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Description

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The Chronicles of Narnia is a series of seven high fantasy novels by British author C. S. Lewis. Illustrated by Pauline Baynes and originally published between 1950 and 1956, The Chronicles of Narnia has been adapted for radio, television, the stage, film and video games.

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SYNOPSIS: NOTE: This synopsis applies to the extended "collector's edition" version with the expanded battle scene Above the skies of London, a Luftwaffe bombardment group flies in, evades the defending flak gunners, and starts to drop yet another load of bombs on that much-abused city.

Below, in a modest home in the London suburb of Finchley, a distraught mother rouses her four children from their sleep and hurries them to a bomb shelter, including one, the younger boy, who foolishly stands next to an open window. But just as they are about to enter the shelter, the young boy turns around and runs back into the house, to retrieve a portrait of their father, an RAF pilot. The older brother dashes after the younger one, and the two boys are nearly killed as the younger one recovers the portrait. As they gain the shelter, the older boy, Peter Pevensie (William Moseley), explodes at his younger brother Edmund (Skandar Keynes), saying that his rash act almost brought death to them all. "Why can't you just do as you're told?" he concludes, indicating that he has been the Man of the House since the elder Pevensie went off to war. The next day, Mrs. Pevensie (Judy McIntosh) herds her four children, Peter, Susan (Anna Popplewell), Edmund, and Lucy (Georgie Henley), onto an evacuation train at Paddington Station, the London terminus of the Great Western Railway. Mrs. Pevensie lovingly pins identification tags on each one and exhorts the older ones to take care of the younger ones.

They all board the train, with Edmund sulkily protesting that he can board a train by himself. The four children ride out of London to a town called Coombe Halt, where the first motorcar they see simply blares its horn at them and moves on, leaving them standing there wondering whether, in

Edmund's words, they might have been incorrectly labeled. Just then a horse-drawn cart appears, driven by a severe-looking middle-aged woman whom Peter guesses is the "Mrs. Macready" (Elizabeth Hawthorne) whom they were told to expect. Mrs. Macready is housekeeper to Professor Digory Kirke (Jim Broadbent), who lives on a vast estate dominated by a large house containing a wealth of historical artifacts from classical times and the Middle Ages.

Macready informs them that the professor "is unaccustomed to having children in his house," and on that account--or perhaps because the house is so like a museum--the children are subject to some rather strict rules. The chief rule (other than "no touching of the historical artifacts") is: Do not disturb the Professor. The children's first day on the estate reveals the tensions among the siblings. Edmund Pevensie is, quite simply, a "rotten kid", Lucy is homesick, Peter feels the weight of trying to be the Man of the Family while their father is fighting the war, and Susan is constantly "trying to be smart" and thus often bumps heads with Peter. (The bulletins describing yet more bombing runs by the Luftwaffe don't help their mood any.) The following day is no better, because it's raining and forces the children to stay indoors.

Lucy proposes a game of hide-and-seek, and Peter, hoping to humor her, agrees to be "It" and starts counting up to 100. The other children find hiding places (Edmund pushing Lucy out of a closet after declaring that he was there first)--but Lucy finds the strangest hiding place of all--an unused room containing one "sheeted" piece of furniture that turns out to be a magnificent wooden armoire, or wardrobe, with an intricate carving of a tree on one of its doors. Lucy climbs inside and burrows in among the coats--but then finds that she can keep going, deeper and deeper, until she emerges into a snow-covered woodland! With little thought of anything but this wondrous land she has discovered, she walks out into the wood, and gazes in wonder at the trees.

Strangest of all the objects she sees is a perfectly functioning gas lamppost standing far away from any sort of street. And then she sees an even stranger sight: a creature, half man and half goat, carrying an armload of brown-wrapped parcels and holding a flimsy parasol over his head! This creature and Lucy both cry out and hide from one another, and then come out and start a conversation--tentative at first, and then more confident.

