

The Importance of C.S. Lewis to Faith-Based Theatre as Seen in *The Silver Chair*

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Abstract

The paper contains an adaptation of the book *The Silver Chair* by C. S. Lewis and details the purpose for why this particular story is important for the faith-based theatre community. There are a number of Christian themes that are evident in the story that are examined as well as the elements of the story that make it apt for adapting to a play format.

The Importance of C. S. Lewis to Faith-Based Theatre as Seen in *The Silver Chair*

Introduction

One of the topics that Christian circles continually discuss is how dark the world of the arts can be. There are often many complaints about how there are no longer any wholesome and family-friendly presentations of artistic endeavors. Parents have begun to discourage artistic passions purely for the protection of their own children, something that can be at times understandable.

This has had a direct impact on some children, causing them to have a negative view of theatre. Even though some have recognized this fact, and, in an attempt to reconcile this gap, have begun to produce theatre on their own, for the large part their work is considerably of lesser quality than the works produced by the outside world, further discouraging young Christians from pursuing theatre and art as a career path.

Preface

One of the greatest Christian artists was C. S. Lewis. His writing inspired millions and didn't confine itself to one particular audience, but reached out to many different people of many different beliefs. However, his stories have definitive and strong messages that Christians have embraced and were excited about. Lewis encompassed the Christian artists' duty to glorify God by creating strong and beautiful art while also keeping a pure and wholesome message.

No better example of this is the author of the book *The Magician's Book*, Laura Miller, and her confession at the preface. Miller is an atheist who does not care about the Christian worldview. She openly admits to continuing to be unconverted by the themes and content of the book. However, she continues to be enthralled with it, enough to write

a book about her interaction with it. She explains herself at the end of her Introduction saying, “one of the reasons [her childhood self] prized the Chronicles was her belief (correct, I still think) that they educated her on the nature of evil as well as good, and that she was the better for it” (15).

The Silver Chair is the story chosen to accomplish the goal for this thesis. *The Silver Chair* is a story about two teenagers, Eustace and Jill, who are chased by some bullies in their schoolyard. A wall magically parts and the two children run into Narnia. After arriving, Eustace falls off a cliff and Jill is alone to receive three instructions from Aslan. When Jill reaches Eustace, the first sign had already passed. They meet up with a Marshwiggle named Puddlglum who agrees to help them on their journey.

They meet a Green Lady accompanied by a knight on their way who instructs them to stay at a castle. Upon reaching it they realize it is a giant’s castle. Aslan visits Jill in a dream and shows her that they missed the second sign. After escaping the giant’s castle, they find a hole that takes them to an underground lair called the Underworld. They are introduced to the prince who informs them that the queen is away. He invites them to stay during his “temptation” while strapped to a silver chair, during which he confesses to be Rilian, the prince of Narnia, which the travelers recognize as the final sign and decide to free him.

The queen returns and Rilian fights and defeats her. They flee to the upper layer of Narnia, where the return of Prince Rilian is celebrated. The children return to England and, with some help from Caspian and Aslan, scare the bullies away.

Style

The style of *The Silver Chair* is a fantasy play, mainly because the book upon which it is based is a fantasy story. One could even further define this play as a “fantasy fiction” play. A short definition of this genre has been offered by Jane Mobley in her article “Toward a Definition of Fantasy Fiction”, wherein she states it is “a nonrational form...which arises from a worldview essentially magical in its orientation.” She further explains that although the definition states that it is “nonrational,” that it does not omit a logical progression of events, but rather that one must accept magic, a force not included in the worldview of most readers, as the main active force.

As an example, Aslan, himself, is the most active and strong force of creation and continuation of a sequence of events in *The Silver Chair*. The entirety of the story hinges on his existence and power. Thus, I focused the play on Aslan and his interaction with the world. As Mobley states, “This world is informed by Magic, and the reader must be willing to accept Magic as the central force” (117). The theme of Aslan’s Magic is something that is undercurrent throughout the story but only appears to emerge at certain moments.

The Collected Letters of C. S. Lewis, Volume III: Narnia, Cambridge and Joy 1950-1963 contains is the following: “In reality however [Aslan] is an invention giving an imaginary answer to the question, ‘What might Christ become like if there really were a world like Narnia and He chose to be incarnate and die and rise again in *that* world as He actually has done in ours?’ This is not an allegory at all.” The realization and new understanding of Lewis’ purpose when creating Narnia and Aslan focused me on

bringing out the story and its themes of Christianity instead of attempting to relate each moment to some allegorical equivalent in the life of a Christian.

Target Audience

What this thesis hopes to accomplish is to bring the love of arts and specifically theatre back into the minds of children, while also giving their parents a sense of comfort with the quality of the message by converting one of C. S. Lewis' books into a play that they can perform. The book that I have chosen to accomplish this goal is *The Silver Chair* because of the strong quality of imagination that Lewis conveys in the story and the strong themes that he weaves through the book. So this play should appeal to both young and old audience members with the purpose of bringing a younger generation of artists into the art form of theatre which a strong support from their parents.

