

# TLC Summer Challenge - 2012

Reflections on reading *The Silver Chair* by CS Lewis

16-25 July 2012

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



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With regret, due to the site failure in late 2012, we lost many of the entries for this year's *Summer Challenge*. This document contains those we were able to retrieve.

# *Swan White*

## **Chapter 1**

### **Inside the gym**

First term in the house of experiment. Are we the lab rats? The Guinea pigs? What a ghastly scientific method must be at work here!

The gymnasium is closed, but I found it unlocked. Usually it is locked when there is no class, but this wasn't so much a long shot as the door to the moor is. Here the lights are all off and the floor is cold. Tears are a funny thing. I hate them when I'm not alone. Sympathy from strangers or scorn from them is all they bring and about equally unwelcome. But here in the dark of the empty gym I do not hate them. They might not help, but it feels better to let them fall.

I sit in the dark and listen to the silence. But the silence is not complete. There's a small sound that I can't quite make out. I press my ear to the wall. A single sob breaks louder than the rest and I know that it's the sound of crying. Someone is crying behind the gym. I'm not the only one, and somehow that makes me feel like there could be such a thing as hope.

## **Chapter 2**

My pride came before his fall,  
And all that I can do is bawl,  
And wish and wonder after all  
How did I end up here  
On this other side of the wall?

Desperation draws me opposite directions.  
Dreadful decision given.  
A dry and grasping thirst,  
A strong and steady objection,  
To being eaten.

Which is worse?  
Seeing the world from a star sight height  
Dancing the dance of a day time star  
Sweeping the sky on the Lion's sigh  
I've never ever been so far

## Chapter 3

### Adventure

Nominated for the *Utter East Award: Best Narnian Poem in the Lion Awards 2013*

Adventure looks nice through a window  
From a comfortable chair by a fire  
The reddish remains of a sunset  
The distant refrains of a lyre

Adventure looks nice in the distance  
When life is too scrumptious for words  
But not so very nice on the moor lands  
When for dinner you're plucking some birds

## Chapter 4

### A Parliament of Owls

A video featuring some of Swanwhite's sculptures, an interesting factoid, and an attempt at reading Middle (?) English.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V91XsJY2kg4&feature=player\\_embedded](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V91XsJY2kg4&feature=player_embedded)

## Chapter 5

### Puddleglum



## Chapter 6-7

Those rocks could be taken for giants  
Or rather those giants for rocks  
A road lined with quarrelsome giants  
Doesn't make the most pleasant of walks

Ever since the lady  
And her warning to make haste  
Jill wouldn't recognize the signs  
If one struck her in the face

Thinking thoughts of Harfang  
Made her memory unsure  
No she wouldn't recognize it  
If it up and swallowed her

## Chapter 8-9

*"Puddleglum didn't want them to go to Harfang at all. He said didn't know what a Giant's idea of being gentle might be..."*

### **A Giant's Idea of Being Gentle**

Bring the water to gentle boil  
Careful as you stew each man  
Gently set them in a pan  
And gently sear in olive oil

Preheat the oven and then you must  
Be gentle as you season them  
Paprika, pepper and alum  
Then gently bake in a golden crust

Now you have your flavour of the south  
Now at last you can enjoy  
Your lovely pie of girl or boy  
And dab a napkin gently on your mouth

# *Tenethia*

## Chapter 1

### Behind the Gym

While reading the first chapter of *The Silver Chair*, my attention was drawn to one of the three bullies who were actually named, Edith Jackle. Although she is a minor character, I can see her having a story all her own.

Also, she was, according to Lewis, “Not one of Them herself, but one of their hangers-on and tale-bearers.” This begins to make me a little more inquisitive. Why wasn’t she one of Them? Why was she only talebearer?

I can think of a number of reasons why she was not a part of Them, but here are three. Number one: it was a matter of rank. You had to be a talebearer before you could be part of Them. Number two: Edith really was a horrid girl. Number three: The way she got out of being bullied was by being their servant: following them around and doing whatever they wanted her to do.

On point three, I believe I have struck gold. Lewis tells us interesting things about some very minor characters. For example, you may remember that in *The Magician’s Nephew*, Uncle Andrew briefly mentioned having a cousin Edward who frequented pawn shops. Edith Jackle is similar. We are told that she had a little, squeaky voice, which makes me assume that she had very small stature, as small voices are usually associated with small people. One might realize it is the small people who get bullied around because they can’t often stick up for themselves.

I am therefore inclined to believe that Edith Jackle was attempting to become a friend of the bullies so she would no longer be one of their targets. I am also inclined to believe that Edith Jackle has a story all her own: one that I believe must be told.

Also, my mind was stirred about the school. Bullying was not only unpunished, but was allowed and more or less promoted because the school thought that the children should do what they liked best. The Head of the school not only didn’t punish the bad acts, but thought of the bullies as “interesting psychological cases.”

Also, at this school, they learned more about running away quietly from bullies than they learned about Latin, or French, or Math. The children found it difficult to learn, and in several cases it was quite miserable. Remember that Jill was found crying at the beginning of this chapter.

*Read Edith’s tale here in:*

### **Edith Jackle: The Inside Story**

Winner of the *Digory Kirke Award*: Best Development of a Minor Character and  
Nominated for the *Reepicheep Award*: Best Complete Short Story in the *Lion Awards 2013*

<http://www.thelionscall.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=17&t=67>

## Chapter 2

### Jill is Given a Task

In chapter two, we learn about pride and its consequences. Only a few short minutes after they arrived in the Other World, Jill finds herself near the edge of a cliff. She sees that Eustace is afraid, and immediately scorns him for his fear. She then proceeds to show off by going near the edge and looking down. Then she becomes deathly afraid of the height, and as Scrubb tries to pull her away from the edge, he falls over himself.

That was the result of Pride, which she even later admitted to Aslan by saying, "I was showing off, Sir." Pride is a disgusting sin, mentioned even in the Bible. Many people host pride in their heart, and it blooms and grows and strengthens as it is used. It is very much like a weed. It is like poison, and it hurts more than oneself. You remember it was Eustace who fell over the cliff, not Jill, although it was she who had to deal with the consequences.

The Bible says, "Pride goeth before a destruction; a haughty spirit before a fall. -Proverbs 16:18" It also says in Proverbs 8:13 "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil: pride, and arrogance, and the evil way, and the forward mouth, do I hate." Proverbs 16:5 says, "Every one that is proud in his heart is an abomination to the Lord...."

Pride is boasting of one's self and one's abilities. It is not simply stating that you have the ability to do something, it is saying that not only can you do it, you are extremely good at it, and such. For example: simply saying, "I play the piano," is not boasting, while "I am a superb piano player, and I've won this award for this, and this award for that, and blah blah blah."

In Proverbs 27:2, God says, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips."

God said that "Before honor is humility."

If Jill had not been prideful, she would have had a much easier time. Eustace would have been present when she was given the signs. The burden would most likely have been shared. And don't forget the fear she felt when meeting Aslan. If her pride hadn't gotten in the way of Eustace being there, he would've recognized Aslan, and it wouldn't have been so hard for her.

## Chapter 3

### The Sailing of the King – Limericks

Eustace sees old friend.  
King Caspian sails away.  
The first sign is missed.

The girls are all killed.  
Eustace is a useless boy.  
Trumpkin cannot hear.

## Chapter 4

### The Parliament of Owls

In this chapter, Jill rode Glimfeather the owl. It made me wonder what flying on an owl actually felt like. I considered everything that Lewis said about it, and also considered the practical side of things, and finally decided that I was going to write a piece on how to ride an owl – read more on the link below:

#### How to Ride an Owl

Nominated for the *Reepicheep Award: Best Complete Short Story in the Lion Awards 2013*

<http://www.thelionscall.com/forum/viewtopic.php?f=17&t=69>

## Chapter 5

### Puddleglum

Now I know that this isn't much of a reflection. To me it seems to be a character description. But I hope the very end will provoke your thoughts as it provoked mine.

#### Pessimistic Puddleglum

When one focuses too much on the bad circumstances in their life, they miss out on all the multiple blessings given to them. Puddleglum the Marsh-wiggle was very pessimistic about life, always looking on the down side of things. The one thing everyone overlooks is that the other Marsh-wiggles thought that Puddleglum was much more optimistic than he should be!

The first thing I notice about Puddleglum is that when he first meets Jill and Eustace, he greets them negatively, by saying, "Ahoy! What is it? Is the King dead? Has an enemy landed in Narnia? Is it a flood? Or dragons?" What a wonderful way to put a first impression on your guest!

The second thing I notice is that even Puddleglum's and his surroundings were gloomy, and it wasn't just his personality. They were on a flat plain which was "cut into countless little islands by countless channels of water." Lewis tells us that the grass was course, and also that the place would have been very depressing on a wet morning. Personally, I think it's very depressing without the wet morning. Puddleglum himself had a very depressing appearance. His cheeks were sunken, his hair flat, like reeds, and a green-grey sort of color. "His expression was solemn, his complexion muddy." Also, his mouth was pulled tight and he had a pointed nose.

He greets Jill and Eustace for the first time in daylight by saying, "Good morning, guests! Though when I say good I don't mean it won't probably turn to rain or it might be snow, or fog, or thunder. You didn't get any sleep, I shouldn't wonder." He assumed that the children would forget his name. He then told the children that he didn't think he could catch any eels for dinner and that even if he did, they probably wouldn't like them. He also doubted that a fire could be built.

But the bad side wasn't all that Puddleglum noticed. When he was with the children waiting for the eels to be done cooking, he said, "It stands to reason that we're not going to get very far on a journey North, not at this time of the year, with the winter coming on soon and all. And an early winter, by the looks of things. But you mustn't let that make you down-hearted. Very likely, what with enemies, and mountains, and rivers to cross, and losing our way, and next to nothing to eat,

and sore feet, we'll hardly notice the weather." Basically, what was just said was, "There are so many other bad things going to happen to us that this other bad thing won't be noticed." Even the good things he noticed were gloomy.

The Bible tells us to be grateful for all things. Jesus said, "Take no thought saying, what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed. For your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things." Puddleglum seemed to look at the bad side so much that he brought the children down some too.

I wonder: Did Aslan make the Marsh-wiggle like that? So grumpy and gloomy? I don't suppose he did, because Aslan likes everything to be perfect. If he did, though, why? Why create a creature that was going to take himself and others down? Think about it: Puddleglum himself said the other Marsh-wiggles were thinking he was too cheery! Why were the Marsh-wiggles like that?

## **Chapter 6**

### **The Wild Waste Lands of the North**

After the visit from the Green Lady and the knight, all the children could think about was Harfang-about how long it would take them to get there, about how good hot baths would feel and good meals would taste like.

Aslan had given the children a task, and they decided to take a detour. They went against their guardian to go there, which was horrid of them, but there were other things I noticed.

First: All they thought about was Harfang. They no longer thought about Prince Rilian, or witches, or problems. They only thought about how wonderful Harfang would be.

Second: the children grew miserably rude and disrespectful to Puddleglum. They snapped at him, and grumped with one another. They directly told him they thought he was just thinking bad thoughts again, and that they were determined to go to Harfang.

