

Out of the Silent Planet



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF C. S. LEWIS

Clive Staples Lewis, one of the most famous Christian authors of the 20th century, was born in Belfast, Ireland and grew up fascinated by animals and fairy tales. After years of English boarding school and the death of his mother from cancer, Lewis abandoned the Christian faith of his family and became interested in mythology. He became a poet and focused on classic epic poetry from the Greek and Norse traditions, then won a scholarship to University College, Oxford. At Oxford, Lewis began a friendship with the writer J.R.R. Tolkien (the author of *The Lord of the Rings*) who eventually led Lewis back to his Christian faith in 1931. Lewis then became a staunch defender of Christian theology, writing many essays, books, and radio broadcasts that outlined the rational and emotional reasons that mankind needs Christian belief. Many of these essays and broadcasts were anthologized in Lewis's most famous non-fiction work, [Mere Christianity](#). Lewis also wrote several fictional novels that display the themes of mankind's sin and need for divine grace, including the Space Trilogy (of which *Out of the Silent Planet* is the first book) and his most famous works, the seven Chronicles of Narnia novels for children. The Chronicles of Narnia, written between 1949 and 1954, have become a classic of children's literature for their whimsical characters and fantastic adventures, but also for their accessible and interesting introduction to the basic tenants and theology of Christianity. Lewis remained a vocal and influential scholar and Christian apologist for the rest of his life, keeping a connection to Oxford and a post at Magdalene College, Cambridge. He was married to the American writer Joy Davidman for four years before her death in 1960. Lewis continued to help raise Joy's two sons, Douglas and David, before his own health failed and he died of renal failure in 1963. His books are still widely read today, and have been translated into many languages.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Lewis wrote *Out of the Silent Planet* as a response to what he saw as a "dehumanization" of science fiction. Through a conversation with the author J.R.R. Tolkien, Lewis decided that he would write a romantic "space travel" novel while adding in the aspects of morality and universal humanity that he felt science fiction had lost. The novel is also steeped in the traditions of English academia, referring to the dons of Oxford, and arguing against the rise of secularization among the scientific community in England. Lewis saw himself as uniquely suited to reach out to those who had abandoned religions and

Christian faith in England, himself struggling with questions of atheism after his experience in World War I. Many who fought in WWI suffered a loss of optimism and became known as "The Lost Generation" for their new search for meaning in a world that suddenly seemed much less clear or good than previous generations believed. Church attendance in Great Britain declined somewhat during this time, as clergy were unable to provide adequate explanation for the senseless horrors of the war. Lewis then attempts to offer a new way to think about the Christian religion for those who were disillusioned by their experience with the church over the course of this time.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

Out of the Silent Planet includes the traditional elements of a science fiction novel, as Lewis pays homage to the novels of H.G. Wells such as [The Time Machine](#) and [The War of the Worlds](#), which describe alien species and fantastic journeys to places outside of Earth. The novel also shares aspects of J.R.R. Tolkien's and G.K. Chesterton's work in its references and allusions to Christian thought via a fantasy or science fiction universe.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Out of the Silent Planet
- **Where Written:** Oxford, England
- **When Published:** 1938, by John Bane, The Bodley Head. 1943, MacMillan.
- **Literary Period:** Modern
- **Genre:** Science Fiction, Speculative Philosophy
- **Setting:** England, Earth; Malacandra (Mars)
- **Climax:** Ransom goes to meet the Oyarsa and finds out about the "bent" history of Earth, then decides to spread that message on Earth rather than siding with Weston and Devine about the exploitation of Malacandra.
- **Antagonist:** Humanity's bent nature, Weston, Devine
- **Point of View:** 3rd Person Omniscient, then 1st person limited

EXTRA CREDIT

Further adventures. *Out of the Silent Planet* is followed by two other novels to make up the Space Trilogy. *Perelandra* and *That Hideous Strength* follow Ransom as he continues to learn more about the religion of Maleldil and take on a more philosophical nature than the space adventure that comprises much of this first novel.

Background work. The language of the hrossa species on Mars that Ransom loves so much is revealed in the further books to be “Old Solar,” the language shared by all sentient creatures in the universe before the fall and isolation of mankind. Lewis thoroughly outlined the language and created an entire grammar system, though it is not fully explained in his books.



PLOT SUMMARY

The novel starts with Dr. Elwin Ransom walking through the English countryside during a year off from his work as a professor of language at Cambridge University. Ransom looks for a place to stay for the night, eventually coming to a large estate. The gate is locked, but Ransom hears a commotion and sneaks in through a hedge. He sees two men, Dr. Weston and Mr. Devine, struggling to capture a young boy. Ransom convinces Weston and Devine to let the boy go home and goes into Weston’s house for a drink. The drink turns out to be drugged, and Ransom has a strange dream of meeting aliens while under its influence. When he wakes, Ransom finds himself in a spaceship. He overhears Weston and Devine say that they have kidnapped him to be a sacrifice to a mysterious people called the sorns on a planet called Malacandra.

Ransom tries to worry about his fate on Malacandra, but can’t help but spend the journey in awe of the bright vitality of **the heavens** – he can’t bring himself to call this expanse “space” now that he has seen how beautiful it is. After a month’s flight, the ship begins its descent to the planet of Malacandra, and Ransom’s fear returns despite the stunning landscape of Malacandra. They land at a settlement site on the shore of a gorgeous lake. As they unpack their supplies, Ransom sees three long, ghostly figures walk across the lake. He assumes these must be the sorns, and runs from Weston and Devine in terror. He flees through the alien forest behind the settlement.

Ransom rests for the night, then continues to walk on the next morning. He stops at a pond to take a drink, and then sees a large, seal-like, black creature also drinking from the pond. Ransom is again overcome by fear until he hears the creature make noises that seem like speech. Ransom decides this creature must be intelligent and goes to meet it. The creature introduces itself as a “hross” named Hyoï and takes Ransom back to his village. Ransom lives among the hrossa for weeks, learning their language and finding out about their peaceful culture from Hyoï. The hrossa are experts with boats and love to create poetry and songs, making Ransom reassess his judgement of the hrossa as a primitive society. Ransom is especially struck by the lack of any conflict between the hrossa, the sorns, and another species called the pffltriggi, as well as the hrossa’s happy acceptance of death as the natural end of a life well lived. Hyoï also gives Ransom an introduction to hross religion, which includes spirits called “eldila” who due the bidding of the head eldil, Oyarsa. Oyarsa is the mouthpiece of

the ultimate gods of the universe, known as the Old One and Maleldil the Young.

Many weeks after Ransom’s arrival, the hrossa become excited about news of a shark-like animal called a **hnakra** in the lake near their village. All the hrossa ready their boats to hunt the hrossa, and Ransom prepares to ride with another hross in Hyoï’s boat. Their small party embarks with the rest of the hrossa to search for the hnakra, the only sign of evil in this otherwise idyllic place. An eldil then finds their boat and informs Ransom that Oyarsa would like to see him, but Ransom puts off this order so that he and Hyoï can continue to hunt. After a morning of sailing to the lake, Hyoï and Ransom sight the hnakra and manage to kill it, though wrecking their boat in the process. On the shore, Hyoï and Ransom celebrate their victory, but their triumph is cut short when Weston fires a gun from the nearby forest and hits Hyoï in the chest, killing him. Deeply grieved by Hyoï’s death, Ransom decides to follow Oyarsa’s orders and go to Oyarsa’s home in Meldilorn.

Ransom gets directions to Meldilorn from another hross and sets off on his journey. He must climb out of the forested area of Malacandra, the handramit, and scale the mountains onto the highlands of the planet, the harandra. Ransom travels for a day, but quickly finds that there is less atmosphere on the harandra and begins to suffocate. He makes it to the home of a sorn named Augray who gives Ransom an oxygen mask so he can survive. After spending the night at Augray’s cavern and learning that the sorns are more scientifically minded but just as kind as the hross, Ransom continues on to Meldilorn. He reaches this sacred island, going down into another handramit even more beautiful than the last one. A hross meets Ransom on the island and shows him stones with scenes of the history of Malacandra. Through these scenes, Ransom learns that Malacandra is Mars, and that Earth also once had an oyarsa, but Earth’s oyarsa is now evil.

Oyarsa calls Ransom and Ransom appears before him, seeing Oyarsa as an indescribable figure of light. Oyarsa tells Ransom that Earth is known as Thulcandra (meaning the silent planet) because Earth’s Oyarsa turned against the Old One and Maleldil and cut Earth off from the rest of the heavens. This ancient battle explains humanity’s “bent” nature, as Earth’s oyarsa, now known as the Bent One, convinces humans to care only for themselves. Ransom’s meeting with Oyarsa is interrupted when a group of hrossa bring in Weston and Devine to stand trial for killing three hrossa (including Hyoï). Weston refuses to respect Oyarsa, believing that all Malacandrians are savages who believe in pagan nonsense, while seeing it as his duty to colonize Mars for the survival of the human race. Devine, for his part, only cares about the gold on Malacandra. Oyarsa sentences both Weston and Devine to leave Malacandra forever, but gives Ransom the choice to stay. Ransom decides to go with his fellow humans and bring news of the paradise of Malacandra and the will of Maleldil back to

Earth.

Ransom, Weston, and Devine are given oxygen and food for their spaceship, but the current orbital paths of Mars and Earth mean they must fly dangerously close to the sun to get home. Somehow, they make back to Earth, but Ransom is too afraid of Weston to share his story. It is only when Lewis, a former student of Ransom's, asks a question about a mention of "oyarsa" in an ancient Latin text that Ransom shares his experience. Ransom and Lewis decide to publish Ransom's adventure as a fictional story, so that the world will not reject them as lunatics, and so their readers can consider the value of the Malacandrian way of life and perhaps implement some of those ideals on Earth.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Dr. Elwin Ransom – The protagonist of the novel, Ransom is a philologist don (linguistics professor) at Cambridge taking a gap year to walk through the English countryside. He is captured by Weston and Devine, then used as "ransom" for the entire human race so that Weston and Devine can continue their exploitative explorations of the planet Mars (called Malacandra by the sentient inhabitants). Ransom's sacrifice proves to be unnecessary to the kind ruler of Malacandra, in line with Lewis's ideas about rejecting older forms of pagan sacrifice in favor of the grace Lewis finds in the Christian faith. On Malacandra, Ransom at first reacts with fear towards the Malacandran species, but is eventually able to overcome this and becomes curious about the language and culture of the hrossa, the first species on Malacandra that he meets. While living with the hrossa, Ransom becomes friends with the hross Hyoui and learns about the religion of Malacandra and the similarities to Christian spirituality on Earth. Ransom eventually obeys the summons of Oyarsa, the guardian spirit of Malacandra, and learns of the "bent" (evil) nature of Earth, called the silent planet (Thulcandra) by the Malacandrans. Ransom dedicates himself to opposing Weston's damaging views about the superiority of human civilization and returns to Earth to share the view of utopia he found on Malacandra, becoming Lewis's spokesperson within the novel of what Lewis sees as correct moral living that respects all beings.

Dr. Weston – A renowned physicist and man of science who organizes the mission to Mars (Malacandra) and seeks to eliminate the "savage" beings he finds there so that humanity can colonize Mars and have another planet to live on should Earth ever become uninhabitable. Weston believes in the superiority of mankind above all, and swears loyalty to the human race – though he is shown to be as selfish about protecting his own life as any beast when he is put in danger. Weston is willing to use Ransom as a sacrifice when the sorns

of Mars wish to talk with a human, assuming the worst of the sorns' intentions. Weston represents the misguided life of a man who assumes that humans control the universe, and that mankind is the pinnacle of life in the universe. Oyarsa describes Weston as "bent" and needing "curing" before he can properly take part in civilized life. Weston is shown to be far more primitive in true morality than the seemingly "barbaric" species on Malacandra.

Dick Devine – A businessman who works with Dr. Weston and an old schoolmate of Ransom's, Devine is motivated only by greed and hopes to settle Mars (Malacandra) so that humans can take advantage of the deposits of gold there. Oyarsa describes Devine as "broken," completely consumed by his materialistic desires such that there is no more humanity left in him. Devine represents a life of secular and hedonistic pleasure, which takes no account of morality or the greater good.

Hyoui – Ransom's first friend among the hrossa, an intelligent seal-like species on Malacandra. Like all hrossa, Hyoui deeply appreciates poetry and beauty, introducing Ransom to the hrossan ideal of death as the welcome completion of life, and that which brings meaning to all the pleasurable experiences of life. Hyoui is killed by Weston and Devine while Hyoui and Ransom are on a mission to hunt the hnakra (a shark-like creature). Hyoui dies content with his identity as a hnakrapunt (one who has killed the hnakra), rather than resenting the fact that his time was cut short by bent humans.

Oyarsa – The specific oyarsa (guardian spirit) of Malacandra and the greatest of the spiritual beings known as eldila, roughly analogous to angels on Earth. Oyarsa appears to Ransom as a being of pure light. Oyarsa is fundamentally good and wise, acting as a liaison between the intelligent inhabitants of Malacandra and the ultimate power in the universe, represented by the Old One and Maleldil. Oyarsa helps Ransom understand the bent nature of humanity and assists Ransom, Weston, and Devine's mission back to Earth once Oyarsa proclaims Weston and Devine unfit to live in the peaceful utopia of Malacandra.

Kanakaberaka – One of the pflitriggi, a species on Malacandra that enjoys craftsmanship and stone work. Kanakaberaka carves Ransom's portrait before Ransom meets Oyarsa, showing the idealization of this story that will be told after Ransom leaves, and making Ransom and the human visitors into another legend in the larger mythology of Malacandra.

The Old One – The supreme ruler and creator of the universe in Malacandran theology. The Old One does not have a corporeal body but lives everywhere in **the heavens** and watches over every living thing through his deputies, the oyarsas (of which Oyarsa is the guardian of Malacandra). Roughly analogous to the Christian concept of God.

Maleldil the Young – The partner of the Old One, who helped

create the world and lives with the Old One through the entire universe. Maleldil stands for all that is good, and his orders are in the best interest of all the beings of the universe. His will is distributed to the intelligent inhabitants of Malacandra through Oyarsa and the eldila. Roughly analogous to the Christian concept of Jesus.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Hnohra – An older hross who helps Ransom learn the language of the hrossa.

Augray – One of the sorns, the most scientifically-minded species on Malacandra, who helps Ransom continue his journey to answer the summons of Oyarsa.

Hrikki – A “cub” (young hross) who first explains the eldila to Ransom.

Whin – A hross who goes on the hnakra hunt with Hyoj and Ransom.

Hrinha – A hross who works for Oyarsa on the island of Meldilorn.

The Bent One – The name given to the oyarsa of Earth after this oyarsa rebels against the Old One and Maleldil and hopes to turn the humans of Earth towards evil. Roughly analogous to the Christian concept of Satan.

Lewis (The Narrator) – A version of the author C.S. Lewis himself, who is a student of Dr. Ransom’s in the story and helps Ransom publish his adventure once Ransom returns from Malacandra.

Harry – A young boy in England who does odd jobs for Devine, and is originally intended to be the sacrifice to the sorns before Ransom appears.

about and engage with Christian ideas and beliefs, disrupting the “stuffy” lectures and moralistic plays that Lewis assumes most people associate with Christian teaching. Away from the reverence of “stained-glass and Sunday school” that Lewis perceives as obstructing the true potency of Christian thought, Lewis hopes that *Out of the Silent Planet* can open the imaginations of his readers so that they are better able to accept the amazing truths he himself has found in Christian life.

Towards that goal, much of the religious discussion that Ransom, Lewis’s main character, encounters on Malacandra loosely resembles the basics of the Christian faith. For example, Lewis describes the ruler of Malacandra as an angel-like figure called Oyarsa, and explains that this oyarsa serves more powerful figures who are rough analogues of the Christian figures God the Father and Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Lewis describes the Biblical account of the “fall” of Earth into sin by connecting it to a story in which Earth once had its own oyarsa, who then fought against the higher gods and plunged the humans of Earth into conflict and pain (paralleling the story of Satan’s fall from Heaven and his subsequent temptation of Adam and Eve). While the Christian allusions are incredibly important to the story, Lewis purposefully leaves them vague rather than fully explaining how he sees the Christian universe relating to his imagined planet. These Christian elements are instead used to inform the fantastical elements of Lewis’s science fiction universe, and in the process open the door for readers to look at Christian thought under a new guise that is not already affected by any negative associations they may have with Christianity.

Lewis then gives his readers a path to follow on their journey to accepting Christian thought through the spiritual awakening of Dr. Ransom, an average English professor who comes to believe and advocate for the Malacandrian religion. Over the course of the novel, Ransom finds that he is better able to avoid experiencing pain himself or causing it for others when he follows the orders of Oyarsa, suggesting that all humans can also improve their circumstances by looking for the will of God in their own lives. Significantly, Ransom is not a bad person who must be brought to salvation to save his life. He is a normal man who tries to do the right thing and hopes to overcome the fundamental brokenness of human nature. Through Ransom, readers are shown how a human might seek forgiveness and grace rather than punishment and restriction in their faith. As Ransom learns about the blessings that can come from living according to the Malacandrian worldview, the reader is also given a chance to consider the possible benefits of finding out more about a Christian life. Using Ransom’s path as a representation for all men, Lewis shapes this awakening to suggest that all humans need God without forcing readers to recognize God immediately as the explicitly Christian God.



THEMES

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



CHRISTIAN IMAGERY AND THOUGHT

C.S. Lewis, a devout Christian for much of his adult life, includes his interpretation of the fundamentals of Christian belief in all his novels. In *Out of the Silent Planet*, Lewis uses the creative and exciting framework of a science fiction adventure to offer a new way for readers to think of Christianity through his protagonist Dr. Elwin Ransom’s experiences on the new planet Malacandra (Lewis’s name for Mars). Indeed, Lewis sees this fantastic setting as absolutely critical to his goal of influencing his readers to think



CIVILIZATION AND UTOPIA

In *Out of the Silent Planet*, Lewis follows the tradition of the travelogue, a genre of literature that includes books such as *Utopia* or *Gulliver's*

Travels in which a traveler goes to an exotic, often fantastic society and learns about their culture. These lessons frequently include both a vision of how a perfect community (known as a utopia, after the “perfect” society in Sir Thomas More’s novel of the same name) would function and, in the process, reveal the shortcomings that the author sees in his own home community. Lewis’s novel specifically takes this concept into the science fiction genre, sending Lewis’s human characters Dr. Ransom, Dr. Weston, and Mr. Devine to Mars (called Malacandra by its sentient inhabitants) and using the alien species there to showcase what Lewis considers a utopia – a society that follows Lewis’s Christian ideals. Throughout the novel, Lewis uses the society of Malacandra to examine the concepts of civilization and utopia, reframing these definitions in order to suggest a form of utopia that human societies could also attain.

First, Lewis considers the notion of civilization as defined by the English characters of the novel, and opposes it with the idea of civilization portrayed on Malacandra. The human character Dr. Weston, a man of science and rational thought on Earth, believes that he knows everything about the ideals of a civilized nation and that English technology, academics, and societal rules are the ultimate example of what a civilization should look like. Yet Lewis shows that Weston’s definition of civilization is simply an excuse for the many evils that Weston commits, hiding a desire to commit genocide against the Malacandrians in the supposedly noble desire to further the success of the human race. Furthermore, the protagonist Dr. Ransom finds out through his time living with the hrossa, one of the Malacandrian species, that Malacandrian society is actually more civilized than Earthly nations despite their lack of the superficial trappings of urban life. The hrossa have achieved complete peace between the three species of Malacandra and are able to live naturally joyful and monogamous lives, seemingly more in line with the supposed goal of civilization – that is, to pull humans away from their more primitive and barbaric instincts. Through these lessons about the hrossa culture, Lewis refocuses the definition of civilization not on the material things and grand competition among human cultures, but on the ability to coexist peacefully with those who are different and work together for the happiness and fulfillment of all.

