
A WRINKLE IN TIME

Adapted by Alan Neal Levy

From the novel by Madeleine L'Engle

Act One

(At rise: The middle of a stormy night in the Murry's house. A middle-aged woman is writing a letter in a home-made laboratory. In turn, the rest of the stage is lit to reveal CHARLES WALLACE [CW], a young, vulnerable-looking boy of six, standing US of the kitchen table, wearing faded blue Dr. Denton's and holding a carton of milk, his sister MEG, who is in her bed having a nightmare, and a lone dissheveled figure caught in a energy field.)

MOTHER

Day 72. Dear Martin: I don't know how much longer I can keep writing these letter. I no longer believe they are getting to you. I'm not even sure if I believe you're . . . safe, anymore. Still they help with the loneliness somehow, so I'll try. *(Pause)* I've been trying to duplicate your last experiments. I think there's a clue there somewhere. *(She stops writing and picks up a tattered notebook.)* Tesseract? Martin, what's a tesseract?

FATHER

A wrinkle . . . a wrinkle . . .

CW

No. Not Mother. Meg.

MOTHER

I bet there's no such thing. *(She returns to the letter.)* Everyone's fine. The twin's are both running for student council. Against each other! It should be interesting.

CW

It's Meg. Meg.

MEG

Father?

FATHER

Meg. My eyes. My eyes!

MEG

Father!

FATHER

I can't see. I can't move.

MEG

Father. Where are you?

FATHER

Why are you doing this to me?

MEG

I don't know. I'm sorry. I didn't . . .

WOMAN's VOICE

"Sorry"?

MOTHER

Charles Wallace is getting so big. You'd hardly recognize him.

CW

Don't be scared, Meg. It's just a dream.

MOTHER

And Meg . . . Well Meg is having a few problems. I think your disappearance has been hardest on her. Her grades have been even worse lately.

WOMAN's VOICE

I just don't understand. With parents as brilliant as yours, how can you be such a poor student? Really, Margaret. If you don't try to do a little better, you'll have to stay back next year.

MEG

But that's not fair. I'm trying.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Well, you'll just have to try harder.

MEG

No! You don't understand!

GIRL's VOICE

Oh, will you grow up? After all, Meg, we're not in grammar school anymore.

SECOND GIRL'S VOICE

Yeah. Why do you always act like such a baby?

MEG

I don't!

MOTHER

And she got into another fight today.

WOMAN's VOICE

The twins seem nice enough, but that unattractive girl and the baby boy certainly aren't all there.

MAN's VOICE

Have you heard from your father, dear?

GIRL's VOICE

Where's your famous father, huh Meg? When's he coming home?

BOY's VOICE

Pretty soon you'll be as dumb as that dumb, baby brother of yours.

MEG

CW is not dumb. He just does things in his own way and in his own time.

BOY's VOICE

He's a freak. That's what he is - a freak. Charles Wallace is a freak.

OTHER CHILDREN's VOICES *(continue during rest of scene)*

Charles Wallace is a freak. Charles Wallace is a freak.

MEG

You shut up! Just shut up about my brother!

CW

It's okay, Meg. They don't understand. I don't mind.

WOMAN's VOICE

Poor child. She still thinks her father is coming home.

MEG

What do you mean? He is, too coming home. He IS!

OTHER WOMAN'S VOICE

I've heard that clever people often have subnormal children.

ALL VOICES

. . . you'll just have to stay back . . . that unattractive girl . . . what would your father think? . . . that dumb baby brother . . . not all there . . . with parents as brilliant as yours . . . you act like such a baby . . . not coming home . . . poor child . . . dumb brother . . . baby . . . **not coming home!** . . . unattractive . . . freak . . . NOT COMING HOME . . .

(Lightning flashes and a loud crash of thunder awakens MEG.)

Father? Oh Father, where are you?

(CW pours the milk into a pot which he then places on a Bunsen burner. Then he sits down and starts eating some bread and jam. MEG enters. CW speaks without looking up.)

CW

Hi! I've been waiting for you.

MEG

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

CW

Too windy up in that attic room of yours. I knew you'd be down. I put some cocoa on for you.

MEG

How'd you know I'd be down?

CW

Don't I always know everything?

(He laughs a sinister, horror-movie laugh.)

MEG

Quiet. You'll wake up the twins.

CW

You'd better check the milk. You know you hate it when it gets that skin on top.

(MEG goes to the pot of milk and pours herself a cupful.)

MEG

You put in too much milk.

CW

I thought Mother might like some.

MEG

But . . .

MOTHER *(entering with calculator and notebook)*

I might like what?

CW

Cocoa! Would you like a liverwurst-and-cream cheese sandwich? I'll be happy to make you one.

MOTHER

That would be lovely. Just what I need after staring at these notes all night.

CW

How about you, Meg? Sandwich?

MEG

Yes, please. But not liverwurst. Do we have any tomatoes?

CW

One. All right if I use it on Meg, Mother?

MOTHER

To what better use could it be put? But not so loud, please, Charles. Unless you want the twins downstairs, too.

CW

No, let's be exclusive. That's my new word for the day. Impressive, isn't it?

MOTHER

Prodigious. Meg, let me look at that bruise. Oh, Megitha, you really don't know the meaning of moderation, do you? A happy medium is all you need. Just a happy medium.

MEG

I'm sorry I got in a fight, Mother. It's been an awful week. And I'm just full of bad feelings.

MOTHER

Do you know why?

MEG

I **hate** being an oddball. I try to pretend I'm just like everyone else, but it isn't any help.

MOTHER

Good. You shouldn't pretend to be what you aren't.

