

A WRINKLE IN TIME

adapted for the stage by

James Sie

from the book by

Madeleine L'Engle



StagePartners

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Cast of Characters

MRS. WHATSIT

MRS. WHO

MRS. WHICH

MEG

CHARLES WALLACE

CALVIN

MOTHER

FATHER

TEACHER

CHRIS HENDERSON

PRINCIPAL JENKINS

POSTMISTRESS

HAPPY MEDIUM

RED EYES

CAMAZOTZIAN 1

CAMAZOTZIAN 2

CAMAZOTZIAN 3

GIRL

BOY (BILLY)

AUNT BEAST

BEAST 1

Scenes

Act I Scene 1—Earth and Thereabouts

Act I Scene 2—Into the Woods

Act I Scene 3—Home

Act I Scene 4—Uriel

Act I Scene 5—The Happy Medium's Cave

Act I Scene 6—Camazotz Outskirts

Act II Scene 1—Camazotz

Act II Scene 2—Central Central Intelligence

Act II Scene 3—Father's Prison

Act II Scene 4—IT

Act II Scene 5—Ixchel

Act II Scene 6—Beast Home

Act II Scene 7—Camazotz and Home

Production Credit

A Wrinkle in Time adapted by James Sie was first produced at Lifeline Theatre, Chicago, Illinois.

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Act I Scene 1—Earth and Thereabouts

(Blackness. ACTORS enter in shadow on either side of the stage, intoning a low sound, something between a chant and the crackle of electricity. It grows in volume, portentous and magical. Lightning flashes.

An unearthly, compelling, reverberating VOICE propels itself through the sound.)

MRS. WHICH: *(Voice over:)* Itt iss timmme.

(With a CRACK OF THUNDER, the sound transforms into the fierce blowing of the wind. The actors' bodies suggest trees being buffeted by a storm. WIND CHIMES jangle.

After a moment, a small bundled figure, a ragtag MRS. WHATSIT, blows across the stage, carried by the wind. She has so many layers on she is as helpless as a toddler in a padded snowsuit. She wears big oversized rain boots. MRS. WHATSIT exits, dropping clothes in her wake.

Pause.

MRS. WHATSIT blows back onto the stage. She tries to snatch some of her clothes from the ground, but gets blown off stage.

Pause.

MRS. WHATSIT rolls on stage, blown by the wind. Manages to right herself and stand up. Is immensely proud. The wind knocks her down again, and she blows off stage.

A WHITE BEDSHEET billows down in the darkness. It whips around in the storm, fluttering this way and that, twisting and finally resolving itself into/around the form of MRS. WHO. MRS. WHO has on enormous spectacles and is considerably steadier on her feet.

MRS. WHO wraps the sheet around herself like a shawl (perhaps it billows behind her?) plants herself and stands ramrod straight, expectant and a little impatient.

MRS. WHATSIT blows back onto stage and almost off before being retrieved by MRS. WHO.)

MRS. WHO: *(English is perhaps not her first language.)* Whatsit! Tempis Fugit for heaven's sake! Time flies by!

MRS. WHATSIT: Oh, but I wish there was no wind. It is so difficult to manage in these clothes.

MRS. WHO: *Ab honesto virum bonum nihil deterret. Seneca. Nothing deters a good man from doing what is honorable.*

MRS. WHATSIT: Yes of course, Who, I know! All I am saying is that the clothes—

(A giant SILHOUETTE OF A HALLOWEEN WITCH is projected against the wall, like a moon.)

MRS. WHICH: *(Voice over:)* Alll rrightt, girrls. Tthere iss nott all thee ttime inn tthe worrldd.

(MRS. WHATSIT and MRS. WHO settle into position.)

MRS. WHATSIT: She's right. Which is always right.

MRS. WHICH: Lett uss beginnn.

(Storm brews. MRS. WHO clears her throat.)

MRS. WHO: *It was a Dark and Stormy Night.*

(A lightning flash reveals MEG MURRY, fourteen, huddled in her bed in her attic room.)

MRS. WHO: *In her attic bedroom Margaret Murry sat on her bed and watched the trees tossing in the frenzied lashing of the wind.*

(MRS. WHO makes a gesture, a huge thunderclap occurs, and the ladies disappear into darkness.)

MEG: I hate this weather. It's the worst it's ever been. It's going to blow the house down, I'm sure of it. Or at least the roof. It's a hurricane and it's going to blow the roof off and I'm going to be tossed out into the wild night sky and no one will know because they're all asleep and I'm stuck in the attic all alone. I hate this attic. I hate everything. It's not just the weather. It's the weather on top of everything. On top of me. On top of Meg Murry doing everything all wrong.

(Lights up on TEACHER.)

TEACHER: It's all wrong! Really, Meg, I don't understand how a child with parents as brilliant as yours are supposed to be can be such a poor student.

MEG: Who cares about stupid school anyhow.

TEACHER: If you don't manage to do a little better you'll have to stay back next year. I realize there may be some trouble at home but—

MEG: Why do they always bring up my family?

(Lights up on CHRIS HENDERSON, a bully.)

CHRIS HENDERSON: Hey Megatron! What's up with your baby brother?

MEG: Shut up, Chris.

CHRIS HENDERSON: He's kinda freaky, isn't he? Like, is he even all there?

MEG: You don't know anything.

CHRIS HENDERSON: I know he's freaky. Freak-ay...woooooo...

MEG: Stop it, Henderson.

CHRIS HENDERSON: Or what? What are you going to do about it, huh?

(HENDERSON's smirk turns into a look of abject fear as MEG threatens him. He screams. Lights out on CHRIS HENDERSON. Lights up on PRINCIPAL JENKINS.)

PRINCIPAL JENKINS: Miss Murry, in my office again. Fighting this time?

MEG: It's not my fault!

PRINCIPAL JENKINS: Margaret, you know you can't beat up everyone who makes remarks about your little brother.

MEG: I can try.

PRINCIPAL JENKINS: Do you enjoy being the most belligerent, uncooperative child in school?

TEACHER: Really, Meg—

PRINCIPAL JENKINS: How are things at home? Are you—

MEG: Everything's *fine* at home.

(Lights up on the POSTMISTRESS.)

POSTMISTRESS: More stamps today? Your poor mother. Still writing letters to your father, isn't she.

TEACHER: Perhaps I should talk to your mother.

PRINCIPAL JENKINS: I know it must be hard on you to have your father away.

POSTMISTRESS: It's been—what? Almost a year?

PRINCIPAL JENKINS: Have you had any news from him lately?

POSTMISTRESS: Ten months and two weeks isn't that right?

PRINCIPAL JENKINS: Margaret, don't you think you'd make a better adjustment to life if you faced facts?

POSTMISTRESS: I wish your poor mother would just face facts.

TEACHER: If you'd just face the facts of the situation—

PRINCIPAL JENKINS: Why don't you face the facts about your father?

MEG: *(Shouting:)* LEAVE MY FATHER OUT OF IT!

(Lights out on everyone but MEG. Lightning resumes.)

(Lights up on a silhouetted figure—FATHER.)

FATHER: Meg, don't worry about Charles Wallace.

MEG: But, but—

FATHER: There's nothing the matter with him.

MEG: I just... I just don't want him to be dumb, like me.

FATHER: Oh, darling, you're not dumb. Your development has to go at its own pace. It just doesn't happen to be the usual pace.

MEG: Yes, but how do you *know*? You just don't think I'm dumb because you *have* to believe that, you're my *father*. Right? Right?

(Lights out on FATHER.)

MEG: Why must everything happen to me? I'll make myself some cocoa. That'll cheer me up, and if the roof blows off at least I won't go off with it.

(MEG makes her way out of the bedroom and downstairs. A DOG BARKS in the distance.)

MEG: Fortinbras! Hush! You'll wake up the—

(She flips on the light in the living room to reveal CHARLES WALLACE, her baby brother, who sits at the table with two mugs of cocoa.)

CHARLES: Whole house?

MEG: Charles Wallace! Don't do that!

CHARLES: Do what? Wait for you?

MEG: Why didn't you come up to the attic? I've been scared stiff.

CHARLES: Too windy up in that attic of yours. I knew you'd be down.

MEG: You did?

CHARLES: You want some cocoa, right? I have it ready—it's hot but not...scalding, just like you like it.

MEG: Charles.

CHARLES: What?

MEG: How did you know I'd be down and want some cocoa?

CHARLES: I can't quite explain it. You tell me, that's all—everything about you tells me.

MEG: You mean you read my mind?

CHARLES: I don't think it's that. It's being able to understand a sort of language, if I concentrate very hard. It's like...understanding the wind talking to the trees.

MEG: Okay...Just...don't tell anyone you can do that, all right?

CHARLES: Could you check the stove? I don't want the milk to burn.

MEG: *(Exiting to the kitchen:)* You've got more milk on? Why?

CHARLES: *(Loudly to MEG:)* I thought Mother might like some.

(Enter MOTHER in her robe.)

MOTHER: *(Whispering:)* Might like some what?

CHARLES: Cocoa. I've put on some milk. *(To MEG:)* Mother's ready for her cocoa, Meg!

MOTHER: That would be lovely, but not so loud please, Charles. That is, unless you want the twins downstairs, too.

CHARLES: Let's be exclusive. That's my new word of the day—exclusive. Impressive, isn't it?

MOTHER: Prodigious.

(Enter MEG with Mother's cocoa.)

MOTHER: Thank you, Meg. Oh, let me look at that bruise.

MEG: It's fine.

MOTHER: Come here.

(MEG kneels at her Mother's feet as MOTHER examines her face.)

MEG: I hate my hair. It's not anything like yours. I should get it all cut off—

MOTHER: Hush, Meg. Hold still. You don't know the meaning of moderation, do you. A happy medium is something I wonder if you'll ever learn. That's a nasty bruise the Henderson boy gave you.

CHARLES: It's prodigious.

MOTHER: By the way, his mother called up to complain about how badly you'd hurt him. I told her that since he's a year older and at least twenty-five pounds heavier than you are, I thought I was the one who ought to be doing the complaining. But she seemed to think it was all your fault.

MEG: No matter what happens people think it's my fault. It's just been an awful week. I'm full of bad feeling.

MOTHER: Do you know why? (*Silence.*) Meg?

MEG: No. It's just... I hate being an oddball. I try to pretend I'm not, but it isn't any help.

MOTHER: You're much too straightforward to be able to pretend to be what you aren't. I'm sorry, Meglet. Maybe if your father were here... I think you're just going to have to give yourself some time. Then things will be easier for you. But that isn't much help right now, is it?

CHARLES: Meg, I think I'll talk to Mrs. Whatsit about you.

MOTHER: What's Whatsit stand for?

CHARLES: That's her name. You know that old house back in the woods that's supposed to be haunted? That's where Mrs. Whatsit and her two friends live.

MOTHER: Why didn't you tell me about them before? You know you're not supposed to go off our property without permission, Charles.

CHARLES: I know. That's one of the reasons I didn't tell you. I wanted to be...*exclusive* about them for a little while.

MOTHER: Charles...

(The wind picks up.)

MEG: I don't like this wind. The house is going to blow down.

MOTHER: This house has stood up for almost two hundred years, Meg. I think it will last a little longer.

(The dog starts barking off right.)

MOTHER: What's Fort barking at?

MEG: He was barking before, too. It's the tramp, I'm sure it's the tramp.

MOTHER: A tramp?

CHARLES: What tramp?

MEG: They were saying at the post office this afternoon that a tramp stole all Mrs. Buncombe's sheets.

MOTHER: We'd better sit on the pillowcases then.

(MOTHER stands up, goes to exit right.)

MOTHER: I don't think even a tramp would be out on a night like this. Let me go see.

(MOTHER exits.)

MEG: I'll go with you!

MOTHER: (*Off stage:*) No, Meg, you stay with Charles until I—oh my!

(The sound of the wind spilling into the doorway and the dog barking.)

MEG: Mother? Mother?

(A disheveled MRS. WHATSIT totters into the room unsteadily. MEG yelps.)

MRS. WHATSIT: What a sweet doggie. Labrador, isn't it?

(MOTHER enters.)

MOTHER: It's all right, Meg, this is, uh—

CHARLES: Mrs. Whatsit! What are you doing here at this time of night?

MRS. WHATSIT: Now don't you be worried my darling.

MOTHER: Mrs.—uh—Whatsit says she lost her way.