From this new definition of civilization, Lewis then revisits the idea of utopia. Lewis explains that a Christian utopia is not necessarily a place that is so perfect that nothing bad can ever happen. Instead, Malacandra represents a truly good society that runs smoothly and accepts the place of tragedy and pain in the lives of sentient beings. Lewis ties this vision of utopia back to his Christian faith through the character of Oyarsa and his

connection to the Old One. From the information Oyarsa gives about life after death with the Old One in **the heavens**, the hrossa are able to accept death without dread or fear. More importantly, the element of danger that a shark-like creature called a **hnakra** introduces to this “perfect” world is another illustration of how a society must avoid the stagnation that comes from absolute, un-changing perfection. The threat of a hnakra reminds the hrossa not to take their idyllic lives for granted, precisely because there is a chance they can end. Lewis shows that humans can also internalize this better way of living, as Ransom sees the value of these lessons while living among the hrossa and works to spread this type of culture to others once he returns to Earth. Dr. Ransom actually contacts a version of C.S. Lewis himself (which Lewis inserts at the end of the novel) and asks the character Lewis to write down his Malacandrian adventures so that other people can read it and shape their lives according to the principles of peace and harmony that Ransom experienced among the hrossa. Thus, *Out of the Silent Planet* is itself the message to humankind that shares Ransom’s thoughts about utopia in the hopes that human society will become more like the Malacandrian utopia that Ransom so admired.



HUMAN NATURE AND MORALITY

Lewis wrote *Out of the Silent Planet* as a response to what he saw as the “dehumanization” of science fiction, that is, the idea that science fiction had

become too much about the strange and wonderful technology that authors could dream up and had moved away from exploring mankind’s place in the universe (as had been the focus of science fiction novels such as the work of Jules Verne or H.G. Wells). Due to this, Lewis uses his tale of travel to Mars to specifically explain what he believes about humanity’s nature and argue that humankind cannot forget their moral duty to each other and to other beings, no matter how scientifically “advanced” they might become.

Lewis finds ways to represent the opposing views on the purpose of science fiction and what those views say about the place of humans in the hierarchy of the universe. Lewis starts by using his characters Dr. Weston and Mr. Devine, an English physicist and businessman respectively, to show his distaste for the view of the pursuit of scientific knowledge as the endless march of progress and the inevitable triumph of human kind. Lewis sees that perspective reflected in modern science fiction novels that praise such characters for their use of strength and intellect to dominate others. Both Weston and Devine focus on what they can gain from exploiting Mars (Malacandra, in the vernacular of this planet’s inhabitants), either in terms of material wealth or in terms of a new colony for mankind to spread their version of civilization. In contrast, Lewis represents his own perspective on science fiction novels as a place to explore the fundamental nature of humankind through

the human protagonist Dr. Ransom. Ransom comes to appreciate the Malacandrian species on their own terms and learns to accept his place in this society as a moral human who considers the well-being of others. He also comes to accept humankind's place as a rational being (hnau) no better or worse than the other hnau of Malacandra. Ransom learns that living by the rule of those beings which are above hnau – the eldila, and specifically the head eldil, called the oyarsa – leads to a more fulfilling life.

Lewis then turns to what he considers proper morality, starting from the Christian idea that all humans fall short of their moral duties of caring for others and must be taught how to do what is right and reject what is wrong. Lewis defines right and wrong in terms of what is in line with the wishes of the ultimate ruler of the universe and what benefits the most people (and aliens). Oyarsa (the specific oyarsa of Malacandra, and the head of their moral system) proclaims Mr. Devine “broken” for forgetting the higher duty of hnau to consider things beyond the material world. In the same way, Dr. Weston is “bent” because he considers no one beyond humankind, staying too loyal to his idea of his own kind while ignoring moral injunctions to respect other types of beings (and indeed individual humans as well). Ransom learns that all humanity has a “bent” or sinful nature due to the failure of the oyarsa of Earth (The Bent One) to properly show humans their place in the universe and the need for obedience to the Old One, who rules the entire universe. Lewis thus sees humanity as fundamentally morally deficient, calling back to the Christian notion of original sin which proclaims all humans as sinful from birth. Yet Lewis sees a path back to the natural order of life, should humans accept that they are not the most superior beings in the universe and subsume their own desires to the greater good as Ransom does at the end of *Out of the Silent Planet*.



ACCEPTANCE AND CURIOSITY VS. FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN

As his human characters explore the alien world of Malacandra, Lewis explores the ways in which humankind can either accept things that are different, or lash out in fear of the unknown. While recognizing that discomfort at what is strange is a natural feature of mankind's animal biology – stemming from the instinct to be careful and keep oneself alive – Lewis argues that life is made more fulfilling and meaningful when humans are able to overcome their fear and react more positively to new situations.

Though the human characters must face the unknown at every turn in Malacandra, Lewis also uses these situations to explore the larger implications of how humankind on Earth should react to new circumstances or people who are different from themselves. When Dr. Weston and Mr. Devine, the Englishmen who first start the expeditions to Mars (called Malacandra in the language of the planet), arrive on Malacandrian soil, they

are so terrified of everything there that they cannot see all the beauty that Malacandra has to offer. Their fear then creates more problems for themselves and others, both keeping them from experiencing the wonders of Malacandrian life and embroiling their fellow human Dr. Ransom in a plot to offer a human sacrifice to appease the alien sorns—which Weston and Devine believe are hostile. Likewise, Lewis suggests that humans often become distracted by their own fears and do not appreciate the good things in a new situation. They can even make things worse for themselves and others by becoming intolerant of those who are different, as Lewis compares his characters' hatred of alien species to the human history of hating cultures that are foreign to their own.

After condemning the trouble that fear brings, Lewis advocates for acceptance and honest communication with those who are different. Ransom lives this out through his gradual movement from distrust to affection for the new beings that he meets on Malacandra. To that end, Lewis shows how Ransom too wishes to stay in his comfort zone at first, but eventually his curiosity wins out and enables him to move past his fear. Ransom is at first terrified of all the species he sees on Malacandra, expecting the sorns to be cold in their super-human intelligence and another species, the hrossa, to be ferocious after seeing their animal-like features. Yet when Ransom is able to make friends with a hross named Hyoj and a sorn named Augray and open his mind to their place as fellow rational beings, he finds that they are kind, generous beings who only want to help him. Ransom even becomes empathetic to the species of Malacandra, despite their odd appearances, and feels more affinity for these good-hearted beings than for his fearful fellow humans by the end of his time on Malacandra. Lewis shows how Ransom appreciates the strengths of these new cultures, comparing him to people in the real world who are able to embrace those who might seem foreign or strange. At the end of the novel, Lewis upholds the Malacandrians as good for welcoming the humans to their planet and condemns the humans Dr. Weston and Mr. Devine as evil for repaying that kindness by killing hrossa and threatening the Malacandrians. In doing so, Lewis suggests that the unfamiliar is not always scary or bad, and that those who are able to accept new things rather than fear the unknown are better able to meet new circumstances well and avoid causing pain for everyone. Ransom uses this lesson to find his purpose in a world full of potentially frightening, yet also thrilling experiences.



SYMBOLS

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



THE HEAVENS

Over the course of the novel, Lewis's protagonist Dr. Elwin Ransom encounters many new things on his journey to Malacandra (Mars) that complicate the way he approaches the unfamiliar and the unknown. Through his changing perspective on space itself, Ransom is shown that those things that can seem disturbing at first might prove to be good when Ransom gives them a chance. After seeing the great marvels and beauties of the heavens (space), Ransom decides that the "old thinkers" – referring to philosophers and astronomers in the ancient world who had such reverence for this celestial place – are more accurate in their assessment of what the space is like. Rather than the dark and empty void Ransom expects from the conventional scientific conception of space, Ransom finds that space is actually full of light and life. By his return flight to Earth, Ransom actually hopes to be scattered throughout the heavens when he dies to become a part of that life when he dies, becoming a part of all that vitality rather than remaining chained to a dead rock of a planet.

More than representing Ransom's changing beliefs about things he originally finds horrifying, Ransom's journey through the heavens is also the start of his spiritual awakening. While gazing at the heavens, he feels far better and healthier than he ever has on Earth. Dr. Weston and Mr. Devine, Ransom's more scientifically-minded companions, explain this away as the effect of solar rays on their bodies, but Ransom gives it a more spiritual significance. While on Malacandra, Ransom also learns that the entire heavens are the home of the Old One and Maleldil the Young, Lewis' analogues for God and Jesus in this fantastic world. Lewis thus inserts the Christian ideal of "heaven" as a paradise where men are perfected. Lewis frames the heavens as the site of religious salvation, aligning this place with the beautiful and peaceful depictions of Christian heaven and the site of all men's hopes and aspirations for a better world.



THE HNAKRA

The hnakra, a shark-like creature that lives in one of the lakes on Malacandra (Mars), first seems to represent all of the terrible things that Dr. Ransom expects from the lifeforms on this alien planet. Yet Ransom learns from the hrossa, a sentient alien species, that the hnakra is a far more complicated part of the paradise that is life on this peaceful world. The hnakra, unlike any of the other beings on Malacandra, is a purely evil creature who seeks only to hurt others. The hrossa hunt down the hnakra, understanding that they cannot allow this ferocious animal to roam free, and consider it a great honor to be a "hnakrapunt" – one who slays the hnakra. Yet they also appreciate the hnakra for its ability to show them what is truly precious about their peaceful lives. Without the hnakra to add an element of danger and

excitement to the hrossa's days, they could quickly become bored of their perfect lives or take the good nature of their community for granted. Lewis uses the hnakra as a symbol of the inescapable place of pain or evil in human lives. Just as the hnakra will always be in the lakes, there will always be some level of pain and evil in any perfect society, even one that would be achievable by humans. Like the hrossa, humans who desire an ideal world must both fight against evil and accept that some evil must always exist – if only to more purely show what good is.

The hnakra is also shown to be a representation of the physical form of the Bent One, Lewis's representation of Satan in the novel. Lewis connects all evil in the universe of the book to Satan, maintaining the ties to Christian theology that he gradually builds throughout this space adventure. The devil, and its smaller cousin the hnakra, are responsible for all that is bad in the world, but they are also an integral part of human lives. Humans must be aware of the devil, just as hrossa must be aware of the hnakra, in order to overcome the devil and truly choose good. Without the devil, the human choice to do what is right would be easy and meaningless. The presence of the devil, and the hnakra, raises the stakes and creates a world in which people's choices matter and doing the right thing has significant consequences – precisely because there is an opportunity to follow the hnakra's predatory way of life, and be led into doing evil.



QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Scribner edition of *Out of the Silent Planet* published in 2003.

Chapter 1 Quotes

●● There was something about the whole scene suspicious enough and disagreeable enough to convince him that he had blundered on something criminal, while on the other hand he had all the deep, irrational conviction of his age and class that such things could never cross the path of an ordinary person except in fiction and could least of all be associated with professors and old school-fellows. Even if they had been ill-treating the boy Ransom did not see much chance of getting him from them by force.

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Dick Devine, Dr. Weston, Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 15

Explanation and Analysis

When Ransom comes across Weston and Devine clearly abusing the young Harry in some way, he refuses to speak up because he doesn't want to think that such "civilized" men could be guilty of wrong-doing. At the beginning of the novel, Dr. Elwin Ransom firmly believes that the structure of society is fundamentally good and that anyone who shows the trappings of civilized life must be doing the right thing. Professors such as himself, the pinnacle of Ransom's idea of the human civilization, would naturally be above reproach, because they presumably always do what is best. Lewis denounces this mistaken perspective, showing that Weston and Devine really did mean Harry harm and that Ransom was right to be initially suspicious of them. The appearance of civilized society is a front that allows Weston to excuse all kinds of horrible things, starting with the kidnapping of Harry and then Ransom, the subsequent sacrifice of Ransom and the proposed genocide and colonization of Malacandra. Ransom gradually learns that Weston is not a role model and that civilization on Earth leaves a lot to be desired in terms of moral standards.

Chapter 2 Quotes

☛ Ransom could never be sure whether what followed had any bearing on the events recorded in this book or whether it was merely an irresponsible dream.

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 20

Explanation and Analysis

When Ransom is drugged by Devine, he has a strange dream of meeting with alien people who live in darkness outside a bright garden. The narrator, later revealed as a character version of Lewis himself, comments that this dream might have some bearing on the later events of the novel. Ransom literally lives out the journey of his dream, leaving Earth and what he comes to think of as the "bright vitality" of space to go down to a dark, cold planet and meet new alien creatures. But the narrator's comments about the dream also reminds the reader that Lewis has an agenda for his novel beyond pure entertainment. Lewis is seeking to show readers the ways that the events of the novel can apply to their own lives, just as Ransom saw resonances of his dream in the strange and difficult journey he was forced to take. Lewis has included many elements of Christian imagery in his novel and hopes that his readers apply those

lessons in the real world, accepting the authority of God over men and embracing those who are different, as Ransom must do on the alien planet of Malacandra.

Chapter 3 Quotes

☛ Ransom was by now thoroughly frightened—not with the prosaic fright that a man suffers in a war, but with a heady, bounding kind of fear that was hardly distinguishable from his general excitement: he was poised on a sort of emotional watershed from which, he felt, he might at any moment pass into delirious terror or into an ecstasy of joy.

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 25

Explanation and Analysis

When Ransom first realizes that he must have been kidnapped and put onto a space ship that has left the Earth, he is gripped by the greatest terror he has ever felt. Yet Lewis frames this in terms of a relationship between fear and ecstasy, opening the door for an exploration of how fear and joy each affect human lives. Ransom has been thrust intensely and suddenly into a completely new world, and Lewis to some extent forgives him for feeling afraid. However, Lewis also advocates for a more general excitement surrounding new things. Depending on how Ransom reacts, this journey could either be the worst experience of his life, or the best. If Ransom falls into terror, he will learn nothing from this trip. If Ransom can overcome his fear of space and the planet Malacandra, he will be able to enjoy the new perspective that life on Malacandra will give him on his own place in the universe. Lewis argues that ecstasy would be far preferable, counseling his readers to follow that same path when they are introduced to the unfamiliar and the unknown.

Chapter 4 Quotes

“I consider your philosophy of life raving lunacy. I suppose all that stuff about infinity and eternity means that you think you are justified in doing anything—absolutely anything—here and now, on the off chance that some creatures or other descended from man as we know him may crawl about a few centuries longer in some part of the universe.”
 “Yes—anything whatever,” returned the scientist sternly, “and all educated opinion—for I do not call classics and history and such trash education—is entirely on my side.”

Related Characters: Dr. Weston, Dr. Elwin Ransom (speaker)

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 29-30

Explanation and Analysis

Weston finally gives Ransom an explanation for why he has been kidnapped, praising the sacrifice that Ransom must make for the greater good of all humans. Though Weston seems to consider this sacrifice the highest purpose of civilized men, Weston only respects a certain kind of civilization and a certain kind of education. He believes that the march of progress, as outlined by his version of the purpose of science, allows humans to do horrible things in the name of the good of all humankind. Ransom disagrees, valuing individual rights and older moral codes more than he values the new push towards scientific progress. By prioritizing some nebulous future advancement, Weston is forgetting to care for the others who live here and now with him. Lewis argues that such actions will only lead to pain and ruin.

Furthermore, Lewis undermines Weston’s grand ideas by showing that Weston is not willing to sacrifice *himself* for this mission. If Weston believes so firmly in his ideals, he should bear the brunt of the cost himself, rather than harming others for his own gain. Lewis argues that the disciplines that Weston dismisses, the humanities and old philosophies, are wiser than the currently popular ideas of progress (and in this quote we also see Lewis being somewhat curmudgeonly, putting “modern” ideas he dislikes in the mouth of his villain). Weston’s blind loyalty to the false idols of scientific inquiry are actually leading him down a path that will only bring harm to everyone instead of the triumph that Weston imagines.

Chapter 5 Quotes

He had read of “Space”: at the back of his thinking for years had lurked the dismal fancy of the black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness, which was supposed to separate the worlds. He had not known how much it affected him till now—now that the very name “Space” seemed a blasphemous libel for this empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam. He could not call it “dead”; he felt life pouring into him from it every moment. How indeed should it be otherwise, since out of this ocean the worlds and all their life had come? ... No: space was the wrong name. Older thinkers had been wiser when they named it simply the heavens—the heavens which declared the glory...

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 34

Explanation and Analysis

As Ransom gets to know the true beauty of space, he is no longer able to demean this wonderful place by considering it in coldly scientific terms. Where he expected to find nothing but silence, darkness, and death, Ransom finds that space is actually the source of all life itself. His initial fear of this unknown place turns to joy as he reconsiders the marvelous celestial bodies. Lewis frames this in specifically Christian terms, renaming space “the heavens” and tapping in to the notion of heaven as the home of God, the creator of the universe according to Christian thought. Lewis also subtly quotes the Bible, not finishing the phrase “the heaven which declared the glory” with “of God,” as it is found in Psalm 19 in the Bible. This is another example of how Lewis uses Christian ideas throughout the novel, but does not make them explicit. The references are readily available in the text for those who would like to look for them, but not so transparent as to put off readers who would rather not engage with this religious content. Just as Ransom finds the heavens to be wonderful, despite his preconceived notions, Lewis hopes that his readers will see the amazing acts of God – such as creating these heavens – in a new light.

☛ The sorns would be . . . would be . . . he dared not think what the sorns would be. And he was to be given to them. Somehow this seemed more horrible than being caught by them. Given, handed over, offered. He saw in imagination various incompatible monstrosities—bulbous eyes, grinning jaws, horns, stings, mandibles. . . . But the reality would be worse: it would be an extra-terrestrial Otherness—something one had never thought of, never could have thought of.

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 37

Explanation and Analysis

When Ransom finds out that he is meant to be a sacrifice to the sorns, he cannot help but picture this alien race as something to fear and despise. Lewis shows that this is partly fueled by Ransom's knowledge of science fiction novels, as he has plenty of examples of monsters to draw from when imagining such a terrible creature. Yet this fear is also a simple fear of the unknown. Ransom does not yet know anything about the sorns, and so cannot fear any specific detail about their physical being or their lifestyle. Instead, Ransom fears their very "otherness" – the fact that he does not know what in particular to fear. Ransom shows that he will fear the sorns no matter what they are like, a response that vastly undermines Ransom's ability to have compassion and empathy for the sorns. He cannot accept that they might be kind or helpful, therefore creating far more trouble for himself. He must later overcome this initial reaction to gain a good relationship with the sorns and learn from this intelligent species.

Chapter 9 Quotes

☛ The creature was talking. It had a language. If you are not yourself a philologist, I am afraid you must take on trust the prodigious emotional consequences of this realization in Ransom's mind. A new world he had already seen—but a new, an extra-terrestrial, a non-human language was a different matter. Somehow, he had not thought of this in connection with the sorns; now, it flashed upon him like a revelation. The love of knowledge is a kind of madness. In the fraction of a second which it took Ransom to decide that the creature was really talking, and while he still knew that he might be facing instant death, his imagination had leaped over every fear and hope and probability of his situation to follow the dazzling project of making a Malacandrian grammar.