MEG

Oh, Mother. That doesn't help. Maybe if I wasn't so repulsive-looking -- maybe if I were pretty like you . . .

CW

Mother's not a bit pretty. She's beautiful. Therefore I bet she was awful looking at your age.

MOTHER

How right you are, Charles. Just give yourself time, Meglet.

(A noise is heard off-stage.)

MEG

What was that?

CW

You didn't leave any nasty-smelling chemicals cooking over a Bunsen-burner, did you Mother?

MOTHER

No. It's just the wind.

MEG

It's the tramp. I bet it was the tramp.

CW

What tramp?

MEG

The one who stole all of Mrs. Buncombe's sheets. I heard some women at the post office. They said that this tramp went right into her back yard and took them off her clothesline.

MOTHER

Well, we better hold onto the pillow cases, then. Come now, Megatron. Even a tramp wouldn't be out walking around on a night like this.

(The noise is heard again from off-stage.)

MEG

That's why! He's trying to get inside.

MOTHER *(exiting)*

In that case, I'll offer him the barn till morning.

MEG

Mother, wait! *(But she is gone)* Oh dear.

CW

Drink your cocoa, Meg.

MEG

I don't think I like this wind.

CW

It isn't the wind.

MEG

Oh, if only Father was here!

CW

Mother can take care of herself.

MEG

Of course she can. I just . . .

CW

Physically, that is . . .

MEG

What is that supposed to mean?

(MOTHER re-enters, followed by a stranger, bundled in many layers of clothing)

CW

Mrs. Whatsit! What are you doing here? And at this time of night, too?

MRS. WHATSIT

Now don't you be worried, my honey.

MOTHER

Mrs. . . . what?

MRS. WHATSIT

Whatsit.

MOTHER
Whatsit?

MRS. WHATSIT
Whatsit.

MOTHER

Mrs. . . . uh, Whatsit - says she lost her way. Would you care for some hot cocoa, Mrs. Whatsit?

MRS. WHATSIT

Charmed, I'm sure. It isn't so much that I lost my way as that I got blown off course. And when I realized 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

By the smell, of course. My, but it's lovely and warm in here.

MOTHER

Do sit down. Would you like a sandwich, Mrs. Whatsit? I'm having liverwurst and cream cheese; Charles has bread and jam; and Meg, lettuce and tomato.

MRS. WHATSIT

Now, let me see. I'm passionately fond of Russian caviar.

CW

You peeked! We're saving that for Mother's birthday and you can't have any

(MRS. WHATSIT lets out a deep and pathetic sigh.)

No! Now you mustn't give in to her, Mother, or I shall be very angry. How about tuna-fish salad?

MRS. WHATSIT

All right.

MEG *(rising, partly in disbelief)*

I'll fix it.

CW

Mrs. Whatsit, why did you take Mrs. Buncombe's sheets?

MRS. WHATSIT

Well, I needed them, Charles.

CW

You must return them at once.

MRS. WHATSIT

But, Charles dear, I can't. I've used them.

CW

It was very wrong of you. If you needed sheets that badly you should have asked me.

MRS. WHATSIT

But you can't spare any sheets. Mrs. Buncombe can. Tell your sister I'm all right. Tell her my intentions are good.

CW

The road to hell is paved with good intentions.

MRS. WHATSIT

My, but isn't he cunning. It's lucky he has someone to understand him.

MOTHER

But I'm afraid he doesn't. None of us is quite up to Charles.

MRS. WHATSIT

But at least you're not trying to squash him down. You're letting him be himself.

MEG

Here's your sandwich.

MRS. WHATSIT (to MOTHER)

Would you be a dear, and help me off with my boots?

(MOTHER squats at MRS. WHATSIT's feet and yanks on one of the boots. When the boot finally comes off suddenly, MOTHER and MRS. WHATSIT go flying and land with a thump.)
Oh, dearie me!

MOTHER

Are you all right, Mrs. Whatsit?

MRS. WHATSIT *(still on the floor, taking a bite of sandwich)*

I think it's sprained. A little oil of clove mixed well with garlic is rather good.

CW

Do get up. You're carrying things too far.

(She struggles to her feet, rights her chair, sits back down on the floor and continues eating.)

MRS. WHATSIT

Now pull while I'm already down.

(MOTHER calmly removes the other boot, as MRS. WHATSIT continues eating.)

Ah, that's ever so much better. My stomach is full and I'm warm inside and out and it's time I went home

MOTHER

Don't you think you'd better stay until morning?

MRS. WHATSIT

Oh, thank you dearie, but there's so much to do I just can't waste time sitting around frivolling.

MOTHER

It's much too wild a night to travel in.

MRS. WHATSIT

Wild nights are my glory. *(She starts to exit.)* Oh, by the way, pet - there **is** such a thing as a tesseract.

MOTHER *(taken aback)*

What did you say?

MRS. WHATSIT

I said, that there is such a thing as a tesseract. (*And she is gone.*)

MEG

Mother, what's the matter! What did she say. What is it?

MOTHER

The tesseract . . . How could she have known?

MEG

What's a tesseract?

CW (*elbowing MEG*)

Shh! Shh! (*Yawning loudly*) Well, I think we've had enough excitement for one night. Bedtime at last. Come on, Meg.

MEG

What are you doing? Leave me alone.

CW (*aside to MEG*)

Shhh! Do what I say. (*HE drags MEG to the door.*) Good night, Mother.

MOTHER (*as she scribbles notes in a pad*)

What? Oh, good night. Sleep well, my darlings. A tesseract. She said so, clear as day. Could it possibly be true. Could he really have done it?

