

Discussion Guide

That Hideous Strength, chs 10–12



OPEN

For one moment, the first for many years, Mark saw himself exactly as a man like Dimble saw him. It almost took his breath away.

“Look here,” he said. “You don’t . . . it’s too fantastic! You don’t imagine I knew about it. You don’t really believe I send policemen about to man-handle my own wife!” He had begun on the note of indignation, but ended by trying to insinuate a little jocularly. If only Dimble would give even the ghost of a smile: anything to move the conversation onto a different level.

But Dimble said nothing and his face did not relax. He had not, in fact, been perfectly sure that Mark might not have sunk even to this, but out of charity he did not wish to say so.

“I know you’ve always disliked me,” said Mark. “But I didn’t know it was quite as bad as that.” And again Dimble was silent, but for a reason Mark could not guess. The truth was that his shaft had gone home. Dimble’s conscience had for years accused him of a lack of charity towards Studdock and he had struggled to amend it: he was struggling now.

- *Ch 10, p. 216*



ENTRY

1. Have you ever found it difficult to separate bad actions from the person who has committed those bad actions?



RECALL

1. Describe the nature of Ransom’s conversation with Dimble about finding Jane and moving her to Belbury.
2. How does Jane’s experience joining the company at St Anne’s relate to her preconceptions about religion? What assumptions does she have to correct?
3. How does Mark begin to realize that he has been a fool this whole time? Is this a real turning point for him?
4. What is the real power behind the Head at the N.I.C.E.? What is the relationship between the scientific experimentation and “macrobes”?



ANALYSIS

1. What does Dimble’s conversation with Ransom reveal about the real stakes in Mark’s continued involvement at Belbury and the N.I.C.E.?
2. Why are both the N.I.C.E. and St Anne’s so interested in the body buried in Bragdon Wood? What does this tell us about the deeper layer underneath all the events in the novel so far?
3. How does the inverse parallel of Mark and Jane’s transformations in these chapters play against one another?



DIVING DEEPER

“That idea is a survival from conditions which are rapidly being altered. A few centuries ago, war did not operate in the way you describe. A large agricultural population was essential; and war destroyed types which were then still useful. But every advance in industry and agriculture reduces the number of work-people who are required. A large, unintelligent population is now becoming a deadweight. The real importance of scientific war is that scientists have to be reserved. It was not the great technocrats of Koenigsberg or Moscow who supplied the casualties in the siege of Stalingrad: it was superstitious Bavarian peasants and low-grade Russian agricultural workers. The effect of modern war is to eliminate retrogressive types, while sparing the technocracy and increasing its hold upon public affairs. In the new age, what has hitherto been merely the intellectual nucleus of the race is to become, by gradual stages, the race itself. You are to conceive the species as an animal which has discovered how to simplify nutrition and locomotion to such a point that the old complex organs and the large body which contained them are no longer necessary. That large body is therefore to disappear. Only a tenth part of it will now be needed to support the brain. The individual is to become all head. The human race is to become all Technocracy.”

- *ch 12, p. 255-266*



REFLECTION

1. What do you think it means to have charity or good-will toward those who you believe to be dangerous or involved in great evil?

He seemed to Mark to be looking at him, not with anger or contempt, but with that degree of loathing which produces in those who feel it a kind of embarrassment—as if he were an obscenity which decent people are forced, for very shame, to pretend that they have not noticed. In this Mark was quite mistaken. In reality his presence was acting on Dimble as a summons to rigid self-control. Dimble was simply trying very hard not to hate, not to despise, above all not to enjoy hating and despising, and he had no idea of the fixed severity which this effort gave to his face. The whole of the rest of the conversation went on under this misunderstanding.

- *ch. 10, p. 217*

2. What about Jane's reckoning with the reality of her surrender to goodness speaks to your own faith journey?