Strategy

There are several strong reasons that were used to justify the adaption of *The Silver Chair* into a play. The first is that I believe that *The Silver Chair* is a story that is strongly suited for the stage and will allow audiences to experience the world of Narnia in a new and fresh medium. The play, while a travel dialogue, is centered around three characters, making it easy to keep track of in a live setting. Audience members, while reading a book have the luxury of rereading sections to clarify and know the names of the characters. In a live play, they do not have this chance, so a play with more central characters is important. Themes are also strongly woven are into the characters, giving motivation and purpose to the characters in each scene. Finally, the story itself is detailed and interesting, continuously moving from plot point to plot point and will not allow the audience to become bored with it.

One of the most important parts about *The Silver Chair* is the travel dialogue. The characters change locations often scene to scene and nearly as often actually change the world that they enter. The book *Planet Narnia*, by Michal Ward was extremely useful in keeping all of these locations unique. Ward notes that there are four distinct worlds that the characters travel to: England, Aslan's Country, Narnia, and the Underland. Furthermore, these locations are all visited in sequence, resulting in a sort of bell curve, showing that England is a land above Aslan's country, which is a mountain above Narnia which is again above the Underland. The travelers then return up through those levels.

The challenge to these locations is to make sure that they were all unique as the characters talked about them so that the audience can keep the locations different in their minds. Ward notes that Lewis treats these divisions like a mountain, describing England/Aslan's country, the peak, as so high that clouds look like sheep (129). The further down they go, the thicker the air is and the easier it is for them to be deceived. Eventually, Jill feels "smothered" (129).

The strong themes that are imbedded and woven throughout the book will also contribute to the completion of the goal of the thesis. Some of these include the themes of love, forgiveness, redemption and the effects of bullying. All of these themes are ones that are very prevalent in the current culture and can be used to impact the younger generation.

This was, of course, one of the main research areas of the thesis: drawing the strong Christian themes and focusing on them without necessarily making them too obvious. The general theme of *The Silver Chair* is noted by Christin Ditchfield, author of *A Family Guide to Narnia: Biblical Truths in C. S. Lewis's The Chronicles of Narnia*, as

that of “staying on guard” (147). The main plot device that Lewis uses to progress the story is the searching out of the “signs” that will lead the questers to the missing Prince Rilian. This is easily a parallel to the truths that are supposed to guide us as Christians in our walk. Ditchfield notes that even though the children fail as we fail, the ultimate point is that “in spite of their own shortcomings . . . Aslan’s purposes prevail” (148).

The other major theme can be seen in the climax of the play: the confrontation with the Green Witch. As Steven Lovell notes in his chapter in the book *The Chronicles of Narnia and Philosophy*, the conflict is “the Freudian critique of religious belief” (43). Belief in God is not logical in the sense that it takes faith to do it. The Witch appeals to the senses of the travelers to convince them she is right, saying they are playing to their childish make-believe (44). Puddleglum, however, desires something better, and says that even if his “make-believe” is not real, it is better than the world that the Witch describes: sans-Aslan.

Conclusion

The goal of this thesis is to reach out to young artists with a quality adaptation of a widely regarded piece of art that also is based in a good message and to inspire them to pursue theatre as an art. As a high school artist, I longed for plays that allowed me to explore my imagination and strong creative worlds and characters, while also allowing me to present a worldview with which I could personally agree. My prayer is that these works will give hope to young and old artists that there can be light in a world of darkness.

Scene Synopses

ACT I, SCENE I: Eustace finds Jill behind the school, crying because she has been abused by bullies. Eustace attempts to cheer her up by making friends with her and telling her about Narnia. When they hear the bullies returning, Eustace tells Jill to repeat the words “Aslan, Aslan, Aslan” and they disappear into Narnia.

ACT I, SCENE II: Eustace and Jill find themselves on a cliff where they begin to fight. Jill pushes Eustace off and just as she does, Aslan appears. He tells her that he has a mission for her and blows her off the cliff to Eustace. They watch a procession and realize that much time has passed since Eustace had been to Narnia. They meet an owl called Glimfeather who decides to help them on their quest.

ACT I SCENE III: While Glimfeather is escorting them to the Parliament of Owls, Jill tells Eustace about the signs that Aslan told her there would be to guide them on their quest. Once they reach the Parliament of Owls, they are informed about a missing prince who is Caspian’s son and how he disappeared. Glimfeather decides to take them to a friend who will help.

ACT I SCENE IV: The children meet Puddleglum who agrees to help them find Prince Rilian.

ACT I SCENE V: The travelers meet The Lady of the Green Kirtle who tells them about a city called Harfang, where the gentle giants will aid them in their quest. After some debate they decide to go to the city despite Puddleglum’s advice against it.