Third: They noticed the miserable weather and things around them. When they were focused on Aslan's business, they hardly noticed the cold and hunger. But now that they were focused on hot meals and warm baths and beds, they noticed how very hungry and cold they were.

Fourth: They took their eyes off Aslan. Sort of like the third point, except worse because when they took their eyes off Aslan's work, they quit thinking about the Prince, and Jill quit repeating the signs, and they lost track, which hurt them later because they even missed a sign. It reminds me of how we start looking at the good things in life. When we look at this world, we completely lose sight of God. We are so involved in this world and its cares, that we have very little if any time for God, and we miss out on the blessings of being in his will!

Fifth: God says not to take any other gods before him. That god does not have to be a statue. It can be music, writing, money, cars, clothes, or Harfang. For the children it was Harfang. They put comfort before Aslan, and therefore had a god before him.

*I lost some of what I wrote because my computer locked up on me, but I hope what I have now has provoked your thoughts as much as it has mine.*



## Chapter 8

### The House at Harfang

Another thing I noticed was Aslan's visit to Jill. When he came, I did not get the impression that He was angry with Jill. It is truly sad because although Jill knew something was amiss, she had forgotten the signs so long before that she did not even know why Aslan was there. He then told her to repeat the signs, and she remembered. She knew why he was there. It's sad because it's the same way in this world too. A lot of times, we have to be approached by someone about our sins before we are willing to admit them. A lot of times, we've so overlooked our attitudes and actions that we don't even know what we have done when we are approached. We have to be reminded, told, and scolded thoroughly. The sad part is that we even do the same thing again sometimes.

Aslan never seems to be angry with her. As far as I could tell, the only thing he actually said was to repeat the four signs. He never snarled; he never roared. He did not need to say more, because Jill was immediately horrified with herself when he said just that much.

Another thing was that the dream didn't seem to have much effect on her because the dream faded, and Jill promptly forgot it. She didn't remember the dream until the three travelers were together on the windowsill looking out. Jill saw the words, and then truly took entire responsibility. She recognized that she could have done better. She repented, and decided for herself that she must do better.

I also noticed Puddleglum's change. As the book goes on, you can slowly see Puddleglum changing. He took part of the blame for what all happened. He recognized that it was partly his fault, as he simply did not do his part. He could have stopped them from going to Harfang, but it appears that he did, in a roundabout way, wish to go there too. He saw the ruined city, or at least thought of it, and it should have been obvious to him. I think Puddleglum's faith sank some in that part of the story, because he didn't seem to keep looking at Aslan. If he had been watching for the signs, and following Aslan's instructions, I don't think there would have been a way in the world he could possibly have missed the ruined city and the message. I think that although he wanted the children to keep going, and not go to Harfang at all, he did look forward to the Gentle Giants, because otherwise he would have been watching.

## Chapter 9

### How They Discovered Something Worth Knowing

The consequences of one's sin are great in number. Your sin not only affects you and your life, but it also affects others. One sin leaves a whole trail of trouble following it, sometimes for generations.

The sin that Jill and Eustace committed in previous chapters could have been several things: coveting, putting other things before Aslan. They coveted the comforts of Harfang- the beds, the baths, and the food. Don't get me wrong- it's not sinning to want to have a warm place to sleep, and good food. That's all quite wonderful. However, in this case, they allowed the thought of Harfang to distract them from their quest- Aslan's work. They put Harfang in front of Aslan, and allowed it to be their first priority.

And, yes, yes, they did talk to strangers. (Shame, shame \*scolds\*)

“We’ve brought the anger of Aslan upon us. That’s what comes of not attending to the signs!” Puddleglum admitted that they had allowed themselves to become distracted. He understood that there were consequences to wrongs.

The consequences for the travelers were great. If they had been attending to the search for the prince as they should have, they never would have been fooled into going to Harfang. For although they did get warm beds and good food, the reason the lady actually suggested they go there was because the giants ate humans and Marsh-wiggles for their Autumn Feast! They did get comfort, but if Aslan hadn’t had mercy, they would have ended up in an oven.

Also, because they were not focusing on Aslan’s work, Eustace, Puddleglum, and Jill missed the third sign. When they got distracted, Jill stopped repeating the signs, and almost completely forgot them. They then concentrated so hard on reaching Harfang that they stepped over the third sign completely (or rather, tripped right over and fell in and still missed it). That was another consequence.

The third consequence was that they ended up eating talking stag. That was worst for Puddleglum, for whom (being Narnian) it was not unlike murder, or “eating a baby!” for us. That consequence was very near as severe for Eustace, who had previously been friends with Talking Beasts. It was basically murder for the two of them, and it made them downright sick. As Puddleglum put it, “We’re under a curse, I expect. If it was allowed, it would be the best thing we could do, to take these knives and drive them into our hearts.” Puddleglum felt as if they were under a death sentence, and that his life was forfeit was eating the stag. (My opinion)

Even in the Bible, there are examples of the consequences sin has later on. When David committed adultery with Bathsheba, he had no idea just how far the consequences would go. (And I’m doing this from memory so I may accidentally mess up something). When Bathsheba had her first child, he died. David prayed that the child wouldn’t die, but it was one of the consequences of his sin. Bathsheba had more children. One was Solomon, who was really the mercy of God, but the others had a royal train wreck (no pun intended). If I remember correctly, the children also got into bad relationships. That is one example of how far sin went (the weak one went first).

The second example was Samson. God has told us to, “Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.” FAIL, SAMSON! Samson went and decided to be friends with the Philistine girl, Delilah. I hope you don’t mind if I say that Samson was a complete idiot at this point. You will remember, I hope, that the Philistines were the Israelite’s enemies. He was completely unsafe being with her, and he was quite foolish too.

And now that I have described the sin, I will describe the consequences. When he chose to be friends with the wrong person, he planned his own demise. The Philistines offered Delilah money if she would only find the secret behind Samson’s strength. She tried. She begged and pleaded with him, and he finally told her a lie to get her off his back. When she found out that didn’t work, she burst into tears, and told him, “You don’t really love me.” He told her several different things before he finally told her the true secret. “Cut my hair.”

She cut his hair.

It worked. His power was gone. The Philistines came and captured him. They put out his eyes, and they put him in chains, and they put him to work at the millstone. Later, because he had chosen the wrong people to be around, he died. He pushed the Philistine temple down around his ears, and killed thousands of people and himself.

That never would have happened if he had obeyed God.

Neither would Eustace, Jill, and Puddleglum have missed the sign, almost got eaten, and basically committed murder if they had been concentrating on Aslan's work.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Travels Without the Sun**

Traveling without light. For this chapter, my reflections are mainly going to focus on comparing this chapter to the Biblical principle of traveling in the dark. First John 1:5 and 7 says, "God is light, and in him is not darkness at all... If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another...."

In the Underworld, the earthmen walked in Darkness. They were unhappy because they were slaves of the Underworld Queen. Their life was bound by chains of darkness and gloom. So it is with the life of someone without Christ. They walk in the Darkness, bound by sin and shame. Sinners have miserable lives, as did the earthmen in this chapter.

Jill, Eustace, and Puddleglum, however, were able to see the darkness of the Underland, but were not bound in it. They saw the darkness, but because they were now on the right track, following Aslan, they had no need to be afraid of it. They had fellowship with one another, (and notice that the earthman only said a few things, and the same thing most of the time), and their fellowship comforted each other. They went through struggles, they had to face their fear, but because they were following Aslan, they had nothing to fear. They also gained ground, courage, and strength through their journey.

"We walk in the light, as he is in the light. We have fellowship one with another." And now, for Eustace, Jill, and Puddleglum, there is no 'if'. They do walk in the light.

I hope you understood all this. I know it was a little disjointed, but I hope you were able to understand that and get something out of it.

## **Chapter 11**

### **In the Dark Castle**

I noticed quite a few things for this chapter. They were few at first, but as I went on and on, my thoughts grew until I felt they might burst within me. At first they were only 2 or 3 different things, not enlightening or spiritual, but everything multiplied on me so now there is quite a bit of that. None of this is in order, it is just how it came to me.

Puddleglum said in the chapter that he could "smell the evil." I'm wondering: is that literal or figurative? I'm wondering if it was figurative, but remember that there are animals and creatures that have noses for hunting. Talking Dogs for instance. However, I'm thinking that it was literal, because I think he would have said, "Sense the evil" rather than "smell the evil." \*listens for someone else's opinion\*

I also found that none of the travelers were at all fooled by the knight. They recognized the evil and enchantments. They saw through the disguise of evil. I was proud especially of the children. In

previous chapters, they were fooled by evil. But in this chapter (and a nice turn of events it was) the children were not fooled. Jill saw nearly at once (and grew more and more assured) that the knight was conceited, and silly. Eustace realized that the knight was like a dog following the lady around. He was attached to her.

They were stepping on the truth. Although they didn't see through it as well as Puddleglum, they were maturing, noticing things, and their eyes were fixing on their task.

Puddleglum saw through the knight and his Lady as well as one can see through clear water. Puddleglum's thoughts were "I wonder what game that witch is really playing with this young fool?" He not only saw the foolishness of the knight, but he realized that his 'lady' was an evil witch. He realized the dark knight was a pawn in the witch's hand.

Another thing I notice about Glummy: as the story progresses, we all notice that the children are growing and maturing. However, what we usually are more keen to overlook is how Puddleglum changes.

You must remember how when we met Puddleglum, that he was grumpy, overcautious, suspicious, and was always thinking on the dark side of things. While the cautious part was good, he was so cautious that he was suspicious of everyone and everything (even some perfectly normal things). Even in the giant city of Harfang, Puddleglum was suspicious of the drink given to him. "There's something nasty at the bottom, I shouldn't wonder," was his comment. However, in this chapter, when the travelers are seated to eat, Puddleglum is not said to have made any negative comments about the food.

I don't think that this was at all carelessness on his part. He ate it, and probably was cautious about eating it, but no negative comments were made. In fact, he seemed to really down it because within the first paragraph of speech, the knight is refilling his cup. (And I don't think it was wine because he wouldn't have been able to think as straight as he did later).

And think of it, when a thief is free out in the world, he does his evil and usually thinks nothing of it. But when he has been caught, and is in bonds, he often realizes what terrible burden of sin he is under. He wants to be free from it, and often times resolves to do better. But more times than not, the thoughts of regret they may have held in prison are forgotten, and they are bound again by their sin.

That reminds me of the knight. When he is free, he is under the evil enchantments and has forgotten what he said in the Silver Chair. But once he is in the chair, he knows himself and only wants to be free of the evil enchantments he is held by.

Another thing I noticed was when the knight called on Aslan's name. Here I think the travelers were a bit off track. "It was the words of the sign," Scrubb said. But I don't think they fully remembered the fourth sign. The fourth sign said this: "You will know the lost prince (if you find him) by this, that he will be the first person in your travels who will ask you to do something in my name, in the name of Aslan!"