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Hyoi, Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 56

Explanation and Analysis

When Ransom first meets a hross, he is absolutely terrified of this Malacandrian species until he hears that the hross, later named Hyoi, is speaking. As a linguist, Ransom is naturally curious about languages. That curiosity allows him to overcome his fear and meet the creature as a fellow rational being. Lewis points out that human tendency towards inquiry and discovery is potentially stronger than our capacity to reject things that are new and different. When Ransom opens his mind to the wonderful things, such as the hrossan language, that he might learn from a new friendship, he is able to gain a relationship with the hross that he otherwise would have missed in his fear. Though Lewis recognizes that caution is necessary for human survival, he goes on to suggest that human curiosity has its own role in helping humans thrive in their environments. Fear may keep Ransom safe, but only Ransom's thirst for knowledge can make Ransom's life truly fulfilling.

Chapter 10 Quotes

☛ Perhaps the hrossa had a mythology—he took it for granted they were on a low cultural level—and the seroni were gods or demons.

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 65

Explanation and Analysis

Before Ransom learns about the hrossa culture, he assumes that their lack of developed tools and simple lifestyle means that they are not civilized. Ransom thinks that the religious beliefs of the hrossa will therefore not be as refined as the religions he is used to at home in England. Ransom has an incredibly high opinion of human civilization at the beginning of the novel, taking for granted that any society that does not look like what he imagines cannot be as "good." However, Lewis later shows that the hrossa have a better understanding of how life should function. The seroni are not gods or demons, but another intelligent life

form on this planet. They coexist peacefully with the hrossa, as fellow rational beings on Malacandra, and place their worship on the correct beings – Maleldil the Young, and the Old One. Ransom allows his false assumptions to get in the way of learning the true knowledge that the hrossa have to teach him.

Chapter 11 Quotes

☞ Ever since he had discovered the rationality of the hrossa he had been haunted by a conscientious scruple as to whether it might not be his duty to undertake their religious instruction; now, as a result of his tentative efforts, he found himself being treated as if he were the savage and being given a first sketch of civilized religion—a sort of hrossian equivalent of the shorter catechism.

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 69

Explanation and Analysis

Ransom at first thinks that he is supposed to “civilize” the primitive hrossa with education about human religion, but as he lives with them, he learns that the hrossa actually think of him as a kind of “savage” who needs instruction. Ransom thus displays his false assumptions, both about the high importance he places on human thought, and how little he thinks of the hrossa. Ransom has mistaken ideals about what civilization should look like, and disregards much of hrossan culture until he is forced to reevaluate it when he learns enough of the hrossan language to understand what they actually know. Ransom then has to think about his preconceived notions of civilized life and accept that the hrossan ways may be just as good as human ways, if different.

Lewis also uses Ransom’s odd epiphany about the hrossan religious instruction to hint that the readers too may be able to learn important information from the portrayal of hrossan culture. The paradise of the hrossa community follows the ideals for life that Lewis sees in the Christian Bible, as the hrossa share all they have and avoid conflict through monogamous living and complete obedience to Oyarsa, their guardian spirit. In this new setting, Lewis wants his readers to be able to consider the basic fundamentals of Christian belief without being too blinded by their own preconceived judgments to see the benefits

that a Christian life may give them.

☞ On Malacandra, apparently, three distinct species had reached rationality, and none of them had yet exterminated the other two. It concerned him intensely to find out which was the real master. "Which of the hnau rule?" he asked. "Oyarsa rules," was the reply.

Related Characters: Dr. Elwin Ransom, Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Oyarsa

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 70

Explanation and Analysis

Ransom asks over and over who the ruling species of Malacandra is, though he repeatedly receives the answer that Oyarsa, a guardian spirit, is the ruler over all three “hnau” (rational) species. Used to the power struggles and inequality of Earth, Ransom finds it very hard to believe that the three intelligent species of Malacandra do not constantly fight to prove their own race superior to the others. The constant wars between different cultures on Earth have conditioned Ransom into thinking that life must be a struggle in which every being fights to become better than all others. Ransom does not see that true freedom comes from finding one’s rightful place in the universe, not forcing the rest of the universe to submit to one’s domination.

In contrast, the species of Malacandra accept their place in the hierarchy of beings. This natural order, which includes the godly Old One and Maleldil the Young on top, followed by the oyarsa, the eldila, the hnau species, and then animals, gives the hnau species the ability to coexist peacefully and trust that the orders of those above them are truly for their own good. Oyarsa guides the inhabitants of Malacandra into doing what is right and creating a perfect society that is far more prosperous and happy than the insecure and divided communities on Earth. If Ransom hopes to leave behind a life of conflict and strife, he too must accept that humans are equal to the hnau and must follow the orders of Oyarsa and the other rightful rulers in order to be truly happy.

Chapter 12 Quotes

☞ At last it dawned upon him that it was not they, but his own species, that were the puzzle. That the hrossa should have such instincts was mildly surprising; but how came it that the instincts of the hrossa so closely resembled the unattained ideals of that far-divided species Man whose instincts were so deplorably different? What was the history of Man?

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Hyoui, Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 75

Explanation and Analysis

Ransom finds out from Hyoui that the hrossa are naturally monogamous, and that they have no instincts to sleep with multiple partners. Ransom is at first surprised that a species he considered as primitive as the hrossa would have this “civilized” trait. Yet the more he thinks about it, the more he realizes that it is humans who are strange for idealizing monogamy so much and also being somewhat incapable of carrying that ideal out. Lewis sees this as another example of humanity’s sinful nature. In a perfect world, such as the community of Malacandra that Lewis created, Lewis suggests that every rational creature’s instincts would follow their ideals for a good life. Earth, as a fallen world under the influence of the devil (in Lewis’s conception), cannot be this perfect society because the devil has twisted all of God’s creations to do things that will harm them. This ancient history of the devil and original sin is “the history of Man” that keeps men from living in the utopia they desire.

☞ I will tell you a day in my life that has shaped me; such a day as comes only once, like love, or serving Oyarsa in Meldilorn. Then I was young, not much more than a cub, when I went far, far up the handramit to the land where stars shine at midday and even water is cold. A great waterfall I climbed...Because I have stood there alone, Maleldil and I, for even Oyarsa sent me no word, my heart has been higher, my song deeper, all my days. But do you think it would have been so unless I had known that in Balki hneraki dwelled? There I drank life because death was in the pool.

Related Characters: Hyoui (speaker), Maleldil the Young, Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 76

Explanation and Analysis

Hyoui explains the significance of the hnakra (a dangerous shark-like creature) to Ransom, detailing how the hnakra may be dangerous but it also adds important excitement and meaning to the hrossa’s world. When Hyoui finds himself at a pool, serene except for the knowledge that a hnakra is under the water, he is far more able to appreciate how good his life is. Hyoui ties this to a connection with the god Maleldil, Lewis’s analogue for Jesus Christ in the novel, describing how happy he was to be in the presence of this ultimate goodness and knowing that Maleldil will keep him safe from the hneraki (plural of hnakra) in the pool. Without the threat of “death...in the pool,” the hrossa way of life would be so perfect as to be completely boring. The hrossa would quickly become stagnant and possibly ruin their wonderful society if there were no evil on the planet to remind them what good is and the necessity of fighting for that good.

Chapter 13 Quotes

☞ He was one with them. That difficulty which they, accustomed to more than one rational species, had perhaps never felt, was now overcome. They were all hnau. They had stood shoulder to shoulder in the face of an enemy, and the shapes of their heads no longer mattered. And he, even Ransom, had come through it and not been disgraced. He had grown up.

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Whin, Dr. Elwin Ransom, Hyoui

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 81-82

Explanation and Analysis

As Ransom learns to trust the hrossa and work with them, he is able to join in the hunt with Hyoui and Whin to slay the hnakra – an event which brings him great pride. As the hnakra represents the necessary presence of evil in this otherwise perfect world, the hunt shows the hrossa’s duty to root out this evil whenever it gets too close. When

Ransom first arrived on the planet, he was too afraid of the hnakra to do anything but run from it. As he becomes more comfortable with the hrossa and the planet of Malacandra in general, Ransom is able to put his fear aside and join with the hrossa in their mission against evil. This mission helps Ransom grow as a person, taking his true place alongside his fellow hnau (rational creatures) who understand the importance of fighting for what is good, rather than fleeing and hiding behind others to avoid danger. Leaving his fear of the hrossa aside, Ransom works with Hyoui and Whin to kill the true evil of the hnakra and finds his own good instincts, and a new sense of maturity, in the process.

“No,” said Whin. “I have been thinking. All this has come from not obeying the eldil. He said you were to go to Oyarsa. You ought to have been already on the road. You must go now...”

Related Characters: Whin (speaker), Hyoui, Oyarsa, Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 83

Explanation and Analysis

When Ransom does not follow the orders of the eldil to go to Meldilorn, his disobedience indirectly leads to the death of his hross friend Hyoui. Another hross, Whin, brings this explicitly to Ransom’s attention, reminding Ransom that the eldila only give orders for the good of the hnau on Malacandra. If Ransom had followed the eldil’s orders immediately, Hyoui would not have been in the forest where Weston shot him. Thus, Ransom himself invited this pain by avoiding the plan that the eldila laid out. The hrossa know that the eldila have higher authority on Malacandra than they do, and that the rule of Oyarsa is what makes the Malacandrian species so happy. Obedience to this natural order is the best choice for all the hnau, who do not know as much about the world as the eldila and Oyarsa do. Lewis ties this to the authority of God in Christian belief. In Lewis’s view, God’s commandments are not restrictions on human behavior, but the best course of action for humans to live happy and productive lives.

Chapter 16 Quotes

“I like the hrossa,” said Ransom a little stiffly. “And I think the way they talk about death is the right way.”
“They are right not to fear it, Ren-soom, but they do not seem to look at it reasonably as part of the very nature of our bodies—and therefore often avoidable at times when they would never see how to avoid it.”

Related Characters: Augray, Dr. Elwin Ransom (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 97-98

Explanation and Analysis

Ransom finally meets his first sorn when Augray saves Ransom from the lack of oxygen on the harandra, the natural home of the sorns and part of the journey that the hrossa sent Ransom on to the sacred site Meldilorn. Augray laughs at the hrossa for sending Ransom to a place that could kill him, knowing that the hrossa did not do so maliciously, but simply did not think of death as a danger. The hrossa welcome death as a homecoming to their god, Maleldil, and so do not have to fear this passage. While Ransom respects the peace and acceptance that the hrossa are able to have regarding an event that is usually so traumatic on Earth, Augray points out that death before one’s time is still something to avoid. Lewis thus suggests that death is something that should not be dreaded, but it is better to be careful than to welcome death prematurely. On Earth, Lewis points out that fear of death is not helpful to humans, as it can signify the satisfying completion of a life well-lived. Yet it is important to live the full span of one’s days instead of recklessly acting as if death does not matter. The hnau, all rational beings, are not meant to seek ways to outlive their days nor die before their time.

They were astonished at what he had to tell them of human history—of war, slavery and prostitution.
“It is because they have no Oyarsa,” said one of the pupils.
“It is because every one of them wants to be a little Oyarsa himself,” said Augray.
“They cannot help it,” said the old sorn. “There must be rule, yet how can creatures rule themselves? Beasts must be ruled by hnau and hnau by eldila and eldila by Maleldil.”

Related Characters: Augray, Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Oyarsa, Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 103

Explanation and Analysis

When Ransom meets the sorns, they have many questions about the practices of life on Earth and are shocked to hear of all the horrible things that humans do to one another on this planet. The sorns blame this on the lack of a proper authority on Earth, now that the former oyarsa (guardian spirit) of Earth has rebelled against the gods. Instead of being joined in one common cause towards a utopic society like the three rational species of Malacandra, the humans are divided into their own interests. Malacandra has one Oyarsa to unite the sorns, hrossa, and pflfltriggi and ensure that these three species remain in equal partnership with their needs provided for. Yet on Earth every person feels the need to look out for their own survival, and the fear of death and suffering causes humans to cause pain to others. Lewis shows that humans cannot and should not rule themselves, as it only leads to war and conflict. He hopes that humans can become united under faith in the Christian God and work towards what Lewis believes would be a better, fairer society.

Chapter 17 Quotes

☛☛ He knew before his guide told him that this was Meldilorn. He did not know what he had expected. The old dreams which he had brought from Earth of some more than American complexity of offices or some engineers' paradise of vast machines had indeed been long laid aside. But he had not looked for anything quite so classic, so virginal, as this bright grove—lying so still, so secret, in its coloured valley, soaring with inimitable grace so many hundred feet into the wintry sunlight.

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 105

Explanation and Analysis

Ransom arrives in Meldilorn, the home of Oyarsa, and the most beautiful place Ransom has ever seen. On the way there, Ransom had expectations about what the capital of Malacandra would look like, drawing from his experience of cities on Earth and his own prejudices about what civilization looks like. Yet where Ransom prioritizes the outer trappings of industrialized urban life and technological advancement, Malacandrian life shows that

civilization can be achieved in a more natural way. Rather than seeing civilization as a rational species dominating their environment, civilization on Malacandra means working with the environment. After spending weeks on Malacandra, Ransom is finally able to appreciate the beauty of this perspective, finding the sweetness and innocence of life on Malacandra far preferable to the bombastic nature of civilization and progress on Earth.

Chapter 18 Quotes

☛☛ “It was not always so. Once we knew the Oyarsa of your world—he was brighter and greater than I—and then we did not call it Thulcandra. It is the longest of all stories and the bitterest. He became bent. That was before any life came on your world. Those were the Bent Years of which we still speak in the heavens, when he was not yet bound to Thulcandra but free like us. It was in his mind to spoil other worlds besides his own.”

Related Characters: Oyarsa (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom, The Bent One

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 119-120

Explanation and Analysis

Oyarsa tells Ransom of the Fall of Earth's oyarsa in order to explain why humans are so “bent” and do such evil things to each other. This story, describing the Bent One as a Guardian spirit for Earth who turned against the ultimate rulers of the universe, closely mirrors the Biblical account of the Fall of Lucifer – who became Satan when he rebelled against the Christian God. Lewis presents this story as a fantastic reimagining of this history, focusing on how it connects to the world of Malacandra rather than making it clear that he is talking about the introduction of sin into Earth.

The Bent One is the reason that human beings have evil as part of their nature. Lewis sees human nature as fundamentally wrong, always looking to hurt others just as the Bent One wanted to destroy other worlds. This sinful nature is portrayed in Christian thought as the fault of Satan, who caused the Fall of Man in the Garden of Eden and brought original sin into Earth. Humans now cannot help but cause trouble, and must fight against this base nature if they wish to return to the way Earth was meant to be, before the mistakes of the Bent One.

●● They thought I wanted one of your race to eat and went to fetch one. If they had come a few miles to see me I would have received them honourably; now they have twice gone a voyage of millions of miles for nothing and will appear before me none the less. And you also, Ransom of Thulcandra, you have taken many vain troubles to avoid standing where you stand now.

Related Characters: Oyarsa (speaker), Dick Devine, Dr. Weston, Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 121

Explanation and Analysis

Oyarsa describes how Weston and Devine caused more trouble for themselves by imagining the worst of the Malacandrians and kidnapping a human sacrifice instead of simply talking to these beings. Oyarsa blames this on their fear, as the two men were so unwilling to accept that creatures so different from humans could be good that they immediately made the sorns into monsters. This fear created huge amounts of work for Weston and Devine, who felt forced to return to Earth and mount an entire mission back to Malacandra with their human sacrifice in order to protect themselves from this imagined doom. Their fear also harmed Ransom, who was kidnapped, drugged, and had his entire life disrupted due to Weston and Devine's misguided understanding of Oyarsa's request that a human visit him. Had Weston and Devine been more trusting, they could have avoided all of the trouble for themselves and Ransom. Lewis uses this example to show that fear of the unknown is rarely a helpful response to new situations. Humans can do better for themselves and others by trying to learn more about others and meeting others with an open mind.

Chapter 19 Quotes

●● Through his knowledge of the creatures and his love for them he began, ever so little, to hear it with their ears. A sense of great masses moving at visionary speeds, of giants dancing, of eternal sorrows eternally consoled, of he knew not what and yet what he had always known, awoke in him with the very first bars of the deep-mouthed dirge, and bowed down his spirit as if the gate of heaven had opened before him.

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes:  

Page Number: 130

Explanation and Analysis

Ransom hears the mourning song of the hrossa after spending weeks living with them, and is finally able to appreciate their music on its own terms and understand the beauty of this art form. When he first arrived, Ransom disliked their music because he expected it to follow the rhythms and harmonies he was used to in music on Earth. Ransom could not accept the music for what it was without comparing it to the music he expected. Yet as Ransom opened up his mind to the possibility that new things could be good in their own ways, he began to embrace the hrossa for their unique traits instead of wishing that their culture would be more familiar. This in turn enriches Ransom's own life, as he can then tap into the ancient wisdom of the hrossa that teaches him how to better handle the sorrows in his own life. The hrossa gained this wisdom from their connection to the "true" religion of Malacandra, which welcomes death as a natural rite of passage that ends a life and welcomes the dead into a perfect heaven. Ransom is more in touch with the beauty of the universe when he understands and accepts this lesson through the hrossa's song.

Chapter 20 Quotes

●● "It is well that I have heard you," said Oyarsa. "For though your mind is feebler, your will is less bent than I thought. It is not for yourself that you would do all this."
"No," said Weston proudly in Malacandrian. "Me die. Man live."

Related Characters: Dr. Weston, Oyarsa (speaker)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 136

Explanation and Analysis

In response to Oyarsa's question about why Weston came to Malacandra, Weston gives a flowery speech (untranslatable to Malacandrian) about the grand march of progress that has created man and given mankind the right to exploit any and all other beings in order to make sure that the human race survives. Weston goes so far as to say that he does not care what happens to him personally as long as a human settlement is established on Malacandra that allows human civilization to spread through the universe

and endure forever even if Earth becomes uninhabitable. Oyarsa somewhat commends Weston for this outlook, as he is at least thinking of others rather than only himself, but shows that Weston truly doesn't understand the philosophy that he is espousing. Lewis shows this through Weston's primitive language skills, using poor English grammar to suggest how primitive and uneducated Weston sounds to the Malacandrians.

Instead of focusing on living forever, no matter the costs, Lewis argues that humans should be concerned with living well and spending whatever lifespan they have helping others. Supporting mankind is not the highest purpose of the entire universe, but rather people should use their time and talents to care for the other beings on Earth and other worlds. If Weston truly cared for others, as he claims he does, he would see that he can do more good by accepting the eventual end of humankind and putting the time he has to work for the good of all creatures according to the will of the God who created mankind in the first place.

☝ "Trash! Defeatist trash!" he shouted at Oyarsa in English; then, drawing himself up to his full height, he added in Malacandrian, "You say your Maleldil let all go dead. Other one, Bent One, he fight, jump, live—not all talkee-talkee. Me no care Maleldil. Like Bent One better: me on his side."

Related Characters: Dr. Weston (speaker), The Bent One, Oyarsa

Related Themes:   

Page Number: 139

Explanation and Analysis

Weston hears all that Oyarsa wants to teach him about how to accept death when it comes, and how to make one's life meaningful through service to others, but Weston rejects this viewpoint and seals his fate as a human who will never overcome his evil nature. Weston sees the fight for survival as the purpose of all life, idolizing those who work for their own gain no matter the cost. He deliberately misunderstands Maleldil's good plan – in which everything and everyone has its time – as Maleldil giving up on life and refusing to care.

However, it is actually the Bent One, Lewis's representation of Satan, who does not care about human lives and hopes to keep them enslaved in their fear of death. Weston is so terrified of what would happen when he dies that he is willing to choose the devil and all the evil acts that the devil

stands for instead of trying to overcome his fear and trust that Maleldil will care for him when death comes. Through Weston's example, Lewis points out how he sees many men of Earth choosing evil out of their fear and praising the wrong things because they do not understand that the real purpose of life is not to live forever – for Lewis, the point is to live well according to God's plan.