ACT I SCENE VI: They knock on the door to the giant’s house and are let in.

ACT I SCENE VII: Aslan comes to Jill in a dream and scolds her for not repeating the signs he gave her then shows her that in their haste to get to Harfang, they missed the

second sign. When Eustace and Puddleglum return to her in the morning, she recounts her dream to them and they decide they need to leave. However, they discover the gentle giants are intending on eating them, and they are under surveillance. They manage to find a way out of the castle and run toward the second sign, while being chased by the gentle giants. The sign leads them underground.

ACT I SCENE VIII: Puddleglum and the children travel underground until they reach the Underworld where they are escorted to the prince of the Underworld who invites them inside, against the orders of his queen who is away. After waxing eloquent about his queen, the prince asks if they wish to remain in the castle while his period of enchantment occurs because he wishes to be with some real people and not the creatures of the Underworld. During the enchantment, he reveals that the real enchantment is that he is enslaved by the queen and that he is the rightful prince of Narnia. The travelers free him, but are confronted by the Witch. The Witch almost convinces them that there is no Aslan, but Puddleglum stamps out her magic and Rilian kills her.

ACT I SCENE IX: The four of them rush to the surface to escape the Underworld and are greeted at the surface by Narnians.

ACT I SCENE X: Jill and Eustace wake up in Aslan's country where they see Caspian, dead. Aslan appears and tells Eustace to drive a thorn into his paw. The blood from the wound lands on Caspian and he awakes. Aslan allows him a glimpse into England.

ACT I SCENE XI: The bullies are still where Jill and Eustace left them, but this time they have Caspian and Aslan. The children run away and the headmistress is taken away for claiming there was a lion in the schoolyard. Jill and Eustace end as friends.

Sample Scenes

Attached are a selection of scenes chosen for their relevance to the goals of the thesis. The first because it introduces character and the second two because they contain the climax of the play. The context of the first scene is that the children have just run through a crack in a stone wall after fleeing some bullies.

SCENE 2

AT RISE

JILL and EUSTACE arrive in a wood. They start moving through the forest)

EUSTACE

Come on.

JILL

Where? Have you been here before?

EUSTACE

I'm not sure... I don't think so.

They almost walk off a cliff

EUSTACE

Look out!

EUSTACE grabs JILL's arm and pulls her away from the edge

JILL

Watch it! You act as if I was a kid... What's wrong with you? (looks over the edge)
Woah! I've never dreamed of being so high! (She continues to look over the edge)

EUSTACE

Come on Pole, what are you doing? Come back idiot!

EUSTACE tries to snatch her back and they struggle for a moment, then EUSTACE falls off the ledge. She doesn't have time to think before a LION comes and bends over the cliff, blowing. She realizes that the LION is blowing EUSTACE away. When it is finished, it turns and walks away without looking at her.

JILL

It must be a dream, it must, it must! I—I'll wake up in a moment... Oh, I wish I had never come here. Why did Scrubb bring me to this awful place! If—if only I could think, but I'm so thirsty. Maybe if I can find some water I can think of what to do.

LION

If you are thirsty, you may drink (indicates water)... Are you not thirsty?

JILL

I'm dying of thirst.

LION

Then drink.

JILL

M—May I? W-would you mind going away while I do?

LION shakes his head

JILL

Will you p-promise not to---do anything to me, if I do come?

LION

I make no promise.

JILL

Do you, eat, girls?

LION

I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities and realms.

JILL

Then I daren't come and drink!

LION
You will die of thirst.

JILL
Then I'll go find another stream.

LION
There is no other stream.

JILL starts forward slowly, bends down, and drinks from the water

LION
Child, where is the boy?

JILL
He—he fell off the cliff... Sir.

LION
And how did he come to do that?

JILL
He was trying to stop me from falling.

LION
And why were you so near the edge?

JILL
I was showing off, Sir.

LION
That is a very good answer. Do so no more. Now, do not worry, the boy is safe. I have blown him to Narnia. But your task will be harder because of what you have done.

JILL
Please, what task sir?

LION

The task for which I called you and him here, out of your own world.

JILL

But, you must be making a mistake. Nobody called me and Scrubb you know. It was we who asked to come here. Scrubb said we were to call to—someone I don't know—and perhaps the somebody would open the door.

LION

You would not have called to me unless I had been calling to you.

JILL

So you are that somebody, Sir?

LION

I am. Now, here your task. Far from here in the land of Narnia, there lives an aged king who is sad because he has no prince of his blood to be king after him. He has no heir because his only son was stolen from him many years ago, and no one in Narnia knows where that prince is or whether he is still alive. But he is. I lay on you this command, that you seek this lost prince until either you have found him and brought him to his father's house, or else died in the attempt, or else gone back to your own world.

