

The Magician's Nephew

by C.S. Lewis

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The Magician's Nephew

adapted for stage by **Altaire Gural**
Canada

running time (with scene/set changes, singing, etc, battle scene, London scene) ...60 minutes.

Digory Kirke

Polly Plummer

Uncle Andrew (imagine Jim Carey in A Series Of Unfortunate Events)

Aunt Letty

Aslan

Jadis (actress must be very interesting, not just menacing).

Cab Driver

Nellie

Mother

House Maid

Warriors/Londoners/animals of Narnia (these roles can all be shared, doubled, tripled dependent on cast size).

ACT 1, Scene 1

Setting: garden with a fence and a low swinging gate. Re: 1900 London, England

Polly Plummer is playing in her garden (either singing to herself, or skipping, or playing out a battle scene with toys, etc). A boy, Digory Kirke, leans over the gate, watching. Polly notices him.

Polly: Hullo!
Digory: Hullo. What's your name?
Polly: Polly, what's yours?
Digory: Digory.
Polly: I say, what a funny name!

Digory: (walking through gate) It isn't half as funny as Polly.
Polly: Yes it is.
Digory: No, it isn't.
Polly: At any rate, I DO wash MY face, which is what you need to do, especially after

...

Digory: ... After what?
Polly: After you've been blubbing.
Digory: ... All right. I HAVE then. And so would you if you lived all your life in the country, and had a pony, and a river at the bottom of the garden, and THEN

been brought to live in a beastly HOLE like this.

Polly: London ISN'T a hole!

Digory: And if your father was away in India ... and you had to come and live with an aunt ... and an uncle who's MAD ... because they're looking after your mother who is very ill, and is going to ... going to die!

Polly: I didn't know. I'm sorry! (She looks up at the opposite house across the gate) ... Is Mr. Ketterley *really* mad?

Digory: He has a study on the top floor, and Aunt Letty says I must never go up there.

Well, that looks fishy to begin with, right? And there's another thing!

Whenever he tries to say anything to me at mealtimes Aunt Letty says things

like, "Don't worry the boy, Andrew" or "I'm sure Digory doesn't want to hear

about THAT" or "Now, Digory, wouldn't you like to go out and play in the garden?"

Polly: What sort of thing does he try to say?

Digory: I don't know. He never gets far enough! But last night I was going past the attic stairs on my way to bed ... and I'm sure I heard a yell!

Polly: Perhaps he has a mad wife shut up in there!

Digory: Yes I've thought of that. OR he might have been a pirate, and be always hiding from his old shipmates.

Polly: How exciting! I never knew your house was so interesting! Oh! It's going to rain, I should go in. Could we ... could we meet and talk again tomorrow?

Your adventures are far more intriguing than mine. Perhaps we might catch a

glimpse of your Uncle's study ...?
Digory: ... I shouldn't like that. But I WOULD like to have a friend to spend time with.

Tomorrow then!

They part. Stage is dark during transition. We hear the ticking of a grandfather clock, and then chiming ringing nine in the morning. Lights come up on Uncle Andrew's study. There is a high backed chair turned away from the door as the children enter.

Digory: Uncle Andrew's not usually about at this time of the morning. But let's be

quick. He frightens me.

Polly: I only want to have a look. **(sees a table with a number of rings on it).**

Ohhhh! What are these rings? They're so pretty!

Digory: Oh, come on! The sooner ...

Uncle Andrew, who has been sitting in the high backed chair unseen by Polly and Digory, rises and approaches the children. They cower as he crosses to the door and locks it.

Uncle Andrew: There! Now my sister can't get at you! I am delighted to see you!

Polly: Please, Mr. Ketterley. It's nearly my dinner time and I've got to go home.

Uncle Andrew: Nonsense. At 9 in the morning? Tut tut. Not just yet. **(he wanders around his study).** This is too good an opportunity to miss. You see, I'm in the middle of a great experiment. I've tried it on a guineapig and it SEEMED to work. But then, a guineapig can't tell you anything, now can they? ... And you can't explain to it how to come back. **(The children are still not convinced).** Ah well, if you MUST go ... allow me to give you a present. Wouldn't you like a ring, my dear?

Polly: Do you mean one of these yellow or green ones? How lovely!

Uncle Andrew: Not a green one! But I'd be delighted to give you any of the yellow ones.

Come and try one on.

Digory: Polly, don't touch them!

Polly reaches out to take a ring, and with a flash or a snap blackout, Polly disappears, leaving Digory alone with Uncle Andrew. Digory is astonished. Uncle Andrew smiles wickedly.