(*MOTHER resumes her scribbling and returns to her laboratory.*)

MEG

Charles Wallace, would you please tell me what you're doing?

CW

Shh! We're going after Mrs. Whatsit.

MEG

Now? In this weather? You're nuts.

CW

You're still uneasy about her, aren't you?

MEG
Well, yes.

CW

Don't be. She's all right. I promise you. She's on our side.

MEG

How do you know?

CW

Meg, I **know**.

MEG

But why should we go see her **now**?

CW

I want to find out more about that tesseract thing. It has something to do with Father.

MEG

How do you know? *(CW looks at her.)* Okay. Let's go.

(The set changes to an exterior. The action is continuous.)

MEG

CW, how **do** you know?

CW

I can't quite explain it. I just hear it. In my head.

MEG

You mean you can read a person's mind? Like ESP?

CW

No, not really. I think it's more like being able to understand a sort of language. Like sometimes, if I concentrate real hard, I can understand the wind. *(He pauses, listening.)* Somebody's here.

MEG

Who? Who's there?

CALVIN

It's me. Calvin. Calvin O'Keefe.

MEG

Oh, great.

CW

What? Who is he, Meg?

MEG

Calvin O'Keefe. He goes to my school. He's on the basketball team and everything.

CALVIN *(stepping out from the shadows)*

Hey, aren't you two of the Murry kids?

CW

What are you doing here?

CALVIN

Why? This isn't your property.

CW

What are you doing here?

CALVIN

What **is** this? The third degree? Hey, aren't you the one that's supposed to be a moron?

CW

Tell us what you're doing here.

CALVIN

Okay, already. *(Deadly serious)* I was running away from home. Eleven kids. And me the youngest. It's horrible!

MEG

Wow!

CW

The truth. Tell us the truth.

CALVIN

Listen, Sport. Who do you think you're talking to? I don't have to tell you nothing. I . . . Oh, what the heck. If I can't tell it to a couple of . . . freaks like you. Okay. I'm in bed, see? Fast asleep . . . when I hear this giant crash of thunder. The rain is coming down, the thunder is rolling off into the distance, but there's something else. A voice. Calling me. Calling me. Like . . . hey, did somebody ask you to come here tonight?

(During the following conversation, a ghost-like figure is seen dimly in the shadows.)

CW

What do you mean, **ask**?

CALVIN

You don't trust me do you?

(MEG thinks she sees the 'ghost'.)

CW

I don't **distrust** you.

CALVIN

Do you want to tell me why you're here then?

CW

Meg and I decided to go for a walk. We often come out here.

CALVIN

At three o'clock in the morning? Come on. You're holding out on me.

CW

And so are you.

CALVIN *(laughing)*

Fair enough. Well, sometimes I get a feeling about things. You might call it a . . . compulsion. Do you know what compulsion means?

CW

"Compulsion: Force. Constraint. Obligation. Because one is compelled.

CALVIN

Most peculiar moron I've ever met.

CW

It's kind of like a voice in your head. A voice without words. Right?

CHARLES

Well, yeah. I never thought about it like that. But, yeah. But how did you know?

MEG

CW hears voices all the time.

CW

Okay, I believe you. Come on, there's someone you should meet.

CALVIN
Lead on, moron!

CW
(as he turns suddenly and calls into the darkness.)

Okay, Mrs. Who. You can come out now.

MRS. WHO

(stepping out from the shadows, removing a sheet from over her head)

Hello, Charlsie! Did I scare you?

CW

Not at all. But my sister was getting a bit concerned.

MRS. WHO

Ahhh! Little Megsie. Lovely to meet you, sweetheart!

CW

I really don't think you ought to have taken Mrs. Buncombe's sheets. Why on earth did you need them?

MRS. WHO

Why, Charlsie. Le coeur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point. French. Pascal. The heart has its reasons, whereof reason knows nothing.

CW

That is totally irrelevant.

MRS. WHO

Your mother wouldn't agree.

CW

I'm not talking about my mother's feelings toward Father. I'm talking about Mrs. Buncombe's sheets.

MRS. WHO

The sheets? We use them to frighten people away, of course. That's why it's so much fun to stay in a cemetery. But, we're sorry. You weren't supposed to find out about the sheets. In flagrante delicto. Latin. Caught in the act.

CW

Mrs. Who, do you know this boy?

CALVIN

Good afternoon, ma'am. I didn't quite catch your name.

MRS. WHO

Mrs. Who will do. He wasn't my idea, Charlsie, but I think he's a good one.

CW

Where is Mrs. Whatsit?

MRS. WHO

She'll be here soon. It's getting near time, Charlsie. Getting near time. Ab honesto virum bonum nihil deterret. Seneca. Nothing deters a good man from doing what is honorable. And he's a very good man, Charlsie darling. But right now he needs our help.

MEG

Who?

MRS. WHO

Yes, Megsie? What is it?

MEG

No, I mean **who** needs our help?

MRS. WHO

Oh. Why, your father, of course.

MEG

Father? Do you know where Father is?

MRS. WHO

In good time. All in good time, Megsie. Now, Charlsie, we must get ready.

(MRS. WHO drags CW SR, leaving MEG and CALVIN alone.)

MEG

Charles. I don't understand!

CW

I'm not sure I do either. I'll tell you what I know as soon as I can.

CALVIN (*throwing open his arms*)

This is great.

MEG

I'm so confused.

CALVIN

So am I. But now at least I know we're going someplace. Tell me about your father.

MEG

He's a physicist.