MRS. WHATSIT: It isn't so much that I lost my way as that I got blown off course. And when I realized that I was at little Charles Wallace's house I thought I'd just come in and rest a bit before proceeding on my way.

MEG: How did you know this was Charles Wallace's house?

MRS. WHATSIT: Oh, by the smell.

MEG: The smell?

MRS. WHATSIT: My, but it's lovely and warm in here. I've only been in the neighborhood a short time, and I didn't think I was going to like the neighbors at all until dear little Charles popped by.

MOTHER: Would you care for some hot chocolate, Mrs. Whatsit?

MRS. WHATSIT: Charmed, I'm sure.

MOTHER: Please, have a seat.

(MOTHER exits to get cocoa.)

CHARLES: Mrs. Whatsit. Why did you take Mrs. Buncombe's sheets?

MRS. WHATSIT: Well, I *needed* them, Charles dear.

MEG: *You* took them?

CHARLES: You must return them at once.

MRS. WHATSIT: But Charles, dear, I can't. I've *used* them.

(MOTHER enters with cocoa.)

MOTHER: Here you are.

MRS. WHATSIT: Thank you, my dear. Charles, tell your sister I'm all right. Tell her my intentions are good.

CHARLES: The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

MRS. WHATSIT: My but isn't he cunning. Who would love that quote.

MEG: Who?

MRS. WHATSIT: Exactly. Do you mind if I take off my boots?

MOTHER: Not at all.

MRS. WHATSIT: My feet are ever so wet—do you hear them squelching? The trouble is my boots are a mite too tight and I never can take them off by myself.

CHARLES: I'll help you.

MRS. WHATSIT: Oh, you're not strong enough.

MOTHER: I'll help.

MEG: Mother!

MOTHER: (*Handing the cup of cocoa to MEG:*) Better grab a bucket, Meg, I'm afraid there may be quite a bit of water in here.

MRS. WHATSIT: Oh there is, I assure you.

(MOTHER works on pulling the boots off.)

MOTHER: Why don't you stay till morning? It's much too wild a night to travel in.

MRS. WHATSIT: Oh, but wild nights are my glory.

MOTHER: (*Pulling one boot off:*) Well, at least until your socks are dry.

MRS. WHATSIT: Wet socks don't bother me, I just don't like the water squishing around in my boots. Don't worry about me, lamb, I'll just be on my way as soon as this boot—

(The second boot comes off suddenly, sending MRS. WHATSIT and MOTHER flying to the floor.)

MOTHER: Oh my! Are you all right, Mrs. Whatsit?

MRS. WHATSIT: If you have some liniment I'll put it on my dignity—I think it's sprained.

MOTHER: (*Laughing:*) Let me help you.

(MRS. WHATSIT grabs Mother's hand and gets to her feet, then pulls MOTHER closer.)

MRS. WHATSIT: By the way, pet, speaking of ways, there is such a thing as a tesseract.

(MOTHER pulls away as if she had been stung.)

MOTHER: What—what did you say?

MRS. WHATSIT: (*Collecting her boots and putting them on:*) I said—that there is—such a thing—as a tesseract.

(Taking the cocoa from MEG, MRS. WHATSIT downs her it in one draught. MOTHER is motionless.)

MRS. WHATSIT: Thanks for the cocoa. Ta ta!

(MRS. WHATSIT exits. CHARLES follows her.)

CHARLES: Mrs. Whatsit, wait!

MEG: Mother, what's the matter?

MOTHER: (*To herself:*) Tesseract...

MEG: What did she say? Mother?

(CHARLES enters.)

CHARLES: Mrs. Whatsit says good-bye.

MOTHER: Oh heavens, it's late. Meg, you'll never get up tomorrow morning. Charles Wallace, you'd better get to bed too.

MEG: But mother—

MOTHER: (*Sitting:*) Meg, make sure Charles Wallace gets tucked in.

CHARLES: I'm perfectly capable of getting to bed on my own. Good night, Mother.

(MOTHER extends her arms for a hug, but CHARLES exits upstairs. MEG lingers.)

MEG: Mother, are you upset?

MOTHER: Yes.

MEG: Why?

MOTHER: Oh, it's...your father, Meg. I miss him very much.

MEG: What does Mrs. Whatsit have to do with Father?

MOTHER: Well, your father and I used to have a joke about tesseract.

MEG: What *is* a tesseract?

MOTHER: It's rather difficult to explain...it's a concept. But you see, I only talked about tesseracts with your father, scientist to scientist, and Mrs. Whatsit seemed to know about it.

MEG: So all of this has something to do with Father?

MOTHER: It would seem so.

MEG: But how?

MOTHER: I don't understand it any more than you, Meg, but I've learned that you don't have to understand things for them to *be*.

MEG: I want to understand things. Like Charles Wallace.

MOTHER: You mean how he seems to be able to see into other people? Well, Charles Wallace is different.

MEG: Different how? He doesn't look any different from anybody else.

MOTHER: People are more than just the way they look.

MEG: Yah. I know. I guess. I'll just have to accept it without understanding it.

MOTHER: Yah. Don't worry about Charles. He'll find his own way.

MEG: Okay.

MOTHER: I'm sorry I showed you I was upset. Good night, Meg.

MEG: Good night.

(Pause. MEG hugs MOTHER from behind.)

MEG: He'll be back, Mother. He'll be back.

(Fade out.)

Act I Scene 2—Into the Woods

(Lights up on PRINCIPAL JENKINS and TEACHER.)

PRINCIPAL JENKINS: Margaret Murray created a disturbance during social studies. Teacher noted a lack of attention—

TEACHER: She couldn't concentrate on the lecture, her eyes were barely open—

PRINCIPAL JENKINS: —and cited behavioral issues, such as insubordination.

TEACHER: When asked to name the principal imports and exports of Nicaragua, *she could not remember a single one.*

(Light up on MEG, dressed for school.)

MEG: Who cares about the imports and exports of Nicaragua, anyhow?

(Lights out on shocked TEACHER.)

PRINCIPAL JENKINS: For her rudeness Margaret was sent to the principal. Again. *(To MEG:)* Ah, Miss Murray. Shall we have another talk?

(Lights out on PRINCIPAL JENKINS. MEG outside:)

MEG: Great! Another horrible day!

(Enter CHARLES.)

CHARLES: Come on, Meg, let's go.

MEG: Where?

CHARLES: I thought we'd better go see Mrs. Whatsit.

MEG: Oh, *why*, Charles? You know how mother feels about us walking through those woods.

CHARLES: Mother's in the lab, she won't even notice we're gone. Come on, I want to find out more about that tesseract thing. Didn't you see how it upset Mother? You know when she lets us see she's upset then it's something big.

MEG: Okay, but not for long.

(They set off into the woods.)

MEG: I'm hungry.

(CHARLES pulls out an apple, hands it to her.)

CHARLES: School awful again today?

MEG: Yes. I got sent to Mr. Jenkins. He made—

CHARLES: —comments about Father. I know.

MEG: Charles!

CHARLES: I can't help it! You tell me, you see, sort of inad— inadvertently.

MEG: *(Impressed:)* Inadvertently?

CHARLES: That's a good word, isn't it? I got Mother to look it up in the dictionary for me yesterday. I really must learn to read, except I'm afraid it will make it awfully hard when I start school next year if I already know things.

MEG: Yah.

CHARLES: Wait. Somebody's here.

MEG: Where? I don't see anyone.

CHARLES: Following us, I think. Whoever's out there, show yourself! Stop hiding, come out!

(Silence. A gangly boy, CALVIN, enters slowly. He is about two or three years older than MEG.)

CALVIN: I wasn't hiding.

MEG: Calvin O'Keefe?

CALVIN: You're two of the Murry kids, right?

CHARLES: Who is he, Meg?

MEG: He's a couple of grades above me. Let's go, Charles.

CHARLES: What are you doing here?

CALVIN: This isn't your property, is it? What are *you* doing here?

CHARLES: Tell me about him.

MEG: What would I know about him? He's...he's a big deal at school. Popular.

CHARLES: We shouldn't hold that too much against him. What else?

MEG: I don't know. He's on the basketball team.

CALVIN: Just because I'm tall.

MEG: Let's go, Charles.

CHARLES: Tell us why you're here.

CALVIN: What is this, the third degree? Aren't you the one who's supposed to be the moron?

MEG: Hey—

CHARLES: That's right. And if you want to know why *we're* here you'll have to talk first.

CALVIN: All right. I just came to get away from my family.

CHARLES: What kind of family?

CALVIN: It's...uh...complicated. There's a lot of us. I'm third from the top of eleven kids. I'm a sport.

CHARLES: (*Grinning:*) So'm I.

CALVIN: Not like in baseball.

CHARLES: I know.

CALVIN: I mean like in biology.

CHARLES: "A change in genes resulting in the appearance in the offspring of a character which is not present in the parents but which is potentially transmissible to its offspring."

CALVIN: I was told you couldn't talk.

CHARLES: Thinking I'm a moron gives people something to feel smug about. Why should I disillusion them?

CALVIN: You're the strangest moron I've ever met.

MEG: All right, let's get going. It's getting dark; Mother's going to wonder where we are.

CALVIN: So where are you going?

CHARLES: You still haven't told us why you're here.

CALVIN: I told you.

CHARLES: The truth.

(*Pause.*)

CALVIN: Okay. Sometimes I get a feeling about things. It's called a compulsion—do you know what a compulsion—?

CHARLES: “Constraint. Obligation. Because one is compelled.” Not a very good definition, but it's the concise Oxford.

CALVIN: Okay, okay! Anyway, when I get this feeling, this compulsion, I always do what it tells me. And today I got this feeling—

CHARLES: —that you had to come over to the haunted house.

CALVIN: Exactly. So what do you think of that?

(They share a look.)

CHARLES: I believe you.

CALVIN: Yeah?

CHARLES: Yeah. I think I'd like to trust you. We're going to the house too. *(To MEG:)* Let's take him to see Mrs. Whatsit. If he's not okay, she'll know.

(CHARLES starts off.)

CALVIN: What? Who?

MEG: *(Setting off:)* It's...hard to explain.

CHARLES: Are you coming?

MEG: Do you...want to come?

CALVIN: Sure... Yeah... Why not? Lead on, moron! *(Off her look:)* Joking!

(They set off to the haunted house.)

CALVIN: *(To MEG:)* So what about you? Do you get these...feelings, too?

MEG: No, no, I—

CHARLES: Meg has it tough. She's not really one thing or the other.

MEG: What do you mean, I'm not one thing or the other?

CHARLES: Oh, Meg.

MEG: Don't oh Meg me. I'm still your big sister—

(A loud thump is heard. Ghostly moans. MEG jumps. They are at the house.)

MEG: What was that?

CALVIN: I guess we've arrived.

(A crescendo of stereotypical Halloween sounds—creaking, ghostly noises, chains, squeaking. Spiders dangling from cords. Likewise white sheets made into ghosts. It's like we've entered an overeager Halloween store. Lightning. Wind.)

CALVIN: This place is a lot more...haunted than the last time I was here.

(Squeaking.)

MEG: Was that a rat?

CHARLES: They get a lot of fun out of using all the typical props.

MEG: Charles, stay close—

(CHARLES opens a door and behind it is a figure wrapped in a white sheet.)

WHITE SHEET: Boo.

(MEG and CALVIN yell, hold hands briefly.)

CHARLES: Mrs. Who. Please take off that sheet.

(MRS. WHO takes off the sheet, stands beaming at CHARLES.)

MRS. WHO: Hello, Charles.

CHARLES: What are you doing? And why have you taken all of Mrs. Buncombe's sheets?

MRS. WHO: *Le couer a ses raisons que la raison ne connait point.* French. Pascal. *The heart has its reasons whereof reason knows nothing.*

CHARLES: But that's not appropriate at all.

MRS. WHO: Your mother would find it so.

CHARLES: We're not talking about my mother.

MRS. WHO: Oh. Well, Ghosts! of course. If we need...to frighten. Anyone. Not you, my pets. Sorry. *Auf frischer Tat ertappt.* German. *In flagrante delicto.* Latin. *Caught in the act.* English. Yes?

CHARLES: Mrs. Who, do you know this boy?

CALVIN: Good evening ma'am. I didn't quite catch your name...

MRS. WHO: Mrs. Who. Will do. Hmm... Not my idea, Charlsie, but...a good one. He is.

