

The Chronicles of Narnia (Series) | The Magician's Nephew | Summary

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About the Title

The events of *The Magician's Nephew* center on Digory Kirke, whose Uncle Andrew is a corrupt magician. The fact that both characters are alluded to in the title shows that each is equally important to the story. Uncle Andrew, with his selfish ways and delusions of grandeur, serves as a foil to Digory, who despite his flaws, stands humbly on the side of good.

Summary

Tricked!

Digory Kirke, a young boy, has come to live in a London row house with his "mad" Uncle Andrew and his kind Aunt Letty, who helps care for Digory's dying mother Mabel Kirke. Digory meets a neighbor girl, Polly Plummer, who shows him how to sneak into adjoining homes on the row through an attic passageway that connects them. They decide to explore an abandoned home two doors down, but accidentally peek into the wrong home. The furnished room seems deserted, and Polly steps inside to investigate a tray of alluring green and yellow rings, though Digory wants to leave. But it is too late to leave—they have stumbled into Uncle Andrew's forbidden study, and he locks them into the room. With a toothy smile, he proclaims, "Two children are just what I wanted," for his "experiment," for after all, "a guinea-pig can't tell you anything."

The alarmed children insist on leaving, but then Uncle Andrew offers Polly one of the enticing yellow rings. Before Digory can stop her, Polly picks one up and instantly disappears. Uncle Andrew explains that he has created these magical rings, and the rings transport whoever touches them to another world. The rings were created from a box of magical dust, left to him by his godmother Mrs. Lefay, and which he had promised to destroy—but then kept instead. The yellow ring draws a person to the Other World, which Uncle Andrew knows nothing about, and the green ring brings the person back. Uncle Andrew has already successfully sent a guinea pig there, and now Polly has gone, too—with a yellow ring only. To save his friend, Digory has no choice but to follow her there using a yellow ring, with two green rings in his pocket (one for his return and one for hers).

Digory is transported to a dreamy, pleasant forest with shallow pools dotted throughout the trees. He has emerged from one of these pools, completely dry. The sleepy atmosphere soothes him into forgetfulness, until he notices a girl lying nearby. They figure out that they know one another, and then the whole story comes rushing back when they notice each other's matching yellow rings. They are about to jump back into the pool to home when Digory wonders aloud, "What are all the other pools?" The children realize the other pools must lead to other worlds. They figure out that the forest is a between world and call it "the Wood between the Worlds." They decide to try out the rings to visit another world, and discover that the green rings allow outward travel from the wood to any other world, while the yellow rings draw one back to the wood each time. Together, they jump into an unknown pool.

Awakening the Queen

Polly and Digory find themselves in an eerie, silent place, its darkness relieved only by the faint glow of a dim, red sun. They are in the ruins of an abandoned castle, and though Polly wants to go back immediately, Digory wants to explore. Inside the crumbling palace, they find a hall full of lifelike images of people dressed in splendid finery. The last of these figures is a breathtaking queen, tall and proud. Digory is entranced by her. In the center of the room sits a tiny golden bell and hammer on a stone pedestal. A carved inscription dares the "*adventurous Stranger*" to ring the bell or eternally wonder "*what would have followed if you had.*" Polly argues against ringing the bell, but Digory

forcibly restrains her, hurting her wrist, and hits it with the hammer anyway. A sonic note grows louder and louder until the castle begins to crumble around them, then the sound fades away. From the end of the Hall of Images, the magnificent queen rises to her feet, awakened by the bell, wanting to know what powerful magician has awakened her. Polly explains that they've come to her world by Uncle Andrew's magic. As the regal, stern woman escorts them from the hall, she casually demolishes the giant castle doors with a single word; they crumble into dust. She tells of the end of her world and this city, Charn, which was once "that great city, the city of the King of Kings, the wonder of the world." She herself destroyed the world and every living creature on it, in an attempt to seize her sister's throne. Rather than admit defeat at the hands of her sister's victorious army, "I, Jadis, the last Queen," had uttered the Deplorable Word, a word of such power it wiped out the entire world. Digory and Polly are appalled at the loss of life, but to [Queen Jadis](#), "they were all *my* people. What else were they there for but to do my will?"