Chapter 21 Quotes

☝ He could not feel that they were an island of life journeying through an abyss of death. He felt almost the opposite—that life was waiting outside the little iron egg-shell in which they rode, ready at any moment to break in, and that, if it killed them, it would kill them by excess of its vitality. He hoped passionately that if they were to perish they would perish by the "unbodying" of the space-ship and not by suffocation within it. To be let out, to be free, to dissolve into the ocean of eternal noon, seemed to him at certain moments a consummation even more desirable than their return to Earth.

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 145

Explanation and Analysis

On the trip back to Earth, Ransom prays that he will not die by suffocation in the space ship due to lack of oxygen, but that Oyarsa's promise to magically destroy the space ship after 90 days will catch them still in space and allow Ransom to die in the freedom of the heavens. Rather than fearing space, which he used to consider a blank, empty void, Ransom now feels how the heavens connect the whole universe. Ransom has embraced the communal nature of life on Malacandra, in which the inhabitants of the planet are in communication with the spiritual beings that live in the heavens and with the ultimate rulers of the universe. Ransom too wants to join that society, rather than remaining cut off from everything in the "iron egg-shell" of the spaceship. This feeling also applies to life on the planets. While Ransom had previously considered Earth the only bright spot in an otherwise dead universe, he now sees that Earth is the silent planet – the one place outside of the true vitality of the universe. As Ransom changes his perspective, he embraces the more meaningful life of joining with the heavens, no longer selfishly trying to control his own fate.

Chapter 22 Quotes

☞ It was Dr. Ransom who first saw that our only chance was to publish in the form of fiction what would certainly not be listened to as fact... "what we need for the moment is not so much a body of belief as a body of people familiarized with certain ideas. If we could even effect in one per cent of our readers a change-over from the conception of Space to the conception of Heaven, we should have made a beginning."

Related Characters: Lewis (The Narrator) (speaker), Dr. Elwin Ransom

Related Themes: 

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: 152

Explanation and Analysis

When Ransom returns to Earth after his adventure on Malacandra, he becomes partners with a fictionalized version of Lewis himself in order to publish this experience as a science fiction novel and educate the public about the things he learned on Malacandra in a subtle way. In doing so, Lewis (the author) reveals his real goal for *Out of the Silent Planet*. Just as Ransom hopes to offer the fictional England a way to find out about Oyarsa and the Bent One so that they are aware of what the universe is really like, Lewis attempts to plant the seed of Christian theology in his readers. Changing the public opinion of Christianity, which Lewis believes is seen as a relic of a by-gone era in modern England, does not happen by instructing people with boring sermons or hounding them with exhortations to change their behavior. Lewis does not give people the facts and condemn them to hell if they do not believe, but he instead appeals to their emotions and their imaginations by specifically hiding the truth of Christian faith in a fictional novel. Lewis wants to show his readers the wonders that Christianity has brought to his life, such as replacing the depressing vision of space as an empty void with a new idea of Heaven as the source of all life. Ransom was able to change his mind through the journey to Malacandra, while Lewis lays the groundwork for his readers to accept Christianity after seeing it through the fantastic lens of a science fiction novel.

Postscript Quotes

☞ Like you, I can't help trying to fix their relation to the things that appear in terrestrial tradition—gods, angels, fairies. But we haven't the data. When I attempted to give Oyarsa some idea of our own Christian angelology, he certainly seemed to regard our "angels" as different in some way from himself. But whether he meant that they were a different species, or only that they were some special military caste (since our poor old earth turns out to be a kind of Ypres Salient in the universe), I don't know.

Related Characters: Dr. Elwin Ransom (speaker), Lewis (The Narrator)

Related Themes: 

Page Number: 156

Explanation and Analysis

At the end of the book, Ransom sends letters to a fictional version of Lewis himself, explaining more about the "facts" of this novel and adding information that Ransom feels the readers of this book will be curious about. Throughout the novel, Oyarsa and the eldila have been described as beings of light that might be analogous to the Christian concept of angels – messengers for the great ruler of the universe. Yet Lewis pulls back from a direct comparison between the eldila and the angels, resisting making his novel a direct Christian allegory but simply hinting towards certain Christian images. Lewis works to make the religious system of Malacandra interesting in its own right, hoping to avoid letting his readers dismiss the thought of the eldila as another way of talking about angels that they may think are silly fairytales. Lewis further describes angels on Earth as warriors, calling back to the Biblical vision of angels as terrifying beings that do great work for God rather than the conventional picture of them as comforting beings who do nothing but play the harp and sing. Lewis attempts to give his readers a new perspective of Christian concepts to help them see the amazing truths that he finds in Christian theology. Through the eldila, Lewis hopes that angels can regain some of their mystery and majesty in the minds of his readers.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

A mysterious man whom the narrator calls the “Pedestrian” walks through the English countryside in a rainstorm, hoping to find a place to stay. After finding that no rooms are open in Nadderby, he walks on to a town noted on his map as Sterk. The Pedestrian has the air of an academic man, and indeed is a philologist (linguist) at Cambridge college. His name is Dr. Ransom. Ransom is disheartened at first to see that Sterk seems to be mostly farmland, until he finally sees a small cottage in the distance where he might ask for lodging.

When Ransom arrives at the small cottage, a woman there explains that there is likely no place to stay in Sterk except for an estate called The Rise. The Rise is where her son, Harry, works for a businessman named Mr. Devine and a professor whose name the woman does not know. The woman seems very upset that her son is not yet home, and Ransom offers to go to The Rise and send Harry home (while hoping to earn a place for himself to stay at The Rise in the process).

Ransom follows the woman’s directions to the estate called The Rise, but finds the gate locked. Ransom decides to sneak through the tall hedge surrounding the estate. Once inside the grounds, Ransom notices how cold and unwelcoming the house itself looks, but presses on and rings the bell. There is no answer, but Ransom hears a scuffle and the sound of angry voices around the back of the house. A young child (later revealed as Harry) yells at someone to let him go home.

Ransom rushes to the back of the house and sees a child, whom he assumes to be Harry, struggling to escape from the grasp of two men. Ransom interrupts tentatively, muttering about sneaking in through the hedge, and then tells the men that Harry’s mother wants him home. The larger man angrily asks who Ransom is, but the thinner man exclaims that he knows Ransom from Wedenshaw Secondary School. The thinner man reintroduces himself as Devine, and Ransom suddenly recognizes Devine as a schoolmate that he did not like. Devine then tells Ransom that the thicker man is “The Weston,” the great physicist.

Lewis begins the novel by giving Ransom a role (the pedestrian) rather than a name, bringing this novel into conversation with books like Pilgrim’s Progress that use symbolic or allegorical names to talk about Christian doctrine. Ransom will stand in for the average human in the book, though also for Lewis himself, who was a professor and linguist as well. Ransom’s desire to explore the countryside immediately shows that he has a curious and open-minded nature.



Ransom seems to put a high significance on the trappings of civilization, and shows that he would rather stay at a large estate like The Rise than try to ask for lodging at the quaint country cottage. He seems far more interested in talking to men of “his own kind” – that is academics and entrepreneurs – than this English woman.



Civilization, as represented by the estate The Rise, is cold and unwelcoming, and Ransom, must sneak in. Furthermore, the façade of civilization seems to be hiding a brutality at its heart—a struggle that is hurting a vulnerable child—as Lewis starts to show how “civilized” life doesn’t always live up to its reputation. The setting also starts the story off with almost a gothic air—a dark and scary mansion the protagonist stumbles upon at night.



Weston’s introduction as “The Weston” immediately sets him up as a pompous man with a high opinion of himself. Mr. Devine puts a high value on making connections with people through his prestigious background at a preparatory school in England. The school system in England is incredibly class based, and Wedenshaw, though not a real school, comes with the air of money and status for families who are able to send their boys to a place like this.



Devine happily explains to Ransom that Harry is prone to fits, and says that he and Weston were simply trying to calm him and give him a bath before they sent Harry home. Devine offers to let Ransom escort Harry home and then come back and stay at the estate for the night. Ransom still distrusts the way that Weston and Devine were treating Harry, but he decides that men of Devine and Weston's class would not be doing anything suspicious.

After a hushed conversation with Weston, Devine tells Harry that he doesn't need a bath and is free to go. Harry sobs that he knows the men were taking him to the laboratory, not the wash-house. Devine simply laughs at Harry's fear of Weston's laboratory and takes Harry into the house for a drink. Ransom follows reluctantly, seeing that Weston does not really want him here, but he is tired enough from his walk that day that he does not want to refuse any refreshment.

CHAPTER 2

Ransom comes in to Weston and Devine's sitting room, remembering again how little he liked Devine at school. Everyone at Wedenshaw and Cambridge thought Devine was hopelessly boring, even if he was inexplicably successful in London after graduation. Devine himself interrupts Ransom's thoughts, bringing in a tray with a bottle and glasses for whiskey.

Ransom gratefully waits to be handed a drink, but Devine gets distracted asking why Ransom is in this part of the country. Ransom explains that he is on a walking-tour. Devine asks if Ransom picked up the habit from his time in the army, but Ransom replies that the walking tour is the exact opposite of the army: Ransom can make his own choices about where to go that do not need to consider anyone but himself. Ransom says he has specifically left no forwarding address so that no one can find him and call him back to his place as a don at Cambridge before he is ready.

Devine suddenly notices that the whiskey bottle is empty and gets Ransom a glass of water. They sit in two expensive chairs in the sitting room. Ransom asks why Devine has a house in this rural area. Devine explains that he is funding Weston's experiments, which promise to further the march of progress and the good of humanity. As Devine speaks, Ransom finds himself unable to focus and then has the strange feeling that Devine is actually sitting a mile away. Ransom's body goes numb and the room fades away.

Ransom is willing to let go of both Harry's obvious discomfort and the evidence of his own eyes to excuse the actions of men he considers civilized and high status. Dr. Weston's position in academia makes him automatically trustworthy in Ransom's eyes—a very classist assumption.



This mention of Weston's laboratory suggests that Weston has been doing possibly unethical experiments on Harry. Ransom is still suspicious of Weston and Devine, but he again ignores his misgivings so he can gain access to the comforts of civilized life that he wants. Harry disappears from the story at this point, and it's unclear if he actually makes it back home.



Society in London allows people like Devine, who do not actually have anything of substance to offer the world, to become incredibly wealthy. Lewis sees this as another failing of civilized life, that it rewards men for fitting in and playing the system rather than being truly productive.



At this point, Ransom is without direction and without a community, making him somewhat purposeless on his walking tour. Ransom seems as if he is enjoying not knowing where to go or having anyone to answer to, but this meandering state is also dangerous. Devine and Weston can kidnap Ransom and use him for their purposes precisely because Ransom has no aims and no real connections to others.



Devine's speech about universal progress and humanity as a kind of "force" foreshadows darker things to come—clearly he and Weston believe that the ends justify the means, and are rationalizing the unethical things they do in the name of "the greater good." Lewis was very critical of beliefs like these, and brings them up in other works as well.



Ransom has what he thinks is a dream, but the narrator explains that it might have bearing on future events in the novel. Ransom dreams that he, Weston, and Devine are trying to climb over a wall to get out of a bright, pretty garden. Ransom fears the darkness on the other side of the wall, but Weston insists that they must go. Peeking over the wall, Ransom sees Weston and Devine talking to very strange looking people. The strange people say “hoo” like owls. Ransom makes it to the top of the wall, then stops because his left leg feels “dark” outside the garden, and his right leg feels “light” inside the garden.

Ransom regains consciousness and realizes he has been drugged. Over Ransom’s head, Devine tells Weston that Ransom will “do quite as well as the boy.” Weston says he is reluctant to substitute Ransom for Harry, as Ransom feels more human, but finally agrees that Ransom carries a lower risk of people looking for him when he disappears. Ransom realizes this might be his one chance to escape and flings himself toward the door. He struggles more violently than he thought possible, but falls unconscious again after a blow to the head.

CHAPTER 3

Ransom wakes again with a horrible headache in a bed in a very warm, dark room. He looks up to find a window with the stars outside pulsing more brilliantly than he has ever seen. Ransom feels his head again, thinking that the drug must have affected his vision. Yet then a huge silver orb begins to move into the frame of the window. Ransom thinks that it must be the moon, though it is never appeared so large before.

In the light of the strangely large moon, Ransom inspects his room. The walls seem to rise at a slant so that the ceiling is wider than the floor. Ransom gets up from the bed and feels oddly light, and then has the strange idea that he has died and is now a ghost. Ransom walks around the room, noting that it is made entirely of metal and seems to be vibrating. Soft raps hit the walls and ceiling at random intervals, making Ransom think of missiles during the war, and Ransom becomes more frightened than he has ever been.

Ransom sits on the bed again, staring at the moon and realizing that his room is moving quickly away from the orb. Suddenly he remembers that he shouldn’t be able to see the new moon tonight. Before he can put together what is going on, a door opens to reveal a brilliant light and Weston’s naked silhouette. Ransom breaks down in sobs, asking Weston what the silver orb is. Weston answers that the orb is the Earth.

In Ransom’s dream, he seems to take a journey of some sort out of a beautiful garden into darkness. The garden connects to Lewis’s Christian beliefs about perfection in the Garden of Eden, the original paradise meant for humans until the devil tempted them to sin. Weston and Devine insist on going into the darkness, hinting that they welcome this fall into sin and will later force Ransom into situations where he is afraid of doing the wrong (that is, “dark”) thing.



Weston and Devine debate the relative “humanity” of others, dismissing the autonomy of Harry and Ransom based on what they believe counts as a human with rights and value. They apparently have no sympathy for Ransom and no scruples about drugging and kidnapping him, though on the outside they appear as upstanding members of society, and even talk about lofty ideals for humanity as a whole.



Ransom has been thrust immediately into the unknown. Here, space appears as a scary, threatening place, with a moon that approaches to attack Ransom in his safe, womb-like room. The hot, dark chamber is the starting place for Ransom’s rebirth as a person.



As Ransom keeps investigating his new surroundings, his overwhelming emotion is fear. This fear will continue to dominate Ransom’s reaction to most of the unfamiliar things he encounters throughout the book. Lewis hints at Ransom’s experience in WWI, suggesting that the war may have contributed to Ransom’s fear of the unknown.



Though Weston has already proved to be untrustworthy, Ransom is still glad to see a familiar thing amid this strange experience. Ransom reacts how most people would to finding that they are inexplicably in space, and Lewis does not condemn Ransom for being scared at this moment.



CHAPTER 4

Ransom sinks back to the bed, aware of nothing but his fear. Gradually, Ransom regains his social manners. Ransom asks where they are, and Weston confirms that they are in space. Ransom then asks how and why he has been kidnapped. Weston hesitates, and then explains that they are moving towards “Malacandra” and will arrive in 28 days.

Ransom asks if Malacandra is a star, and Weston tells him that Malacandra is the true name of one of the planets in our solar system, according to the inhabitants of Malacandra. Weston refuses to tell Ransom which planet it is in terrestrial terms. Ransom cries that he still doesn’t understand why he was kidnapped. Weston responds that this is Ransom’s fault for sneaking into someone else’s yard, and he becomes disgusted with Ransom for selfishly thinking only of himself, not the greater good of mankind. Ransom comments that Weston himself is being selfish on the part of all humans by sacrificing a human life for the potential good of humanity.

Weston refuses to talk with Ransom anymore and brings Ransom into another room for breakfast. As he walks, Ransom feels like he is walking over a cliff. Weston explains that the spaceship is spherical, with all the rooms arranged around a hollow metal center so that it feels as though gravity is “down” as it is on Earth. Weston brings Ransom a weighted vest to help with the feeling of lightness and darkened glasses to protect Ransom’s eyes from the bright light of the sun. Ransom comments that this is not what he expected from dark, cold space. Weston smirks, then tells Ransom to stop talking so they can conserve oxygen.

CHAPTER 5

Ransom tries to get more information about Malacandra from Devine, who is far more talkative than Weston, but Devine usually talks only of the things he wants to buy when he gets back to Earth. The only thing Devine will say about Ransom’s role on this mission is that they are “handing him the baby” – that is, giving Ransom the blame for some unknown crime.

Though he expects to be afraid of space, Ransom finds that he can’t feel anything but wonderful while meditating on the gorgeous views outside the ship. All the planets, constellations, and meteorites in **the heavens** are far more beautiful than Ransom ever dreamed. Ransom finds that he can spend hours just staring in awe out the space ship windows. Weston and Devine explain this feeling away, claiming that the incredible feelings of health are simply from solar rays that do not reach through Earth’s atmosphere.

Ransom is not able to fully overcome his fear, but he does remember his social graces enough to speak again. Lewis shows that the demands of civilization are still more important to Ransom than his primal feelings of fear.



Weston blames Ransom for this situation, suggesting that the comparatively small crime of sneaking into someone’s yard somehow means that Ransom should be punished with kidnapping and a complete loss of his autonomy. Weston carries this further, arguing that no individual’s rights matter in comparison to the needs of “progress” and his ideals of spreading human civilization through the universe. Here Lewis also sets up the mystery of which planet “Malacandra” is.



Though Ransom is still afraid and dealing with the many changes that life in space brings, he is also beginning to have his previous assumptions challenged. While he expected space to be cold and dark, qualities associated with evil and an inability to survive, he finds that space is warm and bright, qualities associated with life and health.



Devine seems to care only for his own pleasure. Unlike Weston, he does not have a higher moral explanation for his actions. Devine simply wants to be as wealthy and comfortable as possible and he doesn’t care who he hurts on the way towards that goal.



Ransom subverts his own expectations by feeling incredibly happy in space, instead of depressed and scared. As Ransom is no longer consumed by fear, he can fully appreciate how beautiful this place is. Meanwhile, Weston and Devine refuse to see the larger implications of Ransom’s discovery, or the layer of spiritual wellness that accompanies their physical wellness.



Ransom eventually rejects the modern scientific image of space as a cold, empty void. It seems blasphemous to him to think of space as dead when everything is so radiant here. Ransom finds himself thinking back to older, wiser philosophers who called this area **the heavens** that “declare the glory.” He quotes Milton to himself and basks in the sun’s light as much as he can.

All the visions of space that Ransom had on Earth are proven to be wrong, to the point where Ransom rejects science – the pinnacle of human progress – and goes back to older sources of knowledge about the goodness of the heavens. One of these sources is hinted to be the Bible, as Lewis quotes part of a verse from Psalm 19 when talking about the glory of the heavens. Lewis also includes a quote from Milton, most famous for his Christian epic [Paradise Lost](#). Lewis therefore starts to introduce elements of Christian thought into this new science fiction world.



Ransom takes over cooking on the ship. One night, while washing up the dinner dishes, he overhears Devine’s side of a conversation with Weston, who assumes that Ransom has gone to bed. Ransom is chilled to the bone as Devine argues with Weston about how they should hand over Ransom to a “sorn” and what the purpose of Ransom’s sacrifice may be to this tribal society. Weston seems to be having second thoughts, but Devine assures Weston that they are giving Ransom up for the best of reasons.

Weston and Devine care only about themselves, as shown by their willingness to offer Ransom as “ransom” for their success on Malacandra. Significantly, the more moral Weston is having second thoughts while the pleasure-seeking Devine tries to convince Weston to stay the course, suggesting that Devine is actually more dismissive of other human lives than Weston is.



Ransom creeps back to his room, dreading the descent from **the heavens** to face becoming a human sacrifice for the horrible monster that he imagines the “sorns” must be. Thinking of H.G. Wells’ novels, he imagines all sorts of terrible creatures, and then decides that he would rather find a way to commit suicide than be given to the sorns – even if he is a pious man who believes suicide to be a sin. He creeps back to the kitchen and steals a knife, then falls into a deep fear-induced sleep.