CHARLES: Where's Mrs. Whatsit?

MRS. WHO: Busy inside. *The time has come, the walrus said...* Oh, Charlsie, getting near time. He's a good man, but now...needs our help.

MEG: Who?

MRS. WHO: Little Megsie!—lovely to meet. Your father of course. Now...go. Go home. Eat. Rest. (Indicating CALVIN:) Feed this one up. *Justitiae soror fides.* Latin again, of course. *Faith is the sister of justice.* Trust in us! Off! Go! Shoo!

(MRS. WHO pushes them off and then slams the door.)

MEG: Charles...?

CHARLES: I don't understand, either. Not quite. Let's not talk about it until we've had something to eat. I need fuel so I can sort things out. (To CALVIN:) I think maybe you'd better come home with us and have dinner.

MEG: Charles! You can't just go asking people over—

CHARLES: Why not? Mother always makes more than enough food. Do you like stew?

MEG: She's probably burned it—

CHARLES: She gets preoccupied with her science experiments.

MEG: He's not going to want to come over to our house—right? Or...do you? Do you have a feeling about dinner, too?

CALVIN: As a matter of fact, I do. I do! I've never even seen your house, but I've got the funniest feeling...it's like, for the first time in my life, I'm going home!

MEG: Okay.

CHARLES: Stew it is!

Act I Scene 3—Home

(MOTHER, in the lab, conducting an experiment, stew by her side.)

MOTHER: Yes, it is stew. Wipe your feet. Don't tell the twins I'm cooking in the lab. They're always suspicious that a few chemical may get mixed in with the meat.

MEG: It smells super. Mother, this is Calvin O'Keefe. Is there enough for him, too?

MOTHER: Oh! Hello, Calvin. Of course, he's welcome to stay for dinner. Will that be all right with your parents?

CALVIN: Yes. I...don't think they'll even notice.

MEG: There's a lot of O'Keefe kids.

MOTHER: Oh. Well, we're glad we get to borrow one of them.

CHARLES: Fuel! I need fuel!

MOTHER: Apples on the counter.

(CHARLES exits.)

MOTHER: Dinner soon!

CALVIN: So, is everyone a genius around here or what?

MEG: No. I'm the dumb one.

MOTHER: Meg. *(To CALVIN:)* Ask her about something you're learning in science.

CALVIN: That wouldn't be fair. I'm a few years ahead of her in—

MOTHER: Go ahead.

CALVIN: Okay...what's $E=mc^2$?

MEG: Einstein's Equation, of course.

CALVIN: What's the "E" stand for?

MEG: Energy.

CALVIN: M?

MEG: Mass.

CALVIN: C—

MEG: The square of the velocity of light in centimeters per second. This is—

MOTHER: Now try math.

CALVIN: What's the...square root of 5?

MEG: This is silly. Let's stop. *(Quietly:)* 2.236.

CALVIN: Hey!

MOTHER: See?

CALVIN: Impressive.

MEG: It's not.

CALVIN: To me it is.

MOTHER: The trouble with Meg and math is that she knows far too many shortcuts from her father. Then when they ask her to do things the long way she sets up a fine mental block for herself. She can be quite stubborn.

MEG: Mother—!

MOTHER: It's true. Now, let me finish up here, and then we can get dinner on the table. I'm almost done.

MEG: Do you want to see the garden?

CALVIN: Sure.

MOTHER: I'm glad you're here, Calvin.

CALVIN: Me too. Believe me. *(To MEG:)* After you.

(They walk into the garden. ENSEMBLE makes cricket noises.)

MEG: So we've got corn, and the last of the green beans, and pumpkins over there—this is really the twins' garden, they take care of it mostly—and the orchard's back there and—why are you looking so...goofy?

CALVIN: Am I? I can't help it. You know what being here is like? It's like, I don't know, I'm not alone anymore!

MEG: But you're never alone! You play basketball, you're good in school, everyone likes you.

CALVIN: For all the most unimportant reasons. It's not really me. There hasn't been anybody I could really talk to. Here, I feel differently.

MEG: You do?

CALVIN: Yeah. Hey, maybe we weren't meant to meet before this. I mean, I knew who you were in school, but I didn't *know* you. I'm glad we've met now, Meg. We're going to be friends, you know.

MEG: Okay. *(Pause.)* I'm glad, too. This is all so...weird.

CALVIN: I know. *(Silence.)* So what's going on with your dad?

MEG: What?

CALVIN: I mean, that woman we met at the haunted house, she was talking about your father, right? All this has to do with him?

MEG: I, I don't know what she was talking about.

CALVIN: But you know more than I do. Where *is* your father? *(Silence.)* He's a physicist, right? *(Silence.)* And he's supposed to have run off with another woman, right?

MEG: That's not true!

CALVIN: Hey, I didn't say I believed it, did I?

MEG: My father works for the government. He's on a classified mission. We haven't heard from him and they won't tell us where he is. All right?

CALVIN: All right. What *do* they tell you?

MEG: Nothing. Mother's been down to Washington and everything, but all they'll say is...he's not able to communicate now and...they'll give us news when they get it.

CALVIN: Meg, don't get mad, but...do you think maybe *they* don't know?

MEG: *(Quietly:)* That's what I'm afraid of. *(She starts crying.)* Ugh. I HATE when I cry.

CALVIN: It's all right.

MEG: I wish I were a different person. I hate myself.

CALVIN: Oh, Meg, don't be a moron. Don't you know you're the nicest thing that's happened to me in a long time?

(Pause.)

MEG: I wish you would quit saying that word.

(They laugh together. Enter CHARLES.)

CHARLES: Okay break it up you two. I wasn't spying but this is it!

CALVIN: This is what?

CHARLES: We're going.

MEG: Going? Where?

CHARLES: I don't know exactly but I think it's to find Father.

(The wind begins picking up, electricity begins crackling.)

MRS. WHICH: *(Voice over:)* Ittt beggginns.

CALVIN: What was that?

CHARLES: It's Mrs. Which.

MRS. WHICH: I ddo nott thinkk I willl matterialize completely. I ffindd itt verry ttirinngg, annd weee have mucch tto dooo.

(Wind and magic crescendo, the CHILDREN hold on to each other.)

MEG: What's going on?

MRS. WHICH: *(Voice over:)* Tttimme to ggo.

MEG: No! Stop this!

MRS. WHICH: Qquiett chilld!

MEG: Charles Wallace!

Act I Scene 4—Uriel

(Darkness. The CHILDREN are suspended in their own separate areas as they are suspended in space [puppets? Masks? Black-light body parts floating separately?]. They bob and wheel in space, like jellyfish in the ocean or someone floating in no-gravity. The three women's faces are in the distance, floating.)

MEG: *(Sound distorted:)* I'm having a nightmare. I want to wake up. Let me wake up.

(CHARLES-in-limbo disappears, and CHARLES is revealed in a separate area.)

CHARLES: I really think you might have warned us. Meg! Calvin! Where are you?

CALVIN: *(Sound distorted:)* Give me a little time, willya? Remember, I'm bigger than you are.

(CALVIN emerges.)

CALVIN: Well! That was quite a trip.

CHARLES: Where's Meg?

MEG: *(Distorted:)* I'm right here!

CALVIN: What happened to her?

MEG: *(Distorted:)* I'm here!

CHARLES: Mrs. Which, you haven't left Meg behind, have you?

(The THREE W's intone Meg's name and she is at last pushed through into the world.)

CHARLES: There you are!

MEG: But where is *there*?

(There is a buzz of meadow insects and birds, gentle music. We see MRS. WHATSIT and MRS. WHO, laughing gently, and MRS. WHICH in a traditional witch costume.)

MRS. WHO: "When shall we three meet again/ In thunder, lightning, or in rain."

MRS. WHATSIT: I am so very glad every time we return here. Smell the breeze!

MRS. WHO: Butterflies.

(They giggle.)

CHARLES: If you ladies have had your fun I think you should tell Meg and Calvin a little more about this all. You scared Meg half out of her wits, whisking her off this way without any warning.

MRS. WHO: "Finxerunt animi, raro et perpauca loquentis." Horace. "To action little less to words inclined."

CHARLES: Mrs. Who, I wish you'd stop quoting!

MRS. WHATSIT: But she finds it so difficult to verbalize, Charles dear. It helps her if she can quote instead of working out words of her own.

MRS. WHICH: Anndd wee mussstn'tt looose ourr senses of hummorr. Thee onnly wway ttoo ccope withh someththingg ddeadly sseriousss iss ttoo ttry ttoo treatt itt a lllittle lllightly.

CALVIN: Where are we now?

MRS. WHO: Uriel, third planet of star Malak in spiral nebula Messier 101.

CALVIN: That I'm supposed to believe?

MRS. WHICH: Aas yyou llike.

CALVIN: Well, then, someone just tell me how we got here. Even traveling at the speed of light it would take us years and years to get here.

MRS. WHATSIT: Oh, we don't travel at the speed of *anything*. We *tesser*. Or you might say, we *wrinkle*.

CALVIN: Clear as mud.

MRS. WHATSIT: You talk of traveling at the speed of light. That, of course, is the impractical, long way around. We have learned to take short cuts whenever possible.

MEG: Sort of like in math?

MRS. WHATSIT: Like in math. (*To MRS. WHO:*) Take your skirt and show them.

MRS. WHO: "La experiencia es la madre de la ciencia." Spanish, my dears, Cervantes. "Experience is the mother of knowledge."

(*MRS. WHO holds out a section of her skirt.*)

MRS. WHATSIT: You see, if a very small insect were to move from the section of skirt in Mrs. Who's right hand to that in her left, it would be quite a long walk for him to go straight across.

(*MRS. WHO brings the skirt together.*)

MRS. WHATSIT: But now, you see, he would be there already, without that long trip.

CHARLES: I see.

MEG: I don't.

CHARLES: You're just used to thinking in terms of three dimensions.

MRS. WHATSIT: We travel in the fifth dimension.

CHARLES: The fifth dimension's a tesseract!

MEG: In other words, a line is *not* the shortest distance between two points! I got it! For just a moment, I got it! Calvin, did you get it?

CALVIN: Enough. I think. Enough to get the idea.

MRS. WHATSIT: It was a concept your mother and father were working on—tesseracts.

MEG: So Father—oh! (*To MRS. WHICH:*) Is my father here?

MRS. WHICH: Nnott heeere, Megg. Llett Mrs. Whatsitt expllainn. Shee isss yyoungg annd thee llanguage of worrds iss eesierr fforr hherr.

MEG: Is my father all right?

MRS. WHATSIT: For the moment, love, yes. But—

MEG: But where is he? Please take me to him!

MRS. WHATSIT: You have to be patient, Meg—

MEG: But I'm *not* patient! I've never been patient!

MRS. WHICH: SSHOWW THEM!!!

MRS. WHATSIT: Now?

MRS. WHICH: Nnoww.

MRS. WHATSIT: Should I change?

MRS. WHICH: Tthey may aas well knoww. Bbetter.

MRS. WHATSIT: I hope it won't upset the children too much.

MRS. WHO: I change, too? Oh, these clothes, so fun. Now, transform?

MRS. WHICH: Nnott yett. Yyou mmay wwait.

MRS. WHATSIT: Now don't be afraid, my loves.

(MRS. WHATSIT looks to the sky and intones a steady, low chord which builds as she begins to spin around like a whirling dervish.)

MRS. WHICH: Wwwatchhhh.

MRS. WHO: "She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudness climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes;
Thus mellow'd to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies."

(MRS. WHATSIT continues to chant, others joining her tone, her clothes unraveling and flying about her as she spins faster and faster. MRS. WHATSIT's clothes extend her body, and she sits astride the ensemble, so together they transform her into a glorious, large creature. Underneath her clothes she is brilliant and shimmery in color, reflecting light. More fabric unfurls from her body to become giant wings.)

MEG: Mrs... What—

(CALVIN kneels to MRS. WHATSIT.)

MRS. WHATSIT: *(In a new voice:)* No. Not to me, Calvin. Never to me. Stand up.

CALVIN: But what do we call you now?

MRS. WHATSIT: My dears, you can't go on changing my name each time I metamorphose. And I've had so much pleasure being Mrs. Whatsit I think I'd better keep to that.

CHARLES: Mrs. Whatsit...

MRS. WHATSIT: Yes, Charles?

CHARLES: It's good to see you.