The queen then demands to be taken to the children's own world, "a younger world," where she will take over as ruler. Startled, the children try to escape without her by putting on the magical rings, but Jadis grabs hold of Polly's hair and is transported with them to the Wood between the Worlds. The queen immediately becomes faint and weak amongst the trees; her power drained, and Polly and Digory seize the opportunity to jump into the pool to their own world. Once again, though, the witch catches hold of Digory's ear and goes along for the ride. Moments later, a shocked Uncle Andrew is faced with two children and the giant, magnificent, unwanted tyrant in his study. Her strength has returned to her, and Jadis loses no time in ordering the frightened Uncle Andrew to bring her "a chariot or a flying carpet or a well-trained dragon" to take her into the city. He leaves the room to call her a hansom cab (horse and buggy), and meanwhile, Digory apologizes to Polly for getting them into this whole mess, while the queen ignores them. Polly hurries home, where she is sent to bed for two hours for being late for dinner.

Downstairs, Uncle Andrew tosses back a couple of drinks to calm his nerves, and then puts on his finest clothes, somehow deluded into believing the queen—"a dem fine woman ... a superb creature,"—will fall in love with him. He asks to borrow cab fare from Aunt Letty, who refuses him—he has already nearly put her into the poorhouse with his poor financial management and lavish spending. Just then the witch bursts through the door, barking out demands to Uncle Andrew. Aunt Letty will have none of it, and orders Jadis to "get out of my house this moment, you shameless hussy." The furious queen tries to blast Aunt Letty into smithereens, but her words of power fail to work in this world. Instead, she picks up and throws Aunt Letty across the room, then exits haughtily to the waiting cab. Digory, afraid the witch will return and upset his dying mother, resolves to catch hold of Jadis as soon as she returns and take her back to the Wood between the Worlds. Digory then overhears his aunt telling a visiting friend that his very ill mother "would need fruit from the land of youth to help her now." It occurs to him that he might, indeed, find a land of youth and a cure for his mother through using the magic rings and visiting the other pools.

Chaos erupts outside the house as Jadis returns, standing atop the cab and driving it herself at full tilt as she whips the horse. She leaps onto the horse's back as the cab smashes into a lamppost in front of the house. The police are hot on her tail, and a crowd has gathered to enjoy the spectacle. The witch, laden with stolen jewelry, tries to cut the horse free from the wreckage of the cab, while the cabby tries to get close to calm his horse, Strawberry. As the crowd jeers at "Empress Jadis," she angrily breaks off a crossbar from the lamppost with her bare hands to use as a weapon. Polly reappears just in time to help. She grabs Digory, Digory grabs the witch, and Polly transports them back to the magical forest. There are more tagalongs than ever now, with not only Queen Jadis, but also Uncle Andrew, the horse, and the cabby—all of whom were touching at the moment Polly grabbed her ring. They immediately leap into another pool, trying to get back to Charn to shake off the witch permanently, but instead find themselves on a dark world with no stars or plants or even wind.

Narnia Is Born

A distant voice begins to sing in beautiful tones, and with each note, wonders begin to appear. The sky fills with stars, a joyful sun rises, and the bare earth is carpeted with grass, trees, and flowers.

The singer is a great lion—Aslan—and the children, the cabby, and Strawberry are awed by him and his beautiful song. The witch, though, hates him instantly, and flings the lamppost crossbar at his head then runs away through the trees. Uncle Andrew tries several times to get Digory to take him home with the rings, but his nephew refuses to leave the others behind. Then they notice the lamppost bar, which has taken root in the ground and begun to grow into a full-size lamppost, lit by flame. Uncle Andrew speculates on the money he could make from this world by planting metal to grow into ships and trains, while Digory realizes this newly born land might very well be the land of youth that could save his mother's life.