The faun, who gives his name as Tumnus (James McAvoy), is delighted to learn that Lucy is a "daughter of Eve," i.e. human. He won't tell her why her human origin is so important, but he rather strenuously persuades her to join him at his home for tea and crumpets--"and perhaps I'll even break into the sardines." Lucy questions nothing that she sees, even the idea that such a creature could not only exist, but also be civilized enough to have a furnished home--with a library of leather-bound books carrying such titles as "Humans" and "Is Man a Myth?". Tumnus then reveals that the world they are in, called Narnia, has seen no Christmas, and no season except winter, for the last hundred years.

Then he offers to play some music of the sort that he used to play in Narnia's summers. He plays a hypnotic tune on a flute-like instrument, and Lucy actually sees shapes form in the flames of Tumnus' hearth fire, shapes of a man riding a unicorn, and fauns and dryads dancing. Eventually Lucy drops her teacup and falls asleep--and then another shape entirely forms in the flames: an angry lion who roars at Tumnus, stopping his playing and snuffing out the candles in his home. Now Tumnus makes a terrible confession: the ruling tyrant of his world, whom he calls the White Witch, has given orders that if any of her subjects were to find a human or humans wandering in the woods, they were to turn said human(s) over to her.

Tumnus was trying to lull Lucy to sleep and hand her over--but now, conscience-stricken, he decides instead to hurry her back to the lamppost so that she can return to "the shining city of War Drobe in the wondrous land of Spare Oom." As a token of her friendship, Lucy gives Tumnus her handkerchief before they part. Lucy tumbles out of the wardrobe--but to her surprise, Peter is just finishing his "It" count and saying, "Ready or not, here I come!" As a result, Lucy loses immediately when she cries out that she is all right after all, and cannot make her brothers and sister believe that she's been gone for hours.

Especially when Susan investigates the wardrobe and finds nothing but a solid wooden wall where Lucy had claimed to find a wooded country. Peter, however, has another problem: Edmund makes a stupid joke about finding "the football field in the bathroom cupboard," and when Peter severely reprimands Edmund for "having to make things worse," Edmund cries out that Peter tries to pretend that he's their father, which Edmund will never accept. Later that night, Lucy takes her candle and goes into the spare room again. And when she opens the door to the wardrobe, a cold breeze blows out the candle. So Lucy goes into the wardrobe and into the wood. But behind her is Edmund, thinking to catch Lucy and make fun of her.

And so he is quite unprepared to find himself entering the winter forest himself. Edmund at first searches for Lucy (and never thinks to follow her footprints). Then he is nearly run over by a sleigh drawn by six large white reindeer stags, and driven by an angry dwarf named Ginarrbrik (Kiran Shah), who stops the sleigh, dismounts, catches Edmund, and is about to cut his throat when the sleigh's passenger calls out, "Wait." The passenger then dismounts. This is a very tall and very stunning but unusually pale-complexioned woman (Tilda Swinton) with blonde hair arranged in dreadlocks. (With that hairstyle, she may or may not be consciously imitating Medusa, the mythical creature that could petrify anyone foolish enough to look her in the face.) She regards Edmund at first with stern aspect and considers him a trespasser. But when she learns that he is one of four siblings, her attitude changes.

She smiles, beguilingly, and offers him a seat in her sleigh--but as she turns aside, one can clearly see that she is worried. The woman offers him a hot drink--which she "makes" by dropping a green liqueur onto the snow. She asks him what he would like to eat, and he names his favorite confection: Turkish Delight, which usually is a fruit-flavored sugar snack covered with confectioner's sugar. But the Turkish Delight that this woman conjures up is more than usually addictive. The woman identifies herself as the Queen of Narnia, and then says that she has no children of her own, and could see Edmund becoming Narnia's king some day--but he would have to bring his family to claim that honor.

With more beguiling words, she leaves Edmund in the path while her sleigh drives off. Then Lucy appears, and says that she has seen Tumnus again, and that "the White Witch" knew nothing of her presence there. Lucy then explains what she meant by that phrase: the "White Witch" is a woman who pretends to be the Queen of Narnia, but isn't actually. Edmund is troubled at those words, but won't tell Lucy why. The two children go back through the portal into the wardrobe, and Lucy wakes Peter and Susan to tell them excitedly that "Narnia" is all in the wardrobe as she said, and this time Edmund had seen it. But to her horror, Edmund now says that he was just playing along. Lucy starts to cry and runs out.