Ransom’s name calls to mind the sacrifices of pagan faiths, but also the sacrifice of Christ himself, who paid the “ransom” for humanity’s sins. This suggests that Ransom is in some way both an “everyman” and a Christ-figure, while his status as an alien sacrifice implies that he is going back to a primitive society that does not understand the lessons of “civilization.” Ransom fears the sorns even though he knows nothing about them, proving that it is the very fact that they are unknown that he fears. Lewis here references piety, hinting at one version of Christianity in the novel that may have to grow and expand through this journey. Note also that Lewis mentions H.G. Wells, linking his work to other early science fiction writers.



CHAPTER 6

Ransom wakes up feeling much better, hoping that he can master his own fear. Over the course of the day, the temperature in the space ship drops and the light seems to change. Ransom can’t call it “darkening” because the quality of light remains the same—it is simply half as much light with the same intensity. Ransom goes to the kitchen and tries to explain this to Devine, but Devine just laughs. Weston comes in to the kitchen and explains that they are entering Malacandra’s gravitational pull, and all three men soon feel sick at the return of their body weight. They get dressed in warmer clothes to prepare for Malacandra’s cold climate.

Lewis adds in a philosophical aside about the properties of light in heaven, suggesting that it can be lessened without losing its integrity. This also applies to Lewis’s conception of God, as a trinity who is always entirely itself, yet can be split into the three persons of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost without losing any of the properties of God. Devine and even Weston again have no time for these spiritual thoughts and focus only on the physical needs of their human bodies.



Ransom mourns the loss of the heavenly light as they enter Malacandra's atmosphere. Ransom realizes that he can never again think of space as devoid of life. Instead the planets seem to be dark, heavy gaps in the living brightness of **the heavens**. He wonders if beyond the solar system is the true void, or if there is another level of brightness and life even better than the heavens. The ship lands on Malacandra with Ransom still stuck in these philosophical thoughts.

Ransom once feared space, but now loves it so much that it is the planet he fears. His vision of heaven as the source of all life also opens the door to Lewis's belief in the Christian Heaven as the home of God, the creator of the universe—and to the more general idea of God's creation as inherently beautiful, surprising, and vast. The thought of another level of brightness also suggests the "next world," or a spiritual heaven where believers would go when they die.



CHAPTER 7

Devine and Weston prepare to leave the space ship, and Ransom's fears of the death waiting for him on Malacandra return. Devine steps out of the window with a revolver, and then Weston forces Ransom out. Ransom makes sure that the knife he stole is still hidden in his belt and steps out. There is a pink mass all over the ground, springy under Ransom's feet. He looks around, trying to make sense of the blobs of bright, pale color across the landscape.

Ransom is again forced into an entirely new situation and allows fear to be his dominant response. The three men's exit from the ship parallels Ransom's dream of leaving a beautiful garden (the brightness of space) for a dark planet, but this planet is not as threatening as it may first seem, as hinted by the pale colors and rather whimsical vegetation Ransom sees.



Ransom sees a hut built on the shore of what seems to be a lake, and hopes that the Malacandran inhabitants make human-like structures. Devine shatters this illusion by telling Ransom that he and Weston built the hut on their first foray here. Weston forces Ransom to help set up the camp and unpack all their supplies. As Ransom tediously carries boxes back and forth, he is surprised to find that he thinks that Malacandra is pretty, and far more peaceful than the nightmare he expected.

Ransom wants the aliens to be as human-like as possible, so that he does not have to fear them. Yet he is also pleasantly surprised by the peace and beauty of Malacandra, which is again so different from the terrible features he conjured in his mind. When Ransom relaxes enough to not let fear rule him, he is able to enjoy his fascinating new setting even though it's different from normal life on Earth.



The hut is built on a peninsula with water on three sides. Ransom tries to make out objects on the far shore and thinks that he sees a purple covered hill, thin jagged green spires, and a rose-colored cloud above – all exquisitely beautiful. Ransom turns to the nearer shore and realizes that the purple plants are like seaweed, flimsy and seemingly too frail to support their great height in air instead of water.

The world of Malacandra specifically does not look like Earth, with its strange colors and oddly shaped features, but Lewis carefully describes them in a way that makes it clear that these things are just as good as they appear. This world truly is idyllic.



Devine stops their work for lunch and Ransom forces himself to eat. Weston and Devine are too distracted by constantly searching the horizon in silence. Suddenly, Devine points to six long, thin, white shapes standing in the water. The shapes, which must be sorns, remind Ransom of men painted by "savages" in prehistoric times. Ransom idly wonders how their spindly limbs can remain upright, and then catches a glimpse of the figures' long, solemn faces. He is gripped by a wild fear and begs Devine to let him go.

Ransom can only see the approaching sorns through his human perspective, tying them back to ancient human fears instead of considering the possibility that the sorns might not actually be threatening. He seems especially concerned that the sorns have human-like faces that are not actually human. Lewis explores how humans are more likely to be intolerant of beings who are almost like themselves, but different enough to pose a threat.



Devine and Weston force Ransom to the water's edge as Ransom fights to get away. Suddenly, Weston fires his pistol in the air. Ransom then sees a line of foam like a torpedo track speeding across the water towards them. Ransom catches one flash of snapping jaws, then notices that Weston and Devine have loosened their hold in the confusion. Ransom tears away from the other two men and runs as fast as he can into the purple forest.

Lewis distills this struggle between the three men as each man fighting for his own personal survival, none of them considering starting a diplomatic relationship with the sorns. Yet the first sign of any danger on Malacandra does not come from the sorns, but from the creature (later named the hnakra) with the snapping jaw.



CHAPTER 8

Ransom gives up on running, but keeps walking through the forest as fast as possible. Ransom thinks about the white shapes, which must have been the sorns that wanted him as sacrifice. The sorns are different from the ogre-ish monsters that Ransom expected, but still appeal to a deep-seated primitive fear in his brain. Ransom clutches his knife, praying and hoping he has the strength to fight back when the time comes.

While Ransom has now seen the sorns and understands that they are not the monsters he imagined, they are still strange enough to waken Ransom's deep-seated fear of the unknown. Ransom channels this fear into violence, imagining himself hurting the sorns before they can hurt him, though the sorns have not yet given him any indication that they are actually dangerous.



Ransom keeps walking, easily crossing several steep ridges. Ransom reflects on how everything on Malacandra seems elongated and thinks that this extreme height must be possible since this planet is lighter than Earth and feels the effects of gravity less. Ransom tries to remember which planets are smaller than Earth, thinking that he might be on Venus, Mars, or even the moon.

Lewis comments on the vertical theme of all life forms and landscape features on Malacandra, subtly hinting that everything on Malacandra is closer to the beautiful life of the heavens than anything on Earth, while also giving a scientific explanation for the strangeness of this new world. Ransom ties this strange world to the known solar system, making it more relatable to readers' lives on Earth.



Night begins to fall and Ransom notices that the streams in the bottom of many of the gullies are warmer than the forest. Wary of the cold and the dangers that might appear in the forest at night, Ransom decides to find a place to sleep. He walks down another steep gully and finds a hot spring. He is thirsty but doesn't want to risk drinking this alien water. He lays down next to the stream, feeling an intense love for his own body and thinking wistfully of all the men on Earth who get a safe, comfortable bed. He mumbles to himself, "We'll look after you, Ransom," then falls asleep.

Ransom still does not trust anything on Malacandra, fearing the forest even though he has not come across anything dangerous yet, and assuming that the water will be poisonous simply because it doesn't look like water on Earth. On this strange planet, Ransom is more aware of himself as a human, getting in touch with his body and his basic nature, as well as talking about himself in the plural, suggesting that his human body is a separate entity from his mind.



CHAPTER 9

Ransom wakes up thinking about another man wandering in the wood who may be able to help him. Ransom practices greeting this man, whispering, "Hullo Ransom," and then stops as he realizes that he himself is Ransom. He can't remember who told him not to drink the water, and decides to try it. The water tastes mineral-filled and very refreshing. Steadied by the drink, Ransom puts all thoughts of some other Ransom out of his mind and hopes not to go mad.

Ransom feels so alone on this strange planet that he makes up another human simply to imagine that there is something familiar in these woods. However, Ransom cannot depend on this crutch, but forces himself to confront everything that scares him and begins to trust Malacandra by trying the water. He is rewarded for his curiosity by finding a refreshing drink that will help him survive.



Ransom begins walking, stopping every few minutes to remind himself that he is Ransom, and he is the only man in these woods. Hungry, he cuts a piece off one of the purple trees with his stolen knife. He chews it, but it seems more like chewing gum than digestible food. Ransom starts to wander about vaguely looking for food, unable to keep up yesterday's urgency.

Ransom gets startled when a large multitude of yellow shapes appears around the next group of trees. They are tall, furry, and somewhat giraffe-like, and blink lazily while eating the tops of the purple trees. Ransom is comforted to find that Malacandra has tame animals as well as the dangerous sorns. The giraffe's feast opens a view to the sky, where Ransom sees the thin, green spires and realizes that they are mountains, rising sharply into the sky. Ransom feels his spirits lift as he gazes at the mountain peaks leaping up towards **the heavens**.

Ransom's heart then drops again as he catches a moving blur out of the corner of his eye and thinks he sees a sorn looking for him. Ransom runs back into the thicket of the forest, clutching his knife and praying that the sorn is alone. He runs downhill and finds himself out of the woods, at the edge of a broad river. He drops to his stomach to rest. Suddenly, a round, black animal bursts out of the water, splashing to the shore ten yards from Ransom. Ransom notices that it looks like an elongated seal, with some otter- and penguin-like features mixed in. Ransom lies perfectly still, past even fear at this point, and calmly hopes that the black animal (later introduced as Hyoui) will not notice him.

The black creature (later known as Hyoui) begins to make noises, which Ransom's linguist ear interprets as speech. Ransom's entire demeanor changes, as he begins to wonder about the possibility of learning whatever language this creature is speaking. He dreams of unlocking the principle behind language itself through studying this non-human language. Unconsciously, he raises himself up on his elbows and the creature turns to look at him. The two beings stare at each other in silence.

Ransom carefully gets to his knees and the creature (Hyoui) takes small steps towards Ransom. Ransom wants to run, but his curiosity is too strong. The two beings begin a slow, tense dance back and forth as each advances and retreats in turn. Suddenly, the creature turns and begins to walk away. Ransom yells in English for the being to come back. The creature says something, walks about 20 yards, and picks up a shell like an oyster shell.

Ransom tries as hard as possible to confront all these new situations logically, reminding himself of who he is and the basics he needs to survive in this place. Lewis suggests that both Ransom's outlook and some calming property of Malacandra itself keep Ransom from becoming hysterical.



Ransom is able to see that the giraffe-like creatures mean him no harm, expanding his horizons on what this planet might be like. Yet he still holds on to his irrational fear of the sorns. Malacandra's association with the heavens continues to put Ransom at ease, considering how happy he was on the journey through space. It suggests that Ransom may learn to be happy on this new planet as well.



Ransom is taking small steps away from fear, but it only takes little things to send him backward again. His default for new experiences is still distrust and suspicion. Like the sorns, this creature has given Ransom no reason to fear it, and Lewis carefully describes the animal in terms of Earthly creatures who are not normally considered dangerous to humans. Yet Ransom is so primed to be scared in this place that he continues to fear every strange thing that crosses his path.



Ransom's fear is overcome only by his curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Lewis suggests that the desire to learn new things is an important way that humans can break out of their survival instincts, and that it is necessary to listen to these feelings in order to have a more enriching life. Ransom's interest in this creature's language opens the door for him to have a positive encounter with the other being. Of course, it's also helpful that Ransom is a linguist.



Hyoui seems just as tentative of Ransom as Ransom is of Hyoui, suggesting that this is not an aggressive or dangerous creature. Ransom overcomes his initial fear so well that he even calls for the creature to come back, unwilling to let the being go without satisfying his curiosity.



The creature (Hyoï) fills the shell with water from the lake and then holds the shell up to its belly. Ransom is disgusted to think the creature might be urinating, but then realizes that it is adding a few drops of liquid to the shell. The creature drinks from the shell, then refills the shell in the same manner and offers it to Ransom. Ransom drinks from the shell, filled with both attraction and repulsion for the creature.

The creature (Hyoï) flaps a paw on its chest and says, “hross.” Ransom interprets this as the species’ name and points to his own chest saying, “man.” The hross picks up some soil and says, “handra.” Ransom questions, “Malacandra?” The hross gestures at the whole landscape, confirming that Malacandra is the entire planet. Ransom is thrilled to have this first look at the Malacandran phonetic system, and then pantomimes, eating hoping for some food. The hross invites Ransom to follow him.

Ransom follows the hross (Hyoï) to a boat, where he is both surprised and happy to see that the boat looks much like a boat on Earth. The hross gets a spongy, orange substance from the boat and cuts a length of it for Ransom to eat. Ransom enjoys the food, but is suddenly overwhelmed by the thought that the hross may be working with the sorns, or may not be as intelligent as it seems. Ransom realizes several days later that the trick to stopping these moments of distrust is to think of the hross as a delightful animal with the gifts of rational thought and speech, rather than a disgusting man with furry features and paws.

CHAPTER 10

Ransom and the hross (Hyoï) finish eating and the hross gets into the boat. Ransom wishes he could ask whether the hrossa (plural of hross) or the sorns are the dominant species on Malacandra, but doesn’t have the words. He hopes that the kind hross is in charge, but fears that the sorns are even smarter than the hross and rule the planet ruthlessly. Ransom realizes that the hross may just deliver him to the sorns, but decides that the best choice at this point is to get into the boat with the hross.

The hross (Hyoï) begins to paddle down the river. They pass through the forest and paddle out into a large lake. Ransom realizes that they are in a deep gorge with highlands ringed by the green jagged mountains on either side. Ransom tries to ask the hross about this landscape, and learns that the gorge is called a “handramit” and the highland is called the “harandra.”

Ransom has a poor opinion of this other being, yet Hyoï is actually offering a gesture of friendship to Ransom, showing that these creatures have some concept of social manners and civilization, even if it doesn't look the way Ransom expects.



Ransom is given his first look at the welcoming nature of the hross, as Hyoï's first instinct is to teach Ransom about his language and his world. Rather than fearing Ransom, Hyoï seems to have had an initial reaction of careful study followed by complete acceptance of Ransom as a fellow rational creature.



Ransom is still comforted by some aspects of the familiar on Malacandra, as he does not yet trust the hross or believe he is safe on this world. Though the hross has still done nothing to harm him, and has even given him food, Ransom shows the suspicious nature of human kind by continuing to wonder if Hyoï is only lulling him into a false sense of security so he can betray him later. Lewis explores the difference between accepting another person as a rough copy of oneself that falls short in some areas, and accepting another person fully on their own merits.



Ransom is so used to power struggles among cultures on Earth that he cannot imagine that two separate species would be able to coexist without one dominating the other. He also shows the human fear of intelligence as something that can manipulate and harm others. Ransom expects Hyoï to betray him, displaying mankind's own tendency towards sin.



Lewis again turns to building the world of Malacandra, describing it in beautiful terms that show that this world is a true paradise. It is exactly as wonderful as it seems, something that is hard for Ransom to accept when he comes from the world of Earth where good things are not to be trusted.



The hross (Hyoï) stops paddling as the boat begins to flow in a strong current. The strange, choppy waves make Ransom horribly seasick and he is ashamed to think that this is the vision that the hross will have of humankind. The hross watches Ransom, seemingly expressionless. Thankfully, the current slows soon and the hross jumps out of the boat into knee-deep water. Ransom follows, and the hross picks up the boat and carries it to land.

Ransom and the hross (Hyoï) walk along a ridge where Ransom can see the full landscape of Malacandra. He is amazed at the sharp contrast between the jewel-like lowlands and the pale highlands. He realizes that the red, flat, highlands must be the true surface of the planet. The hross teaches Ransom more words as they walk, especially concerned that Ransom understand the relationship between “hrossa” and “handramit” and “seroni” and “harandra.” Ransom assumes that this means the hrossa live in the handramit and the seroni, whatever those creatures are, live on the harandra. He muses that the hrossa may be a primitive culture with gods called seroni. It is only hours later that Ransom realizes that “seroni” may be the irregular plural of “sorn.”

Ransom and the hross (Hyoï) walk to another stream and continue the journey by boat as the sun sets. The boat lands again and Ransom makes out dozens of hrossa forms by firelight. Ransom wishes desperately that he could see men, even Weston and Devine. A small hross, presumably a young pup, approaches Ransom and Ransom’s fear dissipates again at the sight of the cute little being. The rest of the night passes as if in a dream, as Ransom eats with the hrossa, and then is shown a place to sleep.

CHAPTER 11

Ransom had spent plenty of time on the spaceship thinking about his chances of returning from Malacandra, but he had not considered what it would be like to actually live there. He spends weeks with the hrossa, finding that he greatly enjoys living with them and learning about hrossan language with an elderly hross named Hnohra. Ransom at first thinks that the hrossa are a primitive culture, because of their rough tools, tribal lifestyle, and songs. He finally reassesses his view of the hrossa when he learns enough of their language to find that the hrossa have been treating him as a wild savage who needs to be taught about the solar system and space travel.

Ransom is the lone representative for mankind among the hross, pointing to the ways that Lewis uses Ransom as an example for all people in his spiritual awakening throughout the novel.



The red highlands are the first clue to which planet Malacandra is in terrestrial terms. Mars, known as “the red planet,” seems to be the best fit for the facts of Ransom’s journey so far. Hyoï continues to educate Ransom about the culture of life on Malacandra, though Ransom misunderstands the intelligence of the hrossa. Due to their lack of technology, Ransom assumes that the hrossa civilization is not advanced, and so ascribes to the hrossa superstitions such as gods called seroni.



Ransom again longs for what is familiar, even though he knows that the other humans on this planet are actively trying to hurt him. He would rather face a known danger than to continue to trust in the unknown. Yet the curiosity, kindness, and acceptance of the pup help distract him from these fears.



Ransom was so consumed with fear about the chance of never getting back to Earth that he did not consider that Malacandra might actually be more pleasant than Earth. His lessons about hrossa culture disrupt his expectations about what it means to be civilized – as the hrossa have all the ideals of civilization though they have none of the superficial aspects that Ransom associates with civilization and progress on Earth.



Hnohra explains that the hrossa call Earth “Thulcandra” - the silent planet. Ransom tries to ask why, but Hnohra simply tells him that the seroni would know, and that Ransom should visit a mysterious Oyarsa to find help and protection from the evil (“bent” in the hrossan language) humans he came with. Painstakingly, Ransom finds out that “Oyarsa” is neither seroni nor hrossa, but rules Malacandra from “Meldilorn.”

Ransom assumes that Oyarsa is the god who created the world, but the hrossa gathered around him laugh and tell him that Maleldil the Young made the world. Maleldil lives with the Old One, and both of them exist in **the heavens** and everywhere in the universe at once. Ransom is overcome by the feeling that the hrossa are trying to give him a religious education, the same way that he might to a primitive tribe on Earth. The hrossa go on to explain that Maleldil is not “hnau” - that is, he is not a corporeal, rational form such as the hrossa, the seroni, the pffltriggi (another Malacandran species), or humans.

Ransom asks more about the pffltriggi and finds that they are expert craftsmen who create art and jewelry out of “sun’s blood” - that is, gold. A hross brings out a bowl made by pffltriggi etched with depictions of the hrossa, the frog-like pffltriggi, and the elongated forms of the species that Ransom has been calling sorns. The hrossa tell him that the plural is actually seroni. Ransom tries to figure out which species rules Malacandra, but the hrossa only answer that Oyarsa is the ruler. Furthermore, none of the Malacandran species are better or worse, but excel in different areas. The hrossa dominate boating and poetry, the seroni scientific inquiry, and the pffltriggi mining and metalworking. Privately, Ransom thinks that the seroni must be the actual rulers, due to their academic intelligence.