Uncle Andrew: It IS a shock when you first see someone vanish. Why, it gave even me a turn when the guineapig did it the other night.

Digory: Was that when you yelled?
Uncle Andrew: Oh, you heard that, did you? I *hope* you haven't been spying on me.
Digory: I haven't! But what's happened to Polly?
Uncle Andrew: Congratulate me, my dear boy! My experiment has succeeded! Yellow rings
that take you there. The little girl's gone – vanished – **right** out of the world!
Digory: What have you done to her?
Uncle Andrew: Sent her to ... well ... to another place. A world that could be reached only by
Magic!
Digory: Well why didn't you go yourself then!
Uncle Andrew: Me? Me? A man at my time of life, and in my state of health, to risk the shock
and the dangers? You might meet anything! Anything!
Digory: Even if you are my Uncle – you've behaved like a coward, sending a girl to a
place you're afraid to go yourself!
Uncle Andrew: (slamming table) Silence, Sir! I will not be talked to like that by a little dirty
schoolboy. I am a **great** scholar! I am the **magician** who is DOING the
experiment. Of COURSE I need subjects to do it on. No great wisdom can be
reached without sacrifice! ... But the idea of going myself is ridiculous!
Supposing I get KILLED? What would become of my life's work?
Digory: Are you going to bring Polly back?
Uncle Andrew: I was going to tell you, when you so rudely interrupted me. The green rings
draw you back.
Digory: But Polly hasn't got a green ring.
Uncle Andrew: (smiling wickedly) No.
Digory: Then she can't get back!
Uncle Andrew: Oh, she can get back. If someone else will go after her, wearing a yellow ring
himself, and taking two green rings with him.
Digory: A trap! You planned the whole thing, so that she'd go without knowing, and
then I'd have to go after her.
Uncle Andrew: (mock sadness) I should be very sorry to think that anyone of our family had
not enough honour and chivalry to go to the aid of a lady in distress.
Digory: If you had any honour you'd go yourself. Very well. I'll do it!
Uncle Andrew: The sooner you go, the sooner you'll return.
Uncle Andrew places the rings in Digory's hand. Digory puts the two rings in his pocket, and
places the third one on his finger.

And with a flash, the lights go out.

THE WOOD BETWEEN THE WORLDS

Polly and Digory are sitting in the middle of a forest (this can be represented by gobos, lights fluttering, or real trees). They are staring dreamily around, and then they look at each other for a few moments, trying to remember things.

Finally, Polly says ...

Polly: I think I've seen you before.

Digory: I rather think so too. Have you been here long?

Polly: Oh, always ... at least ... I don't know. A very long time.

Digory: ... so have I.

Polly: No you haven't! I've just seen you come out of that pond.

Digory: ... yes. I suppose I did. I'd forgotten.

Silence

Polly: Look here. I wonder ... did we ever really meet before? I had a sort of idea ...

a sort of picture in my head ... of a boy and a girl (like us) ... living

somewhere quite different. ... Perhaps it was only a dream?

Digory: I've had that same dream, I think! ... I remember the girl had a dirty face.

Polly: In MY dream it was the boy who had a dirty face!

Digory: Hullo! What's that? You've got a ring on your finger. And so have I.

They stare at each other, trying to remember.

Digory: UNCLE ANDREW!!!

Polly: Oh, he's a wicked rotten awful man! ... What do we do now?

Digory: There's no hurry.

Polly: I think there is! This place is too quiet. It's so ... so dreamy. You're almost

asleep. If we once give in to it we shall just lie down and drowse forever and

ever.

Digory: (lying down to drowse, smiling foolishly) Yes, it's very nice here ...

Polly: (picking him right back up as she talks) Yes it is, but we've got to get back.

Digory: (remembering brightly) The green ring takes us home! We must change rings.

Here's one for you.

Polly: Let's try them right now.

They put their green rings on and POOF. Lights go out and then back up on a world with a red tinged light to everything. In the far corner is a stone throne that the children do not see,

with a frozen figure upon it. On the other side is a table with a bell and a hammer.

The children are almost scared.

Digory: What a strange place!

Polly: This isn't home. I don't like it!

Digory: It's very funny weather here. I wonder if we've arrived just in time for a

thunderstorm ... or an eclipse.

Polly: I don't like it.

Digory: Why are you whispering?

Polly stares at him worriedly, and then they hold hands and refuse to let go.

Digory: Do you think that anyone lives here?

Polly: No, it's all in ruins.

Digory: Let's stand and listen for a bit.

Nothing. Tinkling of winter-like windchimes. Nothing. Wind. Nothing.

Polly: Let's go home!