Peter shoves his brother aside and follows Lucy--only to find that she has run into Professor Kirke.

The commotion has also roused Mrs. Macready, who is about to send them to sleep in the stables until the Professor assures her that he is not offended, and that Macready could help by serving Lucy some hot chocolate. Professor Kirke questions Peter and Susan about the commotion--and when he hears that Lucy claims to have found a forest in the upstairs wardrobe, the Professor eagerly asks about that forest. Peter, surprised, asks Kirke whether he believes her story--and the professor says that he has no reason not to, and neither should Peter and Susan. "You're her family!" he says. "You might start acting like one!" The next day is a bright sunny day, so Peter organizes a cricket match--and of course Edmund gets hit with the ball, because he won't pay attention.

Then Peter "bowls" the ball again, and Edmund swings his bat and connects--and send the ball flying through a stained-glass window, where it smashes a hole and then knocks something over with a crash. The children dash into the house and up the stairs to see what made the crash--and discover a suit of armor knocked supine. "Well done, Ed!" says Peter--and then they hear Macready's voice and start to flee.

The only place to flee is into the spare room, where, at Edmund's urging, they climb into the wardrobe. And then, in an effort to find more room to crowd in, the children walk back--and-back--and back--until the four of them are in the winter-bound woodland. Peter is abashed and apologizes to Lucy, who starts a good-natured snowball fight. Then he realizes that Edmund has lied to the rest of them about what he had seen, and orders him to apologize, which he does. Then the four, wearing oversized coats taken from the wardrobe, set off for Tumnus' house, at Lucy's suggestion. Even Susan is captivated by this wondrous land--but Edmund is half guilty, half furtive, and constantly looking toward the two mountain peaks that the "Queen of Narnia" had pointed out to him on his last visit.

No one takes any notice. Finally, they arrive at Tumnus' house--and find it a total wreck, with smashed furniture and crockery, piles of blown-in snow, and a crudely lettered parchment containing a notice accusing Tumnus of "high treason against Her Majesty, Jadis, Queen of Narnia" for "fraternizing with humans." It is signed with the paw-print of a wolf, and the name Maugrim, identified as "captain of the secret police." Susan wants them to return home, but Lucy insists on staying, to try to help Tumnus. Just then a small robin gives them an unmistakable signal to follow, and leads them out into the open, where they meet a beaver (Ray Winstone) who can actually talk to them. The beaver gives Lucy back her handkerchief, says that Tumnus gave it to him just before his arrest, and encourages them all to follow him "further in," and not to talk anymore until they are out of the woods--because some of the trees might actually inform the Witch against them. The beaver leads them all to his house, which he has built in a dam in the frozen river.

The beaver has a wife (Dawn French), who acts like a typical good-natured scold--until she sees the four Pevensie children, and bows in obeisance to them as if they are somehow important and deserving of a high honor, which puzzles the children. The only sour note is that the beaver notices that Edmund is "enjoying the scenery"--specifically the same two mountain peaks that he was earlier gazing at. Once inside, the beavers tell the children about someone named "Aslan" who is "on the move," and waiting for the children at a place called the Stone Table. (The children don't recognize that name, but they all somehow feel that that's a name laden with spiritual significance--all but Edmund, who asks "Who's Aslan?" and provokes the beaver to uproarious laughter.) The reason is that a long-standing prophecy says that two "sons of Adam" and two "daughters of Eve" will fight the White Witch and defeat her in combat, thus ending the winter and her regime. The beavers shock them further by saying that "Aslan" has outfitted an army for them to lead! Peter thanks them for their hospitality and prepares to lead the four of them out--but then finds that Edmund has gone missing.