JILL

How can I do all that!?

LION

I will tell you. These are the signs by which I will guide you in your quest. First, as soon as the boy Eustace sets foot in Narnia, he will meet an old friend. He must greet that friend at once; if he does, you will both have good help. Second, you must journey out of Narnia to the north, until you come to the ruined city of the ancient giants. Third, you shall find writing on a stone in that ruined city, and you must do what the writing tells you. Fourth, you will know the lost prince by this, that he will be the first person you have met in your travels that will ask you to do something in my name, in the name of Aslan.

JILL

Thank you very much. I see.

ASLAN

Child, perhaps you do not see quite as well as you think. But the first step is to remember the signs.

JILL

Alright, I think I can do that. But, please, how am I to get to Narnia?

ASLAN

On my breath. I will blow you to the place where I have blown Eustace.

ASLAN blows JILL over to where EUSTACE is watching a group of people.

JILL

Scrubb!

EUSTACE

Pole? What are you doing? You look dreadful.

JILL

Well I should think so! I've just been blown who knows how far through winds. . . and clouds! Oh, I'll never get these knots out.

EUSTACE

Pole, stop being such a baby. Before you came barging in I was trying to get a look at that crowd over there.

JILL

But, they're all animals! And talking! Golly. So it's true after all. . . I wonder if they are friendly. Oh quick, Scrubb, do you see anyone you know!?

EUSTACE

Of course not, Pole, I just got here.

JILL

Don't be a fool. There isn't a moment to lose. Don't you see some old friend here? Because you've got to speak to him at once!

EUSTACE

What are you talking about?

JILL

It's Aslan, the Lion! He says you've got to! I've seen him!

EUSTACE

Oh, you have, have you? What did he say?

JILL

He said the very first person you saw in Narnia would be an old friend, and you'd got to speak to him at once.

EUSTACE

Well, there's no one here I've seen in my life before. Now please be quiet so we can hear what they're saying.

JILL

I can't hear a word they're saying!

EUSTACE

Be quiet! The king is getting on board.

EUSTACE

Now—

OWL enters and interrupts EUSTACE

OWL

Tu-whoo, tu-whoo! Who are you two?

EUSTACE

M-my names Scrubb, and this is Pole. Would you mind telling us where we are?

OWL

In the land of Narnia, at the kings castle at Cair Paravel.

EUSTACE

Is that the king who's just taken ship?

OWL

Too true, too true... But who are you two? There's something magic about you two. I saw you arrive: you flew. Everyone else was so busy that nobody knew. Except me. I happened to notice you, you flew.

EUSTACE

We were sent here by Aslan.

OWL

Tu-whoo, tu-whoo! This is almost too much for me, so early in the evening. I'm not quite myself till the sun's down.

JILL

And we've been sent to find the lost prince.

EUSTACE

Wait, what prince?

JILL

I'll tell you later.

OWL

Then you had better come speak to the Lord Regent at once. That's him over there, Trumpkin the dwarf.

OWL leads the way over to the dwarf while muttering

OWL

Who, tu-who. What a to-do! I can't think clearly yet. It's too early. Ahem! Lord Regent!

TRUMPKIN

Heh? What's that!

OWL

Two strangers my lord!

TRUMPKIN

Rangers! What d'ye mean? I see two uncommonly grubby man-cubs! What do they want!

OWL

The girl is called Jill!

TRUMPKIN

What's that! The girls were all killed! I don't believe a word of it. What girls? Who killed 'em!?

OWL

Only one girl, my lord! Her name is Jill!

TRUMPKIN

Speak up, speak up! Don't stand there buzzing and twittering in my ear! Who's been killed!

OWL (yelling)

Nobody's been killed!

TRUMPKIN

Who?

OWL

NOBODY

TRUMPKIN

Alright, alright. You needn't shout. I'm not so deaf as all that. What do you mean by coming here to tell me that nobody's been killed?

EUSTACE

Can you tell him I'm Eustace?

OWL

The boy is Eustace, my lord!

TRUMPKIN

Useless! I dare say he is. Is that any reason for bringing him to me?

OWL

Not useless, Eustace!

TRUMPKIN

Used to it is he? I don't know what you're talking about, I'm sure. I tell you what it is, Master Glimfeather, when I was a young dwarf there used to be talking beasts and birds in this country who really could talk. There wasn't all this mumbling and muttering and whispering. It wouldn't have been tolerated for a moment! Not a moment! Now, Urnus, my trumpet please!

GLIMFEATHER (to the children)

My brains a bit clearer now. Don't say anything about the lost prince. I'll explain later. It wouldn't do, wouldn't do, tu-who, tu-who. Oh whata toodo!

TRUMPKIN

Now. If you have anything sensible to say, Master Glimfeather, try and say it. Take a deep breath and don't try to speak too quickly.