Digory: But we haven't seen anything yet. Now we're here, we must have a look round.

Polly: ... I'm sure there's nothing at all interesting here.

Digory: There's not much point in finding a magic ring that lets you into other worlds if

you're afraid to look at them when you've got there.

Polly: **(sharply letting go of Digory's hand)** Who's talking about being afraid? I'll

go anywhere you go!

They look around, noticing the ruins

Polly: That doesn't look very safe.

Digory: If it's lasted till now, I suppose it'll last a bit longer. But we must be very

quiet. You know a noise sometimes brings things down ... like an avalanche in

the Alps.

Seeing the "frozen royals" (which are really all the audience) ... pointing ...

Polly: Look at their robes! Velvet, and crimson, and purple, the embroidery! Just

beautiful!

Digory: Look at their crowns!

Polly: Are they all royalty? Why do they sit there like that? Why are they so still? Are

they statues?

Digory: Magic! Can't you feel it?

They continue to walk and stop and stare at the people facing stage left.

Digory: They were nice people, I think.

Polly: (nodding) Kind. And wise. And handsome.

They come to the people in the centre

Digory: **These** faces look very solemn. Like **teachers**.

They come to the people facing stage right

Polly: **These** people look strong, and proud, and cruel. Perhaps they had done

something dreadful and suffered something worse?

They come to the throne on the stage with the seated frozen queen.

Digory: ... I do wish we knew the story that's behind all this. Let's go back and look at

that table in the middle of the room.

They go to the pillar with the bell and the hammer.

Polly: There seems to be something written here ...

Digory: ***Make your choice, adventurous Stranger.***

Strike the bell and bide the danger,

Or wonder, till it drives you mad,

What would have followed if you had.

Polly: No fear! We don't want any danger.

Digory: It's no good! I'm not going home to be driven mad by wondering what would

have happened if we had struck the bell. I can feel the magic working on me

already!

Polly: I don't believe you.

Digory: That's all **you** know. It's because you're a **girl!** Girls never want to know

anything but gossip and rot about people getting **engaged**.

Polly: ... You looked exactly like your Uncle when you said that.

Digory: Why can't you keep to the point?

Polly: How exactly like a man! And don't say I'm just like a woman, or you'll be a

beastly copy-cat.

Digory: I should never dream of calling a kid like you a woman!

Polly: Oh, I'm a kid, am I? I'm off. I've had enough of this place. And I've had

enough of you too!

Before Polly can take a step, Digory hammers the bell. The ringing of the bell is eerie, and loud, and louder still. And then there is the sound of thunder. And then the frozen queen on the throne rises, and surveys the room.

Jadis: Who has awaked me? Who has broken the spell?

Digory: ... I ... I think it must have been me.

Jadis: You? You? But you are only a child. A common child. Anyone can see at a

glance that you have no drop of royal or noble blood in your veins. How did

such as you dare to enter this house?
Polly: We've come from another world; by Magic.
Jadis: Is this true?
Digory: Yes, it is.

Jadis studies Digory

Jadis: You are no magician. The Mark of it is not on you.
Digory: It was my Uncle Andrew

There is the sound of rumbling and crashing of ruins

Jadis: There is great peril here. The whole palace is breaking up. Look well on that which no eyes will ever see again. Such was Charn, this great city. Does your uncle rule any city as great as this, boy? No? It is silent now. But I have stood here when the whole air was full of the noises of trampling feet, the creaking of wheels, the cracking of whips, the thunder of chariots, and the drums of war. I have stood here when the roar of battle went up from every street and the river of Charn ran red.

(After Jadis is giving this speech, we see soldiers/armies enter in formation, the lights going red and blue alternately. We hear drums, and battle cries, and you may show us a battle in the interim that the children and Jadis watch as a flashback if you choose. Be as creative and dramatic with this visual as you like).

All in one moment one woman blotted it out forever. I, Queen Jadis, destroyed it using the Deplorable Word.

Polly: **(hushed)** What was it?
Jadis: That was the secret of secrets! After a great battle, I was the only living thing

beneath the sun.

Digory: But the people!

Jadis: What people?

Polly: All the ordinary people? The women, the children, and the animals?

Jadis: I was the Queen. They were all my people. What else were they there for but

to do my will?

Digory: And what did you do then?

Jadis: The force of my spell left me sleeping for a thousand years.

Polly: Was it the Deplorable Word that made the sun like that? So big, so red, and so cold?

Jadis: It has always been so. Have you a different sort of sun in your world?

Digory: Yes. It's smaller and yellower. And it gives a good deal more heat.

Jadis: Ahhh! So! Yours is a younger world. **(She thinks a moment)**. Let us be going. It is cold here at the end of all the ages.