The hrossa are also eager to learn about Earth, but Ransom finds that he does not know enough about how Earth actually functions to answer all their questions satisfactorily. Ransom changes the subject to the animal with snapping jaws he saw at the beach when he ran from Weston and Devine. The hrossa say that it is a “**hnakra**,” and they are all excited that one has been sighted—especially Hyoi (the first hross that Ransom met).

The hrossan society is so peaceful that they do not even have a word for evil—“bent” is the closest approximation in their idyllic worldview. When Ransom learns this, he is forced to see himself and his planet from a different perspective. This is also a twist on the novel’s title—“the silent planet” suggests some foreign and mysterious world, but in reality it’s referring to Earth.



Maleldil the Young is described as the partner of the Old One, closely mirroring the way that Jesus Christ is presented as the right hand and son of God in the Bible. While Ransom had approached his time here thinking that he was like a missionary who needed to spread the true faith to these savage Malacandrians, he finds that the hrossa have a highly developed religious system and a deep understanding of their gods. It is thus Ransom who needs both instruction and a spiritual awakening to accept the wonders of Maleldil and the Old One.



Ransom is again obsessed with finding out the hierarchy of species on Malacandra. He seems unable to accept both that such different species could be entirely equal, and that Oyarsa is the natural and true ruler of everything on Malacandra. Ransom’s own place as an academic and the high priority that Western culture places on scientific intelligence leads Ransom to the erroneous conclusion that the sorns must be in charge.



While Ransom has been questioning the hrossan intelligence and civilization, it turns out that he is also woefully inept when it comes to describing the supposedly wonderful world of Earth. Ransom seems to subconsciously look for the only thing that seems dangerous about Malacandra, still acting out of fear rather than curiosity when he asks about the hnakra.



Ransom goes with Hyoï to ready Hyoï's boat for a **hnakra** hunt. On the way, they pass a young female hross named Hrikki who seems to be speaking to the air. Ransom asks who she is talking to, and Hrikki laughs that Ransom cannot see the "eldila." Ransom assumes Hrikki was playing with an imaginary friend as children do on Earth.

The eldila are analogous to the concept of angels on Earth. Lewis comments on the ways that many devout Christians will pray throughout the day while others look on and think that they are delusional or crazy for talking to made-up spirits.



CHAPTER 12

Ransom and Hyoï work on Hyoï's boat as the other hrossa also prepare for the hunt. Ransom is reminded of war and asks Hyoï if the hrossa ever fight the seroni or piffltriggi over food or resources. Hyoï is confused why any species would need to fight, when the hrossa would give the other hnau species anything they needed. Ransom asks Hyoï what would happen if the hrossa had more young and needed more food to support a larger population. Ransom is surprised to learn that the hrossa regard the enjoyable process of procreation as something that should only happen once in a hross's life.

Lewis continues to add evidence that Malacandra is a utopia – a perfect society that functions smoothly without conflict. The lack of war reveals that Malacandra is a communal society, where everything is meant to be shared. The hrossa naturally give to those who have less than they do, seemingly untroubled by the human qualities of selfishness or greed that plague such charity efforts on Earth.



Hyoï explains that the hrossa see the entire lifetime as one long process of gaining experiences and remembering them, which is only complete upon a hross's death. They do not need to do pleasurable things repeatedly, for the pleasure is in remembering happiness, not overindulging in things that bring happiness. Ransom asks if Hyoï has ever wanted to hear an especially good line of poetry again. Hyoï considers this, eventually answering that a hross might yearn, in one sense, to hear a poem again, but that it would be madness to truly yearn for the repetition of a past pleasure.

Lewis again builds on the idea that the hrossa are hard-wired for happiness in a way that humans are not. While humans constantly seek more for themselves, and accrue pleasure however they can, the hrossa accept moderation in all things. Lewis sees this as an immense failing in humans and praises the hrossa for being more sensible about their lives. Lewis separates out two kinds of "yearning," calling back to the Christian sense of yearning for something (which can be positive) versus coveting something (which is negative).



Ransom asks Hyoï if there are any "bent" hrossa that break these rules about how to enjoy and remember life. Hyoï uncomfortably mentions a legend about a hross who loved two mates, but will not say more. Ransom is incredibly intrigued by the possibility that the hrossa are naturally monogamous, thinking that this species' instincts have perfected an ideal that remains unattainable for humans. Hyoï reminds Ransom that Maleldil made the hrossa so that they would be happy and not have to yearn for things that would not be good for them.

The hrossa live "perfect" lives, free from the mistakes that trouble so many humans. While Ransom's idea of civilization means that humans must reject their basic instincts and try to better themselves, the hrossa civilization has already attained everything that civilization seems to stand for. Lewis ascribes the wonderful lives of the hrossa to Maleldil, suggesting that the hrossa were created to be happy, and that something has gone wrong in human life to make them so unhappy.



Ransom asks why Maleldil would create the **hnakra**, if he only wants what is good for the hrossa. Hyoï responds that the hnakra is good - the very danger and excitement of the hnakra and the hunt remind the hrossa how sweet their lives are when the hnakra is gone. It is the duty of the hrossa to hunt the hnakra when it comes too close, but not to wipe out the hnakra completely, so that there is always a reminder of how peaceful the hrossa are in comparison.

Lewis points out that evil still has a place in his perfect world. Without any danger, there is no reason for the hrossa to appreciate how good their lives are. The hrossa must not give in to the hnakra, just as they must not give in to evil choices, but they must remember that the evil is there in order to make good significant.



Ransom thinks of Hrikki again, and asks Hyoï who the hrossa are speaking to when they talk to air. Hyoï responds that the hrossa are speaking to eldila, beings of light that “come from Oyarsa” and who can easily be mistaken for a sunbeam. Hyoï is not sure if human eyes can ever see the eldil.

Hyoï presents the question of whether the humans can see the eldil as a physical problem, but it is also a spiritual issue. Ransom cannot see the eldila partly because he refuses to believe that they exist, or perhaps is not yet morally pure enough.



CHAPTER 13

The next morning, the entire hrossa village is buzzing with excitement for the **hnakra** hunt. Ransom is honored to join Hyoï in his boat with another young male hross named Whin, determined to show the hrossa that humans can be brave too. He kneels by Whin next to the pile of throwing-spears in the middle of the boat as Hyoï paddles in the back. There are nearly a hundred boats of hrossa crowded in the stream.

Ransom again becomes a representative for all humans, hoping to show the hrossa the best side of humanity. He is learning to control his fear, facing the hnakra now when he ran from it earlier. Ransom now has a community behind him and has learned that fear is not the proper response on this new planet.



Ransom learns that the hrossa have the advantage of numbers and intelligence, while the **hnakra** has speed, invisibility under the water, and a tough hide. The only way to kill the hnakra is to wound it in the mouth with a spear. Hyoï and Whin each desperately want to be the one to throw the killing spear, infecting Ransom with their desire to be a hnakrapunt (hnakra-slayer).

Lewis presents the hrossa, the “good” side, and the hnakra, the “bad” side, as evenly matched. Neither side is assured victory, and both must fight hard to win. The fact that the triumph of good over evil is not certain adds more tension to this hunt and adds more nuance to Lewis’s utopia.



Hyoï paddles out into the water and Ransom scans the calm surface tensely for any sign of the **hnakra** swimming underneath. After a long time, Whin takes over paddling and Hyoï joins Ransom in the front. Hyoï points out that an eldil is coming towards them over the water, but Ransom cannot see it. Hyoï greets the eldil, and Ransom hears a clear, high voice tell Hyoï that the Man with them (that is, Ransom himself) must go to Oyarsa to avoid further evil from the other “bent” humans. Whin laments that the eldil has told them to stop the hunt. Hyoï agrees that their priority now must be to deliver Ransom to Oyarsa. Ransom is disappointed that the two hrossa might miss their dream for his sake, and he pushes the other two to continue the hunt first.

Lewis uses the eldila to point out the proper hierarchy on Malacandra. Oyarsa is naturally and unquestionably above the hnau, and his orders are meant to be followed absolutely for the good of everyone. The hrossa submit immediately to the word of the eldila, accepting that the eldila are more powerful and that the will of Oyarsa is only for their good. Ransom, however, does not trust Oyarsa and believes that he knows best. He thinks of the immediate pleasure of the hunt rather than more long-term happiness.



At that moment, Whin notices the foam track that means the **hnakra** is swimming underwater and begins paddling furiously towards it. Hyoï throws spears into the water to bait the **hnakra** into opening its mouth. Ransom too throws spears, but then is himself thrown out of the boat when Whin paddles the boat onto the shore and crashes it. Hyoï leaps onto the hnakra’s back and hurls a spear into the hnakra’s snapping jaws. As Hyoï falls into the water, the hnakra dies.

The hrossa fight valiantly against the hnakra, doing their duty to stop evil when it gets too close to the hrossa community. Ransom also plays his part, but is less able to fight the hnakra than the hrossa, who are better prepared and equipped for this battle. Lewis points out that men cannot always do much good against evil, due to their own false instincts.



Ransom, Hyoui, and Whin splash to shore and hug each other with joy and relief. Ransom is overcome, and knows now that hrossa and human are both hnau, and that all three of them have proved themselves through this hunt. Hyoui happily pronounces them all hnakrapunti—but Ransom is then distracted by the “familiar and civilized” sound of an English rifle shot. Blood blooms from a bullet wound in Hyoui’s torso.

Ransom kneels by Hyoui’s head and desperately explains that the two bent humans who came with him to Malacandra have shot him, because humans are truly only half-hnau. Ransom tries to apologize, but doesn’t know the hrossan word for “sorry.” Hyoui uses his last breath to once again call Ransom a hnakrapunt, and then dies. Ransom is overcome by the alien and animal nature of Hyoui’s still face, which had become so familiar to him over these last weeks.

Ransom tells Whin that the hrossa should kill all three humans if they are wise. Whin protests that only Oyarsa can kill hnau, and then asks why humans would kill. Ransom explains that humans do sometimes kill for pleasure, but his captors Weston and Devine most likely shot out of fear of the hrossa. Whin tells Ransom that he must now follow the orders of the eldil and go to Meldilorn, while the hrossa look for Weston and Devine.

Whin tells Ransom how to get to Meldilorn, a two-day journey which will take him out of the handramit and onto the harandra, past a place called Augray’s tower, where Augray will help him further. Whin assures Ransom that Oyarsa will not let the bent humans hurt him on his way, but Ransom is not too sure. However, Ransom is so horrified by the death of Hyoui at the hands of his countrymen that he can only do as Whin says.

CHAPTER 14

Ransom starts his journey to Meldilorn, fighting a strong urge to give himself up to Weston, Devine, and the sorns in order to protect the hrossa. He is now determined to follow the orders of the eldil, after his earlier hesitance caused so much pain. Nevertheless, he is worried about going to the sorns’ home on the harandra, unable to keep back his fear of the super-intelligent, cold aliens he assumes the sorns must be. He tries to remember that the hrossa, a kind and gentle species, have absolute faith in Oyarsa, and continues towards his goal.

The experience of defeating evil brings Ransom closer to the hrossa that he once feared and judged. They are bonded in their commitment to fight for what is good, a trait that Lewis praises as something humans should aspire to as well. In stark contrast, human civilization, represented by the gun, brings with its technology and “advancement” only violence and harm.



Humankind is constantly making mistakes that injure others, yet Hyoui is able to forgive Ransom for the actions of his kind and chooses to see what they have in common – the successful hnakra hunt, rather than the things that could easily inspire hatred or division between them.



The hrossa are again so good that they will not kill even in retaliation for the death of one of their own. Meanwhile, humans kill for many reasons. Ransom brings up the issue of fear, which often causes humans to lash out and harm others. In the face of that mistake, it is more important than ever for Ransom to accept his place as a human who should trust in the will of those who are naturally above him, such as the eldila and Oyarsa.



Ransom cannot trust in Oyarsa the way that Whin does, because he does not have experience trusting in things other than himself. However, Ransom has seen the terrible consequences of attempting to control his own life – as his choice to continue the hunt led to Hyoui’s death – and is smart enough to choose a different way now.



Ransom again turns back to the prospect of being a sacrifice, calling back to the idea that someone must suffer to keep everyone else safe. His broken view of a world in which good things cannot be free also colors his view of the sorns. He is still somewhat afraid of the sorns, though he is trying to push past that fear after his lessons among the kind hrossa.



About an hour after noon, Ransom walks out of the forest and to the base of one of the mountain spires. He sees an insanely steep trail climbing up the mountain. Though terrified of the climb, Ransom walks on. The trail is surprisingly easy at first, but then grows more difficult as the cold of Malacandra increases and Ransom's breath gets shorter and shorter. It now feels arctic, rather than the normal wintry conditions of Malacandra. Ransom is forced to stop and rest, overwhelmed by the awfulness of being stuck on an alien planet and following the orders of "monsters" like the eldila and the hrossa. Somehow, Ransom forces himself to go on.

As Ransom keeps walking, he sees the stars above him more clearly than ever and realizes that he must be climbing higher than Malacandra's atmosphere. He wonders if the hrossa have different lungs than humans, and Whin accidentally sent him on a path that will kill him. Yet finally Ransom sees that the path is leveling out at an altitude that is difficult, but not impossible, for a human to survive. He staggers forward, looking for anything that might be called Augray's tower. After a length of time, he sees a light in a cavern mouth that looks promising—until a sorn blocks the doorway.

CHAPTER 15

The sorn (later revealed as Augray) welcomes Ransom in, and Ransom finds himself surprisingly calm at meeting the very thing he has been avoiding all this time. The sorn assesses Ransom as a being from Thulcandra, seeing that Ransom's body shape is right for a heavier planet and Ransom does not seem to be from the hot climate of a planet called Perelandra. Ransom confirms that he is from Earth, but is used to a warmer climate with more air than they currently have. The sorn gives Ransom an oxygen mask.

Ransom introduces himself, and the sorn says he is Augray. Ransom inspects the sorn's long, feather-covered body, finding it far more pleasant to look at up close, though the face is still just human enough to be terrifying in its alien-ness. The sorn sets out a meal for Ransom, trying to explain the entire process of how the sorns make cheese from the milk of the giraffe-like creature. Ransom is heartened by the thought of the sorns as shepherds, until he remembers that the cyclops of Homer also cared for sheep.

Ransom is now far more able to face his fears, seeing that some goals are more important than his discomfort at the new situations he finds on Malacandra. Yet just because his journey to Meldilorn is the correct thing to do does not mean it is easy. Lewis uses Ransom's journey as a reminder that humans who hope to follow the will of God, as Ransom is following the will of Oyarsa, must be prepared to confront challenges.



Ransom is again closer to heaven, suggesting that this journey will be beneficial and eye opening. Just as Ransom had to learn to see the beauty of the heavens after so long considering space to be dead and empty, he will also have to reframe his opinion of the sorns to get the help he needs to survive. Lewis frames this chapter ending as a frightening "cliffhanger," but will then go on to again undercut human assumptions of aliens as horrifying creatures.



The sorn is not the nightmare that Ransom expects, but a welcoming and kind presence. The sorn also presents its desire for knowledge, immediately deducing where Ransom must be from. Instead of using its scientific skills for evil, as Weston has done by coming to Malacandra at all, the sorn uses its technology (like the oxygen mask) to help others.



Ransom has become much better at accepting others on their own terms and celebrating their differences, though he is still uncomfortable with things that look almost human and remind him how different sorns and humans really are. The cyclops is a villain of Homer's Odyssey—but Ransom seems to forget that Jesus, too, is described as the "good shepherd."



Ransom asks Augray if the sorn rule the hrossa. Augray answers that Oyarsa rules all the “hnau” of Malacandra, and elaborates that Oyarsa is the greatest of the light-bodied eldila. Ransom is confused, thinking that bodies can only be made of solids, liquids, or gases, but Augray explains that a body is movement. A body moving fast enough could be in all places at once, but would be too fast to see. For hnau like humans and sorns, light is the fastest thing their sense can perceive. The eldil, who perceive light as a liquid, can see even swifter things in **the heavens**. Ransom begins to think of the sightings of eldila-like things on Earth, such as albs and devas.

Ransom asks Augray why Oyarsa has sent for him. Augray guesses that Oyarsa wants to meet a visitor from a planet with no oyarsa. Ransom is confused. Augray explains that there is an oyarsa for each planet except Thulcandra (Earth), and that they live in **the heavens** and communicate regularly. Ransom asks to go to bed to avoid more of this confusing talk.

Augray leads Ransom to a dark, warm chamber. Out a small window, Augray points out a silver disc in the sky. Ransom inspects the heavenly disc, making out the continents of Earth on its surface. He is overcome by the knowledge that everything he has ever known is on that small disc, and feels the bleakest he has yet on his entire journey.

CHAPTER 16

Ransom wakes the next morning in Augray’s cavern no longer afraid of the sorns, but still hesitant about meeting Oyarsa. Augray offers to carry Ransom to Meldilorn so that Ransom will not risk death on the harandra following the hross’s directions. Ransom tries to defend the hross, who did not mean to send him into danger, but Augray just laughs that the hrossa may be admirable in their acceptance of death, but it is still best to avoid death before one’s time.

Augray gives Ransom a portable oxygen tank, made by the pflfltriggi. Ransom tries to find out if the sorns control what the pflfltriggi produce, but Augray says that the pflfltriggi like making things, especially if they present a technical challenge. Ransom puts the oxygen tank on his back and then climbs up onto Augray’s shoulder. Augray sets off towards Meldilorn.

Ransom has been unable to let the idea of a hierarchy on Malacandra go, though he has been told multiple times that Oyarsa rules all the hnau species equally. Ransom has no way of believing this, as he still does not trust that Oyarsa is real and that an entire species could be so good as to not exploit one who might seem weaker. Lewis indulges in some scientific musings about the possibility of beings that might live on another plane, again using the framework of science fiction to talk about spiritual matters such as angel-like beings. Lewis’s world has room for both science and religion.



Lewis folds Earth into the religious framework of Malacandra, contrasting the silent Earth with the vibrant community of the rest of the planets. Earth is in some way cut off from this support, partially explaining why Ransom has so much trouble understanding the concepts that seem second-nature to the hrossa and the sorns.



After the wonders he has experienced on Malacandra, thinking of Earth disappoints Ransom. He is partially ashamed that he has come from a planet that does not interact with the heavens.



The sorns, like the hrossa, are completely willing to help Ransom in any way they can even though Ransom is a total stranger. Ransom now feels loyal to the hrossa, who have become like family over the past weeks. Still, Augray presents a counter-perspective to the hrossan acceptance of death. Lewis’s final position on how to handle death advocates for approaching death with caution, but accepting it when it is one’s time.



Again Ransom sees how the hnau species coexist peacefully in the utopia of Malacandra. They split the labor of a successful society equally based on what each is good at, presenting another way that peoples with different traits and talents can get along and not exploit each other.



Despite the odd, cat-like gait of the sorn, Ransom finds the journey very comfortable - even fun. He observes the strange landscape of the harandra, where Ransom can see the stars of **the heavens** clearly. He feels again the strange elation that had consumed him on the spaceship. Ransom comments on the rose-colored clouds that he saw when they first landed on Malacandra. Augray explains that these are the old forests of Malacandra, now petrified into stone. There used to be ancient creatures that could fly and lived in the forests when Malacandra had a thicker atmosphere, but now the forests are uninhabitable. Ransom asks how Oyarsa could allow this to happen. Augray responds that nothing is meant to last forever.