GLIMFEATHER

These two were sent by the Lion himself tu-who. To visit the royal court these two.

TRUMPKIN

Sent by the Lion himself, hey?... Well my dears. You are both heartily welcome. Now, Master Glimfeather, see that these two are well provided for. And, Glimfeather, in your ear—(still loudly) And see that they're properly washed!

Lights out

END OF SCENE

SCENE 8

AT RISE

The stage is dark. JILL, EUSTACE, and
PUDDLEGLUM Enter holding hands.

PUDDLEGLUM

Watch your footing, you two.

JILL

It's so warm!

PUDDLEGLUM

We must be about a mile down if you ask me.

WARDEN (in the dark)

What make you here, creatures of the Overworld?

EUSTACE

Who's there?

WARDEN

I am the Warden of the Marches of Underland, and with me stand a hundred Earthmen in arms. Tell me quickly who you are and what is your errand in the Deep Realm.

PUDDLEGLUM

We fell down by accident.

WARDEN

Many fall down and few return to the sunlit lands. Make ready now to come with me to the Queen of the Deep Realm.

EUSTACE

What does she want with us?

WARDEN

I do not know. Her will is not to be questioned but obeyed.

(light comes on and reveals the WARDEN and a group of EARTHMEN)

PUDDLEGLUM

Well, this is just what I needed. If these chaps don't teach me to take a serious view on life, I don't know what will. Look at that fellow with the walrus mustache—or that one with the—

JILL

Oh, whatever will become of us?

PUDDLEGLUM

Now no don't let your spirits down, Pole. There's only one thing you've got to remember. We're back on the right lines. We were to go under the Ruined City, and we are under it. We're following the instructions again.

EUSTACE

Puddleglum look! A city!

(The Warden, guarding Eustace, Jill and Puddleglum, walks up to two Earthmen guards)

THE WARDEN

Many sink down to the Underworld.

EARTHMEN

And few return to the sunlit lands. (They confer)

EARTHMAN

I tell you the Queen's grace is gone from hence on her great affair. We had best keep these top dwellers in strait prison till her homecoming. Few return to the sunlit lands.

PRINCE enters

PRINCE

What coil are you keeping down there Mullugutherum? Overworlders, ha! Bring them to my room, and that presently.

WARDEN

Please your Highness to remember—

PRINCE

It pleases my highness principally to be obeyed, old mutterer. Escort them to my chambers. Welcome, Overworlders! But stay a moment! I cry you mercy! I have seen you two fair children, and this, your strange governor, before. Was it not you three that met me by the bridge on the borders of Ettinsmoor when I rode there by my Lady's side?

JILL

Oh... you were the black knight who never spoke?

PUDDLEGLUM

And was that lady the Queen of Underland?

EUSTACE

Because if it was, I think she was jolly mean to send us off to a castle of giants who intended to eat us. What harm had we ever done her, I should like to know?

PRINCE

How? If you were not so young a warrior, Boy, you and I must have fought to the death on this quarrel. I can hear no words against my Lady. But know this: whatever she said to you, she said of a good intent. You, who do not know her, will see her the possessor of all virtues. But, in the meantime, what is your errand in the Deep Lands?

JILL

Please we are trying to find Prince Rilian of Narnia.

PRINCE

Rilian? Narnia? Narnia? What land is that? I have never heard the name. It must be far from the part of Overworld I know. But it is strange that you should come here seeking—how do you call him? —Billian? Trillian? Indeed, to my certain knowledge there is no such man here.

EUSTACE

We were told to look for a message on the stones of the City Ruinous and we saw the words "UNDER ME"

PRINCE

Had you but asked my Lady, she could have told you better. Those words are but part of a longer script, which in ancient times, read thus: Though under Earth and throneless now I be, Yet, while I lived, all Earth was under me. Obviously this ancient king of the giants caused this boast to be cut on his gravestone, how could you think that these words could possibly have meaning for *you*?

PUDDLEGLUM

Don't you mind him. There are no accidents. Our guide is Aslan; and he was there when the giant King caused the letters to be cut, and he knew already all things that would come of them; including this. And it seems to me, Sir, that this Lady of yours must be very old, if she remembers the verse as it was when they first cut it.

PRINCE

Very shrewd, Frog-face, you have hit the truth. She is one of a great race, and time has no hold on her. This fact makes me even more amazed at her grace. For you must know, Sirs, I am a man under the most strange afflictions, and none but the Queen's grace would have had patience with me. Ah, but it has gone far beyond that. She has promised me a kingdom and herself as my queen. Sit, sit and you shall hear it all.

They all get chairs and sit down.