I think that the three of them remembered the sign like this: "The first person to ask you to do something in my name, do it!" They added the 'do it', and neglected to remember that the prince would be the first to ask. I think that because of this: until they decided to untie him, he was still the knight, and not the prince. If they had remembered the part of the sign about the prince, I think they would have instantly thought, "Yay! We found the prince! End of story, let's go home." But instead

they stand about and discuss whether or not they were meant to untie him. And neither did they realize that he was Prince Rilian until he told them himself! They thought it was all over. They were quite sure (or so it seemed to me) that following Aslan's instruction was going to cost their lives, because they all shook hands and said, "Goodbye."

It seemed to me that even when the knight was in the chair, the enchantment was not even entirely gone. Notice, until he was freed from the chair and it was destroyed, He did not even know who Puddleglum was. It was only until after the chair was destroyed that he realized Puddleglum was a Marsh-wiggle.

Prince Rilian spoke of fooling the earthmen. Now, I will not detail my point greatly, but I will state it as best I can. With Aslan with them, there was no need to fool the earthmen. Aslan + 1 equals a majority. They very well could have over-powered the earthmen.

Same with us. We need not attempt fooling the devil, because with God's help, we can over-power him.

## **Chapter 12**

### **The Queen of Underland**

I must confess I was a little disappointed that nobody called on Aslan. They had just spoken of him, but they forgot about him for the time being, and tried to face the witch themselves. If they had called for Aslan, it would not have been nearly so hard to defeat her evil. They waited so long to mention Aslan that it was almost too late. Jill could hardly remember him, and even when she did, the enchantment was already so heavy she found she could hardly say his name.

The witch, though the book did not say this, was scared at the mention of Aslan. She kept her cool, but inside she was afraid. In fact, she began strumming the strings of her instrument very slightly faster, as if to hurry the enchantment along and keep Aslan out.

Another thing- the witch tried to cover up her evil with sweetness. She used a sweet innocent voice while trying to enchant them. The devil does the same with us. He uses things that are seemingly innocent to try to win our souls. Also, just as the witch tried to convince the Narnians that Aslan was all make-believe, the devil tries to harden our hearts to Christ, and to make our belief sink.

When the serpent was wrapped about Rilian, it was ready to draw tight. She wanted to choke him before he could save himself. This was because they wouldn't give in. The serpent knew that the enchantments were not strong enough to conquer him, so she went in head-first to finish him off before he was completely out of the darkness. When the devil finds that we won't give into his temptations, he wants desperately to cut us off so that we cannot help others. He doesn't want us to prosper. He wants to take our souls, and prevent us from winning other souls.

"All these years I have been the slave of my mother's slayer." Rilian finally realized that he had been the captive of the one who had caused his mother's death. We are slaves of the devil, who is the greatest slayer. The death that the devil causes, however, is not physical, but spiritual. Until we are saved, we are the devil's slaves, just as Rilian was the slave of his mother's physical slayer.

*Unfortunately, Tenethia's reflections on the remaining chapters were lost*

# Ajnos

## Chapter 1-2

### Not an allegory

Being the diehard Narnian fans we are, we all know that "Narnia is not an allegory, it's a *supposal*" (or *supposition* - I've seen both words used). But I've often wondered about this. Is it just a question of definition?

In a way the answer is "of course". Defining something as fitting into a certain category always depends on your definition of that category (and definitions of categories are almost always in some way ambiguous and subjective - something you learn early on if you study any semantics). But at the same time, I think for the most part most people would agree about the main elements of what makes something count, or not count, as allegory.

Right at the outset of *The Silver Chair*, we get a few passages which look like something dangerously close to allegory. Passages like these give me the niggling feeling that perhaps Lewis wasn't so anti-allegory when he wrote the Chronicles as he was later on in life (something I've suspected came from Tolkien's outspoken dislike of it).

In most of the Chronicles, Aslan only appears later in the story (sometimes only really at the end) and it is there that his role as the Christ-figure in the story is most clearly seen. But in *The Silver Chair*, Lewis is less "subtle" as we see the Lion interacting with Jill and revealing his nature right at the start.

In the conversations between Jill and Aslan in chapter two, Lewis uses what seem to me unveiled references to Christian truths (sometimes in language almost taken straight from scripture.) If allegory is an everyday story/account of events which is used to represent something unseen (or in the religious sense, *spiritual*), what do we make of these passages?

The first of these scenes is the most obvious - the conversation at the river where Jill wants to drink but is afraid of the lion standing there (whom, I had forgotten this until I started reading again, she does not know is the same Aslan Eustace had told her about - she has no idea that Aslan is a lion). He invites her more than once, "if you are thirsty, come and drink". When he does not move away on her asking him to and she suggests finding another stream, he says "there is no other stream". When she finally plucks up the courage (or lets her thirst overcome her fear), the water is described as "the coldest, most refreshing water ever tasted. You didn't need to drink much of it for it quenched your thirst at once."

The biblical references alluded to here can, I think, not be missed by anyone familiar with the passages in the bible where Jesus refers to himself as being or providing Living Water, and as being the "only one".

*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... Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But 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)

*On the last day...Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water."* (John 7:37-38)

*Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." (John 14:6)*

The next section which presents a strong, unveiled biblical parallel is when Jill suggests that Aslan has the wrong girl because he did not call them, but they were the ones who asked him to let them into Narnia. His reply, "You would not have called to me unless I had been calling you," reminds me a lot of Jesus' words to the disciples: "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain..." (John 15:16a). Without getting into any controversial topics, I think we all agree that the point made here, that it was Aslan who called the children to Narnia to fulfil a certain task, as Jesus chose the disciples to be given the task of proclaiming his message and founding the church, and as we are called to fulfil certain tasks in our lives, is a good and solid Christian one.

Finally, the passage where Jill is reminded to recite the signs regularly and daily lest she forget them, ("say them to yourself when you wake in the morning, and when you lie down at night and when you wake in the middle of the night") reminds me strongly of God's command to the Israelites concerning the law:

*And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up. (Deut 6:6-7)*

There are lots of small and large lessons in the Chronicles that are much subtler than these. Sometimes it's hard to tell whether Lewis intended them or not. But I think in the case of these passages, the intention is unmistakable.

Does this mean that the Chronicles do, in fact, have allegorical aspects to them (even if they are not full allegories of the kind like *Pilgrim's Progress*)? Well again, that depends on your definition. But I think there is something in these that argue for Lewis' denial of allegory, or at least the bad kind of allegory.

Allegory, in the "bad sense" is something to be avoided, because of its obvious method of forcing one image onto another. It has its uses, but they are limited, as they have the tendency to annoy the reader, who spends so much time worrying about what everything *means* that they miss the story (that's my experience anyway).

Tolkien says something interesting about the difference between intentional and subconscious allegory in the prologue to the second edition of *The Silmarillion*:

*I dislike allegory - conscious and intentional allegory - yet any attempt to explain the purport of myth or fairytale must use allegorical language. (And, of course, the more life a story has, the more susceptible to allegorical interpretations: while the better a deliberate allegory is made, the more nearly it will be acceptable just as story.)*

So Tolkien says that there's nothing wrong with a story being susceptible to allegory - so long as it is not overtly so. Yet is not what Lewis has done in these particular passages intentional allegory? I would say yes, but there is something about the way Lewis does it that saves it from the danger of it being the annoying or bad kind of allegory. Lewis is subtle.

I've said all along that these passages stuck out to me as pointing to very clear biblical references. But that is because I have read *The Silver Chair* a number of times, discussed it for many years, and am very familiar with the biblical truths and passages they reflect. Although I can't judge for certain, I suspect that someone unaware of the biblical passages, or reading SC for the first time and not looking for significance (which was probably the case the first time I read it, though I cannot remember), could gloss over the connections completely, and not see any kind of spiritual lesson being shoved down their throat. At least I hope and imagine that that is the case. I know Pauline Baynes was said to have illustrated LWW without being at all aware of the fact that Aslan represented Jesus (which, though it seems strange to me, is a testimony of Lewis' subtlety).

I'm not sure if this is what Tolkien meant when he said well written intentional allegory is at risk of being taken as just a story and whether he sees that as a good or bad thing. But it seems to me that Lewis gets something of both worlds. The events containing intentional allegory or spiritual lessons in this chapter are clear for those who want to see them and know how to recognise them, but appear as just a story for those who cannot. And yet I think they are more than just a story even then. They are imparting truths about life to all readers, whether as an overt Christian message or as subtle truths. I think all readers would still find beauty in the image of Aslan testing Jill's trust, of his omnipotence in being the one who called them and in his insistence she not allow herself to forget the signs.

As Christians, we see these passages as speaking of Christ, the only source of living water, of pointing out that he is the one who calls us to fulfil what he has planned for our lives and of the fact we must continually remind ourselves of what we believe, lest we forget in the chaos of the world (the reason we observe communion as a reminder of Christ's death).

And so, whether or not you think the word "allegory" be applied to what Lewis has done here, I think it is safe to say that he has got it right. He has got the right combination and balance of lessons with subtlety. And that is what is important.

## Chapters 3-4

### *The Seafarer's Last Voyage*



Lord Regent Trumpkin, Lord Drinian and King Caspian X



Caspian felt old. So old. He had had a good reign, for many years, but the last few had been really hard. At last he was feeling the age which had been creeping up on him almost unawares. What had gone wrong? Why was it going to end so badly? It had been a long time since he last saw the Great Lion, and he wanted so desperately to see him again. *Aslan was not a tame lion*, he knew that, and it wasn't often that Caspian had had the pleasure of meeting him face to face. But he desperately needed him now. He needed to speak to him, to ask him why. Why did it have to end like this?

It all started that May, ten years ago now, when his wife had been so cruelly and unexpectedly snatched from him. It had been such a beautiful morning and he had envied his young son and the courtiers who were to travel with her. His royal responsibilities meant he had to stay behind at the Cair, but he loved his wife and son too much to begrudge them these days of pleasure. It was not easy being the wife of the king, and Rilian would have enough experience bearing the burdens of the kingdom when his turn came.

When the news first came back of her death, Caspian felt as though his heart had been ripped from him. Drinian had ridden hard to bring the news in person and it tore at him in a way he hadn't thought possible. His dear bride, whom he had met on that journey to the Eastern Edge of the World so many years ago. Gone. As a young, adventure-hungry king, he thought when he had set out on that journey, that its purpose was to find the Lost Lords. Looking back, he realised that she was what he had really been searching for, and understood why he had not before been able to find a suitable bride.

The daughter of a Star. Few people in Narnia knew this in truth. While rumours that the blood of stars ran in her veins abounded, only those who had been on the journey knew just how much this was the case. For her own safety, it had been kept that way. Being the wife of the king put her at risk enough of kidnap or death by enemies of either Caspian himself or Narnia. Knowledge that she was half-star would have made her all the more vulnerable. Of all the fears Caspian had had of how she might be taken from him, the last he expected was poison from a serpent. Yet that is what had happened.

He was always grateful for Drinian's bringing the news ahead. It gave him time to deal with his grief, immense as it was, before the news was made public. When the party finally arrived carrying his fair Queen on that bier, he had been able to put up at least a front of composure. He knew he had to be strong in front of his subjects. Her death was their grief as much as his and he was expected to lead them by example. It took almost everything he had, but often when something almost impossible is required of you, you find you have the strength - for as long as necessary, anyway.