MRS. WHATSIT: And you as well.

MRS. WHICH: Ccarry themmm.

MRS. WHATSIT: Come children, climb aboard.

(MRS. WHATSIT "kneels" and the CHILDREN get on her.)

CALVIN: Up you go, Charles.

CHARLES: I'm fine!

MEG: Be careful!

MRS. WHATSIT: Hold tight, children.

(MRS. WHATSIT flaps her wings, and off they fly. The tone becomes a song.)

CHARLES: Look! The mountains are so tall you can't see where they end!

MEG: Hold on, Charles.

CALVIN: Are we going up there?

MRS. WHATSIT: Yes.

CHARLES: The singing—where is it coming from?

MRS. WHATSIT: From the earth. From the earth and the waters and the air itself.

CHARLES: And your wings. Your wings are making the song happen.

MRS. WHATSIT: Yes.

MEG: What's it saying?

MRS. WHATSIT: It won't go into your words. I can't possibly transfer it to your words.

MEG: It's beautiful.

MRS. WHATSIT: Yes it is. Are you getting any of it, Charles?

CHARLES: A little. I can almost understand it.

MRS. WHATSIT: But there isn't time. Up we go.

(MRS. WHATSIT sets a course upwards. The music fades away. The lights change slowly from day to sunset to dark. MRS. WHATSIT lands, her wings beating in fog.)

MRS. WHATSIT: You may slide off now. We've landed.

Act I Scene 5—The Happy Medium's Cave

(They slide off MRS. WHATSIT, and join MRS. WHO and MRS. WHICH, who await them. MRS. WHATSIT retreats into the shadows to transform back.)

CALVIN: Landed where? I can't see anything.

CHARLES: We must be on the top of the mountain.

MRS. WHO: Close to.

MEG: It's like we're...nowhere. Everything's grey.

MRS. WHO: "There is not excellent beauty that hath not some strangeness in the proportion."
Francis Bacon. Come, children, not far to go.

CALVIN: But...where are we going?

MRS. WHO: A friend to see. Don't be afraid. "There is nothing to fear but fear itself." Roosevelt.
Or was it Churchill?

(MRS. WHATSIT returns, her old self.)

MRS. WHATSIT: There is certainly nothing to fear from the Happy Medium.

MEG: Mrs. Whatsit! You're back to being...you.

MRS. WHATSIT: I am always and ever just me.

CALVIN: The Happy Medium?

MRS. WHATSIT: Oh, you'll like her—she's very jolly. If ever I saw her looking unhappy I would be very depressed myself. As long as she can laugh I'm sure everything will come out all right in the end.

MRS. WHICH: Mmrs. Whatsitt. Jusst beccause yyou arre verry youngg iss nno exxcuse forr talkkinng tooo muchh.

MRS. WHATSIT: Oh. Sorry, Mrs. Which.

(Sound of laughter, incessant and infectious, is heard. The HAPPY MEDIUM is revealed in turban and robes. She is looking into a huge crystal ball.)

HAPPY MEDIUM: Oh my! Oh dear! Oh ho ho ho! Oh! Oh! Oh! Ohohoho!

MRS. WHICH: WWEE ARRE HHERE!

HAPPY MEDIUM: Ah! The visitors!

MRS. WHATSIT: Medium, dear, these are the children. Margaret Murry—

HAPPY MEDIUM: Oh yes yes...

MRS. WHATSIT: Charles Wallace Murry—

HAPPY MEDIUM: Of course, of course he is...

MRS. WHATSIT: And Calvin O'Keefe.

HAPPY MEDIUM: In person! So real! Delighted. May I get you some ambrosia, perhaps? Or nectar—no, tea, tea of course! I'll get you some—

MRS. WHATSIT: Actually, Medium, we haven't much time. We want them to see their home planet.

(The HAPPY MEDIUM becomes immediately crestfallen.)

HAPPY MEDIUM: Oh. You want them to see—oh my. Why must we look at unpleasant things when there are so many delightful ones to see?

MEG: Unpleasant?

MRS. WHICH: Therre will nno llongger bee sso manny ppleasanntt thinggss too llookk att iff rressponsissible ppeople ddo nnott ddo smomethingg abboutt thee unnppeassannt oness.

HAPPY MEDIUM: Mmmyes, yes, you're right. Of course. Oh well. Children, look. Look well.

(The HAPPY MEDIUM begins her magic, sends her energy to the globe. The globe reflects its contents outward. As they peer into it, colors within it emerge, begin swirling and changing. Stars appear. The HAPPY MEDIUM is delighted.)

MEG: Look! Stars!

MRS. WHATSIT: There's your own Milky Way.

CALVIN: We're getting closer—there's a planet!

MRS. WHO: "Que la terre est petite a qui la voit des cieux!" Delille. "How small is the earth to him who looks from heaven."

MEG: It's so clear.

HAPPY MEDIUM: (*Laughing:*) Yes!

MEG: I can see polar ice caps!

HAPPY MEDIUM: Yes!

MEG: It's...it's...

HAPPY MEDIUM: Yes?

MEG: It's red.

MRS. WHATSIT: Medium, dear, that's Mars.

HAPPY MEDIUM: Do I have to?

MRS. WHICH: NNNOWWW!

(The globe goes dark, colors come up. HAPPY MEDIUM's breathing becomes labored.)

CHARLES: There. That's the earth. See the continents?

MEG: Yes, only, what's that dark thing around it?

HAPPY MEDIUM: Oh...

CALVIN: That sort of shadow out there, what is it?

MEG: Is it the atmosphere?

MRS. WHICH: Nooo, Mmegg, yyou knoww thatt itt iss nnott tthee attmosspheere.

MEG: But then, what is—

MRS. WHATSIT: Show them the stars.

HAPPY MEDIUM: The stars...oh my...

CALVIN: Wow. I wish I could see stars this bright at home.

MEG: I've never seen so many. It's beautiful.

CHARLES: But the Dark Thing. It's moving towards them—

HAPPY MEDIUM: Yes...

CHARLES: It's growing.

HAPPY MEDIUM: Yes...

MRS. WHATSIT: It's reaching toward the stars.

MEG: What's happening?

(The globe grows darker and darker until it is black.)

HAPPY MEDIUM: (*Possessed, ominous:*) The Shadow grows, dark and deep and cold, spreading over your world, growing larger and stronger, and where the Shadow grows—

HAPPY MEDIUM and MRS. WHATSIT: —the stars disappear.

HAPPY MEDIUM: Cold beyond death, Destroyer of light, Fear beyond breath, Bringer of night.

CHARLES: I hate it. I hate it.

MEG: But what is it?

MRS. WHICH: Itt iss Eevill. Itt iss thee Ppowerss off Ddarkknesss!

MEG: Did it just come while we've been gone?

MRS. WHATSIT: No, Meg, it hasn't just come. The shadow has covered your world for a great many years. That is why your planet is such a troubled one.

CALVIN: What can we do about it? What's going to happen?

MRS. WHICH: Wee wwill cconnttinnue tto ffightt!!

HAPPY MEDIUM: (*Feeling the surge of MRS. WHICH's energy:*) Oh!

MRS. WHATSIT: We're not alone, children. All through the universe It's being fought, all through the cosmos. And some of our very best fighters have come right from your very own planet.

HAPPY MEDIUM: Yes. It's done so well, and it's a *small* planet.

CALVIN: Who have our fighters been?

MRS. WHATSIT: Oh, you must know them, dear.

MRS. WHO: "And the light shineth in the darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not."

CALVIN: Jesus?

MRS. WHATSIT: And also—

CHARLES: Mohammad...Buddha...

MRS. WHATSIT: Of course, and many others. Your artists. Your inventors. They've all been lights for us to see by.

CHARLES: Like Rembrandt! And Shakespeare! And—

CALVIN: Da Vinci! And Ghandi...Martin Luther King...

MRS. WHATSIT: Now you, Meg.

MEG: Uh...Madame Curie and...Copernicus I guess. Galileo. But, my father—

HAPPY MEDIUM: Watch, children, watch! Watch...

(The globe is going wild, black and red colors pulsing and swirling.)

HAPPY MEDIUM: (*Possessed:*) A light, a great burst of light shoots through the shadow, making the darkness shrink away. Where the light touches the Darkness, the Darkness disappears. The light spreads, spreads outward! Yes! Yes! The Dark Thing—is beaten back. Where it once was, only a gentle shining remains—

(Stars reappear in the globe.)

HAPPY MEDIUM: And through the shining—

MRS. WHATSIT: Comes the stars, clear and pure.

CALVIN: No shadow, no fear.

HAPPY MEDIUM: (*Spent:*) See? It can be overcome. It's being overcome all the time. Oh my.

(The HAPPY MEDIUM, exhausted, falls asleep.)

MRS. WHO: (*Looking at the sleeping HAPPY MEDIUM:*) Poor dear Medium. Worn her out, I think.

CHARLES: Tell us what happened, please, Mrs. Whatsit.

MRS. WHATSIT: It was a star. A star giving up its life in battle with the Thing. It won, oh yes, my children, it won. But it lost its life in the winning.

MRS. WHICH: Itt wass nott sso llongg aggo fforr yyou, wwass itt?

CHARLES: I see. You were a star once, weren't you?

(MRS. WHATSIT nods.)

CHARLES: And you did—just what that star did?

(MRS. WHATSIT nods again. CHARLES gives MRS. WHATSIT a hug.)

MRS. WHATSIT: I didn't mean to tell you. I didn't want to let you know. But oh, my dears, I did love so being a star!

MRS. WHICH: Yyouu arre sstill verry yyoungg.

(MEG walks slowly up to MRS. WHICH.)

MEG: My father...is he fighting the Dark Thing too?

MRS. WHICH: Yess. Hhee iss beehinnd thee ddarrkknness, sso thatt eevenn wee cannott seee himm.

MEG: And where is that?

MRS. WHATSIT: On Camazotz. A planet that has given in to the Shadow.

MEG: *(Trembling:)* Will he, will he lose his life, too, like the star?

MRS. WHATSIT: My child, do not despair. Do you think we would have brought you here if there were no hope? It is a difficult thing, what we will be asking of you, but we are confident that you can do it.

MEG: So what can we do?

MRS. WHO: Your father—needs help

MEG: Then let's help him. Let's go to him.

MRS. WHICH: Arre yyouu rready?

MEG: Of course we are! Father needs us, what are we waiting for? Please, let's go now!

MRS. WHICH: Aass youu wwissh. Wwee musstt ggoo bbehinndd thee sshadow.

CALVIN: What's going to happen?

MRS. WHICH: Cchildrenn, ddo nott be frrightenedd.

MRS. WHATSIT: Stay angry, Meg. You will need all your anger now.

MEG: Angry? Why? What's going to—Oh! Oh!

Act I Scene 6—Camazotz Outskirts

(Tesseract effects, coupled with the sound of electrical current. It has a darker tone, this time. The CHILDREN are pushed through the light as before; they arrive, chilled to the bone. The WITCHES are already there, but removed. CALVIN is on his knees, as if winded. A faint sound, like a fluorescent light hum, can be heard.)

MEG: Charles.

CHARLES: I'm okay.

MEG: Calvin! Are you all right?

CALVIN: I think so.

MEG: Did you feel that? That coldness?

CALVIN: It was like it was trying to get into me. Or trying to get me into *it*.

(MEG helps him up.)

CHARLES: Is this Camazotz?

MRS. WHATSIT: Yes.

MEG: But this, this looks like home! Birches, pines, maples...

CALVIN: There seems to be a town down there—I can see smokestacks.

MRS. WHO: We can't stay with you. Here. You three children—on your own.

MRS. WHATSIT: We will be near you; we will be watching you. But you will not be able to see us or ask us for help, and we will not be able to come to you.

MEG: Is Father here?

MRS. WHATSIT: Yes, but we cannot tell you where.

MRS. WHO: You will need help. For Calvin: a hint. Listen well: "By help of their most potent ministers/And in their most unmitigable rage/Into a cloven pine, within which rift/Imprison'd, he didst painfully remain." Shakespeare. *The Tempest*. For you, Charles: "Allwissend bin ich nicht; doch viel ist mir bewisst." Goethe. "I do not know everything, still many things I understand." Remember—you do not know everything. No words for you, little blind-as-a-bat, but to you—my glasses. But—do not use them except—a last resort. Save them for final moment of peril.