PRINCE

You must understand, friends, that I know nothing of who I was, whence I came into this Dark World, or any time before I lived in this court of my Lady; but my thought is that she saved me from my evil enchantment, which is this: every night there comes an hour when my mind is most horribly changed, and, after my mind, my body. First I become furious and wild and would rush upon my dearest friends to kill them, if I were not bound. And soon after that, I turn into the likeness of a great serpent, hungry, fierce, and deadly. So my Lady tells me. I myself know nothing of it. Now the Queen's majesty knows by her art that I shall be freed from this enchantment when once she has made me king of a land in the Overworld and set its crown upon my head.

EUSTACE

It's a bit rough luck on them, isn't it?

PRINCE

Thou art a lad of wondrous, quick-working wit! For, on my honor, I had never thought of it so before. I see your meaning (looking troubled, then laughs) But fie on gravity! Is it not the most comical and ridiculous thing in the world to think of them all going about

PRINCE (cont.)

their business and never dreaming that under their peaceful fields and floors, only a fathom down, there is a great army ready to break out upon them! One can hardly choose but laugh at the thought!

JILL

I don't think it's funny at all. I think you'll be a wicked tyrant.

PRINCE (laughing)

What? Is our little maid a deep politician? But never fear, sweetheart. In ruling that land, I shall follow my Lady's council. Her word shall be my law, even as my word will be law to the people we have conquered.

PUDDLEGLUM

Sounds a very nice lady indeed.

PRINCE (suddenly very grave)

Friends, my hour is now very near. I am ashamed that you should see me, yet I dread being left alone. They will come in presently and bind me hand and foot to yonder chair. So it must be, for in my fury, they tell me, I would destroy all that I could reach.

EUSTACE

I say, I'm awfully sorry about your enchantment of course, but what will those fellows do to us when they come to bind you? They talked of putting us in prison. We'd much rather stay here till you're... better... if we may.

RILIAN

By custom none but the Queen herself remains with me in my evil hour. However, I do not wish to be left alone. I think I hear the gnomes' soft feet even now upon the stairs. Go through yonder door: it leads into my other apartments. And there, either wait until I am sane; or, if you will, return and sit with me in my ravings.

The three travelers walk to the side of the stage and then Earthmen come in and bind Rilian to the silver chair.

EUSTACE

Are we going to watch the enchantment, or shall we stay?

JILL

Stay here, I vote. I'd much rather not see it.

PUDDLEGLUM

No, go back. We may pick up some information, and we need all we can get. Seems to me that the Queen is a witch... and an enemy. There's a stronger smell of danger and lies about this land than I've ever smelled before. We need to keep alert.

The Earthmen leave and the three travelers come back into the room

EUSTACE

It's all right. All's clear.

PRINCE

Come in friends. The fit is not yet upon me. Make no noise, for I told that prying chamberlain that you were in bed. Now... I can feel it coming. Quick! Listen while I am master of myself. When the fit is upon me, it well may be that I shall beg and implore you to loosen my bonds. I shall call upon you by all that is most dear and most dreadful. But do not listen to me. Harden your hearts and stop your ears. For while I am bound you are safe. But if I were to escape this chair, then first would come my fury, and after that the change into a loathsome serpent.

PUDDLEGLUM

There is no fear of our freeing you. We've no wish to meet wild men; or serpents either.

JILL

I should think not.

PUDDLEGLUM

All the same, we oughtn't be too sure. Let's be on our guard. We've muffed everything else, you know. He'll be cunning, I shouldn't wonder, once he gets started. Can we trust one another? Do we all promise that whatever he says we don't touch those cords-- *whatever* he says, mind you?

EUSTACE

Rather!

JILL

There's nothing in the world he can say or do that'll make me change my mind.

PUDDLEGLUM

Hush! Something's happening!

PRINCE (groaning)

Ah. Enchantments, enchantments... the heavy, tangled, cold, clammy web of evil magic. Buried alive. Dragged down under the earth, down into the sooty blackness . . . how many years is it? . . . Have I lived ten years, or a thousand years, in the pit? Maggotmen all around me. Oh, have mercy. Let me out, let me go back. Let me feel the wind and see the sky... There used to be a little pool. When you looked down into it you could see all the trees growing upside-down in the water, all green, and below them, deep, very deep, the blue sky. (There is a sudden change of voice) Quick! I am sane now. 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. But you are not enemies. I am not your prisoner. Quick! Cut these cords.

PUDDLEGLUM

Stand fast! Steady!

PRINCE (forcing himself to calm)

I beseech you to hear me. Have they told you that if I am released from this chair I shall kill you and become a serpent? I see by your faces that they have. It is a lie. It is at this hour that I am in my right mind: it is all the rest of the day that I am enchanted. You are not Earthmen nor witches. Why should you be on their side? Of your courtesy, cut my bonds.

THREE TRAVELERS

Steady! Steady! Steady!

PRINCE

Oh, you have hearts of stone. Believe me, you look upon a wretch who has suffered almost more than any mortal can bear. What wrong have I ever done you, that you should side with my enemies to keep me in such miseries? And the minutes are slipping fast. Now you can save me; when this hour has passed, I shall be witless again—the toy and lap-dog, nay, more likely the pawn and tool, of one of the most devilish sorcerers that ever lived. And this night, of all nights, when she is away! You take from me a chance that may never come again.