In the afternoon, Augray and Ransom see three sorns walking towards them. Ransom is struck by how graceful they look now that he no longer fears them. Rather than ogres or skeletons, they now remind him of angels, and Ransom is ashamed of his earlier disgust for the species. After a few more hours, Augray stops for the night at the home of an older sorn, in an elaborate cave system full of odd scientific instruments and a few rolls of skin that Ransom realizes are books. He asks if there are many books on Malacandra. Augray and his friend respond that it is better to remember things, and say that Oyarsa will not let any crucial knowledge be forgotten.

There are several other sorns in the cavern who seem to be students of the older sorn, and Ransom does his best to answer their many systematic questions about Earth, from its geology to human history to art. Ransom feels compelled to be honest about the many wars, conflicts, and crimes of human history, and the sorns respond that these troubles come from the fact that Earth has no oyarsa, only humans all trying to be their own oyarsa.

The sorns are very surprised to find that Earth only has one kind of hnau, theorizing that this lack of diversity is one reason why humans are so close-minded - they have no other species to teach them other perspectives. Ransom feels very vulnerable and tired after this conversation, and goes to bed. As he falls asleep, he thinks of the lost forests of Malacandra, wondering about how the sorns feel looking at this beautiful place that is out of reach.

Each time Ransom approaches the heavens, he feels the spiritual wellness that comes from being connected to all life and witnessing the home of the "Old One." Yet just because the Old One and Maleldil want what is best for the worlds that they have created does not mean that everything will be perfect according to Ransom's view. Where Ransom thinks that the loss of the forests is incredibly sad, Augray sees it as a natural step in a changing universe that is still good after things pass away in their time.



Ransom is again able to change his perspective on the Malacandrian species by being more open-minded. As he has come to love the hrossa, he also comes to appreciate the sorns for their unique beauty. As his views on the species change, he is also better able to see the wisdom in their approaches toward life. While Ransom may not agree that books are unnecessary, being an academic man, he is able to understand the sorns' trust of Oyarsa and respect their lack of books.



Ransom is forced to admit to the peaceful and intelligent sorns how broken human society is. Unlike the sorns, who are all content with the will of Oyarsa and so can work towards common goals, humans are split and divided by their own desires. Without the comfort and structure of a hierarchy, humans are left flailing for their own orders.



The other species have given the Malacandrians lots of practice accepting those who are different, while humans are more likely to be intolerant of others because they are so tied to their own views on life. Ransom seems to compare the lost forests of Malacandra to his own experience looking at the utopias of the hrossa and the sorns—beautiful things that are out of reach for humans.



CHAPTER 17

The next morning, Ransom and Augray descend into the handramit where Meldilorn and Oyarsa can be found. They re-enter the atmosphere of Malacandra and Ransom gets down to walk on his own. Ransom is completely overcome by the beauty of this handramit, seeing a gorgeous lake with an island covered in a type of golden flower with huge stalks that remind Ransom of the walls of a cathedral. Ransom can tell that this bright island is Meldilorn.

When Augray and Ransom reach the edge of the forest, they find a gong made of a greenish metal, decorated exquisitely with drawings that remind Ransom of prehistoric drawings and ancient Celtic designs. Augray rings the gong and they are soon met by a hross in a boat coming across the beautiful lake. Augray greets the hross as Hrinha, introducing Ransom as a hnau from another planet who must meet with Oyarsa. Ransom gets into the boat and Augray turns to go back to his cavern. Ransom tries to give Augray his wristwatch as thanks for his help. Augray examines the watch, then gives it back to Ransom with directions to show it to a pffltrigg who will enjoy it more.

Hrinha paddles the boat away, explaining that Ransom is free to do as he wishes in Meldilorn until Oyarsa calls for him. Ransom warns Hrinha that there are two bent humans who may follow him to this peaceful oasis. Hrinha lands the boat on the island in the lake and points out huts where Ransom can rest and eat if he wants. The rest of the island is peaceful and empty except for an avenue of stone monoliths that remind Ransom of Stonehenge. As Ransom gets out of the boat, Hrinha tells him in a hushed tone that the island is full of eldila.

Ransom inspects the island further, getting the odd feeling that the island is also watching him. He walks towards the huts, catching flashes of brightness out of the corner of his eye that disappear when he focuses on them, and realizes that he must be “seeing” eldila. Ransom submits himself willingly to the eldila’s gaze, and then becomes distracted as the boat returns with a large group of hross passengers. Ten sorns also wade through the lake. Ransom feels out of place, like a new boy at school, and decides not to go greet these fellow visitors.

Lewis again invites comparisons to religious worship surrounding Oyarsa. The mention of a cathedral places Oyarsa next to Christian priests rather than pagan rituals, though the flowers also connect to the worship of nature often found in pagan religions rather than “civilized” Christianity on Earth.



Ransom has come very far from his original fear of the sorns, trusting all he now meets and considering Augray a friend. Augray again demonstrates selflessness, counseling Ransom to give a gift that he really does want to a pffltrigg that will appreciate it more. The inhabitants of Malacandra care for others’ happiness and well being more than they care for themselves.



Oyarsa may give orders at times, but he clearly does not control or restrict every aspect of the hnau’s lives on Malacandra. The Malacandrians are given freedom within this framework that allows for their lives to be peaceful and happy while also independent. Ransom again views Malacandrian culture in terms of ancient Earthly cultures, but he now respects that instead of considering it something lesser-than.



Now that Ransom is open to believing in the eldila, he can better see them. Lewis again brings up the idea of English civilization, which puts so much emphasis on status. Significantly, it is Ransom who is making himself an outcast here, not the Malacandrians who are not inviting him over. Ransom now sees the problems inherent to all humans and wishes to learn to overcome them before he can truly join Malacandrian society.



That afternoon, Ransom walks to the middle of the island to avoid talking to any other hnau. He comes up to the stone monoliths and looks at the pictures decorating the stones. He sees sorns, hrossa, and pffltriggi, along with a tall figure with wings that Ransom assumes to be the ancient birds of which Augray spoke. There is also a scene of an enormous **hnakra** attacking from the sky while various hnau cluster around a winged flame figure. Ransom takes the winged flame to be Oyarsa.

One scene on the stones particularly puzzles Ransom, until he figures out that it is a picture of the solar system and the various oyarsas that rule the different planets. Mercury's oyarsa carries a trumpet, while Venus's seems to be female, but where the picture of Earth's oyarsa should be there is only a rough cut in the stone, as if someone had erased whatever was there. After Earth, Mars does not have an oyarsa pictured, but rather connects to the larger scenes of Malacandran life. Ransom realizes that Malacandra is Mars.

Ransom is startled out of his inspection of the pictures by the arrival of a small form. Ransom looks at the being's shrew-like face and frog-like body and guesses that this must be a pffltriggi. The pffltriggi (later named as Kanakaberaka) has broad, many-fingered hands with which it is using tools to cut more pictures into the rock. Ransom greets it in the hrossan language and the pffltriggi asks Ransom to stand still. Ransom realizes that the pffltriggi seems to be creating a portrait of him, all the while muttering about "Oyarsa's orders."

The pffltriggi (Kanakaberaka) finishes Ransom's portrait and invites Ransom to look. The stone now holds a scene of three humans arriving on Malacandra. Ransom is at first repelled by the image of the humans, which seem too thick and mushroomy to his eye. Ransom mentions this difference in perspective on the human form to the pffltriggi, and the pffltriggi responds that he purposely idealized the human form for the sake of future generations.

Ransom suddenly notices that the pffltriggi is speaking the hrossan language, and asks if that means the hrossa once ruled all the species and imposed their speech. The pffltriggi says no, all the hnau species use the hrossan language when communicating between species because the hrossan language is more complete. The pffltriggi points out that the sorns and pffltriggi keep their own languages at home, as seen in the different styles of names. This pffltriggi's name is Kanakaberaka.

In another subtle allusion, the image of Oyarsa as a flame matches the descriptions of angels in the Bible. The hnakra in the sky seems to represent Satan, as Oyarsa's story will later make clear. Oyarsa talks about the devil wishing to destroy all the other planets, and suggests that the devil is the one who placed the hnakra here.



Ransom notes how the mythology of the Malacandrians seems to match Earth's mythology in that the oyarsas seem to match these planet's namesakes in Greek and Roman mythology. The rough cut of Earth's oyarsa is another clue that Earthly people may have once had an oyarsa, and therefore were connected to this heavenly knowledge. These strengthens the idea that this whole journey is "really" happening in our solar system and that all this mythology is true.



Ransom reacts to the pffltriggi practically without fear, a huge feat after his initial experiences on Malacandra. He has now grown enough to accept beings that are entirely different from himself. Ransom is even friendly to the pffltriggi and treats it as an intelligent being by greeting it. The pffltriggi also recognize the authority of Oyarsa, as Kanakaberaka uses his artistic talents for Oyarsa's purposes.



Just as the inhabitants of Malacandra seem grotesque and "wrong" in some senses to Ransom's human eyes, the pffltriggi seems to see the human form differently. Yet the pffltriggi specifically tries to make the humans look good, rather than painting them as monsters—like Ransom saw the Malacandrians when he first arrived.



Ransom asks again to know the "ruling" species of Malacandra, another signal that humans are far too concerned with status and power. The pffltriggi answers the same way that the hrossa and the sorns did, praising each species for their separate strengths while still considering all species equal in worth.



Kanakaberaka describes his own homeland, not forested like the handramit but full of deep mines. All the pffltriggi share the work of mining and stone craft equally. Ransom mentions that some people on Earth are forced to mine their whole lives for others who make art. Kanakaberaka proclaims this way “bent” and explains that the art is more meaningful for the pffltriggi because of the hard work they must do to get the stone.

Like the hrossa sharing food with everyone, the pffltriggi also share the work as much as they share the pleasure of making their art. Lewis again builds a utopic society where all members are valued the same. Kanakaberaka even shows how exploiting others can harm oneself, as forcing others to work keeps a person from fully appreciating their art.



CHAPTER 18

That night, Ransom sleeps in a guest house and reflects on the easy peace between all three Malacandrian species. The jokes he had heard during the evening’s dinner made no sense to him, but seemed to please sorn, pffltrigg, and hross equally. He sleeps, and then wakes early the next morning to the voice of an eldil telling him that Oyarsa has requested his presence. Ransom rises obediently and feels nervous, as before an interview, but not afraid.

Not only do the Malacandrian species get along, but they get more enjoyment out of being together than they do out of keeping the cultures separate. Unlike human cultures that often remain loyal only to their own kind, the Malacandrians seem eager to please all three species. Ransom now regards Oyarsa with feelings of respect for an important figure, not terror of a monster.



Ransom follows his instincts to the center of the island amid the grove of golden flowers. He sees that the stone avenue is lined with beings of all three Malacandrian species, and he walks to the center of the stones with a sinking heart as the hnau all stare at him. Ransom stops in the center, noticing that the stones are covered with eldila that he still cannot quite see. His mouth goes dry at the thought of giving his testimony to this audience.

Ransom stands trial for all humanity (again presenting him as a Christ-figure), ready to admit that humans have failed to gain the paradise that the Malacandrians already have. He also now shows full respect for the authority of the eldila, considering them the final arbiters of judgment rather than a silly superstition.



All the gathered hnau rise and bow their heads as Oyarsa walks up to the avenue of stones. Ransom has no words to describe the figure coming towards him, a solid being made of pure light. The figure stops ten feet from Ransom, then asks Ransom why he is so afraid. Ransom answers honestly that he is afraid of Oyarsa and the fact that he cannot really see Oyarsa. Oyarsa responds that he cannot properly see hnau either, but that they both have much in common as beings made in the image of Maleldil.

Again, the base of Ransom’s fear is that Oyarsa is unknown in both form and character. Oyarsa responds not with fear, but with curiosity and a focus on what they do still have in common. With the phrase “made in the image,” Lewis again recalls the biblical language surrounding the creation of humanity itself, as the first people, Adam and Eve, were said to be made in the image of God.



Oyarsa tells Ransom that he was the one who sent the sorns that met Ransom his first day on Malacandra, as well as the **hnakra** to try to bring Ransom to Meldilorn. Oyarsa regrets that Ransom did not listen and only followed Oyarsa’s orders after his friend Hyoj died. Ransom is surprised that Oyarsa was the one who sent for him and asks for the reason. Oyarsa responds that he sent his servants into **the heavens** to watch for Ransom as he came in the spaceship. Ransom wonders out loud how any being could survive in space, but Oyarsa informs him that space is the true home of the eldila. The only place that is a mystery to the eldila is Thulcandra, the silent planet of Earth.

Oyarsa shows that he has control over both good and evil on Malacandra. While it might seem odd that Oyarsa, a figure of ultimate good, would use the hnakra, a figure that has stood for evil, Lewis uses this choice to show how the Christian God is also said to use all things for his glory – both positive and negative events in the lives of humans. The heavens again appear as the home of all spiritual beings, including the eldila. The presence of the eldila possibly explains why Ransom felt so well there. The fact that there are apparently no eldila on Earth adds to the idea that life on Earth is fundamentally broken in some way.



Oyarsa explains that Earth was not always cut off from **the heavens**, but that the oyarsa of Earth became “bent” many years ago and tried to spoil all the other planets, even causing the desolation of the ancient forests on Malacandra. A great war began and Maleldil drove Earth’s oyarsa, the Bent One, back to Earth and bound him there to the planet. Maleldil continues to wrestle with the Bent One on Earth, but none of the other oyarsas know how the fight is going.

Ransom tells Oyarsa that he was kidnapped and brought here by very bent men, full of evil and fear. Oyarsa is aghast that any hnau would bring another of their kind by force. Ransom asks again why Oyarsa wanted him, and Oyarsa tells of how humans first arrived on Malacandra ten years ago and started a settlement. Oyarsa sent a few sorns to greet the humans but the humans proved hostile and afraid. Oyarsa wanted a human to come to him to explain what they were doing on Malacandra, but did not understand that the humans would be so bent as to expect that Oyarsa wanted a human sacrifice. Oyarsa laments the time and effort the humans wasted in going back to Earth and kidnapping Ransom, when they could have made a short journey to Meldilorn and received free rein of Malacandra.

Oyarsa has two questions for Ransom: First, why the humans have come to Malacandra, and second, how the war between Maleldil and the Bent One is going on Thulcandra. Ransom answers the first by explaining that some humans care only for the gold on Malacandra, while other humans want to destroy the hnau of Malacandra and make this planet another world for humans to live on. Oyarsa is confused that any species would think it could live forever, but Ransom explains that humans do not know the will of Maleldil and should be killed to stop the threat completely. Oyarsa proclaims it a terrible thing to kill someone else’s hnau, and assures Ransom that the eldila can handle any evil Weston and Devine attempt.

Oyarsa asks Ransom again for news of the battle on Thulcandra. Ransom cannot answer, unsure if he can say anything about what happened with the ancient Bent One before humanity even began. Oyarsa apologizes, remembering that the hnau have much shorter lifespans and are easily scared by large numbers. As Ransom tries to speak about what he does know of Earth now, he is interrupted by the arrival of a large party of hrossa.

The silence of Earth is now explained through the rebellion of the Bent One, a series of events that closely follows the Christian idea that the angel Lucifer revolted against God and became Satan, the devil. Much Christian thought centers on the battle between Satan and Jesus over the fate of human souls. Yet Lewis frames this in terms of how it affected Malacandra, showing the other negative consequences of the Bent One’s Fall rather than focusing only on the sin of Earth.



Oyarsa shows how Weston and Devine’s fear harmed themselves and others. If they had trusted the Malacandrians to welcome them with good faith, they would have saved themselves the effort of going back to Earth and avoided Ransom’s traumatic journey. Yet the humans showed their own evil nature by projecting their bad intentions onto the Malacandrians. Human fear and suspicion prevented them from understanding the goodness of Malacandra and causes them to do horrible things to themselves and others.



Ransom explains how humanity’s evil nature has caused them to exploit Malacandra for their own gain, whether it is material wealth they want or a more long-term goal of giving humans a chance at surviving forever when Earth can no longer support life. Unlike the hrossa, who have complete faith that they will be with Maleldil when they die, humans are unable to accept death because they fear the unknown. Still, Oyarsa shows compassion and acceptance even of broken or “bent” humans, looking more towards rehabilitation than punishment. Lewis speaks through Oyarsa to show God’s mercy on human sinners.



Part of Ransom’s trouble explaining the effects of the battle between the Bent One and Maleldil is that problems on Earth are no longer considered under a spiritual basis. Most humans seek scientific or cultural explanations for pain on Earth. Meanwhile, Lewis subtly suggests that all suffering on Earth is due to the Bent One (Satan’s) influence.



CHAPTER 19

When the hrossa party comes closer, Ransom sees that they are carrying three long bundles and guarding two creatures. The two creatures look strangely short and thick to Ransom, until Ransom realizes with a sick feeling that the creatures are humans: Weston and Devine. Ransom sees that the long bundles are the bodies of dead hrossa. The leader of the hrossa party approaches Oyarsa and explains that the humans killed two of their hrossa in fear while the hrossa tried to capture them, but killed Hyoui in cold blood, causing the hrossa much grief.

Oyarsa asks Weston and Devine why they have killed hnau. Weston and Devine look around, unable to see any hint of Oyarsa. They mutter in English that one of the creatures assembled is using ventriloquism to pretend to be some tribal god. Weston approaches an elderly hross who has closed his eyes in a small nap, then yells in the hross's face that the humans are not afraid of their tricks and idols. Weston's hrossan language skills are very poor, and he looks idiotic to the audience of Malacandrians, and to Ransom.

Oyarsa speaks again, asking Weston why he has killed a hnau. Weston continues to direct his answers to the sleeping elderly hross, saying that the humans are powerful enough to kill anyone they wish and dangling a gold necklace in front of the hross guards as a bribe to set him free. Ransom is disgusted to hear how primitive and stupid his fellow humans sound. The audience of Malacandrians begins to laugh, scaring Weston with their loud cries. When the laughter dies down, Weston tries again to offer the necklace to the hross, sparking another round of laughter as Weston jerks and dances around in confusion.

Unable to take the humiliation of humanity any longer, Ransom tells Weston to stop. Weston ignores Ransom, whispering to Devine about the possibility of giving the necklace directly to the sleeping hross, who Weston has decided is a witch doctor. Weston drapes the necklace over the sleeping hross's head. Oyarsa asks Ransom quietly if his fellow humans are out of their minds with fear, and Ransom explains that his countrymen believe that the Malacandrians are like young cubs, able to be frightened and pleased with shiny objects.

Ransom has become so accustomed to life among the hrossa and other Malacandrians that the angry humans now seem entirely alien to him, and the Malacandrians seem far superior. The hrossa can somewhat forgive the humans their actions in retaliation for their capture, but they do not condone killing that is not immediately in self-defense.



Weston and Devine refuse to believe that the Malacandrians could be anything but primitive, but their prejudice only makes them seem more pitiable and "savage" themselves. Lewis shows this through Weston's inability to even speak the hrossan language. Weston is so convinced that humans are the greatest species that he never even considers that there may be authorities above men.



Rather than remaining blindly loyal to the human race, Ransom has completely changed his perspective on who is the true power in the universe. He rejects the idea that human kind should rule other kinds of beings. Weston's rigid belief in the primacy of mankind again makes him look ridiculous. Lewis ironically makes Weston act like the stereotypical savage, with a strange dance and broken language skills.



Oyarsa again ties Weston's awful behavior back to fear. While Weston is arrogant, he is fundamentally insecure about humankind's place in the universe and therefore lashes out at anything that tries to control him or show him a better way of life. It is easier for Weston to think of the Malacandrians as simpletons because then he does not have to re-evaluate his own perspectives on the world.



