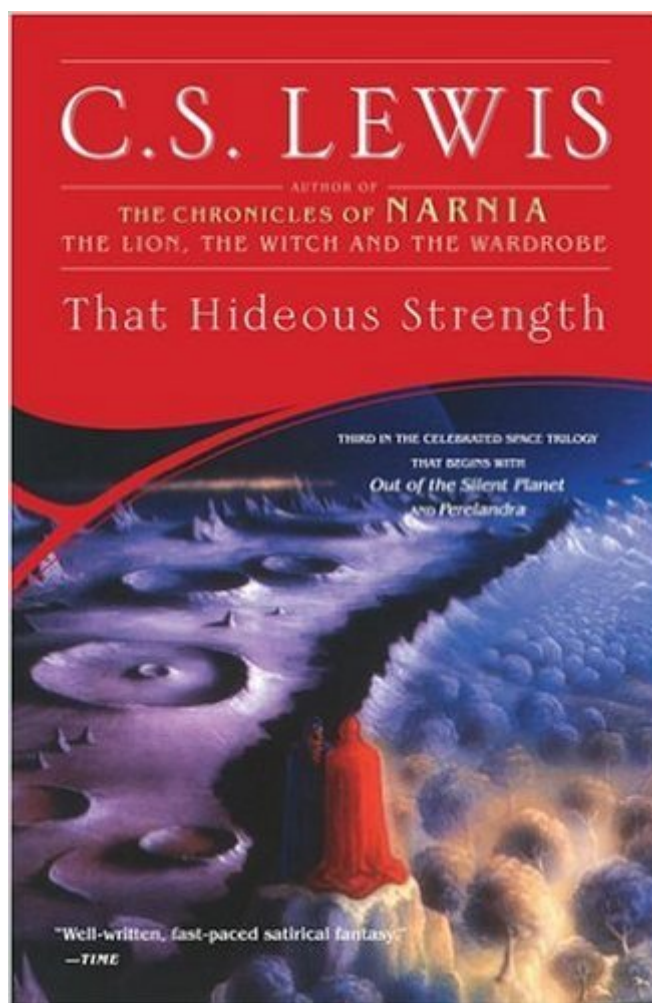


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That Hideous Strength (Space Trilogy, Book 3)



Synopsis

Written during the dark hours immediately before and during World War II, C. S. Lewis's Space Trilogy, of which *That Hideous Strength* is the third and final volume, stands alongside such works as Albert Camus's *The Plague* and George Orwell's *1984* as a timely parable that has become timeless, beloved by succeeding generations as much for the sheer wonder of its storytelling as for the significance of its moral concerns. The final book in C. S. Lewis's acclaimed Space Trilogy, which includes *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra*, *That Hideous Strength* concludes the adventures of the matchless Dr. Ransom. The dark forces that were repulsed in *Out of the Silent Planet* and *Perelandra* are massed for an assault on the planet Earth itself. Word is on the wind that the mighty wizard Merlin has come back to the land of the living after many centuries, holding the key to ultimate power for that force which can find him and bend him to its will. A sinister technocratic organization is gaining power throughout Europe with a plan to "recondition" society, and it is up to Ransom and his friends to squelch this threat by applying age-old wisdom to a new universe dominated by science. The two groups struggle to a climactic resolution that brings the Space Trilogy to a magnificent, crashing close.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Having enjoyed this novel again and again for a generation, I believe that it is prophetic and even more relevant today than when it was written. Now that recent filmings of *Lord of the Ring* and the first *Narnia* book have delighted critics and the public alike, is it too much to hope for a high-quality

cinematic version someday of *That Hideous Strength*? Lewis would be most pleased, I daresay, if any such adaptation were set in our own time, because we need its message now. By the time Mark Studdock arrives at Belbury, he is a confirmed brown-nose with considerable experience in pursuing his life's ambition: joining the esoteric Inner Circle of whatever. It is striking, then, how much difficulty he has in the NICE even determining who is in this group. Feverstone, Filostrato, Hardcastle, and Straik, for instance, all confide to him that their own respective purviews are of the institute's essence, while various other departments are peripheral or merely for public consumption. By the end of the book, the chaos proclaims that none of these figures, nor anyone else, is effectively in charge. In this respect, Lewis brilliantly anticipated insights that the late William Stringfellow would articulate in the 1960s and 70s: that institutions are among the contemporary world's most characteristic manifestations of the demonic "powers and principalities" mentioned in the Bible. They inevitably take on lives of their own and go off the rails. Eventually they justify any and all means towards the end of their own survival and hegemony. They enslave and "deplete the personhood of" every human being involved with them-- even (and perhaps especially) those who imagine that they are in control.

Silly heading, but nobody reads them anyway. I think. The third and last book in the trilogy (you did read the others, right?) and about as far from science fiction as you can possibly get . . . there's a definite shift, Lewis seems to be bringing in more fantasy and religious allegorical elements as the series continued, with the end result here. The tale is subtitled "A Fairy Tale for Grown-Ups" and that's what it boils down to. If you're like me, you'll have read this right after reading the other two books (which were great, by the way) and you'll be immediately confused. Instead of focusing on the nifty Dr Ransom, you get a young couple Mark and Jane. Jane's having weird dreams that keep coming true and Mark isn't really paying attention because he's trying to get into the political "circles" at the local university where he works. However, little does he know that evil is lurking there and the folks are plotting some very dark things. Herein comes the good guys and after being introduced to lots o' supporting characters, some of which are interesting, some less so, you finally meet the man himself: Ransom. The problem I have, and this has been said elsewhere, is that he's apparently the "Pendragon" (but also the Fisher King . . . weren't they two different people?) but there's absolutely no explanation as to how that happened. Lewis probably figured it wasn't important and not relevant to the story itself, heck, Ransom's discussion of how he inherited the mantle of the Pendragon is basically tossed off in one sentence. The first half of the book mostly focuses on the college and the dread blokes there, but when Ransom and company shows up

finally, things get very trippy indeed.

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