(She hands the glasses to MEG, then fades away.)

MRS. WHATSIT: All I am allowed to give you is a talisman. Calvin, your greatest gift is your ability to communicate with all kinds of people. So, I will strengthen this gift for you. Use it well.

CALVIN: You're afraid for us.

MRS. WHATSIT: A little.

CHARLES: But if you weren't afraid to do what you did as a star, why should you be afraid for us now?

MRS. WHATSIT: But I was afraid. Meg, I give you your faults.

MEG: My faults!

MRS. WHATSIT: Your faults.

MEG: But I'm always trying to get rid of my faults!

MRS. WHATSIT: Yes, however, I think you'll find they'll come in handy on Camazotz. Charles Wallace, to you I can give only the resilience of childhood.

MRS. WHICH: Itt iss ttime.

MRS. WHATSIT: The danger here is greatest for you.

CHARLES: Why?

MRS. WHATSIT: Because of what you are, you will be by far the most vulnerable. You *must* stay with Meg and Calvin. You must *not* go off on you own. Beware of pride and arrogance, Charles, for they may betray you.

CHARLES: Now I think I know what you mean about being afraid.

MRS. WHATSIT: Only a fool is not afraid. Now go.

(MRS. WHATSIT fades.)

MRS. WHICH: Tto alll tthree off yyou I ggive mmy ccommanndd. Ggo ddownn inntoo tthee ttownn. Ggo ttogetherr. Ddo nnot llett themm sseparate yyou. Bbee strongg.

(MRS. WHICH fades away. Silence.)

CALVIN: They're gone.

CHARLES: I don't feel them at all.

MEG: All right. Come *on*.

(She extends her hands out. The other two take them.)

MEG: Let's go.

End of Act I.

Act II Scene 1—Camazotz

(RED EYES is heard over the airwaves. He has a soothing, cool voice.)

RED EYES: Welcome to Camazotz.

(The inhabitants of Camazotz appear. They are not robotic or hypnotized; rather, they are all very complacent and content, but hollow. Gated community denizens. The gestures that accompany each speech are exactly alike as well. The children enter sometime during these speeches.)

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Each house in our town...

CAMAZOTZ 1:

Each house in our town is exactly alike—

Cozy units painted grey.

Each has a small rectangular plot

Of manicured lawn in front of the house.

The flowers all make perfect lines:

(Points out flowers:)

Pink, blue, pink, blue, pink, blue, pink, blue... *(Continues...)*

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Our neighborhood...

CAMAZOTZ 2: *(Entering with SON:)*

Our neighborhood is top of the line—

We watch our kids with civic pride.
Every day at three o'clock
My child plays ball in front of the house.
He bounces the ball in perfect time:

(Claps hands as if to instruct his SON, who bounces the ball.)

CAMAZOTZ 2 and BOY:

Bounce down...
Bounce down... *(Continues...)*

RED EYES: The street—

CAMAZOTZ 3: *(Entering with daughter:)*

The street we live on is perfectly safe—
I never lock my door at night.
Every day at three o'clock
My child skips rope in front of the house.
She skips the rope in perfect time:

(Makes skipping gesture with fingers as GIRL skips rope:)

CAMAZOTZ 3 and GIRL:

...Skip up...
...Skip up...

(They continue, fading in volume until only the gestures are seen enacting the speech.)

MEG: How do they do that?

CALVIN: Let's go back.

MEG: Back? Back where?

CALVIN: I don't know. Anywhere. Back to the hill. Back to Mrs. Whatsit. I don't like this.

MEG: Come on, you know we can't go back. Mrs. Which said to go into the town. We've got to find Father.

CALVIN: What's wrong with them?

MEG: Do you know, Charles? Can't you work on them?

CHARLES: I'm trying, but I can't get through anywhere. I can't get in.

(The voices fade up in time for:)

CAMAZOTZ 2: Bounce down... *(Continues...)*

CAMAZOTZ 3: ...skip up... *(Continues...)*

CAMAZOTZ 1: Pink, blue, pink, blue... *(Continues...)*

(The BOY has gradually stopped bouncing in time—holding the ball, tossing it in the air, twirling it on his finger. The ball falls away from him. All the CAMAZOTZIANS gasp and stop. CAMAZOTZ 3 shields her daughter's eyes.)

CAMAZOTZ 2: Billy! What are you doing?

CAMAZOTZ 3: Get inside. Everyone inside.

CHARLES: *(Stepping forward:)* Wait!

MEG: Charles!

(CHARLES grabs the ball and steps up to the CAMAZOTZIANS, MEG and CALVIN behind.)

CAMAZOTZ 1: Whose children are you? Children on our block aren't supposed to be out unsupervised.

CALVIN: *(Stepping forward:)* We didn't know that, ma'am. We're strangers here.

CAMAZOTZ 2: Strangers? What are you doing here?

CHARLES: I think your little boy dropped his ball.

(CHARLES holds out the ball. BILLY reaches for it, but is pushed back by CAMAZOTZ 2.)

CAMAZOTZ 2: *(Frightened:)* No! No, that's not his. He didn't...he didn't...

CAMAZOTZ 3: The children in our section *never* drop balls. They're all perfectly trained.

CAMAZOTZ 1: Perfectly.

CAMAZOTZ 3: We haven't had an Aberration for three years!

CAMAZOTZIANS: Three years!

MEG: We don't want to get anyone in trouble, we just want to—

CAMAZOTZ 2: What are you doing on our block anyway? Where are your papers?

CAMAZOTZ 1: Are you Examiners?

CAMAZOTZ 3: *(Whispering:)* We were just inspected last month!

CAMAZOTZ 1: No matter. No matter. Mm— "Everybody knows our city has the best Central—

CAMAZOTZIANS: "Central—

CAMAZOTZ 1: "Intelligence Center on the planet. Our production levels are the highest, our machines never stop rolling.

CAMAZOTZ 2: "We have five poets, one musician and three artists, all perfectly channeled."

CHARLES: What are you quoting from?

CAMAZOTZ 2: The manual, of course. Mm— "—all perfectly channeled. There has been no trouble of any kind for centuries.

CAMAZOTZ 3: "That is why we are the capitol city of Camazotz. That is why IT makes IT's home here."

MEG: It?

CHARLES: Where is this Central Intelligence of yours?

CAMAZOTZIANS: *Central Central Intelligence.*

CAMAZOTZ 3: *(A little suspicious:)* Just up the way there.

MEG: What is IT?

(They all look at MEG.)

CAMAZOTZ 1: Who are you? Show us your papers.

CALVIN: We...

CHARLES: Are you supposed to ask questions?

(This freezes CAMAZOTZ 1. The other two take a step away.)

CAMAZOTZ 1: I...I humbly beg your pardon. I...I must continue with my program, or I will have to talk my timing into the Explainer. Excuse me.

(Exit CAMAZOTZ 1.)

CAMAZOTZ 3: We.... Mm— “Our whole block was completely reprocessed last month. Enjoy your stay.”

(CAMAZOTZ 3 with DAUGHTER exit. CHARLES holds the ball out for BILLY, who darts out from behind CAMAZOTZ 2 and takes it.)

CAMAZOTZ 2: I...I...I...

(He grabs BILLY and exits.)

CHARLES: What is it? It’s almost like they weren’t really doing the talking.

CALVIN: What are they so afraid of? The whole thing stinks.

MEG: Come on. Let’s find Father. He’ll be able to explain it all to us.

CHARLES: Then let’s go. They said Central—

CHARLES and RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Central—

CHARLES: —Intelligence was right over there.

MEG: But if Father’s in trouble with this planet, isn’t that exactly where we *shouldn’t* go?

CHARLES: But we haven’t the faintest idea where to look for him, and in my opinion that’s the best place to start. If you have a better idea Meg why of course just say so.

MEG: Oh get down off your high horse. Let’s go to your old Central—

MEG and RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Central—

MEG: — Intelligence and get it over with.

(They set off.)

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Walk past our quiet streets to busier avenues, bigger buildings, city lights. Come to the pulse, the pulse of Camazotz. Metropolis.

(CAMAZOTZIANS come out in business wear, briefcases and headphones. They have a steady, rhythmic gate. Their chanted mantra is “to work to work to work to work.”)

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Doors swinging open and shut, people going in and out and in and out on their way to work to work to work to work.

MEG: Are they robots?

CHARLES: They’re not. I can feel minds, a sort of pulsing—but I can’t reach them. I’m completely shut out. Shut out-shut-out.

CALVIN: Look.

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Across our magnificent square is the largest building on Camazotz, higher than the tallest skyscraper and almost as long as it is high. Welcome to—

CAMAZOTZIANS: Central—

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Central Intelligence. Come.

CALVIN: Wait. There's a bad feeling I'm getting coming from there. Why don't you and Charles Wallace wait here and let me check out the place and report back to you.

CHARLES: No. Mrs. Whatsit told us not to go off by ourselves.

CALVIN: She told *you* not to go off by *yourself*. I'm the oldest and I should go in first.

MEG: No. Charles is right, Calvin. We have to stay together. Of course. But let's hold hands at least, if you don't mind.

(MEG and CALVIN hold hands, but CHARLES wiggles out of Meg's grasp.)

Act II Scene 2—Central Central Intelligence

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Upon your arrival, the doors to—

CAMAZOTZIANS: Central—

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* —Central Intelligence slide open just for you, leaving you in an enormous hall of pale, cool, green. Please enter.

CALVIN: *(Muttering:)* Nothing to fear...

MEG: What?

CALVIN: "Nothing to fear but fear itself." I'm quoting, like Mrs. Who. I'm terrified.

MEG: So'm I. Come on.

(CHARLES starts writhing in pain.)

MEG: Charles! What is it?

CHARLES: He's trying to get at me! He's—trying—

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Welcome.

MEG: Who? Who, Charles?

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Down the hall.

CHARLES: I don't know. But he's trying to get in at me. I can feel him.

CALVIN: Let's go back.

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* Walk down the hall.

CHARLES: No, we have to go on. We can't make decisions based on fear.

RED EYES: *(Voice over:)* At the end of the hall you will find a platform. On the platform you will find a chair. And on the chair you will find...me.

(RED EYES is finally seen seated on a chair. His voice maintains that detached, amplified quality, as if it is not coming out of him at all. His eyes pulse red, as well as a red light above him.)

RED EYES: I have been waiting for you. I hope you have had a pleasant visit so far?

CHARLES: Very educational.

RED EYES: Really? And perhaps you can tell me how it has been educational? *(As RED EYES stares at each of them:)* Can you tell me? Can you? Can you?

CHARLES: Close your eyes! Don't look at the light or his eyes—he'll hypnotize you!

RED EYES: (*Laughing:*) Oh, clever, aren't you? Focusing your eyes would, of course, help, but there are other ways, my little man, there are other ways.

CHARLES: If you try them on me I shall kick you.

RED EYES: (*Hypnotically:*) There is no need to fight me. Why should you want to fight someone who is here only to save you trouble? To help you. As I do for each of the happy, useful people on this planet. I am willing to take on all responsibility, all the messy burdens of thought and decision.

CALVIN: We'll make our own decisions, thank you.

RED EYES: Of course. And our decisions will be one, yours and mine. So much easier that way. Let me show you. Let us say our multiplication tables together.

CHARLES: No.

RED EYES: One times one is one. One times two is two. One times three is three—

CHARLES: (*Shouting:*) Mary had a little lamb! Its fleece was white as snow!

RED EYES: One times four is four. One times five is five—

CHARLES: And everywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to go!

RED EYES: One times six is six. One times seven is seven—

CALVIN: Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty—

RED EYES: One times eight is eight. One times nine is nine—

MEG: Father! Father! Where is he?

RED EYES: (*Laughing:*) Splendid! Splendid! You have passed your preliminary tests with flying colors!

MEG: Please, sir, the only reason we're here is because we think our father is here. Can you tell me where to find him?

RED EYES: It is not whether I can, young lady, but if I will.

MEG: Will you then?

RED EYES: That depends. Why do you want him?

MEG: Why? You don't want him for a reason, you want him because he's your *father*. We want to see him. Right now.

RED EYES: Patience, my young lady. Whether or not you will see your father depends on how much you cooperate.

CALVIN: Why should we trust you?

RED EYES: What cause have you to *distrust* me?

CHARLES: Because you aren't you. You aren't what's talking to us. I'm not sure where it's coming from, but it's coming *through* you. It isn't you.