CALVIN

Sure, we all know that. And he's supposed to have left your mother and gone off with some dame.
(*In anger, MEG turns to walk away. CALVIN grabs her by the wrist and pulls her back.*)
Hold it, kid. I didn't say anything you haven't heard before, right?

MEG

No. Let me go.

CALVIN

Come on. Calm down. Anyone who's ever taken one look at your mom knows that couldn't be true. I mean, she's beautiful. It just goes to show what jealousy will do to people. Right?

MEG

I guess so.

CALVIN

Look, stupid. I just want to get things straight. Sort out the fact from the fiction. Your father's a physicist. That's a fact, yes?

MEG

Yes.

CALVIN

He's a Ph.D. several times over.

MEG

Yes.

CALVIN

Then he did some kind of work for the government. Right?

MEG

Yes.

CALVIN

You take it from there. That's all I know.

MEG

That's about all I know, too. Maybe Mother knows more. I don't know. What he did was - well, it was what they called Classified.

CALVIN

Top Secret, huh? Wow! And you don't know what it was about?

MEG

No. Not really. Just an idea. Because of where he was.

CALVIN

Well? Where?

MEG

Out in New Mexico for a while. We were with him there. And then he was in Florida at Cape Kennedy. And then he was going to be traveling a lot, so we came here.

CALVIN

And you don't know where your father was sent?

MEG

No. At first we got lots of letters. Mother and Father wrote each other every day. And then the letters just stopped coming.

CALVIN

You haven't heard anything at all?

MEG

Nope. *(She hands CALVIN a photograph.)* That's him. There.

CALVIN

The one with the glasses?

MEG

Yup. The one who needs a haircut.

CALVIN

I like him. Looks kind of like Charles Wallace, doesn't he?

MEG *(laughing)*

When Charles was a Baby he looked **exactly** like Father. It was really funny.

CALVIN

He's not handsome or anything. But I like him.

MEG

He is too handsome.

CALVIN

Nah. He's tall and skinny like me.

MEG

Well, you're handsome. I mean . . . well, Father's eyes are kind of like yours. You know. Only you don't notice him as much because of his glasses.

CALVIN

Like you.

MEG

What do you mean?

CALVIN *(removing her glasses)*

I never noticed before, but you've got dream-boat eyes. Do you know that this is the first time I ever saw you without your glasses.

MEG

Without my glasses, I'm as blind as a bat. I'm near-sided, just like Father.

CALVIN

Well, you go right on wearing your glasses. I don't want anybody else to see what gorgeous eyes you have.

CW

Okay, hold it you two. I wasn't spying on you, and I hate to break things up, but this is it kids. This is it.

CALVIN

This is what?

CW

We're going!

MEG

Going? Going where?

CW

I don't know exactly. But I thinks it's to find Father.

MRS. WHATSIT *(entering from over a wall)*

My, but I wish there wasn't any wind. It's so difficult with all these clothes.

MRS. WHO

Then why do you insist on wearing so many?

MRS. WHATSIT *(still struggling)*

Oh dear, I shall never learn to manage.

MRS. WHO *(helping her up)*

Come t'e picciol fallo amaro morso! Dante. What grievous pain a little fault does give thee!

MRS. WHATSIT

Oh, thank you. You're so clever!

MRS. WHO

Un asno viejo sabe mas que un potro. A. Perez. An old ass knows more than a young colt.

MRS. WHATSIT

Really! Just because you're a few billion years older than me.

MRS. WHO

A few billion?

VOICE

Alll rrightt, girrlss, Thiss iss nno ttime forr bbickkerring.

CW

It's Mrs. Which!

MEG

A witch?

CALVIN

Where?

MEG

Oh, no.

MRS. WHICH

(still just a vaguely distinguishable presence)

Oh, yes. Bbut, I ddo nott thinkk I willl matterrialize commpletely. I ffindd itt verry ttingg, andd wee hhave
mmuch too ddoo. Everybbdy ready?

(The wind increases and the trees are lashed into a frenzy.)

CALVIN

Ready for what?

MEG

I don't think I'm going to like this.

(The tesseract effect begins: a combination of fog, lights and sound effects. MEG screams, as it all begins.)

MRS. WHICH

Qquiett chilldd!

MEG

What's going on? Charles? Calvin? Charles Wallace, where are you?

CALVIN

Meg? I can't see you. Are you there?

(The effects starts to die down. Meg is thrown to the ground from the force, CW is standing surveying the surroundings and CALVIN is just a bit woozy. The setting has changed to a bright mid-day exterior, although it is an alien landscape. The three MRS. W's are sitting on some rocks nearby, pretending to hold a ceremony.)

CW

Well! That was quite a trip! Meg! Calvin, are you all right?

CALVIN

Well, just give me time, will you? I'm older than you are.

MEG

What was that? Where am I?

MRS. W's

"When shall we three meet again

In thunder, lightning, or in rain?"

CALVIN and MRS. WHO
Shakespeare.

CALVIN

I know. "MacBeth"

(MEG, finally getting her bearings, looks at MRS. WHICH, who has finally materialized. She is dressed as the stereotypical witch of lore.)

MEG

A-ha! So you really are a witch. I knew it!

(MRS. WHATSIT and MRS. WHO begin giggling. They soon build to uncontrollable laughter.)

MRS. WHICH

Well, if you insist. *(She gives her best cackling imitation of an evil witch laugh.)*

CW

If you ladies have had your fun, I think you should explain yourselves to Calvin and Meg. They really aren't witches, Meg. They just like tricking people.

MEG

Then what . . . ?

MRS. WHATSIT

Almost, dearie. It's 'Whatsit'.

MEG

Who . . .

MRS. WHO

Exactly!