Edmund has indeed left the beavers' house and gone hiking toward those two mountain peaks. The others try to follow, but arrive only in time to see Edmund entering a very large, forbidding palace, seemingly constructed of ice and stone. Peter tries to follow, but the male beaver stops him, saying that Edmund is the bait for a trap. When the palace doors close on Edmund, Susan and Peter argue whether they should have gone back long before that, but Lucy says that arguing will not help Edmund. The male beaver agrees, saying, "Only Aslan can help your brother now"--so Peter asks the beavers to lead them to Aslan. Edmund, in the palace, is in a courtyard seemingly full of stone-masonry statuary--giants and centaurs and leopards and all manner of other creatures. Whether he notices that all of the statutes seemed to have been carved in an attitude of fright or anger or defiance--as if some of them were trying to kill someone in combat, and others were begging for mercy--is not entirely clear. Then he tries to step over a sleeping wolf (Michael Madsen)--who rouses himself with great speed and pounces on Edmund, challenging him for identification. Edmund says who he is, and the wolf condescendingly leads Edmund to an obvious throne room--where Edmund cannot resist sitting on the throne.

Queen Jadis finds him sitting in it, and at first does not reprimand him for such lese-majeste. Instead, she first asks whether his sisters are deaf, and whether his brother is unintelligent--and then loudly demands to know how he dares return alone! Now sounding not very beguiling at all, but talking clearly for the first time, she frightens him into revealing that his brother and sisters are in the beavers' house. Edmund then asks whether he could have more Turkish Delight--and Jadis summons Ginarrbrik, who leads Edmund away at knife point--to a prison cell. Then she summons the wolf, who is actually Maugrim, the police captain--or rather, the alpha dog of a pack of wolves, who now rush out of the palace, intending to raid the beavers' house. At the house, the beavers hurriedly pack some supplies, and then the three children and two beavers escape into a tunnel just as Maugrim and his pack invade the house. The five emerge into another clearing--where they find the stone statue of a badger, which the two beavers recognize as once a buddy of the male beaver's. The children realize at once that they are looking at a real badger, once able to talk as the beavers are but now petrified.

Nor is he the only such sad creature whom they find. "This is what becomes of those who cross the Witch," says a fox (Rupert Everett) who offers to hide them up a tree while he sends Maugrim and his pack off on a fool's errand--though the fox is not entirely unscathed in the encounter. After the wolf pack runs away, following the fox's false lead, the fox allows the female beaver to tend to him only briefly, while he informs the party that "Aslan himself" has asked him to go about recruiting more troops. Peter is still dubious about getting involved in any war, but the fox and the beavers all urge him to fight, saying, "We can't go to war without you." Back at Jadis' palace, Edmund, chained to the wall of a cell, meets a miserable faun who can only be Tumnus, with whom he shares the unappetizing food that Ginarrbrik, presumably, has thrown him. Tumnus asks Edmund whether Lucy is safe, which Edmund does not know.

Then an angry Jadis storms in, saying that her police have torn the beaver house apart and found nothing. Lifting Edmund off his feet, she

glares at him angrily--and if she didn't look like Medusa at their first meeting, she definitely does now. She demands to know where they went and is on the point of striking him with her upraised sceptre when Edmund abruptly drops the name of "Aslan." Tumnus is shocked to hear him reveal so much, and Edmund, not wanting to reveal too much too fast, says that he left before his siblings said where they were going. Jadis then cruelly informs Tumnus, "You're here because he turned you in for sweeties!" She orders Tumnus taken to the statuary courtyard, and her sleigh made ready for travel. When Edmund is led out to the sleigh, he passes a statue of Tumnus--which he now realizes, with a sickening feeling in his gut, is actually Tumnus--petrified.