In private, he could drop the façade and grieve properly, which he did. Drinian and one or two of his other close friends had been there to help him bear his sorrow. It was difficult, but slowly he came to terms with what had happened, and life went on. Running the kingdom went on, and he had so many loyal friends around him that, though he never forgot, the ache in his heart was very often overwhelmed with love and friendship and the loyalty of his subjects.

Things had not gone so well with his young son. From the moment Caspian first saw the boy's face as he marched home solemnly at the head of the bier, he knew that the child's grief was worse than his own. Though he had always loved his son, and been so proud of his heir, their relationship had never been as close as that of the boy and his mother.

Those two had a special bond, perhaps for the starrish blood that they shared. But Caspian never envied them, as he realised the boy filled the gaps and brought her joy during times when Caspian's

responsibilities took him from her. And she cared for him and showed him love and attention far more than Caspian was at leisure to do.

The grief on the boy's face was only the first sign that things were not well with his son. The boy's behaviour changed markedly too. He was not only torn apart by grief, but bent on revenge. He became moody, lashing out at his servants and anyone who tried to get near him. He spent so much time away from the house, Caspian sometimes wondered if the boy felt partly responsible for what had happened.

Caspian tried speaking to him. But the young prince closed up as soon as he broached the subject. While they had never been exceptionally close, they had always been able to talk in the past: Caspian invested much time discussing with him the responsibilities of the kingdom and the trials and challenges a king has to face. But now it was like there was a wall between them, one Caspian had no idea how to breach.

Caspian had lost both his parents at a very young age. He barely remembered his father at all, and had a few vague but happy memories of his mother. He couldn't really empathise with his son, though, as he hadn't been old enough to know her as the boy knew his wife. He remembered his heartache when, some years younger than Rilian was now, his nurse and best friend had been cruelly removed, but he knew that not even that was comparison enough.

In despair, he gave up and hoped that in time things would blow over, the boy would come to terms with his mother's loss, and life would go on. He asked Drinian to keep an extra eye on the boy (the two were close as it was) and left it at that.

Although Rilian continued his hunts for his mother's killer, for a while, things did seem to get a little better. The sorrow began to fade from his face and he was willing to speak to Caspian about matters of court life again, though he refused to broach the topic of his mother.

Then it came, only a month later, though it had felt much longer; the week that brought Caspian's second tragedy. He knew that first day when the boy came home, having been out all day, with his horse still fresh, that something was wrong. He had also seen something different in his face. Not the grief or weariness, but something new. And it frightened Caspian terribly. Drinian said he had seen that look before, on the faces of sailors who claimed to have seen visions; visions of great evil - of sea serpents more dangerous than that which had hounded the *Dawn Treader* all those years ago; more dangerous because there was something evil behind them - something magic.

Caspian brushed it off as sailor's talk but he feared there was some truth in it. It had been suspected all along that it was more than poison which had killed his wife; that something magic had been at work then. Caspian had the horrible feeling he was dealing with something beyond his experience and for the first time began to wish desperately that Aslan would reappear.

Eight days later, the news of the boy's disappearance came to him. It hit him harder than he would have thought possible. When Drinian asked for an audience with him and told him of their journey to the spring the day before, Caspian could hardly think straight. He felt an emotion he had never experienced before, at least not in this form. A black rage. As he turned his back on the man, he saw the battle-axe before him, beckoning him. Picking it up, he began to rush at Drinian, barely aware of what he was doing.

Then suddenly, everything began to slow in a whirl before his mind. He saw his wife on the bier, his son's face. Then his son being brought to him, a new born infant. Then he was on Ramandu's Island,

and there was the tall girl in her blue mantle carrying the candle light. The light of the candle grew bigger until all he could see was the glow of orange and yellow. The colours swirled together and an indistinct figure began to solidify and become clearer. It was the face of a golden lion and it was roaring, baring its terrible teeth. The roar rose to a crescendo in Caspian's ears. He suddenly came to himself and found he was bearing down on his friend with a battle-axe. He stopped, and threw the axe away as quickly as possible. He looked at the face of his dear friend and broke down.

*"I have lost my queen and my son: shall I lose my friend also?"* (He'd have lost more than his friend, he knew, but didn't say this).

After the moment Caspian had seen Aslan's face, everything became clear again. He remembered he had a kingdom to run, and while he missed his son bitterly, as he continued to miss his wife, he knew life must go on.

There was a chance that the boy was still alive, and so he allowed many champions to go in search of him. He was overwhelmed with the courage and loyalty of his subjects, especially when it became clear that this was a dangerous task. Those who set out were away for a long time and Caspian began to realise that they would likely never return.

He knew he had to do something about it. There was no guarantee his son was alive and for countless subjects to risk almost certainly getting captured, if not killed, for the sake of the boy, made no sense. And so, though it pained him to do so, he eventually issued the ban. No more searches were allowed.

More often now, Caspian began to wish Aslan would come and explain to him what should be done. He even wished that something miraculous would happen, like the Kings and Queens of Narnia of old reappearing, but he knew that was a wish in vain. The children only came when they were really needed. The loss of one boy was hardly equal to a curse of eternal winter, the oppression of the old Telmarine regime on the Old Narnians or even the loss of Seven noble Lords. Besides, he knew Peter and Susan were forbidden from returning and suspected the same was true for Edmund and Lucy after their last visit. The days of the Pevensie children were over.

The years wore on and again time began to make the aching less, and the affairs of the realm and his friends brought him joy. The land was at peace and Caspian was almost content. The only thing that worried him was the lack of an heir. Trumpkin was too old, as was Drinian. Though he had a handful of younger loyal Lords and Knights (those who had not been lost in the search for Rilian), none of them stood out as someone he could trust. He wished more and more that he could see Aslan again.

And then he heard of the sighting. A lion had been seen on Terebinthia. Whether or not it was Aslan, no one knew for sure. But Caspian had to know. And so the order was made and preparations begun for his journey.

The day finally arrived bright and clear. He stood at the gang plank to bid farewell to his subjects. He knew that, if he did not find Aslan, and the Lion did not send him back, he would sail on. He wanted to see the Island where he had met his beloved again. Her father might even still be there, younger than last time; perhaps he would have advice for the king. But Caspian was tired of ruling and only his awareness of his responsibility held him to the people.

As he looked over at the loyal crowds, he tried to smile. Quite far back, and standing off to one side he saw two figures. They seemed like a young boy and a girl. They were talking to each other and not looking in his direction. There was something familiar about the boy, but he couldn't place it.

Just then, Trumpkin came up in his donkey chair and he told him to take care of the kingdom well, to keep his head and (as a last thought) should Aslan or children from the other World miraculously appear, to do exactly what they said.

He then made a speech to the audience, thanking them for their loyalty over the years and assuring them that he hoped to come back with news from Aslan himself. Then he turned and made his way on board the ship.

This was it. As the ship began to make its way out into the open sea, he turned to look at the shrinking shoreline. Would he ever see Narnia again?

## Chapter 5

### Puddleglum and Paxford

Winner of the *Cornelius Award*: Best Essay in the *Lion Awards 2013*



I don't think I've met a single person who dislikes, or is even ambivalent, towards the character of Puddleglum. We wouldn't say it to his face, but he is endearing. Part of this comes from his strength of character which we know about from later in the book, but I think even on first encounter there's something immensely likeable about him. It seems a little odd that someone so annoyingly pessimistic is so likeable. And he *is* annoying, so much so that it is on the first day that Eustace turns to him, quite angry with *"I don't believe the whole thing can be quite so bad as you're making out..."* and after Puddleglum's response that it's good for him to put a good face on it he responds *"Well if you think it's so hopeless, I think you'd better stay behind!"*

I think it is, in part, the ridiculousness of Puddleglum's pessimism that makes him such a likeable character. His negative remarks are always so extreme that no one can quite take them seriously. No one, that is, but Puddleglum. He seems to be completely oblivious to just how ridiculous he is, and

this adds to his appeal. He also has something of sense in his head, despite appearances to the contrary. We see this especially in the next chapter in his caution against trusting the Lady of the Green Kirtle and visiting Harfang. Unfortunately, his unrealistic pessimism plays against him here. The children are so sick of his negativity, they ignore his warnings and insist on visiting Harfang. *"Oh bother his ideas! He's always expecting the worst, and he's always wrong."* Only this time he is not wrong. They have not yet learned to tell the difference between Puddleglum's exaggerated grumbling and his serious warnings.

It is widely known that Puddleglum was inspired by a real life figure in Lewis' life; Fred Paxford, the long-serving gardener and handyman at the Kilns. In the meetings of the Oxford CS Lewis Society last term, Fred Paxford came up twice in conversation. Once at the talk on Joy's recently discovered poetry, where Walter Hooper made reference to the fact that Paxford had been at least partly responsible for destroying many of Lewis' papers on a bonfire after his death. He told Hooper he had one day to take what he could and that the rest was going on the bonfire. As a practical and non-scholarly man, I do not blame him entirely for this. Knowing how much paper notes and scribbles I acquire in a single term of study, I can only imagine how much stuff there was, and how it could have seemed to him that disposing of it was the only sensible thing to do. Doubtless, much of what he destroyed was simply boring scribbles, though I do shudder to wonder what gems may have been destroyed along with them.

The second mention of Paxford came up at Douglas Gresham's talk. It was with reference to Puddleglum, but I was interested in the wording he used. I always thought that the man had been a vague inspiration for Puddleglum, but Gresham said with insistency, *"Puddleglum was Fred Paxford"*. He may have been exaggerating, but since he had actually grown up knowing the man, I think we can probably trust such an assessment. Out of curiosity, therefore, I had a look at Gresham's bibliographical work, *Lenten Lands*, in which he tells the story of what it was like growing up with Jack and Joy. I haven't yet had a chance to read the book, but I suspected there would be some reference to Paxford in it.

I was not mistaken; the man is given his own chapter, albeit a short one. Douglas says of him, *"Fred Paxford and I were friends - not associates, but friends...Fred was a countryman through and through, he knew the ways of animals and plants and he knew the ways of little boys."*

He goes on to describe a few of Fred's characteristics. Not all are exactly the same as Puddleglum - except the fact that he seems as annoyingly exasperating (yet also endearing) as the marshwiggles. Apparently, he had a fondness for singing aloud as he worked - despite the fact that he could hardly keep a tune. What was most annoying about it was that he would sing aloud one or two lines, then continue in his head for a while, before breaking out at a later line in the song (only the timing and key of this later break out was completely unpredictable). Another annoying thing was his insistence at leaving vegetables to be picked until the last possible moment, sometimes only once they were over ripe (exasperating Douglas' mother). He tells of how once, when it was Fred's turn to do the cooking, he would not pick the cauliflower until the water had started boiling.