Yet [Aslan](#) is still singing, and now creatures of every shape and size are emerging from within the earth. Strawberry trots forward to join the menagerie of animals as the lion begins to choose pairs of animals to separate from the herd. As the pairs follow the lion, the other animals disperse to every corner of the land. The chosen animals begin to transform as the lion commands, "Narnia, awake. Love. Think. Speak. Be walking trees. Be talking beasts. Be divine waters." Mythical creatures and naiads emerge from the forest and river, and Strawberry is the first to speak, asking Aslan to explain what is happening. It is the birth of Narnia, Aslan explains, and "though the world is not five hours old an evil has already entered it." Digory, Polly, and the cabby approach Aslan and Digory asks for something to help his mother. Aslan instead puts Digory on the spot, and Digory admits to the animals that he had awakened the witch and brought her into Narnia. The lion then declares, "as Adam's race as done the harm, Adam's race shall help to heal it." He magically transports the honorable cabby's wife Nellie into Narnia, and names them as the first king and queen of Narnia: King Frank and Queen Helen.

In the meantime, Uncle Andrew, terrified of the beasts, shrinks into the forest. He has convinced himself that they can't really be singing or speaking, and hears only roars and growls. The curious but well-meaning crowd of talking animals surrounds him, thinking perhaps he might be the evil Aslan mentioned, and Uncle Andrew faints from fright. Not knowing what a human is, the animals debate whether he is a tree or an animal. They decide he must be a tree, so they "plant" his limp body in the ground from the knees down. An elephant douses him with water, and Uncle Andrew awakens screaming. Realizing he is surely an animal now, the beasts dig him up and make a cage from trees to keep him safe until Aslan can advise them on what to do with the strange, sorry creature.

The Tree of Protection

After naming Frank and Helen as king and queen, Aslan transforms Strawberry into a winged horse and christens him Fledge. The horse agrees to carry Digory and Polly on a quest to the distant mountains in the Western Wild. There, Digory is to pluck an apple from a special tree in the center of a garden on the top of a hill and bring it back to Aslan. It is a long journey, and the trio stops to rest for the night in a forest along the way. The next day, they fly to the hilltop garden, which has a high wall and a golden gate with a warning inscription: enter only by the gate, and take fruit only for others, not for oneself. Digory enters alone, finds the special tree, and plucks a silver apple from it. Although he is tempted to take a bite, he pockets the fruit and then turns to find the witch standing nearby. She has just eaten an apple herself, and tries to entice him to do the same, or even to take this "Apple of Life" home to his mother. The boy resists her wheedling, and quickly returns to Aslan with Polly and Fledge. Digory hands over the apple, and the lion instructs him to plant it in the earth, where it will grow into a tree that will protect Narnia from the witch for many years.

Next, Aslan turns to Uncle Andrew, who is a muddy, soggy mess, and casts the frightened man into an enchanted sleep. King Frank and Queen Helen are crowned, and afterward, the gathered crowd turns to find the tree planted for Narnia's protection already fully grown. Aslan grants Digory an apple from the tree to take to his mother as a cure for her illness. The lion transports Digory, Polly, and the sleeping Uncle Andrew to the Wood between the Worlds, where he points out the dried-up pool that once led to the world of Charn. "That world is ended," he intones. "Let the race of Adam and Eve take warning." He then instructs the children to bury the magical rings when they return home, and he sends the three on their way. Digory hurries to give his mother the Apple of Life, and she is magically cured overnight. Digory buries the apple core in the garden, surrounded by the magic

rings, and many years later when the tree is blown down in a storm, he uses the wood to make a great wardrobe—the same wardrobe through which [Lucy Pevensie](#) later enters Narnia.