

4. Prince Caspian (Summary)

Return to Narnia

It is one year after Peter Pevensie, Susan Pevensie, Edmund Pevensie, and Lucy Pevensie first journeyed to Narnia, and they are at the railway station waiting for the train to return to boarding school. Suddenly, they begin to feel a strange tugging sensation, and moments later they find themselves magically transported to an unknown, wooded area. After discovering they are on an island, the children stumble upon the ruins of an ancient castle with an overgrown apple orchard. Soon enough, they realize the crumbling structure is Cair Paravel, where they once reigned as monarchs, and untold centuries have passed in Narnian time during the previous year the children have spent in their own world. They uncover the long-abandoned treasure room of the castle and arm themselves with the magical gifts they once received from Father Christmas. Only Susan's horn is missing—a horn that can be used to summon magical help in desperate times.

The children decide to leave the abandoned island, which was previously a peninsula but has been separated from the land over centuries. As they follow the coast seeking a landmark river, a boat rows into view, in which two soldiers are about to throw a struggling captive into the water to drown. Susan looses arrows unseen from the wood, and the frightened soldiers leap into the water and flee. The children retrieve the boat and rescue the captive, an "Old Narnian" dwarf named Trumpkin, in King Caspian's service. Trumpkin explains to the confused children that Narnia has been ruled for many generations by an outside race of people called the Telmarines (of which Caspian is one). Moreover, the remnants of Old Narnia—including dwarfs, talking animals, and other magical creatures—have been in hiding for so long they are now believed to be merely legends. He then unfolds the tale of young Prince Caspian, the rightful heir to the Narnian throne.

Caspian is but a child at the time of his father's death, and his usurping uncle Miraz—now known as King Miraz—steps into power in his place. Caspian learns of Old Narnia through the tales of his beloved nurse, much to Miraz's displeasure, who banishes her and sternly forbids Caspian ever to speak of such "nonsense" again. Fortunately, Caspian gains a new ally in his tutor, Doctor Cornelius, a half-dwarf disguised to pass unnoticed among men. Cornelius reveals his identity to Caspian and teaches him the true history of Narnia in secret, confirming the legends of Aslan, talking beasts, living trees, and the kings and queens of Cair Paravel. Caspian thrills to these legends, and Cornelius entreats him to seek out the Old Narnians—if any others remain—when he becomes king.

Caspian's chance to do just that arises far sooner than expected when his aunt gives birth. Now that Miraz has a son of his own, Caspian, as heir to the throne, is in mortal danger. Cornelius reveals that Miraz had murdered Caspian's father to gain the throne, and that Caspian is the true king. The tutor pledges his loyalty to Caspian and gives him the legendary horn of Queen Susan. Cornelius then helps the bewildered boy escape the palace, sending him to seek refuge in a friendly kingdom to the south. Caspian travels through the forested mountains by horse, but a violent storm spooks the animal and the prince is knocked unconscious as the horse tears through the woods.

The Rise of Old Narnia

Caspian awakens in a warm cave, where three unknown voices discuss whether they ought to kill him. It is Trufflehunter, a talking badger, and two dwarfs, Nikabrik and Trumpkin—Old Narnians. Nikabrik is set on killing Caspian, especially when he discovers the prince's identity: "Not only a Telmarine but close kin and heir to our greatest enemy," Miraz. Trufflehunter, though, declares his allegiance to Caspian as the rightful king, reminding the others that Narnia has best prospered under the rein of humans.

In the end Caspian is allowed to live, and the Old Narnians begin to introduce him to others who've been living secret lives in the forest. Pattertwig the squirrel carries the message through the forest for everyone to gather for a feast. Meanwhile, Nikabrik offers to introduce him to a few hags and ogres, but Caspian and the others want nothing to do with such "horrible creatures out of the old stories." Nikabrik, however, declares that he'd befriend

anyone who could help rid the land of the hated Telmarines—"Anyone or anything, Aslan or the White Witch." Caspian then meets Glenstorm the Centaur, who makes it clear that what is really needed is a council of war. Reepicheep, a pint-sized but valiant talking mouse, also pledges his loyalty to Caspian, who "tried hard (and successfully) not to laugh." Through all the talk of Old Narnia, Trufflehunter remains steadfast in his belief in Aslan, tree spirits (dryads), and water spirits (naiads), while Trumpkin and Nikabrik remain skeptical that such creatures ever existed.