RED EYES: Very smart, aren't you.

CHARLES: It's not that I'm smart.

RED EYES: Don't be so modest, little man. Try to find out who I am.

CHARLES: I've been trying.

RED EYES: Look into my eyes. Look deep within them and I will tell you.

CHARLES: If I get in, can I get out again?

RED EYES: Yes, of course, if you want to. But I do not think you will want to.

MEG: Charles, don't. Let me do it.

CALVIN: Or me.

RED EYES: It is only Charles Wallace whose neurological system is complex enough. The young man's capabilities have not yet begun to be explored. Charles. Why don't you come in and find out who I am?

CHARLES: If I come in—not to stay, you understand—will you tell us where our father is?

RED EYES: Yes—that is a promise. And I don't make promises lightly.

MEG: Charles, you can't!

CHARLES: I have to. You know that. I'll try to keep a part of myself out.

MEG: But you know you can't trust him! He's stronger than you.

CHARLES: I have to try. For Father's sake. And not only him. It's the Dark Thing, Meg. We have to do what Mrs. Which sent us to do.

MEG: Calvin—

CALVIN: He's right. And we'll be with him, no matter what happens.

CHARLES: *(To RED EYES:)* Okay. Let's go.

(CHARLES and RED EYES lock eyes. The pulsing grows more and more intense, much like a rapidly beating heart. Just when it sounds like it will reach overload, all sound stops. CHARLES is still, his back to MEG and CALVIN.)

MEG: Charles?

(CHARLES faces her and smiles.)

CHARLES: Yes, Meg? What is it?

MEG: No! No no no no no no no!

CALVIN: What's wrong, Meg?

MEG: What's happened? What's happened to Charles?

CHARLES: I'm right here, Meg.

MEG: He's not there anymore! Look at his eyes!

CHARLES: Be sensible, Meg.

MEG: Calvin! That isn't Charles Wallace! It's only a copy of Charles Wallace! *(To RED EYES:)* Where is he? What have you done with him?

RED EYES: There he is before you, completely well and happy for the first time in his life.

MEG: You know that's not him! You've got him somewhere!

CALVIN: *(Whispering to MEG:)* Meg. There's no use talking to him. Don't lose control. Not now. Hold Charles Wallace tight. He's still in there somewhere, underneath, and we can't let them take him away from us.

(MEG and CALVIN grab onto CHARLES.)

CHARLES: Let go of me Meg. You know I don't like being grabbed. You're hurting me, Meg, let go.

MEG: No!

CHARLES: Meg, listen to me. We've been all wrong. This person isn't our enemy at all. Mrs. Whatsit, Mrs. Who and Mrs. Which have confused us. They're the ones who are really our enemies.

MEG: Ha.

CHARLES: We've misunderstood. We've been fighting our friend, and father's friend. You don't understand what a wonderful place we've come to! All you have to do is look into the eyes of our good friend here, dear sister, and he will take you in as he has taken us all in.

MEG: Taken you in is right. You've never once in your life called me "dear sister."

CALVIN: Hush a minute, Meg. *(To RED EYES:)* All right, we know you have Charles Wallace hypnotized—

RED EYES: A most primitive way of putting it.

CALVIN: If you are our friend, who are you?

RED EYES: It is not necessary for you to know who I am. I am the Prime Coordinator, that is all you need to know.

CALVIN: Are you going to take us to Mr. Murry?

RED EYES: No.

MEG: You promised!

RED EYES: Charles Wallace will conduct you.

CALVIN: Charles Wallace?

(They let go of CHARLES.)

RED EYES: Yes, it may as well be now.

CHARLES: Come.

(He starts off. CALVIN extends his hand to MEG but she does not take it.)

MEG: Why did you let him do it?

(They follow CHARLES.)

Act II Scene 3—Father's Prison

(CHARLES walks with the same stiff gait that the CAMAZOTZIANS have. He leads them through Central Central Intelligence, a series of shifting panels and walkways.)

CHARLES: Let me tell you something about this place—

CHARLES and RED EYES: (*Voice over:*) —the beautiful planet of Camazotz.

CHARLES: On Camazotz we have conquered all illness, all deformity—

CALVIN: We?

CHARLES: We let no one suffer. No one is in pain.

MEG: How?

CHARLES: If anyone is sick or hurt, we simply end discomfort by putting them to sleep.

MEG: You mean you have them murdered?

CHARLES: Murder is a most primitive word. There is no such thing as murder on Camazotz. IT takes care of all such things.

MEG: Where are we going?

CHARLES: Up. (*He turns the corner.*) On Camazotz we are all happy because we are all alike.

CHARLES and RED EYES: (*Voice over:*) Differences create problems.

CHARLES: You know that, don't you dear sister?

MEG: No.

CHARLES: Oh yes, you do. You know that's the reason you're not happy in school. Because you're different.

CALVIN: I'm different, and I'm happy.

CHARLES: But you pretend that you aren't different.

MEG: Maybe I don't like being different, but I don't want to be like everybody else, either.

CHARLES: Oh, how sad, to be low, individual organisms. So messy. Look.

(He waves an arm, and a room is revealed, containing BILLY, bouncing a ball.)

CALVIN: It's that kid.

BILLY: One times one is one. One times two is two... One times—AAAAAH!

(The room pulsates with a beat, and BILLY tries to bounce the ball in time with the beat. When he does not stick to the beat, or stops, the walls pulse red and he screams in pain. Perhaps RED EYES is reciting the multiplication table with him.)

MEG: What are they doing to him?

CHARLES: Every once in a while there's a little trouble with cooperation, but we soon take care of that.

MEG: Why? Why are you doing this? Why are *they* doing this?

(CHARLES raises his arm again and the room vanishes.)

CHARLES: Meg, you're supposed to have some mind. Why do you think we have wars at home? Why do you think people get confused and unhappy? Because they all live their own, separate, individual lives. I've been trying to explain to you in the simplest possible way that on Camazotz individuals have been done away with. Camazotz is ONE mind. It's IT.

MEG: What is this IT?

CHARLES: It's because of IT that things run so smoothly here.

CHARLES and RED EYES: (*Voice over:*) Camazotz is ONE mind because of IT.

MEG: But what *is* IT?—

CHARLES: Here we are.

(*CHARLES gestures with his hands, and a column of light appears, with a man inside of it.*)

MEG: FATHER!

(*MEG rushes to the column.*)

CALVIN: Wait!

MEG: What?

CALVIN: (*Waving his hands:*) He's behind something transparent, like glass. Look, he doesn't see us, or hear us.

MEG: Oh, Father...

(*She spreads her arms out to him, but he does not respond.*)

CALVIN: I think it's like one of those two way mirrors, where you can see in but they can't see out

(*MEG kneels in front of FATHER.*)

MEG: He looks so old.

CHARLES: Yes, he does look a mess, doesn't he.

MEG: Charles, that's Father. Father!

CHARLES: So what?

MEG: Let me in to him. Please, Charles.

CHARLES: You must do as I have done, and go in to IT.

MEG: No. How will my being a zombie help Father?

CALVIN: (*To himself:*) Into IT...

CHARLES: IT wants you, Margaret, and IT will get you.

CALVIN: "And for thou wast a spirit too delicate to act her earthy and abhorred commands... she didst confine thee...into a cloven pine." Charles!

CHARLES: What?

CALVIN: Good thing I had *The Tempest* in school last year, isn't it, Charles. The witch put Ariel in the cloven pine...

CHARLES: Stop staring at me.

CALVIN: And you're like Ariel, trapped inside the pine. I can let you out, Charles. Just look at me, Charles. Look at me. Come back to us.

CHARLES: (*Shuddering:*) N-n-n-oooooo....

CALVIN: Come back Charles, come back...

(*CHARLES is thrown backwards by the conflicting forces and huddles shivering, feral, on the floor.*)

CALVIN: I almost did it. He almost came out.

MEG: Calvin, try Father. He's imprisoned, too.

CALVIN: But he can't see me, Meg. He can't see me. I don't know what to do. They're asking too much of us.

MEG: Mrs. Who's glasses! Maybe they could—

CHARLES: Give me those glasses!

(MEG puts on the glasses, sees the world changing.)

MEG: Look, the walls... They're rearranging...

CALVIN: *(Struggling to hold back CHARLES:)* Go through, Meg! Go!

(MEG runs into the column of light. Lights out everywhere but in the column. MEG hugs FATHER, sinks into his arms.)

MEG: Oh Father! Father!

FATHER: *(Running his hands along her face:)* Meg! Meg, is that you? What are you doing here?

MEG: Of course it's me, father, I—can't you see me?

FATHER: No, Meg, I can't.

MEG: But I can see you— *(Snatches off Mrs. Who's glasses.)* Here, put on these glasses.

FATHER: I'm afraid your glasses won't help, Meglet.

MEG: They're not mine, they're Mrs. Who's. Try them on, please!

(He takes the glasses. MEG is blind.)

MEG: Can you see now?

FATHER: Yes, yes I can! The wall is transparent, now! Oh, Meg, my Meg, look at you! And Charles Wallace! He's—Meg, that is Charles, isn't it? He's gotten so much older...

MEG: IT has him, Father. He's gone into IT. We have to help him.

(Pause.)

FATHER: Meg, I'm in prison here. I have been for a long—

MEG: Father, the walls, you can go through them with these glasses.

FATHER: Meg, I'm afraid these walls—

MEG: I got through, Father. They worked for me. Try them. We could go through together.

FATHER: All right, Meg. Put your arms around my neck. Hold on to me tightly. Close your eyes and don't let go, whatever you do.

(FATHER and MEG go through the column with difficulty.)

MEG: IT's trying to get me...

FATHER: Hold...on...Meg...

(Lights back on, the column disappears.)

CHARLES: IT is not pleased. IT is not pleased at all.

(FATHER kneels in front of CHARLES.)

FATHER: Charles. Charles Wallace.

CHARLES: What do you want?

FATHER: You're talking now.

MEG: He started just after you left. Full sentences.

CHARLES: Big deal.

FATHER: I'm your father, Charles.

CHARLES: So?

MEG: That isn't Charles, Father. Charles isn't like that. IT has him.

FATHER: Yes, yes, I see. Charles, come here.

CHARLES: No.

FATHER: Charles, come here.

CHARLES: Come off it. You're not the boss around here.

FATHER: I'm your father.

MEG: That's IT talking through Charles, he's not like that, ask Calvin. Calvin—

CHARLES: Make your introductions later. IT does not like to be kept waiting.

FATHER: We can't go to IT. You can't take Meg there.

CHARLES: Oh can't I?

MEG: Father, you can't talk to him as if he were Charles! Don't you understand?

FATHER: I understand, Meg. I just don't know what I can do.

MEG: But—

CHARLES: Come along. We must go.

(CHARLES exits.)

FATHER: Charles! Stop!

(FATHER follows.)

CALVIN: Come on Meg.

MEG: Why isn't he doing something? Why isn't he helping? I thought once we found him everything would be all right—

CALVIN: We've got to go—

MEG: I don't want to go to IT! I can't go!

CALVIN: We can't leave Charles. They wouldn't like it.

MEG: Who?

CALVIN: Mrs. Whatsit and Co.

MEG: But they've betrayed us! They brought us here to this terrible place and abandoned us!

CALVIN: Well, you can sit down and give up if you like. I'm sticking with Charles.

(Exit CALVIN.)

MEG: Wait! I didn't mean—wait!

(She exits.)

Act II Scene 4—IT

(The room glows red. RED EYES appears.)

RED EYES: All minds. One mind. All minds. One mind. IT waits. IT beats. IT calls. It wants. You. Now.

(MEG, FATHER, and CALVIN are in the room with IT, a pulsating enormous brain. CHARLES takes his place on high on the right hand of RED EYES. The pulse is overwhelming, irresistible. The pulsating brain starts out relatively small [maybe the size of a pumpkin], on a pedestal.)

RED EYES: Feel the pulse within the room. Let your breath belong to IT. Let your lungs belong to IT. Let your heart belong to IT.

CHARLES: See, dear sister, see what's here for you.

MEG: Charles, please...no...

(The brain starts to grow. Each pulse seems to expand its size, until eventually it will almost fill the space.)

RED EYES: A brain, a disembodied brain, a brain to think for everyone. A pulse. A breath. All minds, one mind. Let your mind belong to IT.