That must have almost happened to Edmund, and worse yet: every one of those statues is not a statue at all, but a petrified victim of the Queen of Narnia--and "White Witch" is certainly a name that fits! And he is her prisoner. Jadis sets out on her sleigh (without bells), with Edmund bound hand and foot and sitting miserably at her feet. Meanwhile, the beavers lead the remaining Pevensies over a natural stone bridge to a vast vista that they will have to cross. Reluctantly, Peter leads the party across the apparent frozen wasteland, with the beavers acting as their only guides. On the way, a sleigh notices them and gives chase, forcing them to hide. The fleeing children fail to notice that the sleigh has a full set of bells on--or else don't stop to think that Jadis would not have hung bells on her sleigh while on the hunt. In any case, the driver of the sleigh that pursues the children is not Queen Jadis, or the nasty Ginarrbrik--but none other than Father Christmas (James Cosmo)!"I've been driving one of these longer than the Witch," he says by way of explanation, and then gives the children some valuable gifts. To Lucy he gives a bottle made of diamond and containing a bright-red-colored cordial made from "fire-flower juice," one drop of which can heal any injury, and a small dagger. To Susan he gives a bow, an ivory quiver filled with bright red-feathered arrows, and an ivory horn that will summon aid from anywhere.

To Peter he gives a shield (argent a lion rampant guardant erect gules) and a sword containing a runic message that he does not take the time to translate. Then he says, "Winter's almost over, and things do pile up when you've been away for a hundred years! Long live Aslan, and Merry Christmas!" Peter notices another implication of Father Christmas' message: the great river that they must cross, that is supposed to be frozen, will not be frozen much longer. Sure enough, when they arrive at the Ford of Beruna, the river is already thawing. Desperately the children and the beavers try to cross on what little ice remains--and then Maugrim and his pack catch up with them. Maugrim's beta, or second-in-command, pounces on the male beaver while Maugrim taunts Peter and Susan, saying, "This isn't your war! All my Queen wants is for you to leave!" Maugrim might or might not have noticed that the rest of his pack are no longer able to support him, because the ice, breaking up, is already carrying them downriver and away from the fight. Then, before Peter can make up his mind, the nearby waterfall thaws the rest of the way, and its ice covering breaks. Peter drives his drawn sword into the ice and orders them all to hold on to him--and then the ice-dam collapses, scattering the wolves and washing the five fugitives down river. Almost by a miracle, they survive and manage to get safely across--where they notice that they can shed their coats, for now the snow is melting fast, and the nearby trees are putting out their first buds and leaves of spring. Behind them, Jadis arrives to find a running waterfall--and Maugrim and his pack arrive, dragging the fox who had deceived them earlier.

Edmund, hoping to spare the fox's life, reveals the phrase "stone table" and that "Aslan," whom he still does not know (though Jadis does) has an "army." To his horror, Jadis strikes the fox with her sceptre--and a horrid blue electric flame leaps from the sceptre, washes over the fox--and petrifies him. That, then, is how she must have killed all those unfortunates in the courtyard! Jadis then slaps Edmund, telling him to remember whose side he is on. Then she orders Maugrim to muster those creatures faithful to her at an undetermined place, and declares--while petrifying an inoffensive butterfly with her sceptre, almost as an afterthought-- "If it's a war Aslan wants, it's a war he shall get!" The beavers lead the children straight into a medieval war camp, complete with brightly colored officers' tents, and all manner of wondrous creatures preparing armor and weapons for themselves. The fascinated children see centaurs, more fauns, satyrs, and gryphons (a kind of flying creature, part avian, part mammalian). Susan wonders what everyone is staring at, and Lucy says, "They probably think *you* look funny!" But the point is that the onlookers are not looking at the children with curiosity, but with reverence and awe, of a kind reserved for kings and queens. The children still do not understand the significance of this attitude. Peter walks up to the obvious command tent, draws his sword, and says, "We have come to see Aslan!" Then everyone kneels to the ground, and the command tent flap opens--and now the children meet Aslan (Liam Neeson) face to face. Aslan is a very large lion, who truly walks like the "king of beasts," and now the children, too, kneel before him, as seems a perfectly natural thing to do. Aslan bids the three welcome, thanks the beavers for their good guidance, and then asks after Edmund--and Peter shocks the assembly by saying that Edmund was captured.