Both children: Going where?

Jadis: Where? To your world, of course. What else were you sent here for if not to fetch me?

Digory: I'm sure you wouldn't like our world at all! It's not her sort of place, is it, Polly? It's very dull; not worth seeing, really.

Jadis: It will soon be worth seeing when I rule it.

Polly: They wouldn't let you, you know.

Jadis: **(smiling)** Many great kings thought they could stand against the House of Charn. But they all fell. Do you think that I, with my beauty and my Magic, will not have your whole world at my feet before a year has passed? Take me there at once.

Digory: **(aside to Polly)** This is perfectly frightful!

Jadis: This Uncle of yours must be a very great Magician if he has found how to send you here. Is he King of your whole world or only of part?

Digory: He isn't King of anywhere!

Jadis: You are lying!

Digory: **(to Polly)** Now! The rings!

They make a mad dash to escape the world of Charn, and return to Uncle Andrew's study with the Queen who has grabbed a piece of Digory's coat to hang on to, as well as Uncle Andrew who is amazed. He begins to bow, repeatedly at this stately woman.

Jadis: Where is the Magician who has called me into this world?

Uncle Andrew: Ah ... ah ... Madam. I am most honoured ... most highly gratified ... a most unexpected pleasure ... if only I had had the opportunity of making any preparations ... I ... I ...

Jadis: Where is the Magician, Fool?

Uncle Andrew: I ... I am, Madam. I hope you will excuse anyer ... liberty these naughty children may have taken. I assure you, there was no intention ...

Jadis: You? **(she studies him dreadfully, frightening him with her long stare)**. I

see. You are a Magician ... of a sort. Stand up, dog, and don't sprawl there as if you were speaking to your equals. How do you come to know Magic? **YOU**

are not of the royal blood, I'll swear.

Uncle Andrew: Well ... ah ... not perhaps in the strict sense. Not exactly royal, Ma'am. The

Ketterleys are, however, a very **old** family. An old **Dorsetshire** family, Ma'am. You are a little, peddling Magician who works by rules and books. Your kind

Jadis:

was made an end of in my world a thousand years ago. But here I shall allow

you to be my servant.

Uncle Andrew: **(horror on his face for a stunned moment, then ...)** **Delighted** to be of any

service ... a pleasure, I assure you. I should be most happy ...

Jadis:

You talk far too much. **(Uncle Andrew shuts up, defeated)**. I see we are in a

large city. Procure for me at once a chariot or a flying carpet or a well-trained

dragon. Bring me to places where I can get clothes and jewels and slaves.

Tomorrow I will begin the conquest of your world!

Uncle Andrew:

... I'll go and order a cab at once.

Jadis:

Stop! **(Uncle Andrew halts, midflight)** ...Do not **dream** of treachery. My eyes

can see through walls, and into the minds of men. At the first sign of

disobedience I will lay such spells on you that anything you sit down on will

feel like red hot iron. Whenever you lie in a bed there will be invisible blocks

of ice at your feet. Now GO.

Uncle Andrew flees

(As the Witch curiously examines the contents of the study, perhaps causing a mess by sneering at the books on Uncle Andrew's shelf ... as a laugh moment for the audience ... and then stares out the window to the street ...)

Digory: This is simply ghastly, having her here. We must make some sort of plan.

Polly: That's up to your Uncle now. It was he who started all this messing about with magic.

(Polly makes to leave)

Digory: You can't leave me alone in a scrape like this.

Polly: **(turning back)** If you want me to come back, hadn't you better say you're
sorry?
Digory: Sorry? Well, now what have I done? **(the queen looks at them, and they hush
a bit) ..**
Polly: Oh, nothing of course! Only struck the bell with the hammer, like a silly idiot!
Jadis: What is that old fool doing? I should have brought a whip!
Noises outside Uncle Andrew's study as we hear Uncle Andrew and Aunt Letty

Offstage:

Andrew: Letty dear, I have to go out, Just lend me five pounds or so!
Letty: I've told you times without number that I will not lend you money.
Andrew: You don't understand! ...
They both enter the study, Letty stopping in her tracks to view the Witch
Jadis: Now, Slave, how long am I to wait for my chariot?
Letty: Who is this person, Andrew, may I ask?
Andrew: Distinguished foreigner ... v ... very important p ... person!
Letty: Rubbish! Get out of my house this moment!
Jadis: Down on your knees, minion, before I blast you. **(Jadis raises her hands)**
Letty: The woman is mad!
The housemaid pops in, shocked at the tableau
Maid: Please, sir, the 'ansom cab has come.
Jadis: Lead on, Slave!
Andrew: I really must protest. **(Jadis' look silences Uncle Andrew)**
Off Jadis goes, scaring Andrew, Letty and the housemaid out the door.
Digory: Jiminy! She's loose in London!
Black out.