With reference to Puddleglum, Douglas says the following:

*Fred was the ever cheerful eternal pessimist. The character of Puddleglum in The Silver Chair... is modelled directly upon Fred. "Good morning, Fred," I might say. "Ah, looks loike rain afore lunch though, if'n it doan't snow ... or 'ail that is," might well be his reply.*

From Douglas' account, Fred was a very humble man, and possibly completely unaware of the impact he had on the young boy's life (and Lewis'). I wonder if he knew that he had inspired one of

the most loved characters by readers of the Chronicles? I do hope Douglas told him, though I suspect he had no idea just how much Puddleglum is loved. After Lewis' death, Douglas says, the man retired. He visited him once at his small home where he lived "in abject poverty". Yet he seemed fully content with his life, and splashed out what little money he had to entertain his guest. He died not many years later, without anyone telling Gresham. He suspects there were not many who even marked his passing.

Gresham sums up his life saying

*Fred Paxford was one of the finest, kindest and most Christian men I ever knew. He was my friend. He is gone and I miss him. I could never have told him so, but I loved him deeply.*

It's interesting that he describes him as being one of the "most Christian" men he knew. Looking at his life of hard work, "cheerful eternal pessimism" and his uneducated and sometimes uncouth language, I would not have expected him to be a good Christian example, not of the kind educated Lewis was. And yet in his way, he clearly had a strong and positive impact on Gresham's life.

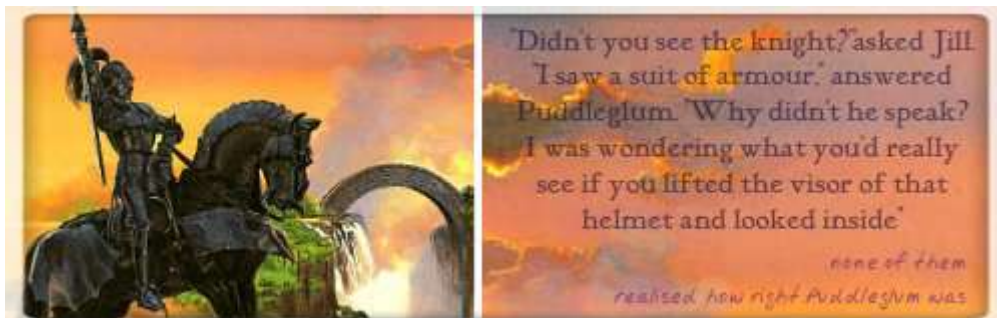
I think in this way too, he is like Puddleglum. Judging by his nature, eternal pessimism and grumpiness, although we like him, we don't picture the marshwiggle as a great example of faith. Eustace reprimands him at the beginning saying, "I don't think Aslan would ever have sent us if there was so little chance as all that." But later on, we are to learn that behind his pessimistic grumpy exterior is a sturdy faith that is steadfast and able to withstand the witch's best attempts at making them forget and deny Aslan. Puddleglum turns out to be one of the finest, kindest and most faithful to Aslan of marshwiggles the world of Narnia ever knew.

## Chapter 6

### The Black Knight



This chapter is one of those you can only really read once (or perhaps twice if there has been a long enough gap since the first reading and you've forgotten most of the story - which I think happened to me). Now when I read it, it's so hard not to get frustrated with the characters for not seeing the obvious - she's wearing green! And at the children for not heeding Puddleglum's warnings. To spare you another long essay by me, I've made a graphics set instead.



## Chapters 7-8

### Of Signs: On the Mountain Top and in the Low Country

*“Remember, remember, remember the signs. Say them to yourself when you wake in the morning and when you lie down at night, and when you wake in the middle of the night ... Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia. Here on the mountain, the air is clear and your mind is clear; as you drop down into Narnia, the air will thicken. Take care it does not confuse your mind. And the signs which you have learned here will not look at all as you expect them to look when you meet them there. That is why it is important to know them by heart and pay no attention to appearances. Remember the signs and believe the signs. Nothing else matters.” - Chapter 2*

I wanted to say something about this passage back on the first day, but didn't get around to it. Now seems an opportune time. Many of you will be familiar with the metaphor of “a mountain top experience.” This refers to a point in time where everything is going well and we feel like we're “on top of the world.” In the Christian life, we use it to describe times when we feel as though God has spoken to us clearly (not audibly, but in a manner which is unmistakable). It's something that often happens when we have spent a lot of time with other Christians focused very much on God and bible teachings (such as a church camp, conference, retreat etc.) The sense of purpose, God's purpose in our lives is strong, and we feel like we could never doubt. We recommit our whole lives to God and vow to change.

Then the camp or conference ends, and the “spiritual high” fades. I've experienced it enough times to know this is inevitable. Someone wise once pointed out to me that this is normal. We would not be able to function in everyday life if we were continually on a spiritual high.

In many ways these “mountain top experiences” are reflected in Jill's literal adventure on the top of the mountains of Aslan's Country. And the warning Aslan gives her is true for us too.

*“Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not often do so down in Narnia.”*

Aslan's warnings to Jill were prophetic. Though he gave her every warning he could, when she got to Narnia she allowed the thick air to confuse her mind. The message and warnings of Aslan were not clear anymore, and she allowed the cares of the road and their travel to distract her from “the only thing that mattered”.

In Chapters 7 and 8 it reaches a climax. Starting with the promise of steaming baths, soft beds, bright hearths and warm food offered by the Lady of the Green Kirtle, Jill, and the others, let their physical desires interfere with remembering why they are there.

On the one hand, considering the circumstances, one could hardly blame the travellers for forgetting their purpose. The elements were against them in every way imaginable: cold, snow, wind, poor visibility and hunger. In contrast to this was the hope and promise of a warm safe place to spend the night. No wonder that was all they could think of.

And yet in the clear light of the next day, as the children looked out of Jill's window in the Giant's Castle, they knew they could not blame the circumstances on their missing the signs. As Jill says, “If I'd been thinking about [the signs] I could have seen it was the city, even in all that snow.”

If only they'd been thinking about their mission and the signs as they travelled rather than hot baths, beds, fires and food, things would have turned out so differently. If *“You must journey out of Narnia*

*to the north till you come to the ruined city of the ancient giants*” had been going around in Jill’s head as she walked, she would have been looking for signs of a ruined giant city. As her imagination saw piles of stones that looked like giants (and turned out to be giants) at the beginning of the journey, would not her imagination have seen the ruins of walls as they travelled among the dykes and trenches?

Once they realised that it was the city and had begun looking for the writing, they would likely have changed their minds about going to Harfang, knowing the next clue was so near. I’ve always thought the writing was the hardest clue for them, as it would have been difficult for them to see it while they were in it. But if *“You shall find writing on a stone in that ruined city”* was going around in their heads when they reached the strange trenches - trenches which had no logic to them in the way they turned at right angles and then stopped, they may have worked out that it was lettering. And even if they had given up that day, due to the snow storm, because they knew they were at the ruins, if they had only waited till the next day, in the clear sun, they would almost certainly have figured it out then.

And then, as Puddleglum said, *“No doubt if we’d had our minds on the job when we were at the ruinous city, we’d have been shown how - found a little door or a cave or a tunnel, met someone to help us. Might have been...Aslan himself. We’d have got down under those paving-stones somehow or other. Aslan’s instructions always work: there are no exceptions.”*

But their minds weren’t on the signs. The cares of the world had made Jill forget about repeating them and in the end, even forget how to recite them at a moment’s notice. When Puddleglum starts to suspect something about the hill they are on and asks her which sign is next, instead of taking time to remember, she lashes out at him (in part because she felt guilty for not having been paying enough attention to them):

*“Oh bother the signs,” said Pole. “Something about someone mentioning Aslan’s name, I think...”*

*As you see, she had gotten the order wrong. That was because she had given up saying the signs over every night. She still really knew them, if she troubled to think; but she was no longer so “pat” in her lesson as to be sure of reeling them off in the right order at a moment’s notice without thinking. Puddleglum’s question annoyed her because...she was already annoyed at herself for not knowing the lion’s lesson quite so well as she felt she ought to have known it.*

It is at this moment, that the seriousness of Aslan’s warning to her on the mountain top is revealed. She has succumbed to forgetfulness and it costs them dearly (in time and almost their lives).

And so these chapters serve as a warning to us. Humans are forgetful creatures. We need only read the Old Testament to see how often the Israelites forgot the blessings and instructions of God. And we are no better.

This is why we need mountain top experiences; times when God speaks clearly to us. But he does not do that all the time. The rest of the time it is our responsibility to make habits of spending time in God’s word, talking and praying to him, and reminding ourselves of his promises and commands.

Or else the thickness of the air in the “low country” will confuse our minds and we will forget.

Thank God that in his grace, even when we are forgetful, he is still faithful and will nudge us back in the right direction. Aslan says to Jill, *“Here on the mountain I have spoken to you clearly: I will not*



*often do so down in Narnia,* ” and he keeps his word. Just when all hope is lost and the children have completely “muffed” the signs, Aslan appears to Jill in a dream to nudge her back in the right direction. In the same way, God does not always speak to us clearly as he does in “mountain top experiences”, but he will still speak to us in subtler ways, reminding us of what we have forgotten.

And so the lesson we can learn is this: God gives us moments of clarity when he speaks to us in an unmistakable way. But for most of life, we live by faith and it is, in part our responsibility, to remember what he revealed on those mountaintops by reminding ourselves daily. At the same time, God, in his grace, also speaks to us subtly. As a gentle father, he gives us hints to put us back on track when we have strayed.

## **Chapter 9**

### **Food fit for a feast**

*“But more than thirty champions...have at one time or another set out to look for the lost Prince, and none of them have ever come back...”*

“Not bad for a day’s hunting,” sighed the young giant Rufflemutton as he surveyed the day’s haul. “I’ve seen better, but then I’ve seen worse.” He glanced over at the pile of deer, boar and fowl carcasses that lay not far from where they rested. They would return early today, as preparations for the feast began in earnest.

“No talkin’ beasts this year,” sighed his companion Wafflepotter. “This early cold snap, ‘as chased them down south it ‘as,” he continued.

“Aye,” nodded Rufflemutton, “At least we will have man pies this year. It’s never a proper feast without them.” His friend nodded.

“Unusual for her ladyship to send children, though,” put in Wafflepotter after a moment’s thought.

“Better than no men, as we’ve had these last three years,” countered the first, “I was expecting a’nothing again. Unusual for them to arrive so late too.”

“Indeed,” said his friend, “And that creature with them. Never seen th’ likes of ‘im before.”

The first shook his head, “Mollywater tells me it’s called a ‘waggle’ or some such. Says they’re not known to be tasty, but she’s found a recipe that will make him quite a pleasant treat. Said she’ll save a mouthful for me, since first choice goes to the royals.” He lowered his voice as he said the last, so as not to be overheard by the royals in question.

“Aah, ‘tis an advantage ye be friends with the cook then,” said Wafflepotter with a smile.

“I remembers a time when we’d have man pie every year. And a plenty to go around. The green lady seems to have lost her touch these last years.”

“Aye, that or the menfolk ‘ave become more cautious,” added the second.

“Remember that great year, must be near on ten years ago, she sent so many men to our doorstep, we had man pie not only for the harvest festival, but well into the winter too. That was a good year.”