MEG

Which . . . ?

MRS. WHICH

At your service.

MEG

Ooooooh.

CW

You know, I do think you might have warned us. You scared Meg half to death whisking her off like that.

MRS. WHO

Finxerunt animi, raro et perpauce loquentis. Horace. Actions peak louder than words.

MEG

Will you please stop quoting everything?

MRS. WHATSIT

Oh, but she must, lamb. She finds it so difficult to verbalize on her own.

MRS. WHICH

Anndd wee musstn'tt looose ourr sennses of hummorr.

CALVIN

But where are we? And how did we get here?

MRS. WHO

We're on Uriel, the third planet of the star Malak in the spiral nebula Messier 101.

CALVIN

And I'm supposed to believe that?

MRS. WHICH

Aas yyou llike.

MEG

Why not? It doesn't seem any more peculiar than anything else that's happened.

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, but we don't travel at the speed of anything. We tessier. Or you might say . . .

ALL 3 MRS. W's
We wrinkle!

CALVIN (*sarcastically*)
Gotcha! Clear as mud.

MRS. WHATSIT

It's really quite simple. Traveling at the speed of light, as you pointed out Calvin, is dreadfully slow. Tessering

is like taking a short cut. *(To MRS. WHO)* Take your sheet and show them. You see, if a very small insect were to move across the section of sheet in Mrs. Who's right hand to that in her left, it would be quite a long walk

MRS. WHO

If it had to walk straight across.

MRS. WHATSIT

But if the sheet had a wrinkle in it . . . *(She snaps her fingers and MRS. WHO demonstrates.)* . . . now, it would be there without that long trip. That is how we travel.

(CW accepts the explanation silently, nodding his head. CALVIN lets out an "Oooh", while MEG shakes her head.)

MEG

Oh, dear. I guess I am a moron. I just don't get it.

MRS. WHATSIT

That's because you think of space only in three dimensions. We travel in the fifth dimension.

CALVIN

The fifth dimension? I know of only three.

MRS. WHATSIT

What are they?

(As CALVIN and MRS. WHATSIT continue with the explanation the other two W's illustrate with long cords.)

CALVIN

Well, the first dimension is a line.

MRS. WHATSIT

Okay. And the second dimension?

CALVIN

Well, you'd have to square the line. A flat square would be in the second dimension.

MRS. WHATSIT

Good. Now what about the third dimension?

CALVIN

Well, you'd square the second dimension. Then the square wouldn't be flat anymore. It would have a bottom, and sides and a top.

MEG

A cube!

MRS. WHATSIT

That's right. Now keep going. What is the fourth dimension?

CALVIN

Well, you'd have to square the cube. But you can't draw that like you can the first three. I know it's got something to do with Einstein.

CW

Time! The fourth dimension must be time! And the fifth dimension . . .

CW and MRS. WHATSIT

. . . is a tesseract!

CALVIN

A wrinkle in time!

MEG

Wait a minute. You mean like Mother's tesseract? That must mean. . . Is my father here?

MRS. WHICH

Nno, nnot heeere, Meg. Wwe jjustt stopppedd heeere to cccatch ourr bbreathsss.

MRS. WHATSIT

And to show you what you're up against.

MEG

But what about Father? Is he all right?

MRS. WHATSIT

For the moment, love, yes. He's one of the reasons we're here.

MEG

Well, where is he? Please take me to him!

MRS. WHATSIT

We can't, not yet. You have to be patient, Meg.

MEG

But I'm **not** patient.

MRS. WHO

If you want to help your father then you must learn patience. "Vitam impendere vero." Latin, again. To stake one's life for the truth. That is what we must do.

MRS. WHATSIT

That is what your father is doing.

MRS. WHICH (*to MRS. WHATSIT*)
Sshoww themm.

MRS. WHATSIT (*uncomfortably*)
Now?

MRS. WHICH
Nnoww.

MRS. WHATSIT

Just because I'm the youngest . . .

CALVIN

Just how old **are** you?

MRS. WHATSIT (*counting on her fingers*)

2,379,152,497 years, 8 months and 3 days.. That is, according to your calendar, of course. It really was a very great honor for me to be chosen for this mission. It's just because of my verbalizing and materializing so well, you know. But of course we can't take credit for our talents. It's how we use them that counts. And I make far too many mistakes. That's why Mrs. Who and I enjoyed seeing Mrs. Which . . .

MRS. WHICH (*sternly*)
Whatsit!

MRS. WHATSIT

Sorry. Sorry. (*to MEG*) We're here.

(MRS. WHATSIT ushers the children in through a doorway. Inside a woman is gazing raptly into a crystal ball. After a beat, the woman begins laughing at whatever she sees in the globe.)

MEG

Who is she? And why is she laughing like that?

MRS. WHATSIT

Why, she's the Happy Medium. Surely you've heard of her?

MEG

Well, now that you mention it, my mother did say I should find a happy medium.

MRS. WHATSIT

Oh, Medium, dear. These are the children. Charles Wallace Murry. Margaret Murry. And Calvin O'Keefe.

(All the children bow or curtsy in turn.)

MRS. WHICH

Time tto shoow themm whatt they'rre upp aggainstt.

MEDIUM (*losing her smile*)

Oh, why must you make me look at unpleasant things when there are so many delightful ones to see?

MRS. WHICH

Therre willl nno llonggerr bee sso manyy pplleasantt thinggss too llookk att iff rresponsible ppeople ddo nnot ddoo ssomethingg abboutt thee unnpleassantt oness.

(The Medium sighs and looks into the crystal ball.)

MRS. WHATSIT

Look children Look into it well.