In the dark we begin to hear people. People on the streets of London.

We hear the clop of horses hooves, and carriage wheels, and street vendors calling out their wares.

Then ...

“Look here, get out of the way!”

“What's she doing?”

“The woman’s mad, I tell you!”

“Oh my, look at her crown!”

“And her robes, and her jewels!”

We hear a fire engine. (Think about how the crowd will arrange themselves during this entire scene, so that they neither upstage the action, nor stand there being boring). Then the lights come up on a street in London, with a lamp post. Londoners are milling around in confusion, shouting (“Hullo, what’s that?”, and “I wonder what house is on fire?” and “Great Scott, it’s coming here!”)

And then a Hansom cab arrives on stage (the carriage can be as simply or elaborately made as your stage artists choose). Jadis is standing on the carriage, and a horse is prancing at the Hansom cab’s front, clearly in agitation.

Three police men rush on stage, followed by children on bicycles, all ringing their bells and cheering and calling. This is chaos, and it is fun.

A man comes running on last of all ...

“That’s the woman, that’s the woman! Do your duty, Constable. Jewels she’s taken from my shop! And she’s given me a black eye too!”

and pointing to Uncle Andrew in the background ...

“HE put her up to it!”

Policemen: **(pulls out a giant notepad and pencil)** What’s all this, then?

Andrew: Dear me, I’m terribly shaken.

Policeman: Are you in charge of that there woman?

“Look out” call several voices, as the Witch steers the horse in a frenzy.

Cab driver: That’s my ‘orse what she’s got there, same as it’s my cab what she’s stolen!

Policeman: One at a time, please, one at a time!

Cab driver: But there ain't no time. I know that 'orse better'n you do. If the young woman goes on pestering him, there'll be murder done. 'Ere, let me get at him.

(everyone backs away as the Cab driver addresses Jadis) Now, Missie, let me get at 'is 'ead. You're a Lidy, and you don't want all these roughs going for you, do you? You want to go 'ome and 'ave a nice cup of tea, then you'll feel

ever so much better. Steady Strawberry, old boy. Steady now.

Jadis: Dog! Unhand our royal charger. We are the Empress Jadis.

The crowd laughs

“Ho, Empress are you?”

“Three cheers for the Empress”

The cheers and the taunting infuriate Jadis. She reaches up and breaks a bar off the lamp post, and threatens the crowd with it, who all back away, frightened.

Polly and Digory run on to the stage

Polly: Quick, Digory, this must be stopped.

Digory: Hold on to me tight, you'll have to manage the rings. Yellow, remember. And

don't put it on till I shout!

Jadis is attacking the policemen, brandishing her weapon.

An angry roar from the crowd:

“Call out the Military!”

“Stop her!”

The Cab driver is trying to protect his horse.

The crowd boos.

Jadis: You shall pay dearly for this when I have conquered your world! Not one stone
of your city will be left. I will make it as Charn!

Andrew: Madam ... my dear young lady ... for heaven's sake ... compose yourself

The children rush in and grab on to Jadis, but Uncle Andrew also catches on to Digory.

Digory: GO! Oh no, we didn't want to bring HIM along!

Lights flash to signal the change of scenery. The new scene is very dim.

Polly: Oh look! We've brought the old horse with us too. AND the Cab driver! What
a kettle of fish!

Strawberry, the horse, is clearly happy, whinnying.

Cab driver: That's right, old boy. That's better. Take it easy.

Jadis: **(looking round)** ... This is not Charn. This is an empty world. This is Nothing.

Polly: **(looking up)** There are no stars.

Jadis: My doom has come upon me.

Andrew: Oh, don't say that, pray don't say such things.

Cab driver: Now then, now then. Keep cool everyone, that's what I say. No bones broken,
anyone? Good. Well there's something to be thankful for straight away, and
more than anyone could expect after falling all that way.

The Cab driver goes to check on his horse. Uncle Andrew approaches Digory in quiet.

Uncle Andrew: Now, my boy. Slip on your ring. Let's be off.

Jadis: Have you forgotten that I can hear men's thoughts? If you attempt treachery I
will take such vengeance ...

Digory: And if you think I'm so mean as to go off and leave Polly, and the Cabby, and
the horse ... in a place like this, you're well mistaken!

Uncle Andrew: You're a very naughty and impertinent little boy.

Cab driver: Hush!