JILL

This is dreadful. I do wish we'd stayed away till it was over.

PUDDLEGLUM

Steady!

PRINCE (whose voice is rising to a shriek)

Let me go, I say. Give me my sword! Once I am free, I shall take such vengeance on the Earthmen that all of Underland will weep for a thousand years!

EUSTACE

Now the frenzy's *really* starting. I hope those knots are tight.

PRINCE

Beware! One night I did break them. But the witch was there that time. You will not have her help tonight. Free me now, and I am your friend. I'm your mortal enemy else.

PUDDLEGLUM

Clever, isn't he?

PRINCE

Once and for all, I adjure you to set me free. By all fears and loved ones, by the bright skies of Overland, by the great Lion, by Aslan himself, I charge you—

All three travelers gasp and jump back in surprise

EUSTACE

It's the sign. It was the words of the sign!

JILL

Oh, what are we to do?

PUDDLEGLUM

I think we know.

EUSTACE AND PUDDLEGLUM

In the name of Aslan!

They cut Rilians bonds. As soon as he is free, he jumps up and runs to his sword

PRINCE

You first, vile engine of sorcery! You who were my prison! To dust will I grind you, lest your mistress should ever use you for another victim!

RILIAN attacks the chair and it explodes. All four fly back.

END OF SCENE

SCENE 9

AT RISE

They are lying on stage and begin to slowly get up as if knocked out

RILIAN (rising)

Thank you, my friends. What? Do I see before me a Marsh-wiggle—a real, live, honest, Narnian Marsh-wiggle? I had... forgotten Narnia while under the spell; but that enchantment is over now! You may well believe that I know Narnia, for I am Rilian, Prince of Narnia, and Caspian the great King is my father.

PUDDLEGLUM

Your royal highness. We have traveled these many days in search of you. My name is Puddleglum, my lord. This is Eustace and Jill, sent by the Lion himself from beyond the world's end.

RILIAN

I owe all of you a debt greater than I can ever repay. How long have I been under the power of the witch?

PUDDLEGLUM

More than ten years, your Highness.

RILIAN

Ten years! Yes, I believe you. Now that I am my true self, I can remember those enchanted years, though while I was under the spell I forgot myself. And now fair friends—but wait! I hear their feet on the stairs. Eustace, go lock the--no, wait, I have a better thought than that. I will fool them, if Aslan gives me the wit.

He walks over to the door and flings it open confidently, quickly backing away when he sees who is standing there. The Witch enters with her minions, taking in the scene.

WITCH (to Earthmen)

Leave us. And let none disturb us, on pain of death. (They leave and the Witch closes the door. She then turns to Rilian.) My lord Prince! Is your nightly fit over so soon? Why stand you here unbound? And who are these aliens? Is it *they* who have destroyed the chair which was your only safety?!

RILIAN (with great effort)

Madam, I no longer need that chair. You have told me a hundred times how deeply you pitied my sufferings, so you will be glad to know that they are ended. Forever. There was, it seems, some small error in your way of treating them. These, my true friends, have delivered me. I am now in my right mind, and there are two things your Ladyship must know. First: as for you plan to break out into the Overworld and make me king of some nation that never wronged me, I now detest. And second: I am the only son of Caspian the Tenth, king of Narnia. Therefore, Madam, it is my duty to depart suddenly from your court into my own country. I only ask you grant me and my friends safe conduct through your dark realm.

The Witch does not reply, but moves over to the fire place, throwing into it a handful of green powder. She then takes out her magical instrument and begins strumming it methodically.

WITCH

Narnia? Narnia? I have often heard your Lordship utter that name... in your ravings. Dear Prince, you are very sick. There is no land called Narnia.

PUDDLEGLUM

Yes there is though, Ma'am—I happen to have lived there my whole life.

WITCH

Indeed. Tell me, where is that country?

PUDDLEGLUM

Up there. I—I don't know exactly where.

WITCH (laughing)

But how? Is there a country in the roof?

PUDDLEGLUM

No! It's in the Overworld.

WITCH

And what, or where, pray is this...how do you call it? *Overworld?*

EUSTACE

Oh don't be so silly. As if you didn't know! It's up above, where you can see the sky and the sun and the stars. Why, you've been there yourself. We met you there!

WITCH

I cry you mercy, little brother! I do not recall that meeting. But we often meet our friends in strange places when we dream. And as none dream alike, you must not ask me to remember it!

JILL

I've been there too!

WITCH

And I suppose thou art the Queen of Narnia, pretty one.

JILL

I'm nothing of the sort. We—Scrubb and I—come from another world.