FATHER: Don't give in!

CALVIN: I won't! Help Meg!

RED EYES: Control.

CHARLES: Control.

FATHER: Meg, fight it!

MEG: I can't!

CALVIN: Meg, remember what Mrs. Whatsit gave you! Your faults!

MEG: My faults? What? Impatience, stubbornness, anger?

RED EYES: Give in.

CHARLES: Give in.

MEG: No! No! Shut up! *Mary had a little lamb, it's fleece was, was—*

FATHER: Too rhythmic!

MEG: *We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that, that—*

CHARLES: Exactly what we have on Camazotz. Everyone alike. Complete equality.

MEG: *(Breaking free:)* No! Like and equal are not the same things at all!

FATHER: Good girl, Meg! Don't let IT think for you! Try something else! The periodic table of elements, Meg, you know them! Say it!

RED EYES and CHARLES: One times one is one. One times two is two. *(Etc.)*

MEG: Uh, the periodic tables. Hydrogen. Helium. What's next, yes, Lithium. Beryllium Boron Carbon—

RED EYES and CHARLES: One time six is six—

MEG: *(Starting to fall into the rhythm:)* One times— Ni-tro-gen. Ox-y-gen. Fluorine. Neon. So-di-um—

(She falls into reciting the multiplication tables. She, and the others, are almost enveloped into the brain.)

CALVIN: Tesser, sir, tesser!

FATHER: I—I don't know—

CALVIN: You have to! Tesser!

(FATHER pulls himself away from the brain, reaches out to grab MEG and CALVIN's hands. CHARLES and RED EYES scream, tesser effect happens. MEG screams. Blackout.)

Act II Scene 5—Ixchel

(All is dark except for a tight spot on Meg's face. We hear her heartbeat. She speaks in its cadence.)

MEG: My eyes...won't open...my hands...won't...move...my mouth...won't open ...I'm...so... cold...so...cold...

(CALVIN and FATHER are heard in the blackness.)

CALVIN: Her heart is beating so slowly.

FATHER: But it's beating. She's alive.

CALVIN: Barely. She's as cold as marble.

MEG: Please...please...

FATHER: We couldn't find a heartbeat at all before—it's getting stronger. All we can do is wait.

MEG: I...can't...feel...anything...

CALVIN: You got us away from IT, anyhow. We couldn't have held out much longer—I don't know how we held out as long as we did.

FATHER: It's because IT is unused to being resisted.

CALVIN: But what about Charles Wallace?

MEG: Charles...

FATHER: From what you told me it's because Charles Wallace thought he could go deliberately into IT and return—he trusted too much in his own strength and then—

(Her heartbeat gets faster.)

MEG: Where's...Charles...Charles...Wallace... Where...

FATHER: Her pulse is getting stronger!

CALVIN: Did her eyelids move?

MEG: Ch...Ch...Ch...

CALVIN: Her lips! Look!

FATHER: Meg! Meg! Can you hear me?

(MEG gasps. Her breath brings us back to reality, where she is lying frozen. CALVIN and FATHER are trying resuscitate her. All around are strange, monochromatic trees and roots.)

MEG: *(Croaking:)* Charles!

CALVIN: Meg!

FATHER: Meg. Meg. Are you all right?

MEG: I...can't...move.

CALVIN: Try! Wiggle your toes. Wiggle your fingers.

MEG: I can't. Where's Charles Wallace?

(Pause.)

CALVIN: We were knocked out for a minute too. You'll be all right, Meg. Don't get panicky.

FATHER: Can you feel my fingers, Meg? Can you feel them?

MEG: I'm frozen—why? Where are we?

FATHER: I don't know, Meg. I don't tesser very well. I must have overshot, somehow. I think you're so cold because we passed through the Dark Thing and I thought for a moment that it was going to tear you away from me.

MEG: It's so gray...here. Is this a dark planet?

FATHER: I don't think so, but I can't be sure. I know so little about anything...

MEG: You shouldn't have tried to tesser, then. Where's Charles Wallace?

FATHER: Meg—

MEG: Did you just leave him there?

CALVIN: You see, Meg, if your father tried to tesser Charles Wallace away while IT still had him, it might have been too much for Charles.

FATHER: The brain is a very delicate organ, I was afraid that if I—

CALVIN: And we had to do something right then—

MEG: *You* told him to tesser.

FATHER: There isn't any question of blame. Can you move yet?

MEG: No! You're supposed to be able to help! You're hurting me!

FATHER: Then you're feeling again. I'm afraid it *is* going to hurt, Meg.

MEG: You don't even know where we are! You lost Charles Wallace! What good are you?

(Her outburst seems to disturb the landscape. Perhaps it changes color.)

CALVIN: Look!

(The landscape seems to rise up, combine, and transform into two huge CREATURES, with many arms and tentacles coming from each hand. They have no facial features. A soft purring seems to emanate from them. They change color as they approach.)

CALVIN: What...what are they?

FATHER: I don't know. Animals?

CALVIN: No, they're intelligent. And they've seen us.

FATHER: How can you tell? They have no eyes.

CALVIN: I can just...tell.

MEG: You've killed us, bringing us here.

(The CREATURES approach.)

CALVIN: I don't think so. *(To the CREATURES:)* How do you do, sir—ma'am—can you understand me?

BEAST 1: *(Many voices speaking as one voice:)* Who are you?

CALVIN: We're from Earth. We've had an accident. Meg—this girl—is paralyzed. She's terribly cold.

(AUNT BEAST kneels by MEG, waves tentacles towards her.)

MEG: Don't come near me! Go away! Don't—

(AUNT BEAST changes to a soothing color, touches her with a tentacle and purrs. MEG quiets and sighs. Closes her eyes.)

FATHER: Meg?

CALVIN: Meg—are you all right?

MEG: Warm...so warm...

(AUNT BEAST picks MEG up.)

FATHER: What are you doing?

AUNT BEAST: Taking the child.

FATHER: No!

BEAST 1: *(Mild alarm color:)* We frighten you?

FATHER: What are you going to do with us?

BEAST 1: Sorry, we communicate better with the other one. *(To CALVIN:)* Who are you?

CALVIN: I'm Calvin O'Keefe.

BEAST 1: What is that?

CALVIN: I'm a boy. A—a young man.

BEAST 1: You too are afraid?

CALVIN: I'm not sure.

BEAST 1: Tell me. What would you do if we arrived on *your* planet?

CALVIN: Uh...shoot you, I guess.

BEAST 1: Is that what we should do with you?

CALVIN: I'd really rather you didn't. We don't always make the best decisions on our Earth.

AUNT BEAST: Perhaps they aren't used to visitors from other planets.

BEAST 1: You. Oldest. Man. From where have you come. Now.

FATHER: From a planet called Camazotz.

(There is a change of color—dismay—amongst the BEASTS.)

AUNT BEAST: We must take this child back with us.

MEG: No!

BEAST 1: The child is in no danger. From us. You must trust us.

MEG: Don't leave me the way you left Charles Wallace!

AUNT BEAST: The sickness seems to have spread inside as well as out. This little...what is it you call it?

CALVIN: Girl?

AUNT BEAST: This little girl needs prompt and special care. The coldness of the...what is it you call it?

CALVIN: The Dark Thing.

AUNT BEAST: The Dark Thing. Yes. The Dark Thing burns unless it is counteracted properly.

FATHER: Can you save her?

AUNT BEAST: I think so.

FATHER: May I stay with her?

BEAST 1: No. But you will not be far away.

FATHER: Then—we have no alternative.

BEAST 1: *(Waving a tentacle towards CALVIN and FATHER:)* Come.

MEG: Father!

(FATHER and CALVIN exit with BEAST 1. AUNT BEAST sets off with MEG in her arms. A song of pacification and healing begins. Her color changes.)

MEG: Father... Calvin... I'm so tired.

AUNT BEAST: Then sleep, child. Sleep. During the coolness we sleep.

MEG: You're so soft...you must be good. You have to be good...

(MEG falls asleep as AUNT BEAST reaches home. Her color changes to match her environment—muted but comforting.)

Act II Scene 6—Beast Home

(The song ends. MEG awakens.)

AUNT BEAST: Are you awake, little one? What a funny tadpole you are! Is the pain gone?

MEG: Yes, I'm fine.

AUNT BEAST: No, lie still, little one. Do not exert yourself as yet. The Dark Thing does not relinquish its victims willingly.

MEG: Why is it so dark here? Don't you have any lights?

AUNT BEAST: What is this light? We do not understand. Your father and the boy Calvin say it is night now on our planet, and that they cannot see. We do not understand what this means, to see.

MEG: Well, it's what things look like.

AUNT BEAST: We do not know what things *look* like, as you say. We know what things *are* like. It must be a very limiting thing, this seeing.

MEG: No, it's not, it's—oh, I'm not making any sense. Charles Wallace would be able to— Charles Wallace! He's my brother. We've got to save him!

AUNT BEAST: Yes, yes, little one, of course we will help you. A meeting is in session right now.

MEG: They left him behind!

AUNT BEAST: It is an extraordinary feat, to escape from a dark planet. It will not be easy to go back through the Black Thing, back to Camazotz.

MEG: But we can't just abandon him!

AUNT BEAST: *(A flash of color, which subsides.)* No one said anything about abandoning anyone. But it must be approached carefully. And you must wait until you are more calm. You must get well.

(AUNT BEAST rocks MEG.)

AUNT BEAST: It is so long since my own small ones were grown and gone. You are so tiny.

MEG: What should I call you, please?

AUNT BEAST: Well, now. First, try not to say any words for just a moment. Think within your own mind. Think of all the things you call people.

(AUNT BEAST "kythes" or mind-melds with MEG. Their tentacles concentrate on MEG.)

AUNT BEAST: Hmmmm...Mother? No. Mother is a special, a one name. Father you have here. No, not friend, nor teacher, nor brother nor sister. Aunt. Maybe. Yes, that will perhaps do. Oh, you think such odd words about me. Thing...and monster! Monster, what a horrid sort of word. Beast. Yes, that will do. Aunt Beast.

MEG: Aunt Beast. *(Laughs.)*

AUNT BEAST: Mmmmm...

MEG: I feel wonderful.

AUNT BEAST: Are you ready to see your father and your Calvin?

MEG: Yes, please.

AUNT BEAST: *(Calling out:)* You may enter. Now.

(FATHER and CALVIN enter.)

CALVIN: Meg! Hey, Meg.

FATHER: They promised me you were all right.

MEG: *(Awkward:)* I'm fine.

FATHER: We were trying to work out a plan to rescue Charles Wallace. Since I made such a mistake in tessering away from IT, we feel it would not be a wise move for me to try to get back to Camazotz.

CALVIN: These people know about tessering, but they can't do it onto a dark planet.

MEG: Have you tried to call Mrs. Whatsit?

FATHER: Not yet—

MEG: But if you haven't thought of anything else, it's the only thing to do! Don't you care about Charles Wallace at all!

AUNT BEAST: (*Coloring:*) Child.

(*MEG retreats to AUNT BEAST.*)

MEG: We've got to ask them for help now. You're just stupid if you think we don't.

AUNT BEAST: The child is distraught. Don't judge her harshly. We don't know what kind of spiritual damage has been done by the Dark Thing.

CALVIN: Hasn't it occurred to you that we're trying our best here? I've been trying to tell them about our ladies. What do you think we've been up to all this time? *You* have a shot at it.

BEAST 1: Yes, try, child.

MEG: Well...

(*The BEASTS try kything with MEG.*)

AUNT BEAST: This anger, this confusion is it part of what you are trying to describe?

MEG: No. No. It's— (*She takes a deep breath.*) Mrs. Whatsit, she's got all these scarves on and different colored shawls and these boots and...but she's she's not really like that she's really...she's got wings and, but—oh! She doesn't look like that, she looks—

BEAST 1: This *look* doesn't help us at all.

AUNT BEAST: They are very young. And on their Earth, as they call it, they never communicate with other planets. They just revolve around in space.

BEAST 1: Oh, aren't they lonely?

CALVIN: They're like—Guardian Angels! Do you know?

BEAST 1: I thought for a moment...no. It is not clear enough.

AUNT BEAST: Think. Think harder. What they are.

MEG: They—they—Cal—

(*She holds Calvin's hand, concentrates.*)

MEG: They—

(*Sound of a terrific wind. The THREE W's appear. They have a somber, distant aspect, similar to judges at a tribunal.*)

MRS. WHICH: WWEEE ARRE HHERRE!!