Old Narnians arrive for the feast, and the council of war is set to convene when a stranger is captured nearby. It is Doctor Cornelius, who has come to warn Caspian that Miraz's army is on the move, hunting for the prince. With no time to lose, the entire party departs for Aslan's How, an earth mound, which was built over the ancient Stone Table, with tunnels and chambers inside. King Miraz's army catches up to them in no time, and skirmishes ensue. The Old Narnians are outmatched, and the situation becomes desperate. Caspian blows the horn of Queen Susan in the hope that either Aslan or the legendary kings and queens of Cair Paravel might arrive to aid them. Doctor Cornelius believes such people would most likely appear at ancient locations, so Pattertwig is sent to Lantern Waste, where the Pevensies first entered Narnia, to intercept whoever might magically appear. Trumpkin is sent to the ruins of Cair Paravel on the same mission, and it is he who encounters Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy when they save his life. Upon hearing his story, the children realize Caspian must have blown Susan's horn as they were at the railway station, and it was that call that pulled them back into Narnia.

Trumpkin, at the castle Cair Paravel, having just finished telling Prince Caspian's story so far, is crestfallen because in his mind "no help has come," since, "no offense," the four Pevensies are only children. The siblings prove their mettle to him through a series of challenges in which Edmund bests him at swords, Susan tops him in archery, and Lucy heals his battle wounds with her magical cordial. They also outfit him (and themselves) from the treasure chamber with the finest armor Trumpkin has ever seen. The dwarf is humbled, now convinced the four are indeed the help that has been sent. The party decides to save precious time in returning to Aslan's How by taking the captured boat up Glasswater Creek instead of returning overland the way Trumpkin had come. They begin the journey and set up camp for the night in the dark, thick forest along the river's bank. While the others sleep, Lucy slips away into the lovely forest, feeling nostalgic for the old days of dancing tree spirits. She calls out to them, "Oh Trees, wake, wake, wake ... come out, come to me," and the trees seem to stir, but the moment passes, and Lucy returns to camp.

The next morning they set off through the forest, where a bear attacks Lucy. Trumpkin kills it with an arrow. They pocket meat from the bear for a later meal, and continue onward. At last they arrive at the Rush, a river they had hoped to cross, only to find it has become an impassable gorge in the centuries since the children were last there. Just as they decide to head downstream, Lucy spots Aslan in the forest above them, "just the opposite of the way you want to go," she says. She urges the group to follow Aslan, but none of the others can see the Lion, so they overrule her and head downstream anyway. Edmund is the only one who believes Lucy, but he, too, is outvoted. "Crying bitterly," a reluctant Lucy follows the group. Their journey is arduous and takes far longer than hoped, and just as their destination is in sight, they are ambushed and driven back by arrow-fire from King Miraz's sentries. Trumpkin and the children are forced to double back, retracing ground all the way back to the gorge where they started.

Aslan's Return

As they camp that night, Lucy is awakened by a voice that calls to her, and once again she slips out of camp and into the forest, where the tree spirits are truly dancing now and Aslan awaits. They greet each other joyously, but the Lion then reproaches Lucy for her failure at turning the party's course the previous day. Lucy realizes she could and should have followed him alone, even if the others refused to. Aslan then urges her to wake the others and follow him now, even though they would not be able to see him for themselves. Determined, Lucy does so, refusing to give up until the others grudgingly agree to go.