The beaver shocks them further by saying that Edmund had betrayed them. Aslan quiets the assembly, and then Peter confesses that he is at least partly to blame, for being "too hard" on Edmund. As may be, Edmund is their brother, and they want him back, on any terms--a thing with which Aslan sympathizes, though he warns them that the situation is now very difficult. Later, Peter, now dressed in the leather jerkin of a Medieval officer, talks frankly with Aslan about the battle to come, and about Peter's future career as High King of Narnia, a post that he will have to win in combat. While he and Aslan are talking, Edmund is in a truly miserable situation: bound and gagged, and being taunted by Ginarrbrik about his "special treatment." Susan and Lucy try on their own new costumes--when suddenly Maugrim appears, with only his beta to accompany him. (Why he did not come with his whole pack is never explained.) They announce that they intend to kill them both. Susan throws one of her dresses into Maugrim's face, grabs her horn, and manages to get off a good blast before she and Lucy have to climb a tree. Peter rushes to the spot and finds the girls up a tree with Maugrim and his beta trying to jump at them. Maugrim turns to Peter, saying, "We both know you haven't got it in you!" Peter is wondering how he will fight two wolves at once when suddenly Aslan arrives and restrains the beta. Behind Aslan come several galloping centaurs, led by Oreius (Patrick Kake), who draws his sword.

Aslan tells them to stay where they are and let Peter fight his battle. Maugrim charges Peter--and impales himself on Peter's sword. Aslan releases the beta dog, sends Oreius and the centaurs to chase him, and holds a dubbing ceremony to invest Peter with a new title: Sir Peter Wolf's-bane, Knight of Narnia. Later that night, Oreius, having followed Maugrim's miserable beta back to Jadis' camp, leads a successful raid to rescue Edmund. The next morning, Aslan talks to Edmund alone about what he has done, and then re-introduces Edmund to his siblings, telling them "there is no need to speak about what is past." Peter and his sisters are glad enough to have Edmund back, and are quite satisfied that Aslan has asked all the questions that need asking. The four children then have a serious conference. Peter wants to send his three siblings back to the lamp-post and the wardrobe, while he stays and leads Aslan's troops in the coming battle. But Lucy insists that the free Narnians need all four of them to win, and Edmund will not walk away from a situation that he helped create. Susan, the last holdout, then takes up her bow and arrows to "get in some practice." All four of them practice their combat techniques--Susan with her bow and arrow, Lucy with her dagger, and Peter and Edmund learning the proper way to ride a horse while holding a drawn sword ("Sword point up!") and even how to fight while on horseback. Then the male beaver alerts them all that Jadis has demanded a parley with Aslan and is coming to the camp. Jadis makes

a terrible demand: Edmund must surrender himself to her, to be executed on the Stone Table--otherwise, Narnia will be destroyed completely.

Aslan offers to talk alone with Jadis. Later, Jadis and Aslan emerge from the command tent, and Aslan announces that Jadis has renounced her claim. Jadis wants to know whether Aslan's own "promise" will be kept. Aslan roars his answer at her, and Jadis leaves--but Lucy notices that Aslan is much troubled. That night, Aslan walks out of his camp, toward the Stone Table. Susan and Lucy plead with Aslan to let them accompany him, a gesture that Aslan appreciates. But finally Aslan orders them to wait and "trust" him--while he walks into a barbaric ceremony and submits to being bound, shorn, and eventually executed with a single stroke of a stone knife held by Jadis. Jadis orders her own chief general, a minotaur named Otmin (Shane Rangi), to prepare for battle, "however short it may be." Her forces withdraw, leaving Aslan's body alone on the Stone Table. Susan and Lucy rush forward and stand guard over the body all night long. Lucy opens her bottle of fire-flower cordial, but Susan says that it is too late for that, because Aslan is dead. (The cordial is a potion, and Aslan can no longer swallow it.) Susan at first wants to chase away the rats and mice who are swarming around Aslan, until Lucy points out that they are actually gnawing away his bonds.

