bree tells of his capture by Calormene soldiers, I was reminded of how God really does make everything work out for good. He hates sin – but He can work with our failures to advance His will. His plan is above all others, and we can trust as Christians that He will forgive our mistakes and often make something good out of resulting circumstances. I'm not sure if Lewis was thinking of this as he wrote HHB, but it sure seems like it. An encouraging thought!

## **Chapters 5-6**

The Tombs where Shasta spends a night in Chapter 6 are very interesting. I thought that Shasta's encounter with THE cat wasn't perhaps the first thing of interest ever to happen there. What's the history of this Calormene landmark? Have there only ever been twelve Tisrocs, since there are twelve tombs? (And, like a former TLC comic.... "Apparently they didn't live forever." Kudos to whoever made that comic.) Interesting things to ponder.

Unlike Tolkien, Lewis doesn't give us paragraphs and paragraphs of backstory on every element of his stories, so we're left to imagine our own. Same thing with the residents of Tashbaan – since I assume most of them don't visit the Tombs on a daily basis, their imagination takes over, and, suddenly, ghouls haunt the tombs during the night. It's like the Telmarines with the forest: unfamiliarity breeds fear.

Shasta, who had absolutely no reason to think that "ghouls" hung out around the tombs, believed it because of the stories he was told. Bree, as a true Narnian horse, didn't believe, but Shasta's suspicions had already been raised. Later, he gets to the tombs. It's dark, it's creepy, jackals are howling, and he thinks he's being attacked by a lion. Fear gradually grew until it nearly overpowered him. (Of course, then the lion turned out to be a remarkably friendly cat.)

With all that rambling, I was trying to say that fear often starts on completely unreasonable grounds and grows out of control within a very short amount of time. But God, like the cat in the Tombs, can comfort our fear if we lay our worries over to Him.

*John 14:27 - Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

(The current poster apologizes for the apparent lack of logical flow in the above paragraphs. However, he feels it is justified by the It-Is-Midnight Clause in Section Three, Article Two of the Poster's Handbook.)

## **Benisse**

*I thought I would write some "Found Poems" that is, poems made primarily from phrases found in the text itself but rearranged freely for poetic effect.*

### **Bree**

Kidnapped ...Or stolen, or captured  
All these years a slave  
Hiding my true nature  
Longing for escape  
Prisoners ... captives in enemy country

Breehy-hinny-brinny-hoohy-hah!  
No more Southern jargon!  
Run away with me  
To Narnia and the North!  
(Do Talking Horses roll?)

### **The Tombs of the Ancient Kings**

great  
grim  
tombs  
masses of mouldering stone  
like gigantic beehives  
black in the setting sun

and in the moonlight

great  
silent  
mounds  
like twelve huge people  
draped in gray  
and beyond, the desert

the cry of a jackal

...loneliness...

## *Miniver*

### **A reflection on the book inspired by *Planet Narnia***

I would have been able to spend the weekend catching up on reading HHB, except that I have had to work on the second office project, which the supervisors hope will magically get done while I'm working on the first project. I'm taking a break for a few moments.

I had mentioned that I was enjoying reading *Planet Narnia*, Michael Ward's fascinating supposition that (in addition to all the other things Lewis wanted to tell us in the Narnia books) Lewis created a secret parallel between each Narnian book and one of the seven heavenly bodies in the Ptolemaic heavenly structure. The seven are Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, the sun, and the moon. According to Ward, HHB is associated with Mercury.

My feeling is that Ward's ideas are fun to speculate on, and they're an interesting extra layer of concepts that Lewis might or might not have inserted in his books. You can take them or leave them. But it's tempting to imagine Lewis coming up with them – his brain was so fertile that he easily could have thought, "I think I'll set up a hidden treasure in these books. Wonder if anyone will find it."

For those of you who worry that this thesis touches on astrology, relax: no horoscopes will be involved! Ward is a chaplain at Oxford University.

Possibly the most convincing of the seven parallels that Ward argues in favor of is HHB and Mercury. For one thing, there's the connection of Mercury with swiftness. In this story, speed is of the essence. Virtually the whole story has the protagonists on the run. Mercury, or his Greek equivalent Hermes, is also considered the messenger of the gods – and one crucial plot element in HHB is that Shasta must bring to Archenland the urgent message that they are in danger of attack.

The other significant element in the "Mercury connection" is that traditionally, Mercury is associated with the constellation of Gemini...the Twins. Already we're in Archenlandish territory. But it gets even more precise. According to Greek tradition, this constellation doesn't represent just any twins. Gemini represents the twins Castor and Pollux. These twins appear in the epic tale that Ajnos has been discussing, *The Iliad*, the story of the Trojan War. Castor is described as a great breaker or trainer of horses, and Pollux is known as a boxer.