(*The BEASTS bow.*)

MRS. WHATSIT: We are not quite materialized...we had to hurry so there wasn't time...you wanted us?

MEG: Mrs. Whatsit! Father left Charles Wallace! He left him on Camazotz! Save him, please save him.

MRS. WHATSIT: You know we can do nothing on Camazotz.

MEG: But we can't do anything! You have to save him!

MRS. WHATSIT: Meg, I thought you would know that this is not our way.

(FATHER steps up, bows, the W's acknowledge it.)

FATHER: I am very honored to meet you, I—I'm sorry my glasses are broken and I can't see you very well—

MRS. WHO: Not necessary to see—us.

FATHER: If you could teach me enough about the tesser so I can get back to Camazotz—

MRS. WHICH: Wwhatt tthen.

FATHER: I will try to take my child away from IT.

MRS. WHICH: Yyou wwill nnott succeedd.

FATHER: There's nothing left except to try.

MRS. WHO: Sorry. Cannot allow—you.

CALVIN: Then let me go. I almost got him away before. I can do it.

MRS. WHATSIT: No, Calvin. It is too late for that, now. Charles has gone even deeper into IT. You can not be permitted to throw yourself in with him, for that is surely what will happen.

MEG: Well, then what are you going to do? Are you going to just throw Charles away?

MRS. WHICH: Ssilencee, cchilldd!

MEG: *(Crying:)* I can't go! I can't! You know I can't!

MRS. WHICH: Ddid annybboddy asskk yyyou ttoo?

MEG: I know you want me to go.

MRS. WHATSIT: We want nothing from you that you do without grace or that you do without understanding.

(MEG buries herself against AUNT BEAST, then calms.)

MEG: But I do understand.

MRS. WHICH: Wwhattt ddoo yyou unnddersstanndd?

MEG: That it has to be me. I'm closest to Charles. Father's been away for so long, they don't know each other. And Calvin's only known Charles for such a short time. It has to be me. There isn't anyone else.

FATHER: No! I will not allow it! I will not allow my daughter to go alone into this danger!

MRS. WHATSIT: *(To MEG:)* Do you have the courage to go alone?

MEG: No, but it doesn't matter.

AUNT BEAST: Is she strong enough to tesser again?

MRS. WHATSIT: If Which takes her she can manage.

AUNT BEAST: If it will help I could go too, and hold her.

MEG: Oh, Aunt Beast—

MRS. WHATSIT: No.

AUNT BEAST: I was afraid not. I just wanted you to know that I *would*.

CALVIN: I'm the one to go if anybody goes! Why else did you bring me along? You can't send Meg!

FATHER: She's only a child.

MRS. WHATSIT: Don't you see that you're making something that is already hard for Meg even harder?

MEG: Please. If I've got to go I want to go now and get it over with. It gets harder every minute.

MRS. WHICH: Sshee iss rrightt. Itt iss ttime.

MRS. WHATSIT: You may say goodbye.

MEG: *(To AUNT BEAST:)* Thank you. I know you saved my life. I love you.

AUNT BEAST: And I, you, little one.

MEG: Cal—I—

(CALVIN takes her hand, kisses her, and turns away. She glows for a moment, then turns to FATHER.)

MEG: I'm, I'm sorry Father.

FATHER: Sorry for what, Meg.

MEG: I wanted you to do it all for me... I tried to pretend it was all your fault...because I was scared.

FATHER: Meg...don't be afraid to be afraid. We will try to have courage for you. I love you, Meglet.

MRS. WHATSIT: Are you ready?

(MEG ascends to where the THREE W's are. The others fade away.)

MEG: Are you going with me, Mrs. Whatsit?

MRS. WHATSIT: No, only Mrs. Which.

MEG: The Dark Thing. It almost got me.

MRS. WHATSIT: Your father is inexperienced, though worth teaching. We will not let the Dark Thing get you.

MEG: But suppose I don't get Charles Wallace away from IT—

MRS. WHATSIT: Stop. We gave you gifts the last time we took you to Camazotz. We will not let you go empty-handed this time. I give you my love, Meg. Never forget that. My love always.

(MRS. WHATSIT fades away.)

MRS. WHO: What I give you this time—try to understand not word by word, but in a flash. Listen well: "God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are." May the right prevail!

(MRS. WHO fades away.)

MRS. WHICH: I ccannott hholddd yyourr handdd chilldd.

(MEG and MRS. WHICH tesser.)

(MEG is alone.)

MRS. WHICH: *(Voice over:)* I hhave nnott ggivvenn yyou mmyy ggiffitt. Yyou hhave ssomethinnngg thatt IT hhas nnott. Thiss ssomethinnngg iss yyourr onlly wwapponn. Bbutt yyou mmusstt ffinndd itt fforr yyourrsellff.

Act II Scene 7—Camazotz and Home

(MEG alone.)

MEG: What have I got that IT hasn't got? What have I possibly got? IT isn't used to being resisted. That's what Father said. Is that what I've got that IT hasn't got? No, I'm sure IT can resist. IT just isn't used to having *other* people resist. I'm going to Charles Wallace. That's what's important. Father said it was all right for me to be afraid. And Mrs. Who said—I don't understand what she said but I think it was to make me not hate being the way I am. And Mrs. Whatsit said she loves me. That's quite something, to be loved by someone like—

(MEG is almost knocked off her feet by the intense pressure of the pulsations from IT. The brain is back, expanding, darker and more violent in its pulsing. CHARLES and RED EYES are almost entirely enveloped in the brain. MEG breathes hard against the pulsing.)

MEG: *(Frantic:)* What is it I have got that IT hasn't got?

CHARLES: You have nothing that IT hasn't got. How nice to have you back, dear sister.

RED EYES and CHARLES: We've been waiting for you.

CHARLES: We knew Mrs. Whatsit would send you. She is our friend, you know.

MEG: No! No! You lie! As long as I can stay angry enough IT can't get me. Is that what I have that IT doesn't have?

CHARLES: You have nothing that IT doesn't have.

MEG: Shut up! You...thing! You're lying!

RED EYES and CHARLES: You have nothing that IT doesn't have.

CHARLES: No-thing.

MEG: *(Starting to give in to the rhythm:)* I hate you! I hate you! I...hate...you...I... hate...you...

CHARLES: Very good! Hate is nothing that IT doesn't have. IT knows all about hate.

MEG: You're lying about Mrs. Whatsit!

CHARLES: Mrs. Whatsit hates you.

MEG: Mrs. Whatsit loves me! That's what she told me, that she loves me, Mrs. Whatsit—

(MEG takes in a sudden deep breath of revelation, her own breath.)

MEG: That's what I have that IT doesn't have! I have Mrs. Whatsit's love and Father's and Mother's and Aunt Beast's love...and Charles Wallace's love, the real Charles Wallace. And I love them too.

(MEG stands up, stronger.)

MEG: Charles. Charles Wallace. I love you. You're my baby brother, you take care of me. Please, come back. I love you. Come back to me, come away from IT. Please, come home. We love you, Charles Wallace. I love you.

(CHARLES starts to waver. IT's pulse fragments, hitches, malfunctions. MEG kneels and spreads out her arms to him. The rhythm starts breaking.)

MEG: Charles Wallace, you are my darling and my dear and the light of my life and the treasure of my heart. I love you! I love you! I love you!

(CHARLES breaks out of IT, runs towards MEG.)

CHARLES: Meg! Meg! Meg!

(They hug.)

CHARLES: I love you Meg! I love you! I love you! I love you!

(The world comes crashing down. RED EYES screams. Tessering. Lights up on CHARLES and MEG, back home in the garden.)

CHARLES: Meg. Meg. You saved me. You saved me!

MEG: Charles Wallace.

FATHER and CALVIN: *(Offstage:)* Meg!

MEG: Father! Calvin!

(Enter CALVIN and FATHER.)

CALVIN: Meg, you did it! You saved Charles!

FATHER: I'm so proud of you, Meg.

MEG: Where are we?

CHARLES: In our vegetable garden! And we landed in the broccoli!

MOTHER: *(Offstage:)* Children? Where are you?

MEG: Mother...

(Enter MOTHER.)

MOTHER: There you are. Dinner's getting cold—

(MOTHER sees FATHER. She freezes.)

FATHER: I'm home.

(MOTHER and FATHER rush towards each other, hug. CHARLES and MEG join them. CALVIN is alone outside the circle until MEG pulls him in. The sound of wind and wind chimes. MEG breaks from her hug, looks up. CHARLES and CALVIN join her.)

MEG: Wait...

CHARLES: Do you feel them, too?

MEG: I do.

MRS. WHO: *(Voice over:) Abeyadi ya boiteyadi. Arabic. Home Sweet Home.*

MRS. WHICH: *(Voice over:) Nnowww—*

MRS. WHATSIT: *(Voice over:) Oh, my darlings, I'm sorry we don't have time to say goodbye to you properly. You see, we have to—*

(There is a big rush of wind. MEG turns to the audience.)

MEG: But we never learned what it was that Mrs. Whatsit—

CALVIN: Mrs. Who—

CHARLES: And Mrs. Which—

MEG: —had to do, for there was a gust of wind, and they were gone.

(Stars illuminate the night sky, remaining even when lights go out on the stage, then finally they twinkle out.)

End of Play.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Madeleine L'Engle was born on November 29th, 1918, and spent her formative years in New York City. Instead of her school work, she found that she would much rather be writing stories, poems and journals for herself, which was reflected in her grades (not the best). However, she was not discouraged.

At age 12, she moved to the French Alps with her parents and went to an English boarding school where, thankfully, her passion for writing continued to grow. She flourished during her high school years back in the United States at Ashley Hall in Charleston, South Carolina, vacationing with her mother in a rambling old beach cottage on a beautiful stretch of Florida Beach.

She went to Smith College and studied English with some wonderful teachers as she read the classics and continued her own creative writing. She graduated with honors and moved into a Greenwich Village apartment in New York. She worked in the theater, where Equity union pay and a flexible schedule afforded her the time to write! She published her first two novels during these years—*A Small Rain* and *Ilsa*—before meeting Hugh Franklin, her future husband, when she was an understudy in Anton Chekov's *The Cherry Orchard*. They married during *The Joyous Season*.

She had a baby girl and kept on writing, eventually moving to Connecticut to raise the family away from the city in a small dairy farm village with more cows than people. They bought a dead general store, and brought it to life for 9 years. They moved back to the city with three children, and Hugh revitalized his professional acting career.

As the years passed and the children grew, Madeleine continued to write and Hugh to act, and they to enjoy each other and life. Madeleine began her association with the Cathedral Church of St. John the Divine, where she was the librarian and maintained an office for more than thirty years. After Hugh's death in 1986, it was her writing and lecturing that kept her going. She lived through the 20th century and into the 21st and wrote over 60 books. She enjoyed being with her friends, her children, her grandchildren, and her great grandchildren.

Stage adaptations of other works by Madeleine L'Engle, available at Stage Partners

[A Wrinkle in Time](#)

(full-length and one-act adaptations available by Morgan Gould, John Glore, James Sie, and Tracy Young)

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[The 24 Days Before Christmas](#), adapted by Jason Pizzarello

James Sie has written many plays and adaptations as an Artistic Associate of Lifeline Theatre in Chicago. He received a Joseph Jefferson Citation for his adaptation of *Island of the Blue Dolphins*, for which he was also nominated as director. James has also garnered two Jeff Citation nominations for his Lifeline adaptations of *Dracula* and *A Wrinkle in Time*, and an After Dark Award for *The Road to Graceland*. His adaptations of *A Wrinkle in Time*, *Bunnicula*, *Ferdinand the Bull*, and *My Father's Dragon* have been produced nationally. Other adaptations include Randy Shilts' AIDS memoir *Talking AIDS to Death*, *The Cricket in Times Square* (which he also directed), and *Miss Bianca*. His adaptation of Daniel Pinkwater's *The Snark Out Boys and the Avocado of Death* was broadcast on "Chicago Theatre on the Air." Since moving to Los Angeles James has written and starred in a solo performance *Talking with My Hands* for the Mark Taper Forum/East West Players, which was also produced at the NWAAT in Seattle. James also the author of a novel, *Still Life Las Vegas*, which was published by St. Martin's Press in 2015. Please visit him at www.sieworld.com.

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