Lucy's faith is rewarded when an unexpected path opens up before them, descending into the gorge toward their destination. One by one, the others are able to see Aslan leading them as they proceed along the route: first Edmund, who believed Lucy from the start, then Peter, who was less stubborn, and last Susan, who was most obstinate in her disbelief. Trumpkin, who hasn't believed in Aslan all along, gets his own wake-up call when Aslan roars, "Come here, Son of Earth, come HERE!" and playfully tosses him into the air like a child. Aslan then sends Trumpkin, Peter, and Edmund into the mound of Aslan's How to "deal with what [they] will find there," while the girls remain behind to witness events unfolding. Aslan roars, and the sound calls forth the river-god, nymphs, mountain giants far away, and a massive wave of trees, which dance around Aslan in joy. Among them are the youthful Bacchus and aged Silenus, mythical figures who spread wine and merriment wherever they go. Magical vines shoot up everywhere, laden with luscious grapes, and the crowd feasts and frolics with pleasure. After that, Aslan and the girls proceed to Beruna, where Bacchus's vines pull down the bridge to free the river-god, and Aslan sweeps through town and countryside to recruit new followers and frighten away the other inhabitants. At one home, they encounter an aged but faithful woman on her deathbed, Caspian's old nurse, and Aslan restores her to health.

At Aslan's How the boys and Trumpkin enter stealthily and approach the central chamber, where they hear voices arguing inside. They pause to eavesdrop on Caspian, Doctor Cornelius, Trufflehunter, and Nikabrik, who have almost given up hope of any help arriving from the call of Susan's horn. Only Trufflehunter remains steadfast in his belief. Nikabrik, who has brought two ominous strangers to the council, proposes to summon the evil White Witch of legend, claiming her power would defeat the Telmarines. When the others won't go along with his plan of "Black sorcery," Nikabrik declares he'll summon the witch himself. The two strangers are revealed as a hag and a wer-wolf, and fighting erupts. Trumpkin and the boys join the fray, and the treasonous dwarf and his loathsome companions are slain.

Peter, as High King of old, assumes command. Caspian's army is far overmatched by Miraz's, and a battle could mean the end of them all. Peter, hoping to delay such a battle to give Aslan time to act, decides to challenge Miraz to single combat. Peter sends Edmund to Miraz's camp to deliver the challenge, though it is a long shot that Miraz will accept—he has a far stronger army, and a battle would surely go his way. Peter is unexpectedly aided by two of Miraz's own advisors, Lord Glozelle and Lord Sopespian. Wanting Miraz out of the way so that they can take power for themselves, the pair goad him into accepting the challenge by implying he is too old to win against the youthful King Peter.

Peter and Miraz meet on the field of combat while their armies look on. It is an even matchup, and the two fight to the point of exhaustion. When Miraz trips and falls, Peter steps back to allow him to rise, but traitorous Lords Glozelle and Sopespian rally their army with the false cry that Peter has stabbed Miraz in the back. As the Telmarine soldiers rush forward, Glozelle himself stabs Miraz. Full battle ensues, and the tide turns when the awakened trees sweep toward the Telmarines, who flee toward the nearby town of Beruna in terror. There is no bridge for them to cross the Great River to Beruna, however, and they are forced to surrender.

With the battle won, Aslan crowns Caspian as king. Lucy uses her magical cordial to save seriously wounded Reepicheep's life, and Aslan restores his severed tail to him, as well. A great bonfire is struck, and the victors revel and dance amidst the flowing wine and abundant feast of Bacchus. The following day Aslan issues the proclamation that any Telmarines wishing to depart Narnia may be returned to their long-lost native land—an uncharted tropical island in the children's own world. The mystery of the Telmarine's origin is revealed: once a band of pirates stranded on the island by storm, the Telmarines wandered into Narnia through a magical portal in a cave, long since closed. Aslan creates an empty doorframe made of sticks, and one brave Telmarine chooses to step through. He disappears, leaving the others frightened and unwilling to go. Peter realizes he and his siblings must set the example—now that Caspian is established as king, they are no longer needed in Narnia. They bid farewell to their friends, replace their royal robes with their old school clothes, and lead a line of willing Telmarines through the gateway. The Telmarines are transported to the tropics, while the four siblings find themselves once more at the railway station back in England.