(The children gaze into the crystal ball. At first it reveals a dark and empty space, and then a galaxy comes into view.)

Your own Milky Way. And now we're moving closer to your home.

MRS. WHICH

No, no, Medium dear, that's Mars.

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.

CALVIN

Earth! But what's wrong with it?

MEG

Is that pollution in the atmosphere? Is that why we can't see it properly?

MRS. WHICH

Nno, Mmegg, yyou knnoww thatt iss nnott thee attmossphееere. Yyou musstt bee brrave.

CW

It's bad

MEG

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

MRS. WHICH

Ttell herrr.

MRS. WHATSIT

No Meg. It hasn't just come. It has been there for a great many years. That is why your planet is such a

troubled one.

CW

I hate it. It's evil.

MRS. WHATSIT

Yes, Charles dear. We all do.

CALVIN

But what is it? We know that it's evil, but what is it?

MRS. WHICH

Yyouu hhave ssaid it! Itt iss Eevill. Itt iss thee Ppowers of Ddarrkknness.

MEG

But what's going to happen? Oh, please, Mrs. Which, tell us what's going to happen!

MRS. WHICH (*nodding to MEDIUM*)

Shhhoww themmm!

MEDIUM

Awww, do I have to?

MRS. WHICH

Nnoww!

(The crystal ball stays dark momentarily then reveals a figure.)

MEG

Father! It's Father. Where is he?

MRS. WHICH

On a planet that has given in.

MEG

But what's wrong with him. He's in pain.

MRS. WHICH

Hhee'ss ffighttngg thhee Ddarkknnesss.

MEG

We must help him.

MRS. WHICH

Yesss, yyou mmusstt ggo tto himm.

MEG

How?

MRS. WHICH

Wwe wwill ttake yyou thherre.

MEG

Let's go.

MRS. WHATSIT

That's it, dear. Stay angry. That will help you through. Remember.

MRS. WHICH

Gggoddbye, Mmeddiumm, ddear.

MEDIUM (*crying hysterically*)

I only meant to help . . .

MRS. WHATSIT

Oh Medium, dear don't feel badly. Look at something cheerful now. Please do. I can't bear to have you distressed!

MEG

It's all right. Truly it is, Mrs. Medium. And we thank you very much.

MEDIUM (*brightening*)

Are you sure?

MEG

Of course. It really helped ever so much.

MEDIUM

Well, kiss me good-by, then. (*MEG and CW do so.*) I want the young man to kiss me, too. It'll give you good luck, Laddie-me-love. (*CALVIN awkwardly kisses her lightly on the cheek.*) You've got a lot to learn, my boy.

MRS. WHATSIT

Good-by, Medium dear, and many thanks. I dare say we'll see you . . . in an eon or two!

MEDIUM

Where are you going in case I want to tune in?

MRS. WHATSIT (*as they exit*)

Camazotz. But please don't trouble yourself on our behalf. You know you don't like looking in on the dark planets. And it's very upsetting to us when you're unhappy.

MEDIUM

But I must know what happens to the children. It's my worst fault, getting fond of people. If I didn't get fond I could be happy all the time. Oh well, ho hum. I manage to keep pretty jolly, and a little snooze will do wonders for me right now. Good-by, everybbb . . . (*She begins snoring.*)

MRS. WHICH

Nnnow childdrenn, yyou mmustt nnot bbe ffrighttenedd att whatt iss ggoingg tto hhappenn.

MRS. WHATSIT

We can't go with you, you know.

MEG and CALVIN

What?

MRS. WHATSIT

You three children will be on your own. But we will be nearby - watching you. You will not be able to see us, though. Or ask for help.

MRS. WHICH

Andd wwe wwllll nnot bbe abllle tto ccome tto yyou.

MRS. WHATSIT

You will need help, but all we can give you is a talisman. Calvin, your great gift is your ability to communicate with all kinds of people. So for you, I will magnify this gift. *(She hands him a magnifying glass.)* Meg, I give you your faults. *(She hands to her a crystal, cracked.)*

MEG

My faults! But I'm always trying to get rid of my faults.

MRS. WHATSIT

Yes, but stubbornness and independence will come in very handy on Camazotz. Charles Wallace, the danger here is greatest for you. The only thing I can give to you is the resilience of your childhood. *(She hands him a willow branch.)* The strength to weather any storm.

MRS. WHO

My turn My turn. Calvin, for you as little hint:
"For that he was a spirit too delicate
To act their earthly and abhorr'd commands,
Refusing their grand hests, they did confine him
By help of their most potent ministers,
And in their unmitigable rage,
Into a cloven pine, within which rift
Imprisoned, he didst painfully remain . . .
Shakespeare.

CALVIN

"The Tempest". Yeah, I know. Thank you. I think.

MRS. WHO

This is for you, Charles Wallace. "Allwissend bin ich nicht; doch viel ist mir bewisst." Goethe. I do not know everything; still many things I understand. Remember that, Charles. You do not know everything. *(To MEG.)* To you I leave my glasses, little blind-as-a-bat. But do not use them except as a last resort. Save them for the final moment of peril.

MRS. WHICH

Tto alll threee off yyou I ggive mmy ccommmandd: Ggo ttogetherr. Ddo nnott llett themmm sseparate yyou. Bbe sstrongg. NNow cchildrenn, arre yyou readdy?

MEG

Can we hold hands this time?

MRS. WHATSIT

You can try. But understand this: though we travel together, each of us travels alone. We'll go first and bring you children along in the backwash. Perhaps that will be easier on you. Especially for you, Margaret dear.