Wafflepotter nodded as he remembered.

“We'd 'ave plenty a' talkin' beasts too, back then,” he added, “And not just the usual game: badgers, bears, mice and squirrels. A couple o' fauns too. They was tasty. Apparently there was a centaur once. Would 'ave made a rare treat, but alas 'e got away.”

“Although...we had to fight for the pleasure back then,” remembered said Rufflemutton, “Those men came armed and dangerous. Me old man still has a scar on his calf from the wound one made as he tried t' bring him down. Succeeded in the end, he did, but that wound plagued him for a long time after.”

“More strange that this year, the lady did send us mere children, and a girl too. 'Twere not many women-folk among those who came in the past.”

“No not many. It's made it easier though. They seem to suspect nothing. That frog-creature, the waggie, is more dangerous I do think. Good thing we got him drunk last night, or he might've been on to us. Strange as he is, I think he could be dangerous.”

“Not once 'e's boiling in Mollywater's pot,” added Wafflepotter. And both giants began to gufaw. Some of the other hunters looked over to them for a while, then lost interest and resumed their own conversation.

“Ya know,” said Rufflemutton then. “I remember a time b'fore it was custom to eat man pies at the feast. Giants are forgetful, we are, but I could've sworn when I was younger man pies were as rare then as they're becoming now. We'd have them as a treat should any wonder onto our doorstep, but they werin't so big a part of the festival as they are now. I spoke once to me older brother about it, and he says 'twas the green lady who introduced them as part of the feast about the same time they suddenly became plentiful in the area.

I believe you're right, though I'd about forgotten. Why, we was almost still kids aback then. I've always wondered why she's so interested in us and so keen to send us men. I wonder what she 'as t' gain from it?”

“Does make one wonder, eh...”

At this moment, their speech was disturbed as boy giant, who had not been on the hunt, came crashing through the bushes nearby. He was panting from a hard run. He announced that while he was polishing his weapons in his room, he had glanced out his window and seen the children and frog-creature going for a stroll in broad daylight. It might just be an innocent stroll, but he was worried they might have figured out what was to become of them, and were making an escape.

Best to be safe, agreed the king on this news. Their rest was cut short as they rounded up the dogs and returned to the castle with haste.

## Chapter 10

### Underlands

When my siblings and I were young, we used to play a game which we called “Worlds”. What we referred to as “worlds”, were imaginary underground layers of Earth that we found “by accident” one day while playing in the garden with our cousin. Of course, none of our adventures really happened underground – children have the most amazing imagination – but we pretended that we could get to these “underground worlds” by special doorways (the stairs down the bank from the swimming pool to the lower front yard made a good entryway). Each world/layer had a similar layout to the one above, explaining why each looked identical to the other (which, incidentally, looked identical to the layout of our garden). The underground worlds/layers had fake skies, which explained the presence of sunlight and blue sky in what was supposed to be Underground.

We had all sorts of amazing adventures in these worlds, which were ruled over by a number of spikey plants in our garden (cycads) who were given Greek names: Alpha, Beta, Gamma and Sir. Sir was the first one we met on our adventures, and the leader of all the worlds – we hadn't come up with the Greek names when we met him. Oh, and then there was Omnicron (yes, mispronounced as it's misspelt). He was the evil cycad whom we defeated and got replaced by a cool cycad named Jack, who had an Australian accent. Our long concrete driveway which runs up behind our house was the underground river, which opened into a concrete lake in front of our garage. It all sounds a little extreme now, but we had so much fun with it.

So you can only imagine my excitement when, a few years after we'd outgrown playing “Worlds”, I read *The Silver Chair* for the first time, and found a story of some children having their own adventures underground.

What is under the miles and miles that lie below the crust of the earth has always fascinated mankind – it has fuelled the imaginations of children and writers throughout the ages. What if we should find cities or civilisations of people or other creatures living in the depths of our planet? While voyages into outer space are far more widespread and popular, there has always been an allure of stories about “inner space”. Jules Verne addresses this question in one of his 19th century science fiction works, *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth*. It was the first of his books I read (some years after reading *The Silver Chair*), and has therefore had a special place in my mind, though I really need to reread it, as my memory of the story has been horribly warped by poor TV and movie adaptations.

One part I do remember about the story, is when the adventurers have a voyage across an underground sea. I was pretty sure Lewis, who was a fan of Verne, had had this in mind when he wrote *The Silver Chair* almost a hundred years later. After looking up a summary of the story, I've realised that that was not the only part that inspired Lewis. Verne's underground world also had giant mushroom-like trees, although in his world the light comes from the ceiling of the caverns rather than the plants themselves. Verne's characters also encounter prehistoric dinosaur-type creatures, which may have inspired Lewis' cavern of dragon-like beasts. A striking difference between the two accounts though, is that Lewis has a civilised and bustling city in his story whereas Verne's characters only encounter hints of intelligent life. I think it is fair to say, however, that Verne's account inspired Lewis' story. But like the good writer he was, he used only basic ideas but created the setting to fit his own story.

Another fifty years after Lewis' work, stories continue of underground civilisations in works such as Eoin Colfer's *Artemis Fowl* series, which has a modern thriving underground technologically-advanced “fairylnd”. In the *Doctor Who* episodes “The Hungry Earth” and “Cold blood”, the

characters stumble upon an underground dwelling by a race of terrestrial hominids, the reptilian Silurians, who have made a place of refuge that they built ages ago to ride out the effects of Earth's capture of the moon. They are still hibernating there, for the most part, waiting for a time when they can return to the surface and live peaceably with humans.

A decade or so before this, a family of kids in South Africa played a continuous game of adventures in "underground" worlds. The allure and mystery of what lies under the world, albeit invented, has gripped the imagination of mankind for many years and will doubtless continue to do so. Despite this, I don't think any of us would really want a life underground.

*Many sink down to the Underworld...and few return to the sunlit lands*

Ironically, I was reading this passage sitting out in bright South African sunshine on one of the warmest days we've had this winter. I've come to appreciate the sun a great deal after spending the last few months in a very (even more than usual) rainy Britain. I learnt there how much I take the warm and cheery sun for granted, to the point that whenever the sun peeped out (which it did more often than I probably make it sound) I could feel the lift in my spirits. I'm not entirely surprised the Earthmen were as morbid as they were (even making Puddleglum seem cheerful). As much as an underground world seems fascinating or enticing; as much as I enjoyed playing and pretending as a kid, I think, like Jill, I would have not enjoyed a real underground adventure. And I'm truly grateful that I live in the sunlit realms.

## **Chapter 11**

### **The Silver Chair**

*Reading chapters 11 and 12 got me thinking a lot about the witch's motives and plans. What was she really after? And how did she expect to succeed?*

I know a number of people, including me, have discussed before why Lewis chose the title he did for this book. The silver chair is seemingly one of the least significant things in the book and there are a number of other titles he could have used (including *Night Under Narnia* and *Wild Waste Lands*). But after reading these chapters, it's made me wonder again. I think the silver chair is far more significant than we realise.

Rilian refers to it as "*a vile engine of sorcery,*" which is about the most information we are given on it. We don't even know what it looks like, apart from it being silver. At a set time every night, Rilian is made to sit on it and tied up to it. He is told this is because of the fit of rage which comes upon him for that hour every night. He is tied to the chair because he becomes violent and it is a means of keeping him from harming anyone.

Yet we know that in actual fact, it is only during that hour every night that he is completely sane. Which made me wonder what kind of enchantment the witch had cast upon him? Usually, when people are bewitched to forget who they are, it is permanent; where does this one hour of sanity come from?

I've always thought it was the chair itself that made him sane - like some side effect of its working. While the witch used the chair to re-enforce the enchantment, it also meant that he would be sane while it happened. But thinking about it now, it makes more sense that the spell only lasts a day at a time. Every night it wears off, and has to be re-administered - by the chair itself. After an hour in the chair, the spell is restored and he forgets again who he is. A more basic spell by the witch (such as

she tries to use on Puddleglum and the children), would not have been powerful or practical enough to keep Rillian under her authority all that time. The son of the King of Narnia, and someone known to Aslan would, sooner or later, have seen through her bewitchment and turned on her. Doubtless she could kill him should that happen, but she wants him alive.

And so somehow, she had made (or acquired) the chair. He needed to be kept in the chair for an hour every night for the curse to remain on him (it was like he needed a new dose of it every night to keep it in his system - like some kind of poison). Once the hour had passed, and the chair done its work, he had forgotten again and continued the next day under the witch's spell.

I noticed something particularly interesting about when Rilian was in the chair (which I hadn't thought of before). Although he claims to be *"sane now"*, he does not seem to remember everything of his past life. He does not even remember who he is. He knows only that

*"Every night I am sane. If only I could get out of this enchanted chair it would last. I should be a man again. But every night they bind me, and so every night my chance is gone."*

In all his imploring that the companions release him, he doesn't once claim that he is Rilian. This can only mean that he has not fully remembered his life before his enchantment, as those words, if any, would encourage them to release him if they were friends. But he doesn't. Instead he continues to shout at them, even threaten them. His voice rises *"to a shriek"* and Eustace describes his behaviour as a *"frenzy"*. Perhaps this is partly because he is so desperate, but I think there is more to it. He threatens them and tells them if they do not release them they will make him their *"mortal enemy"*. These don't sound like the words of a perfectly sane Prince Rilian. Despite having some degree of sanity, the chair is still working on him so that he only remembers something of who and what he is.

Thankfully, he remembers one of the most important things. Somehow, subconsciously, he remembers Aslan. He might not remember fully who Aslan is (for he does not call on him directly to save him), but in a last desperate attempt, he calls on the greatest powers he knows of to implore them to free him: *"all fears and loves...the bright skies of overland, [and] the great Lion, Aslan himself"*.

These are, as Eustace says, *"the words of the sign"*. Had Rilian been saner, and spoken to them more clearly, the decision to follow the sign would have been easier. But as Aslan had told Jill, *"the signs... will not look at all as you expect them to look...pay no attention to appearances."* Thanks to Puddleglum's wisdom, they choose to follow the sign no matter the consequences, *"That fellow will be the death of us, I shouldn't wonder. But that doesn't let us off following the sign."*

Only once they have released the prince, does he become fully sane and remember who he is. He starts by rushing on the chair with his sword and destroying it *"lest your mistress should ever use you for another victim"*. He knows more than the others how important the chair was in the witch's scheme. I think we can be sure here that the chair was made of real silver, since a stronger metal would not have been so easily rent (even by a very good sword with the strength of revenge behind it).

Next he recognises Puddleglum as a Marshwiggle and tells them that he is Rilian, the son of Caspian X, King of Narnia. There are no further threats, or anger. His complete sanity is evidenced by the words:

*"And the something wrong, whatever it was, had vanished from his face."*

Coming back to the witch's scheme, I still wonder what she was up to. We know that she wanted Narnia and her kidnapping of Rilian was part of the plan. But how was it really to work? Surely once they broke through into Narnia he would be recognised as the lost prince. Unless the silver chair was taken with, she could not keep him under the spell forever. Rilian says that he would be freed from his "enchantment" once he was made king, but the witch could only have meant by this that he would be forever under her enchantment and there'd be no further use of the silver chair. But that seems to me like nonsense - why would her enchantment suddenly become permanent just because he was above the earth?