Then Susan says that Peter and Edmund need to be alerted, and Lucy reminds her that the trees are animated--or rather, have their own spirits, the dryads, who can carry messages faster than even the girls can deliver them. And so a dryad (Katrina Browne) awakens Peter and Edmund, back at the main camp, to advise them of Aslan's death. Now Edmund turns to Peter and says that Peter must lead them. Peter is afraid that he would never be able to do this--but Edmund reminds him that Aslan believed in him--and now, so does Edmund himself. Oreius, as if to underline the point, asks Peter what his orders are--and Peter gives them. The next day, the First Battle of Beruna unfolds. Peter deploys a cavalry consisting of centaurs and leopards at the base of a cliff, and orders Edmund to command the rest of his forces, armed with bows and arrows, at the top of the cliff. Peter even has an air force, consisting of talking eagles, falcons, hawks, and gryphons. He designates some to act as fighters, some as bombers, and some as aerial scouts. One gryphon (Cameron Rhodes) brings word that the enemy forces are coming, "in numbers and weapons far greater than our own." Oreius confidently observes that numbers alone are not sufficient to win. The battle starts when Otmin leads half of Jadis' forces onto the open area, advancing in a full horizontal line.

Peter first orders aerial bombardment, by his gryphons and other birds, carrying rocks and dropping them onto the advancing black dwarfs, ankle slicers, and other unsavory creatures. Otmin notices the approaching gryphons and alerts his forces, who begin shooting arrows. Jadis, driving a chariot drawn by polar bears, sends a group of large bats to attack the gryphons, resulting in a rather interesting substitute for modern aerial dogfighting. Then Peter cries out, "For Narnia and for Aslan!" and, astride his own war charger (a white unicorn), leads his cavalry in flying-wedge formation to drive into the enemy line. At the Stone Table, the girls prepare to leave--when suddenly they are thrown off their feet, as the Stone Table cracks in two--and Aslan is now missing.

Then, as the look, a very much alive Aslan appears before them, assuring them that he had relied on a little-understood provision of the "Deep Magic," "that when a willing victim who has committed no treachery dies in a traitor's stead, the Stone Table will crack, and death itself will turn backwards." Aslan then orders the girls to climb on his back and cover their ears, as he starts to race across the countryside--back to Jadis' castle. At the battle, Peter orders Edmund to deploy another weapon--a phoenix, that forms out of a firebrand shot like an arrow from the top of the cliff. Jadis sends a bat after it, but Peter kills the bat with a javelin. The phoenix then self-combusts and draws a wall of fire separating the two sides--until Jadis advances and uses her magic--perhaps a blast of energy from her sceptre--to part the wall. Peter now orders his forces to fall back to the rocks inside the cliff area, where Edmund and his archers will shoot the enemy as they try to come in. All goes well, until Ginarrbrik shoots Peter's war charger out from under him.

Now unhorsed, Peter watches helplessly as Oreius charges forward to attack Jadis on his own. Otmin tries to stop Oreius, but the centaur leader impales him with his swords. Drawing another, massive sword, Oreius leaps at Jadis, but the White Witch easily leans back to dodge his blow--and in the process, Oreius gets too close, thus allowing Jadis to petrify him with one touch of her sceptre. At that instant, Aslan, Susan, and Lucy have arrived at Jadis' palace, which is totally unguarded. Lucy sees the petrified Tumnus and bursts into tears--but then Aslan breathes upon Tumnus and revives him! Aslan orders the girls to search the palace, saying that they must form a relief army out of every petrified creature they can find. Jadis, having petrified Oreius, fends off all attackers with the same deadly efficacy. Peter now orders Edmund to quit the field, find the girls, and get them home. At first Edmund allows the male beaver to drag him away--but then he notices Jadis making her way to Peter and raising her sword and that dreadful sceptre. Once again he disobeys: he jumps into the fray, knocking Ginarrbrik off a cliff in the process, and engages Jadis as she is about to use the sceptre.