(The tessera effect begins again. The children takes hold of each other's hand.)

ALL THREE CHILDREN

To Camazotz!

(This time the tessering is even worse than before, especially for MEG: there is intense cold as well. When the effect fades, they collapse and lie groaning. MEG is the last to be released. Around them is a town.)

CW

Is this Camazotz?

CALVIN

Oh, that was awful!

VOICE OF MRS. WHATSIT

The Darkness is very close here, children. Remember what we told you. Remember our gifts. And beware of pride and arrogance, Charles. They may betray you.

VOICE OF MRS. WHICH

And kkeeppp togetherrr.

VOICE OF MRS. WHO

Good-by, children.

VOICE OF MRS. WHICH

Nnoww ggo intoo thee ttownn.

MEG

Let's go. Let's go find Father! Come **on**.

(The children and head towards the town. They come to a row of identical houses. Shortly a group of identically-dressed children enters, marching in line.)

CW

What's this? A parade?

MEG

More like a drill team.

CALVIN

Or cheerleader practice.

(The children march to their respective houses, where the doors fly open at precisely the same moment. A mother appears at each door, hands their child a rubber ball, pats them on the head, then s the door.)

CW

Look! They're bouncing their balls in rhythm. Everyone's doing it at exactly the same moment.

MEG

How can they do that? What does it mean? We couldn't do that if we tried.

CALVIN

I'm not sure I'd want to. Let's go back.

CW

Back? Where?

CALVIN

I don't know. Anywhere. I don't like this.

MEG

Come on. You know we can't go back. Mrs. Which said to go into the town

(MEG starts off towards one of the house.)

CALVIN

Wait a minute. Look!

(MEG looks to see what CALVIN is pointing at: one of the little girls is having a difficult time with her ball. She is unable to keep bouncing it in unison with the others, finally missing it altogether. The ball rolls towards MEG, who picks it up. The door to the girl's house opens and her mother peers out in

horror. All the other doors open, mothers pull their children back inside, all the while shunning the girl who had dropped her ball. Finally mother and child return inside.)

CALVIN

Oh how sad. Just because she's different.

MEG

Let's bring the ball to her.

(She goes to the door and knocks on it. It opens slowly, as do the other doors.)

WOMAN

What do you want? It isn't paper time yet. We've had milk time, and I've given my Decency Donations regularly. All my papers are in order.

MEG

I think your little girl dropped her ball.

WOMAN

Oh no! The children in our section never drop balls! They're all perfectly trained. We haven't had an Aberration for three years.

(Heads nod yes from all the houses. CW moves closer to peek in around the woman, into her house. The girl comes and stands behind her mother.)

WOMAN

You can't come in. You haven't shown me any papers. I don't have to let you in if you haven't any papers.

(MEG holds out the ball to the little girl, who runs out and grabs it quickly, then darts back inside. The woman opens her mouth in shock, then slams the door. All the other doors slam as well.)

CW

What are they afraid of? What's the matter with them?

MEG

Don't you know, Charles? Can't you hear what's inside their heads?

CW

Not yet. Not even an inkling. And I'm trying.

(An older boy enters and begins tossing newspapers to each of the doors. Again, his motions are identical at each house.)

PAPER BOY

What are you kids doing out on the street. Only paper boys are allowed out now. You know that.

CW

No, we don't know it.

CALVIN

Uh - yeah. We're strangers here. How about telling us something about this place.

PAPER BOY

You mean you've had your entrance papers processed and everything? You must have if you're here. And what are you doing here if you don't know about us?

CW

You tell me.

PAPER BOY

Are you examiners? Well, you'll find everything in order here. Our factories never close; our machines never stop rolling. Our production levels are the highest on the planet. We also have five poets, one musician, three artists, and six sculptors, all doing officially sanctioned work.

CW

What are you quoting from?

PAPER BOY

Why, the Manual, of course. We are the most oriented city on the planet. There has been no trouble of any kind for centuries. All Camazotz knows our record. That is why we are the capital city of Camazotz. That's why CENTRAL Central Intelligence is located here. That is why IT makes IT'S home here.

CW

IT?

CALVIN

Central Intelligence?

PAPER BOY

CENTRAL Central.

MEG

Maybe that's where . . . Where is it?

PAPER BOY

Just keep going and you can't miss it. Boy, you really are strangers, aren't you! What are you doing here?

CW

Are you supposed to ask questions?

PAPER BOY

I humbly beg your pardon. I must continue my route now or I will have to talk my timing into the explainer.

CW

What is it? There was something funny about the way he talked, as though - well, almost like he wasn't the one talking. Know what I mean?

CW

Funny is right. Funny peculiar. I think we ought to have passports or something.

CW

If we needed passports or papers, Mrs. Whatsit would have told us.

CALVIN

Look here, I love those three old girls as much as you do, but I'm not sure they know **everything**.

CW

They know a lot more than we do.

CALVIN

I mean about people. They're not **real** people, after all.

(The doors to the houses fling open, and identically dressed business people emerge, all carrying briefcases.)

Hey, maybe these people aren't real people either.

MEG

Maybe they're just robots.

CW

No. That girl who dropped the ball wasn't any robot. And the rest of them aren't either. I'm not sure what they are, but they're not robots. I can feel minds there. Let me try some more.

(CW stands 'listening' as the BUSINESS PEOPLE stream into the door marked 'CENTRAL Central Intelligence'. One enters later than the others)

BUSINESS PERSON

Oh dear, I shall be late.

MEG

He's like the White Rabbit.

CW

No. Nothing. I'm scared I can't reach them at all.

MEG

We have to find Father.