Did she plan to kill him once the kingdom was won? If so, why bother capturing him in the first place? Her plan was to marry him so she'd be queen, but Caspian was not quite dead yet. The Narnians would never allow it, and either rescue Rilian from her clutches or brand him as a traitor and usurper (since his father was still alive). Of course, the witch had all the earthmen on her side, so perhaps she would have succeeded in defeating the Narnians in battle (many of their best warriors were lost looking for the prince), but if she could win it by force, why did she need Rilian? I doubt her being married to him would make the surviving Narnians any more accepting of her authority. She would have been better off convincing Rilian to marry her and returning with him as his bride (peacefully) on the news of Caspian's death. Why did she plan to make him take by force what would one day be his by right?

Perhaps I've missed something; perhaps there are more clues as to her schemes later in the book that I have forgotten. Regardless, the witch's plans seem rather strange to me.

In the end, she failed. Her silver chair, whatever its full purpose, was destroyed, as was she along with her plans. We'll never know, thankfully, exactly what she was up to. But reading it this time round, I couldn't help but be curious.

It is clear, though, that the silver chair was indeed important to her schemes. In destroying the chair, Rilian broke her spell. I find it interesting that she returns (unexpectedly early) almost as soon as it is destroyed, as if she instinctively knew something had gone wrong. Her response on seeing Rilian free and the chair destroyed is telling:

*"She turned very white; but Jill thought it was the sort of whiteness that comes over some people's faces not when they are frightened, but when they are angry. For a moment the witch fixed her eyes on the Prince. And there was murder in them."*

## **Chapter 12**

### **Good Old Puddleglum**

A lot could be, and has in the past been, said of the witch's attempt at making our heroes forget Narnia and Aslan, and of Puddleglum's heroic refusal to be beguiled.

I wrote a while back on the a former thread on the old forum

Another well-known passage where the antagonist tries to trick the heroes with lies is LotGK's speech in which she tries to convince them that Narnia is a figment of their imagination.

*"I see...that we should do no better with your lion, as you call it, than we did with your sun. You have seen lamps, and so you imagined a bigger and better lamp and called it the sun. You've seen cats, and now you want a bigger and better cat, and it's to be called a lion. Well, 'tis pretty make-believe, though...it would suit you all better if you were younger. And look at how you put nothing into you make believe world without copying it*

*from the real world of mine, which is the only world...Come, all of you. Put away these childish tricks...There is no Narnia, no Overworld, no sky, no sun, no Aslan..."*

This lie, together with her enchanting music and powder almost takes them all in. In a place so far away from the Narnia they remember, they begin to think, that perhaps they did just imagine it. Our enemies try to make us doubt our own beliefs in a similar way. They try to reduce our experiences of God - experiences which we knew were real at the time - to figments of our imagination. They make us wonder whether what we thought was a word from God, was not just wishful thinking, or something we imagined. And when that moment has passed, sometimes we do start to doubt whether it was real. Human memory is a strange thing, and becomes increasingly unreliable as time passes from when the event occurred. When we find people (or even ourselves) questioning the reality of our experiences, we need to respond like Puddleglum:

*"One word, Ma'am... All you've been saying is quite right, I shouldn't wonder. I'm a chap who always liked to know the worst and then put but the best face I can on it. So I won't deny any of what you've said. But there's one more thing to be said, even so. Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things...Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones... We're just babies making up game, if you're right. But four babies playing a game can make a play-world which licks your real world hollow. That's why I'm going to stand by the play-world. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia."*

Good Old Puddleglum!

In my Day Two post on *Puddleglum and Paxford*, I quoted Douglas Gresham as saying of Fred Paxford, on whom Puddleglum was modelled, *"Fred was the ever cheerful eternal pessimist."*

When we first meet Puddleglum, that doesn't seem like a fully accurate description. Pessimist, yes. Comical, perhaps. But ever-cheerful? Hardly. When he tells us that the other Marshwiggles think he's quite bouncy and upbeat, we are inclined to disbelieve him. Could they possibly be worse than him?

But as the story goes on, we see what he means. Although Puddleglum always sees the worst side of things and always expects the worst, he is still cheerful despite this. He thinks things will be bad, but then imagines something worse and concludes that actually the bad things aren't quite as bad as they could be.

Right at the beginning he tells them not to worry about the weather, because they'll be so distracted by enemies, mountains, rivers, losing their way, almost nothing to eat and sore feet.

Later, when they are trying to find their way across the river gorge (before they spot the bridge) he says, *"The bright side of this is, if we break our necks getting down the cliff, then we're safe from being drowned in the river."*

It is Puddleglum who points out that if they had been paying attention to the signs, Aslan would have shown them away underground. *"Aslan's instructions always work: there are no exceptions"*.

This is the first hint we get of his faith. He's not only a cheerful pessimist. Behind (and despite) his eternal pessimism, he has an unrelenting faith in the supremacy of Aslan. Perhaps part of the reason he can be so gloomy, is that he knows Aslan is in control. He doesn't even seem to fear death, and occasionally sees it as a better alternative (*at least if we break our necks, we needn't suffer drowning, and later, maybe we should go back to give the giants a feast rather than being lost in the depths of the earth and suffer threat of dragons and other dangers*). He knows death isn't the end.

When they are faced with the dreadful decision of whether to release Rilian or not, his cheerful pessimism comes to play again. He doesn't sugar coat things by suggesting everything will turn out alright if they obey the sign, but says:

*"Aslan didn't tell Pole what would happen. He only told her what to do. That fellow will be the death of us, I shouldn't wonder. But that doesn't let us off following the sign."*

Because of his pessimism, he is able to bear the fact that they might die if they release the prince. But he recognises that Aslan's orders come from a higher place. Doing right is more important than being safe. Even more important than living. Puddleglum has the heart of a martyr. And in part it is his pessimism that gives him that.

Finally, when it comes to the crunch, his pessimism saves that day. He is aware of the enchantment working on them and sees a way out (extinguishing the fire, the source of the enchantment). He knows it will hurt, but he's okay with that. Things could and would be worse if he wasn't willing to face that pain - so he embraces it.

And then in his speech, he expresses the true faith behind his pessimism. His pessimism lets him grant that perhaps the overworld, the sun, and Aslan are all imaginary. Perhaps none of what they seem to remember is true. But there is a worse alternative. That the world underground is all there is. And he will not accept that. He would rather embrace an untrue dream, than suffer the fate of one who has no hope. His hope at this point is fragile - he is full of doubt in what he believes. But he knows he would rather embrace that, and be proved wrong, than live in a world of such dreariness.

Puddleglum's pessimism lets him see what is bad, and then imagine something worse. By doing this, the bad suddenly becomes bearable. It is this which saves him and his friends.

I'm not saying we should all be Puddleglums. His pessimism is draining, and leads to arguments and the children not always trusting his better judgement. But there is something in his mindset we can imitate. Not full pessimism, but a trust in God that means if we do God's will, if we trust in him, even bad things will look bright and be bearable in the light of what could be so much worse - a life without him.

The apostle Paul comes close to saying what Puddleglum tells the witch. He acknowledges that she may be right, and they might have imagined Narnia and the sun and Aslan. But he'd rather chance that they be wrong than live without hope. Paul imagines for a second what would be the case if what we believe and what he preached was not true; if Jesus did not die and rise from the dead:

*But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty and your faith is also empty. Yes, and we are found false witnesses of God, because we have testified of God that He raised up Christ, whom He did not raise up—if in fact the dead do not rise. For if the dead do not rise, then Christ is not risen. And if Christ is not risen, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins! Then also those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, **we are of all men the most pitiable.** 1 Cor 15: 13-19*

As Puddleglum and his friends soon learn - they were right. Their faith is rewarded because it turns out to be real. They find Narnia and see the sun and Aslan again. Their hope was not in vain. Paul, who had seen the risen saviour, knows the same is true of what we believe: *"But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."* (1 Cor 15: 12-19)

*I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live as like a Narnian as I can even if there isn't any Narnia!*



## Chapters 13-14

### Things are not always as they seem

This tale is full of mistaken identities and misconceptions. *"Pay no attention to appearances"* says Aslan to Jill of the signs. And it's true of more than just the signs.

Right from the outset, things are not always as they seem. When she first meets him, Jill doesn't trust Aslan. She is afraid of him, for the completely wrong reasons. When she realises who he is and he tells her that he has called them to Narnia, she assumes he has made a mistake - they are not the ones for the task. Mistaken identity. Aslan corrects her.

When she arrives in Narnia at the sailing of the King, Jill asks Eustace if he sees a friend. He doesn't recognise that he is staring at Caspian, because he makes the assumption that he would not look that much older than last time. Mistaken identity.

Eustace suspects the owls of plotting against the king, because they are meeting in dark in the night. Meanwhile they are simply used to meeting at night because they are owls. There is nothing sinister about their dealings. Mistaken identity.

Jill and Eustace are wary of Puddleglum at the beginning because he is so negative. They don't see that there is sense, faith and dedication lying at the heart of his pessimism - just what they need as a guide. Mistaken identity.

When Jill first sees the giants lining the gorge, she assumes they are simply piles of rock. Until they start to hurl stones around them. Mistaken identity.

When they meet the Lady of the Green Kirtle, they think her kind, sweet and helpful. Mistaken identity.

When they come to the ruined city and the writing, they think it is merely a strange wilderness of ledges, dykes and trenches. Mistaken identity.

When they arrive at Harfang, they think the giants are friendly and that they want to have the children and Puddleglum take part in the autumn feast with them. Not that they will be the main dish at the feast. Mistaken identity. Mistaken intentions.

When the three meet Rilian, they think he is nasty and not to be trusted. They don't realise he is the one they have come to rescue. Mistaken identity.

When the mudmen come to themselves and realise what spell the witch has had them under, they prepare to fight for their freedom, unaware that the one who had them under their spell is dead. Rather than celebrate, they prepare for war. When they see Rilian and the others on horseback, they prepare to defend themselves against the onslaught by the witch's people. They haven't the slightest idea that these people were also subject to her lies and sorcery and that it is they who have killed the witch and freed them from her spell. Mistaken identity.

When the children, Puddleglum and Rilian see the mudmen letting off rockets and marching as to war, they assume that they are their enemy and that the rockets are warnings. They don't realise it is their way of celebrating their liberation from the spell, and at the same time a taking to arms should the queen or her subjects try to stop them. Mistaken identity.

These last two points, which are the subject of chapters 13 and 14 bring about an almost fatal ending to the story. The earthmen think the heroes are their enemy and the heroes fear the earthmen. Both assume the other group are working for the witch.

Thankfully, the truth comes out quickly and the situation is ratified. Mistaken identities and misconceptions are brought to light, and both sets of people are able to make their way home and leave the cursed shallowlands of the underworld. The heroes head for the overworld, the earthmen for Bism.