WITCH

Why, this is a prettier game than the other. Tell us, where is this other world? What ships go between it and ours?

Jill is speechless. The enchantment is taking her over

JILL

No. I suppose that the other world must be all a dream.

WITCH

Yes, all a dream.

JILL

Yes, all a dream.

WITCH

There never was such a world.

JILL & EUSTACE

Never was such a world.

WITCH

Never was any world but mine.

JILL & EUSTACE

Never was any world but yours.

PUDDLEGLUM (with great exertion)

I don't know rightly what you all mean by a world. But you can play that fiddle till your fingers drop off, and still you won't get me to forget Narnia. We'll never see it again, I shouldn't wonder. You may have turned it dark like this, for all I know. Nothing more likely. But I know I was there once! I've seen the sky full of stars; I've seen the morning sun coming up out of the sea and sinking behind the mountains at night. And I've seen him up in the midday sky when I couldn't look at him for brightness.

RILIAN

Why, there it is! The blessing of Aslan on you, honest Puddleglum. How could we have forgotten? Of course we've all seen the sun!

EUSTACE

By jove, so we have! Puddleglum, you're the only one of us with sense, I do believe.

WITCH (cooing)

What is this sun you all speak of? Do you mean anything by the word?

JILL

Yes, we jolly well do.

WITCH

Oh! Can you tell me what it's like?

RILIAN

You see that lamp? It is round and yellow and gives off light to all the room, hanging from the roof. The sun is like the lamp, only far greater: it gives off light to all the

RILIAN (cont.)

Overworld, hanging from the sky.

WITCH

Hanging from... what, my lord?

He cannot respond

WITCH (laughing)

You see? When you try to think the *sun* out clearly, you cannot tell me. You can only tell me it is *like* the lamp. There is nothing in that dream that is not copied from the lamp, which is the real thing. The *sun* is but a tale, a children's story.

JILL

Yes, I see know. It must be so.

WITCH

There is no sun... there is *no* sun.

ALL FOUR

There is no sun.

WITCH

There never was a sun.

ALL FOUR

Never was a sun.

JILL (with great effort)

There's Aslan.

The Witch quickens the pace of her strumming

WITCH

Aslan? What a pretty name! What does it mean?

EUSTACE

He's... he's the great lion who called us out of our own world to find the Prince.

WITCH

What is a *lion*?

EUSTACE

Oh, hang it all! Don't you know? How can we describe it to her? Well—a lion is a little bit, only a little but, like a huge cat. With a mane... except it's not a horse's mane, you know, it's more like a judge's wig. And it's yellow. And terrifically strong.

WITCH (shaking her head)

I see that we should do no better with your *lion* than we did with your *sun*! Here. You have seen lamps, 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 a pretty make-believe! Though to say truth, it would suit you all better if you were younger. And look how you can put nothing into your make-believe without copying it from the real world, this world of mine, which is the only world. But even you children are too old for this play... as for you, my lord Prince, that art a man full grown, fie upon you! Are you not ashamed? Come, all of you, put away these childish tricks. I have work for you in the real world. There is no Narnia, no Overland, no sun, no sky... *no Aslan*. And now, to bed. And let us begin a wiser life tomorrow. To bed; to sleep; deep sleep, sleep without foolish dreams.

After a moment, Puddleglum gathers all his strength and walks over to the magical fire. He stomps directly on the flames, cutting off the sweet smell.

WITCH

What are you doing? Dare to touch my fire again, mud-filth, and I'll turn the blood to fire inside your veins!

PUDDLEGLUM

One word, Ma'am, one word. All you've been saying is quite right, I shouldn't wonder. I'm a chap who always likes to know the worst and then put the best face I can on it. So I won't deny what you've said. But there's one thing more, even so. Suppose we have only dreamed, or made up, all those things—trees and sun and grass and moon and stars and Aslan himself. Suppose we have. Then all I can say is that, in that case, the made-up things seem a good deal more important than the real ones. Suppose this black pit of a kingdom really is the only world. Well, it strikes me as a pretty poor one. I'm on Aslan's side even if there isn't any Aslan to lead it. I'm going to live like a Narnian even if there

PUDDLEGLUM (cont.)

isn't any Narnia. So, if these two gentlemen and the young lady are ready, we're leaving at once and setting out in the dark to spend our lives looking for the Overland. Not that our lives will be very long, I should think; but that's a small loss if the world is as dull a place as you say.

EUSTACE

Oh, hurrah!

JILL

Good old Puddleglum!

RILIAN

Ware! Look to the Witch!

The Witch attacks Rilian. A struggle ensues. The Witch is killed

RILIAN

Gentlemen, thank you. My royal mother is avenged. This is undoubtedly the same worm that I pursued in vain so many years ago. All this time I have been the slave of the one who silenced my mother... But come, friends, let us leave at once.

EUSTACE

A jolly good idea, Sir.

END OF SCENE

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