Ransom explains to Weston in English that there is no witch-doctor, and the voice they are hearing comes from a real being that humans cannot see. Ransom tries to get Weston to treat Oyarsa with respect, but Weston believes that Ransom has been brainwashed by the Malacandrians. Weston yells in his broken hrossan language at the sleeping hross, trying to blame Ransom for the death of Hyoi. The sleeping hross finally wakes, regarding Weston with confusion, then bows to Oyarsa and walks out of the assembly. Weston is astounded when Oyarsa speaks again, now that the hross he believed had been speaking is gone.

Oyarsa sees that Weston will not be convinced through calm conversation, and directs one of the pfiltrigg to take Weston to a guest house and bathe him in cold water until Weston is more cooperative. Weston screams at Ransom for help as he is dragged away by the pfiltrigg and a few hrossa guards. Oyarsa ignores this, turning to give proper reverence to the dead hrossa at his feet.

The hrossa in the stone circle all begin to sing, and Ransom is finally able to appreciate the strange hrossan music. He feels the presence of **heaven** and is deeply moved by the hrossa's song of eternal sorrow, healing, and the better world to which their fallen friends are traveling. Oyarsa calls forward a pfiltrigg to "scatter" the dead bodies of the three hrossa. The pfiltrigg touches the bodies with an unknown object, causing a blinding light and a strong wind. When Ransom can see again, the hrossa bodies are gone. Devine chuckles that murderers on Earth would love to dispose of bodies so easily, and Ransom ignores him as Weston is brought back.

CHAPTER 20

The hross guarding Weston tells Oyarsa that they doused Weston's head with cold water 14 times and Weston now seems ready to speak. Weston tries to put on an expression of great nobility in the face of his "attackers." Devine warns Weston in English to be careful, considering that the Malacandrians have technology to make bodies disappear, and Weston accuses Devine of having "gone native" as well.

Weston would rather believe that Ransom is a traitor than trust that the Malacandrians are telling the truth. As Weston has lied to and about Ransom, Weston now believes that Ransom is lying to him. Lewis shows how humans often believe the worst of other people, showing their own tendency towards manipulating and harming others. Weston is willing to blame anyone else to preserve his own life and sense of superiority.



While Oyarsa does always work for his citizens' good, that does not mean that he is always gentle or passive when it comes to showing the hnau the right path. Weston needs to be scared straight for his own good, and Oyarsa does not hesitate to use strong force when circumstances require it. This echoes Biblical ideas of angels as forces for good that are still sometimes terrifying to humans.



Now that Ransom is no longer afraid or judgmental of the hrossa, he can appreciate their music, even though it follows patterns different from the music of Earth. Because the hrossa trust in Oyarsa and the promise of going to be with Maleldil, death is not quite the tragedy for them it is among humans. The hrossa better understand what heaven is really like, and are ready to accept that world even if they are sad to say goodbye to their friends prematurely. Devine still remains solely focused on material gain, only seeing the most base and selfish potential for the wonderful Malacandrian technology.



While Weston has been treated roughly, the harsh behavior of the Malacandrians is only in response to his own belligerence and exploitation of this world. Weston has now separated himself from all his human companions, thinking of himself as the last guard of civilization on this planet. He accuses Devine of "going native," recalling accounts of Englishmen who realized the intelligence or value of tribal societies on Earth but were then ostracized by their "civilized" colonialist peers.



Oyarsa tells Weston to be quiet, and then explains to Weston that it has been Weston's own fear that has caused the darkness and pain of Weston's time in Malacandra. Oyarsa scolds Weston for his willingness to betray Ransom, a fellow human being, to protect his own life. Oyarsa tells Weston that the Bent One has clearly done much harm on Earth, and that Weston deserves to die for his crimes, but that Oyarsa will hear out Weston's side of the story first.

Weston tries to yell at the direction from which he hears Oyarsa's voice like he yelled at the elderly hross. Devine jumps in, explaining in his own broken Hross that the humans just want gold and will go away if Oyarsa gives them the gold they want. Oyarsa shushes Devine and invites Weston to speak again, but Weston is too frustrated by his lack of Malacandrian language. Oyarsa tells Weston that Ransom will translate from English.

Weston begins a grand speech about the greatness of human civilization compared to the stone age tools of Malacandra, and explains that humans have the duty to spread their superior ways throughout the universe no matter the dictates of morality. Humans must do anything they must to preserve their civilization forever. Ransom translates this into basic Malacandrian, stripping the words of their pompous air and explaining only that Weston believes that humans are greater than any other species and that Weston selfishly wants all planets for mankind. Weston ends with a triumphant claim that his own life does not matter as long as the human race continues, which Ransom translates as Weston's insane desire for humans to continue. Weston then looks around for applause, seeming confused when he is met with silence.

Oyarsa considers Weston's words, commending him for thinking of future humans rather than just himself. Yet Oyarsa points out that humans would have to change physically to survive on other planets and that Weston should therefore be more accepting of rational beings with bodies that look different. Furthermore, Oyarsa exposes Weston's hypocrisy in his willingness to kill Ransom, when he claims to care about all humans. When Ransom translates Oyarsa's words, Weston sputters that he is loyal to humanity itself, and Oyarsa realizes that the Bent One has done his work on Earth by convincing humans that this is the one natural law that matters, when really loyalty to one's own kind is a small part of the larger morality of the universe.

Weston would have been welcomed and accepted on Malacandra if he had not sought to hurt and exploit the Malacandrians at every turn. The Malacandrians must now protect themselves and the others that Weston has harmed due to his sinful nature (which, according to this cosmology, the Bent One caused in all humans).



Devine cares for nothing but keeping himself alive and getting as much gold as possible, and seems willing to grovel to what he thinks are false gods if he gets what he wants. Oyarsa has no respect for this viewpoint, but does seem interested in Weston's more complex and pseudo-moral justification for his own poor behavior.



Lewis makes it clear through the translation of Weston's speech that the ideals of civilization are not actually as good as Weston makes them sound. Furthermore, humanity's duty is not to survive forever, but to choose to do what is right while they are living and accept death when their time comes. Weston echoes other science fiction novels that laud the principles of natural selection and the strength of men who fight to survive no matter what, and in his fancy language these goals sound noble. Yet in the simple Malacandrian, the roots of these goals are revealed as the deluded musings of a seriously misguided society. Weston is clearly used to being able to dazzle people into doing what he wants through his intelligence, but he does not have that power on the perfect world of Malacandra.



Oyarsa does acknowledge that the seed of Weston's grand mission – caring for the survival of one's own kind – is a good and correct pursuit. Yet Oyarsa shows the many holes in Weston's theory that he is working for the good of others, when Weston has clearly chosen again and again only to save himself. This base selfishness comes from the twisted influence of the Bent One, who uses the front of "the good of humanity" to hide many evils and distract from goals that are actually more important than saving the human race. Humans are a small part of the universe and should listen to the authority of the eldila and Maleldil instead of caring only for themselves.



Oyarsa proclaims Weston “bent,” for Weston still keeps one law of the hnuu, unlike Devine who is “broken,” driven only by animal greed. Oyarsa tries to help cure Weston’s soul by explaining that no species, or planet, can live forever. Malacandra is indeed closer to death than Earth and will soon be given lovingly back to Maleldil. Oyarsa reminds Weston that the Malacandrians did not invade Earth when their own harandras became uninhabitable. Maleldil has assured that the Malacandrians do not fear death, while the Bent One keeps that fear alive on Earth so that humans will suffer. Weston snarls that he is on the Bent One’s side then, rather than standing with those who quietly give up to death. Oyarsa sees that Weston is past curing.

Oyarsa proclaims that Weston and Devine must leave Malacandra tomorrow. Weston sputters that the timing for a return flight to Earth is all wrong, as they are in the far point of Malacandra’s orbit. Oyarsa answers that he will be forced to kill the humans if they stay here, counseling Weston to figure out how to take advantage of this chance at survival. After hearing Weston’s calculations, Oyarsa promises to provide them with 90 days-worth of oxygen and supplies, then informs Weston and Devine that he will fix it so that their spaceship will disappear (like the bodies of the dead hrossa) after 90 days so that humans can never again return to Malacandra.

CHAPTER 21

Weston and Devine are taken to a guest house while Ransom stays to talk with Oyarsa. A mysterious narrator (later shown to be Lewis himself) explains that the contents of this conversation are not meant for this book. Oyarsa does ask Ransom if he will go back to Earth or stay on Malacandra. After much thought, Ransom decides he must remain loyal to his own planet. Oyarsa approves and informs Ransom that he will send eldila to protect Ransom in space. Oyarsa lets Ransom go with a warning not to be fearful and to listen to the will of Maleldil for his life. According to Oyarsa, this heavenly year was prophesized to be a year of great change, and could mean that Ransom’s return to Thulcandra may open this silent planet.

The next day, the three humans embark for their dangerous journey. Weston warns them all not to move to conserve oxygen, while Devine seems to have given up entirely and devotes himself to drinking. The spaceship takes off, and the handramits in which Ransom lived grow smaller. Ransom fears that all he has learned on the trip will disappear as fantastic mythology when he returns to his mundane life on Earth.

Weston still has the capacity for some moral code, however erroneous his understanding is, while Devine is no better than an animal that no longer understands right and wrong or good and evil. Still, Weston is not as smart as he thinks he is. Human intelligence only goes so far, Lewis shows, though Weston does not respect the orders of those who are greater than him. Weston chooses to continue living in his sin and his fear of death rather than accepting the new perspective that Oyarsa offers. Through this Lewis points out that God cannot help those who reject him.



Oyarsa clearly has compassion for the humans, as they are not fully in control of their sinful nature, but he cannot allow these humans to poison his utopia. Oyarsa gives Weston and Devine the best possible chance of survival, but these two men do have to suffer the consequences of their own actions.



The narrator leaves some things to the reader’s imagination, allowing Ransom’s full spiritual conversion to remain a personal decision between him and Oyarsa. Lewis hints that one’s religious beliefs can and should remain a personal matter between a person and God. Finally, Oyarsa cautions Ransom against that fear which makes him choose the wrong path, and he also gives Ransom a mission: to spread the word of Maleldil. Rather than a vague walking-tour, Ransom now has a more urgent purpose on Earth.



Lewis now includes another aspect of the average science fiction novel, adding a race against the clock journey. In this return to the genre, Ransom also fears a loss of the spiritual knowledge that he gained on Malacandra. Just as Ransom hopes to carry the lessons of Malacandra into his everyday life, Lewis hopes that his readers will take the events of his book with them into their lives.



As the spaceship continues to blast away from Malacandra, Ransom is overcome by fear at the sight of black space swallowing the bright disc of the planet. Soon Malacandra hangs in the distance, a small red dot that Ransom can only call Mars – not the world he has come to know. Ransom spends the first few days of his journey writing recollections of his time on Malacandra, desperately trying to hold on to this experience so he can share it with others on Earth.

As the days of oxygen tick down, Ransom hopes that they will be killed by the disappearance of the spaceship and left to float free in the vitality and light of **heaven**, rather than suffocating in this small iron box. He finds it hard to trust that Oyarsa's *eldila* are protecting him, unable to sense them in any way or believe that these heavenly beings care about the life of one insignificant man.

Over the next weeks, Ransom realizes that Weston is bringing them far closer to the sun than they had come on the trip out to Malacandra, hoping to cut off some time in their voyage. After a few hours at the hottest temperatures the human body can survive, the spaceship mercifully makes it past the midpoint of the sun and the heat begins to lessen.

Weston, Devine, and Ransom all hope wildly that they will make it to Earth, doing little but staring at the shiny dot of the planet out the window. On the 87th day, Ransom sees the awful sign that the moon is directly in their pathway and will prevent them from any chance of landing in time before the ship disappears. Devine is forced to change course, bringing the space ship farther from Earth with only two days of air to go.

Ransom goes to his bedroom to prepare himself for this inevitable death, and surprisingly falls asleep. When he awakes, he hears rain on the roof of the spaceship. Ransom realizes that they somehow managed to land on Earth. Weston and Devine are nowhere to be found as Ransom clambers out of the ship and soaks in the wonderful smell of new rain. He walks away from the ship, noticing a bright flash of light after about half an hour – meaning the spaceship has disappeared. Ransom reaches a bar, hears voices speaking English inside, goes in, and orders a pint.

The space ship journey begins Ransom's return to the "real world." His fear about space and the unknown creep back in, even though Ransom tries desperately to hold on to the lessons of acceptance and faith that he learned on Malacandra. With the experience fresh in his mind, Ransom is totally committed to his mission to share this news with others.



*Ransom hopes to be killed floating free in the wonder of space, going through some version of Heaven. As suffering and everyday pain returns to his life, he finds it harder to keep his faith in Oyarsa and the *eldila*, as Lewis points out that many people lose their belief during the trials and tribulations of daily life.*



*Weston, Devine, and Ransom suffer, but they survive. Lewis hints that the *eldila* do have a hand in keeping the humans alive through this incident. In Lewis's conception, God promises to help his people, not keep them totally comfortable.*



Weston, Devine, and Ransom are forced to think of nothing but survival, like animals. Through their own power, it is impossible for the humans to get home, since Weston's calculations didn't account for the moon. Lewis points out that humans need the assistance of larger powers in the universe.



*Ransom, following the example of the *hrossa*, hopes to make peace with death rather than fearing it. Yet, through no power that Ransom understands, the space ship makes it to Earth. Lewis hints that the *eldila* really did have a hand in saving the space ship, though none of the humans saw them. Ransom now suddenly returns to "normal" life, getting a pint at a bar as if this were an average day.*



CHAPTER 22

The narrator, supposedly Lewis himself, comes in to say that the story itself is now over but there are certain things left to reveal about how this book was written. Dr. Ransom, an alias for an actual professor in England, quickly abandoned his dreams of publishing a Malacandrian dictionary or telling the world of his extraterrestrial adventure. He accepted that this experience must have been a hallucination, and would have stayed quiet for the rest of his life if not for a strange coincidence.

Lewis explains that he was a student of Dr. Ransom's, often asking for help with for literary and linguistic questions. A few months ago, Lewis sent Dr. Ransom a letter asking what meaning there might be to the word "oyarses" in an ancient Latin text about a voyage through heaven, in a context that seems to refer to a tutelary (or guardian) spirit. Dr. Ransom then invited Lewis to his home and explained the whole story of his time on Mars.

Lewis agreed not to spread this story as truth, for fear of retaliation by the real "Weston," but continues to help Dr. Ransom collect evidence from Platonist thinkers to form a resistance for the inevitable time when Weston tries again to colonize Malacandra. Dr. Ransom suggests publishing his account as a fiction, to plant a seed of certain ideas so that when the time comes to reveal the truth about Mars, it will be easier to accept. Lewis tells the reader to look out for the next stages of Dr. Ransom's adventure.

POSTSCRIPT

The postscript includes excerpts of letters from Dr. Ransom to Lewis. They describe certain corrections that Dr. Ransom wanted made to the manuscript, as Dr. Ransom felt that Lewis was not able to include enough detail about the language and sensory experiences of Malacandra. Dr. Ransom laments that the reader cannot know the hrossa as Dr. Ransom did after his time living with them. He adds further information about the agriculture and living spaces of the hrossa and explains the relationship between the hrossa and the other hnau species—somewhere between the relationship of men to men of other nations and the relationship of men to pets.

Lewis (the author) ends the book by claiming that all the events of the novel were true, turning himself into a character and explaining away Ransom's strange name as an alias to protect the "real" identity of some supposedly well-known professor. Notably, the pressure of normal life makes Ransom forget his convictions, as Lewis points out that religious fervor is hard to maintain in modern England.



Lewis again calls back to ancient thought, giving the old mythology just as much credence as the modern pursuits of science and reason. What modern men dismiss as superstition, Lewis holds up as a better understanding of the world. He therefore supports some of the old values of Christianity even if modern England has rejected them altogether.



Lewis describes this fight against Weston as an on-going battle, mirroring the battle that Maleldil fights against the Bent One. (And indeed, Ransom and Weston both return in the sequel, Perelandra.) Ransom's idea to publish this as fiction also matches Lewis's (the author) hope to hide his truths of Christian thought in this science fiction novel.



The excerpts from the letters also are presented to substantiate Lewis's claim that this novel is real. Claiming that the Malacandrian adventure truly happened also indirectly supports the religious lessons that Lewis included in the book. Returning to the idea of the hnau, Lewis again suggests that humans should open their minds outside their own perspective and accept other cultures and other beings.



Dr. Ransom apologizes that he was not able to find out more about the varieties of hrossa or sorns, or the pffltriggi at all. He rejects the idea, which Lewis has apparently suggested, of faking an episode in the homeland of the pffltriggi, on the basis that he “can’t imagine myself explaining it to Oyarsa.” But he does explain that the pffltriggi live in the craters of Mars, which used to be ocean beds.

Dr. Ransom turns to one of Lewis’s questions from an earlier letter: whether Augray equated superior beings with non-corporeal bodies when Augray described the light-bodied *eldila*. Dr. Ransom denies this idea completely, but does wonder how the *eldila* were able to speak without any organs with which to vibrate air. He offers the theory that *eldila* do not speak at all, but simply manipulate the ears of those who “hear” them. Dr. Ransom then mentions that Oyarsa seemed to consider the Earthly notion of “angels” as something different than himself, though it was unclear whether Oyarsa thought angels were a completely different type of being, or a special warrior caste of the Oyarsa meant to help the war conditions on Earth.

Dr. Ransom then shares two scenes of Malacandra that have always stayed with him. One is at dawn as Ransom observes a group of hrossa walking down to the edge of the lake, singing a ritual song that sends three elderly hrossa on their journey to *Meldilorn* to die. This is a solemn occasion, but not a sad one, as these hrossa have always known that this would be the year of their death and are able to go to this next stage of being without dread.

The other scene Ransom remembers is bathing with Hyoui one night. He looks up from the lake to see the entire Milky Way illuminated in the sky, until this belt of twinkling lights is broken by the rise of an immense glowing disc. This planet is known to the hrossa as “great *Meldilorn*” and “the center,” and is thought to be home to an even greater type of creature than the *hnau* (though it is specifically not the home of *Maleldil*). Dr. Ransom then signs off, telling Lewis that he is still looking for further mentions of this mythology in the writings of the old astronomers and philosophers.

Ransom keeps to the ideals of Oyarsa, believing that it is better to be truthful even in this fictional account, so that he does not misrepresent the Malacandrians or their ruler. Lewis continues to add details about the “real” Mars to make the novel seem more authentic.



*The character Lewis’s question about subtler bodies gets at the heart of where the *eldila* get their authority. The *eldila* are not given control over the *hnau* simply because they have faster bodies, but because they are the natural link between the *hnau* and the gods. The *hnau* of Malacandra do not listen to the *eldila* because they are forced to, but because this is the proper way of the universe. Lewis (the author) disrupts the natural connection between *eldila* and angels, keeping the Christian allusions in his novel from becoming too explicit yet leaving open the idea that Earthly angels might also be real.*



Ransom is especially struck by the hrossa’s calm demeanor surrounding death. Without the fear and uncertainty of when one is going to die and what happens after death, this natural part of life becomes nothing but another stage in the lifecycle of the hrossa. It is a ritual that brings the community together, rather than splitting apart relationships and causing needless pain as it does on Earth.



*Lewis leaves the question of why Jupiter, the planet known as “great *Meldilorn*” is so important. The allusion to *Meldilorn*, the home of Oyarsa on Malacandra, suggests that Jupiter has some significance to the *eldila* and again emphasizes humanity’s small place in a grand universe. Lewis also suggests that Ransom continues to learn more about this spirituality—and that readers too can deepen their understanding through more study and reflection on the old philosophers and the ideas of Christianity.*





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