There's a lesson in all this. Things are not always as they seem. We need to be aware of this in faith as in life. Sometimes things look hopeless and as though there is no way out. But there is a bigger picture we can't see. Just as the heroes and the earthmen did not realise that the other group was equally the enemy of the witch, and so feared them, what might be looking to us like a hopeless situation might just be a small bit of the picture.

I'm sure as the characters looked back on the story afterwards, they realised how they had missed the (sometimes almost obvious) cases of mistaken identity in their adventures. And so we can look back on events in life and realise that what looked like a bad job, was actually for the best.

When Jesus was arrested and crucified, it looked to the disciples as though everything was lost. All their dreams and plans for the Messianic kingdom with Jesus as the ruler were shattered. They couldn't make sense of it, and feared they had been wrong. Jesus was not the Messiah; it was a case of mistaken identity. Mistaken identity, yes, but not in the way they thought. Three days later he rose again. Jesus had a bigger plan at work, a bigger, more important kingdom to win. Once the disciples came to realise this, they could look back and see clearly what God had been doing and knew that what looked like defeat was the greatest victory of all - the victory over sin and death. Things are not always as they seem.

I can testify to this in my own life, when I was distraught last year over thinking I did not have a scholarship to study in Oxford. I couldn't see any light or make any sense of it. When, after two weeks in this state, the unthinkable happened and I was awarded the scholarship, it seemed like the whole situation had been pointless. Why go through those two weeks of sadness? But as the truth sunk in, I realised all the good that came out of it. I had learnt to surrender to God and grown so much closer to him. I knew I was doing what he wanted me to do. And other girls' lives were blessed because they were given the scholarship as well as me (something that might not have happened had I been awarded it first time).

Things are not always as they seem. But that's okay. We have a God who sees the whole picture; who knows what is best. And he is the one who is in control.

## **Chapter 15**

### **The Great Snow Dance**

When first o' the season's snow starts to fall  
And lies fresh on the ground  
We hear the wak'ning winter's call  
Summons us to gather 'round

Fauns with groom'd flanks and hooves that shine  
Begin to gallop and prance  
While their dearest dryads, leafy hair divine  
Glide swiftly in to dance

Dwarfs dressed in their finest gear –  
Golden tassels, scarlet hoods  
Join th' mythic creatures once a year  
In a clearing in the snowy woods

And so begins the Great Snow Dance  
Intricate weavings, practised moves  
Music sweet, but with eerie stance  
Guides floral feet and caprine hooves

And the dwarfs stand forming a secondary ring  
Tossing spheres of compact snow  
While feet make a drum beat and sweet fiddles sing  
In a rhythm neither too fast nor too slow

But lo' what commotion disturbs our rite?  
A voice calling from the hill?  
We spot the source, but what a sight!  
A girl emerges - her name is "Jill"

She says she needs help, she's not alone  
There're others trapped as well  
So lost and far from kin or home  
With such a tale to tell

The dwarfs stop their game, and gather their tools  
To rescue those trapped in the mound  
The moles join the cause, as though mining for jewels  
No match for their skill is the ground

At last they break through, and all is made clear  
A wiggle, two horses, a man –  
But he's no mere man, but someone more dear  
Can it be? By the Lion, it can!

It's our Prince who was lost, for so many a year  
Our Prince whom we'd giv'n up for dead  
He's returned, yes he has, he really is here  
He's been saved, bless his dear royal head

Though the snow dance was brought to an untimely end  
We've something far greater to cheer us  
Our Prince has returned, yes, we have hope again  
And again will our enemies fear us.

But come children dear, be warmed, sup and rest  
For your journey was tiring and long  
But you're heroes; we'll praise you along with the best  
Our minstrels shall laud you in song.

## Chapter 16

### *The Seafarer's Last Voyage Part II*

It was only the fifth day after setting out from Narnia, and they would soon reach the shores of Terebinthia. Caspian had wished to bypass Galma, but his advisors suggested they stop there as it would be his final voyage to his subject isles, and the people would appreciate seeing their king one last time. In a way he was glad of the visit. He had had opportunity to speak to many of his subjects, who thanked him greatly for his many years' service, and they had held a feast in his honour that evening. Among those he met was an elderly woman, not many years younger than himself. Beneath her healthy but wrinkled skin, she bore the hint of faint freckles, and she wore a splendid pair of glasses that accented her hazel eyes. The daughter of Galma's previous duke, she was now married to a kindly doctor, whom he also met, and had served many years as his assistant nurse. Together they had been a blessing to many of the sick and injured of Galma.

Now they were back at sea, and Caspian sat in his cabin, staring at the gold lion head on the wall, praying that Aslan would grant that he see him one last time. As he sat there, the face seemed to come alive and he remembered of the last time Aslan had appeared to him at sea, near the World's End. His heart began to beat faster.

"Aslan, is that you?" he managed to whisper.

The lion's face was more life-like now, and he looked into its eyes. Last time those eyes had been full of disappointment and sorrow, so that it tore at the young king's heart. This time, there was still sorrow, but of a different, gentler kind.

"Caspian," said the head.

"Oh, it is you," cried the old king, not bothering to hold back the tears - tears he'd refrained from shedding in front of his subjects for so long. He'd had so much he wanted to tell the Lion, but now that he was here, there were no words. And he realised words were hardly necessary.

"My son..." he finally managed, "My son is lost. He was lost to me before ever he vanished. He was lost the day my wife..." The king could not continue. He didn't try.

He just looked at the Lion and saw in his eyes a sorrow deeper than his own. Nothing more needed to be said at that moment.

At last, the Lion spoke, "I know. I know it hurts. For your sake, I wish it could have been otherwise, but had I stopped the one harm, a worse would have befallen all of Narnia. It had to be this way. One day you will understand the reason why."

"When?" asked Caspian, not with disrespect, but with the broken heart of a weary man, "I've waited these ten years, hoping to see reason - to learn why - how much longer before I can understand?"

Aslan looked at him with something that seemed like a mixture of pity and joy. "Sooner than you realise, my dear Caspian. Indeed, very soon now."

Caspian realised there was something ominous in these words, yet at the same time his heart leapt with anticipation.

After another long silence, he asked the thing that was most on his heart, "Why my son, though? I could bear the loss of my wife, though I loved her more dearly than my own life. I knew always that the blood of the stars flowed in her veins, and would rather her departure was before mine than long after. But why the boy? Not yet come to manhood, with a kingdom to rule? Could not I have been taken in his place, and he be left to rule, to fall in love, to marry and to bear an heir to continue the line?"

Aslan growled slightly, not in anger, but admonition, at this. "You forget who the true king of Narnia is," he corrected. "I would never leave her leaderless without reason. Sometimes I think you care too much for your line - your dynasty."

Caspian dropped his head, fairly admonished, "You're right, of course. Though I had not realised before now. What is my line in the scheme of history? You can raise up a new king when you need to. Why, you can bring a ruler from another world as before. Sometimes I forget that I come from a line of usurpers; conquerors. By all rights I should never have been king."

"Narnia is ruled by the one I chose. Just as you appoint those who rule over your subject isles. I told you once that you come from a lineage with honour enough to erect the head of the poorest beggar and shame enough to bow the shoulders of the greatest emperor. That remains true."

"It does, Aslan," replied the King. "You speak the truth and I thank you for putting up with someone so forgetful and ungrateful as me." There was another pause.

"But come. Now I have reminded you of your place, be of cheer. For your line will continue longer than you realise. Even now, I have sent children from the world of the High Kings and Queens of Old to rescue your son. He is not lost, but simply ensnared. He was lured away by the same creature that killed your wife. In the guise of a beautiful woman, she enchanted him and keeps him in her secret kingdom below the earth, forgetful of who he is. She has promised him a kingdom if he joins with her in conquest, not knowing that the kingdom she promises him is that which he should inherit by right."

Caspian gasped. "Why do you tell me this? I would rather my grey head went to the grave thinking him dead, than knowing this awful truth."

"Badly treated, yes," responded Aslan, "But not harmed. He is still whole. And when the children I have sent, along with a faithful Marsh-wiggle, find him, they will free him fully of his enchantment. He will be fit to rule Narnia. These years of imprisonment have strengthened his character. The boy who was kidnapped would not have made a good king. He was young and unstable. His heart was full of revenge and bitterness. And even were this not so, you know better than most that it is no small task to rule a kingdom while still a child. The man that will return will make a good ruler. He will be gentle and just and Narnia will enjoy peace under his rule, which will begin sooner than he would want."

Caspian understood what Aslan meant by these last words. He was not sad. He had lived a long life, and good, for the most part. Knowing that his son was alive and would soon be well, erased the only regret he had.

"I am ready," said Caspian at last. "I thought I was ready, back on the voyage of the Dawn Treader, but my life was only beginning then. Now I want to see your country for real, knowing that Narnia has no further need of me."

"You still have some time," answered the Lion. "Command your sailors to turn sail and return to Narnia. You will arrive in time to bid farewell to your son."

Until now, Caspian had been planning to continue his journey to the World's End. But he realised now that it was not by that means that he would enter Aslan's Country. He would take the short path. But he was content. He would see his son one last time. And then, he would go home.

## The Ending

The last chapters of so many of the Chronicles are so packed with truths and pieces of brilliance, it's near impossible to comment on them. Like the end of *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* and *The Last Battle*, this chapter reveals so much of what makes Lewis such a brilliant author, I don't know where to start with the comments: We see the beauty of Narnia for the first time in the book; the sorrow of a son reunited with his father only to lose him again; a return to the splendour of Aslan's Country; the rejuvenation of the old dead king in a scene that once again comes rather close to allegory; the granting of Caspian's wish to see our world, for just five minutes; bullies being taught their lesson; a poorly run school being investigated and put right; and social and political comments made on education, feminism (?), leadership and politics. Lewis crams all of this into just one chapter so smoothly and adeptly that we hardly notice the transitions.

I've said many times before that Lewis is such a good writer, he's really hard to paraphrase. It's better to quote him directly. So below are a few of my favourite quotes from the last chapters (the first from the second last):

*...tears came to Jill's eyes. Their quest had been worth all the pains it cost.*

*"Puddleglum," said Jill, "You're a regular old humbug. You sound as doleful as a funeral and I believe you're perfectly happy. And you talk as if you were afraid of everything, when you're really as brave as - as a lion".*

*"Now speaking of funerals," began Puddleglum, but Jill, who heard the centaurs tapping with their hooves behind her, surprised him very much by flinging her arms around his thin neck and kissing his muddy-looking face, while Eustace wrung his hand...*

*The marshwiggle, sinking back on his bed, remarked to himself, "Well I wouldn't have dreamt of her doing that. Even though I am a good-looking chap."*

*"I have come," said a deep voice behind them...*

*And she wanted to say, "I'm sorry," but she could not speak...*

*"Think of that no more. I will not always be scolding. You have done the work for which I sent you into Narnia."*

*Even the Lion wept: great Lion-tears, each tear more precious than the Earth would be if it was a single solid diamond.*

*After that, the Head's friends saw that the Head was no use as a Head, so they got her made an inspector to interfere with other Heads. And when they found she wasn't much good even at that, they got her into Parliament where she lived happily ever after.*