Edmund swings his own sword, forcing Jadis to withdraw the sceptre. Jadis then thrusts forward with the sceptre in an attack on Edmund, but Edmund backsteps in time--and with another two-handed swing of his sword, cuts the sceptre in two, thus permanently deactivating it in a wash of blue lightning. The display distracts Edmund for a critical few seconds--and Jadis, who is much more skilled than Edmund, disarms him with the sword she is carrying in her left hand, and stabs him with the short fragment of her broken sceptre. Peter, seeing this, cries out in blind rage and rushes at Jadis, swatting another minotaur aside like an annoying insect. Then the two leaders clash, with Peter, armed with sword and shield, against Jadis, who has cast aside her now-useless sceptre and engages him with two swords--her own and the one that Edmund had been carrying. Peter swings almost blindly, Jadis counters every move he makes, and their differences in skill are painfully obvious--and then a great, air-filling roar interrupts them both, and they turn to see Aslan, the last person whom Jadis ever expected to see--with Susan and Lucy, at the head of a force greater even than the force that Peter had started out with! Susan and Lucy's relief forces, with Tumnus and a good-natured giant (Lee Tuson) in the lead, rush in and start to make quick work of Jadis' forces.

Jadis, now concentrating on Peter, trips him up, pins his sword arm with one of her own swords, lifts his shield away from him, and is about to finish Peter off with one quick thrust when the angry Aslan pounces and bowls her over. Aslan allows her about five seconds of respite--during which she looks at Aslan with a look that is half terrified and half anticipatory. Then Aslan opens his great jaws and presumably breaks her neck. Whereupon Jadis' troops break and run in a rout, with Susan and Lucy's relief forces in hot pursuit. (The pursuit is made to look like an army of wraiths, to illustrate that Peter can barely perceive them, and has eyes only for Aslan and the dead Jadis.) As the chase moves out into the open, Aslan quietly declares, "It is finished." Peter is joyously reunited with his sisters, and then reveals that Edmund is very badly wounded.

The three come upon him, breathing agonally, with Ginarrbrik about to cut his head off. Susan kills Ginarrbrik with her bow, and then Lucy gives

Edmund a drop of the firewater juice--which at first does not appear to succeed, until Edmund regains his consciousness and breathing. Peter embraces his brother lovingly, and then asks, "When are you going to learn to do as you're told?" Aslan then starts reviving the petrified Narnians by breathing on them (Aslan can restore anyone from that state, even a petrified creature that has since been shattered), and Lucy rushes about with her bottle of firewater juice to render what first aid she can. The shot then slews over the countryside, all the way out to the mouth of the Great River, to Cair Paravel, the Castle of the Four Thrones, where a solemn coronation ceremony now takes place.

Aslan presides, of course, and installs the four children as the permanent resident Kings and Queens of Narnia, each with his or her own region of responsibility. With that done, Aslan walks out along the beach and away from Narnia, obviously leaving the children in charge. Turnus assures Lucy that Aslan will return one day, but when Aslan himself sees fit. Years later, the four Kings and Queens, now grown to adulthood, are in the Western Wood, chasing after the legendary White Stag, when they happen upon a most strange device: a lamp growing out of the ground. The four know it is familiar, but don't know why--until Lucy (Rachael Henley) remembers a phrase, "Spare Oom!" and leads the other three (Noah Huntley, Sophie Winkleman, and Mark Wells) deeper into the woods. As they continue to run, they find themselves in a confined space--with coats, not trees, to either side--and in the next instant they pile out of the original wardrobe, having not aged a day or even a second since entering Narnia so many years, as they perceived them, before--and then Professor Kirke comes to ask them what they were all doing in the wardrobe!"You wouldn't believe us if we told you, sir!" says Peter, now back to his original age, as are all the others.

Kirke tosses him the cricket ball he had bowled, and says, "Try me." As the credits roll, Lucy tries one more time to re-enter Narnia through the wardrobe, and Kirke informs her that she will not likely be able to re-enter that way, because "you see, I have already tried." This is the one time that Professor Kirke reveals that he knows far more about Narnia than he ever was willing to tell, and even that the children can expect to return to Narnia someday, but at a time when they least expect, and aren't actively looking for it. As he leads Lucy out of the spare room, Aslan gives one last roar through the open wardrobe, which then turns dark forever.