Well, any story set in a traditional milieu is likely to have horses. But it's pretty amazing to me that Corin isn't just a fighter but specifically a boxer. If anything could convince me that Ward is onto something, it's that detail.

I don't know whether anyone will ever prove that Ward is right or wrong about Lewis's intentions in this area. Lewis left no clue of this supposed structure in his writings or ever confided it to any of his associates or friends. But it's a lot of fun to follow Ward back into the stories and find these extra details. Either way, the snippets of classical and medieval lore that Ward cites reflect Lewis's broad and deep knowledge of European literature up through the centuries. For that reason, I find the idea hugely delightful.

For those of you familiar with Lewis's book *The Discarded Image*, a discussion of the forms and symbols of the Ptolemaic universe (geocentric – with the Earth at the center of the orbits of the seven heavenly bodies, rather than heliocentric – with the sun at the center), you'll be aware that these ideas were indeed very congenial to Lewis, and he alluded to them in his poetry and in the Perelandra trilogy. Why not in Narnia?

(A shortened, more Narnia-specific edition of *Planet Narnia* has been published, titled *The Narnia Code*.)

## ***Queen Amarlie***

### **A reflection on the readings**

As I was reading the chapters, especially Chapter 5 where they are trying to escape Tashbaan, I thought this: Edmund is really worried about his sister Susan and her reputation, which may be damaged. There are two choices "Wife or Slavery". Which is worse? Good thing they have the help of someone who knows something about the place.

"He that would find that way," said the Raven, "must start from the Tombs of the Ancient Kings and ride northwest so that the double peak of Mount Pire is always straight ahead of him. And so, in a day's riding or a little more, he shall come to the head of a stony valley, which is so narrow that a man might be within a furlong of it a thousand times and never know that it was there. And looking down this valley he will see neither grass nor water nor anything else good. But if he rides on down it he will come to a river and can ride by the water all the way into Archenland."

Ravens are good at spotting a location to go to. But Ed and Mr. Tumnus suggested the sea and its way to Narnia and some banquets to deceive them from getting away in the Tashbaan.

"Well, then," said the Faun, "how would it be if your majesties bade the Prince to a great banquet to be held on board our own galleon, the Splendour Hyaline, tomorrow night? And let the message be worded as graciously as the Queen can contrive without pledging her honour: so as to give the Prince a hope that she is weakening." "And then," continued Tumnus excitedly, "everyone will expect us to be going down to the ship all day, making preparations for our guests. And let some of us go to the bazaars and spend every minim we have at the fruiterers and the sweetmeat sellers and the wine merchants, just as we would if we were really giving a feast. And let us order magicians and jugglers and dancing girls and flute players, all to be on board tomorrow night."

But the thing here is Shasta didn't know what to do, for he was mistaken as Prince Corin. He wanted to lie to them to be able to escape from Tashbaan and his Master. But then he remembered the girl who helped him and whom he had given help to. So he decided to exchange with the real Prince Corin and he went to the place where he and Aravis had decided to meet, "The Tomb of the Ancient Kings."

As he was thinking of Aravis and Bree and Hwin, he saw this big cat lingering in the Tomb. At first he was frightened to talk to this cat but then he saw the cat walked towards the other side of the desert and sat with his head towards the North and Narnia and his back to Tashbaan. During that time, Shasta sat with his head in front of the tomb and his back to the cat. At that time when the cat appeared, the moon shone brightly and but then when he turned his back he saw that the cat had disappeared. But then suddenly he heard a noise and big thuds. He guessed that it was a lion and he was right. Again he sat facing forward and then he said something before he dozed off. When he woke up he saw that the lion was gone and the sun was rising in the east. As the day goes by, Aravis did not show up until the sun set in the west. But then he still waited for Aravis to come together with Hwin and Bree...

Lesson: Courage is the key to explore more worlds and to take further adventures in life. Do not hesitate to make friends and depend to them for they know which way is the best way to take when traveling. Also, do not desert a companion just so you can have a good and peaceful life. For in the end your conscience might continuously persecute you and you could live in boundless hatred and suffering.

## **Some Poems**

### ***A castaway***

*From a land faraway  
Trying to let herself seek freedom  
From her father's misfortune  
A friend was there to give a hand  
But also the one who might sell her  
She let herself hide under the covers of the households  
Trying not to be seen by anyone  
As soon as she reached the desert  
A new friend was there waiting almost in vain  
She tagged along and they set themselves  
To a journey. No one knows how it will end....*

### **Chapter 10**

*Down the valley they've ridden  
Going to the North is the route they have taken  
The sun's heat; the cold nights  
All this they must have come to  
As soon as they reached the gate  
A Hermit is there watching over the place.*

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