CW

Meg, I'm not sure I'll even know Father. It's been so long, and I was only a baby . . .

MEG

You'll know him! Of course you'll know him. The way you'd know me even without looking in.

CW

Yes. Well, let's go. Let's go in to CENTRAL Central Intelligence.

CALVIN *(stopping CW)*

You remember when we met, you asked me why I was there? And I told you it was because I had a compulsion, a feeling?

CW

Yeah, sure.

CALVIN

Well, I've got another feeling. A feeling that if we go into this building, we're going into terrible danger.

MEG *(opening the door)*

But we must find Father.

BLACKOUT.

Act Two

(At rise: the interior of the CENTRAL Central Intelligence building. The children enter and cross to the center of the room where a man is seated on a chair on a platform.)

RED EYES

Welcome. I've been waiting for you, my dears. But how does it happen that there are three of you?

CW

Oh, Calvin just came along for the ride.

RED EYES

Oh, he did, did he? I hope it has been a pleasant ride, so far.

CW

Very educational.

RED EYES

Let Calvin speak for himself.

CALVIN

I have nothing to say.

CW

Close your eyes! He'll hypnotize you.

RED EYES

Clever, aren't you. Focusing your eyes, of course, would help. But there are other ways, my little man. Oh yes,

there are other ways.

CW

If you try it on me I shall kick you!

MEG

Charles!

RED EYES

Oh will you, little man?

(Four guards in dark smocks enter and flank the children.)

Now, my dears, you will soon realize that there is no need to fight me. After all, why should you fight someone who is here to help you. To save you from pain and responsibility. To save you from the terrible burden of thought and decision. I can do that for you.

CW

We will make our own decisions, thank you.

RED EYES

But of course. And our decisions will be one, yours and mine. Don't you see how much better, how much easier for you that is. Let me show you. Let us say the Multiplication table together.

CW

No.

RED EYES

One times one is one. One times two is two. One times three is three.

CW

Mary had a little lamb! It's fleece was white as snow!

RED EYES

One times four is four. One times five is five. One times six is six.

CW

And everywhere that Mary went the lamb was sure to follow.

MEG

Charles? What's the matter?

RED EYES

One times seven is seven. One times eight is eight. One times nine is nine.

CW

Peter, Peter, pumpkin eater, had a wife and couldn't keep her . . .

RED EYES

One times ten is ten. One times eleven is eleven. One times twelve is twelve.

MEG

What are you doing to my brother?

RED EYES

Two times one is two. Two times two is four. Two times three is six.

CW (in an angry shout)

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

RED EYES

Splendid! Splendid! That was terrific concentration. You have passed the first test with flying colors.

CW

You didn't think I was going to fall for that old stuff, did you?

RED EYES

I certainly hoped not. But after all, you are very young and very impressionable, and the younger the better, my little man. The younger the better.

MEG

If you please, sir. The only reason we are here is because we think our father is here. Can you tell us where to

find him?

RED EYES

Ah, your father! It is not **can** I, you know young lady, but **will** I?

MEG

Will you, then?

RED EYES

That depends on a number of things. Why do you want your father?

MEG

Because he's our father! Didn't you ever have a father?

RED EYES

Ah, but he hasn't been acting much like a father, lately, has he? Abandoning his wife and children to go off gallivanting on some wild adventure of his own.

MEG

He was working for the government. He'd never have left us otherwise. And we want to see him, please. Right now.

RED EYES

Patience, young lady. Patience.

MEG

No! You tell us. NOW!

(CW suddenly rushes towards the platform and hits RED EYES. MEG instantly seeks to protect him.)

MEG

Charles!

CALVIN *(restraining her)*

No. Wait . . .

(The guards start towards CW, but RED EYES holds up a finger and they return to their original places.)

RED EYES

May I ask why you did that?

CW

Because you aren't you. I'm not sure what you are, but you aren't what's talking to us. *(to MEG and CALVIN)*
This probing in my head - it's not coming from him. It's coming from someone else. Or something else

RED EYES

Pretty smart, aren't you? Then why not try to find out who I am?

CW

I've been trying to.

RED EYES

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

MEG

Don't do it Charles. It's a trick.

CW

I have to. How else will we ever find Father?

MEG

Let me do it.

CW

You can't.

MEG

What about Calvin?

RED EYES

No. Only this precocious little child has a neurological system complex enough to know me. If I opened my mind fully to either of you, your brains would explode.

CW

You see. I'm the only one who can.

RED EYES

That's right, little man. You're special. Be proud of that.

CW

If I come in - just to find out about you - will I be able to get out again?

RED EYES

But of course. If you want to. But once you know me, I don't think you will want to leave.

CW

Can I speak to Meg and Calvin alone, without your listening in?

RED EYES

No.

CW

Listen. I'm the only one who can find out what he really is.

MEG

Charles Wallace, remember what Mrs. Whatsit said about pride and arrogance.

CW

Meg! I can do this! *(to RED EYES)* If I come in, will you tell me where Father is?

RED EYES

Yes. And that is a promise. I don't make promises lightly.

CW

Okay. *(to MEG and CALVIN)* I'm going to try to hold back. I'm going to try to keep part of myself out.

MEG

But you won't be able to, Charles! He's stronger than you are! You know that!

CW

I have to try, Meg. For Father. Please. *(He begins to walk towards the platform.)* Okay. Let's go.

MEG
Calvin -

CALVIN
Maybe he's right, Meg.

MEG
What? Calvin, you're supposed to protect him.

CALVIN
I'm also supposed to help you find your father.

CW
And it's not only Father, Meg. You know that, now. It's fighting the Darkness; the Evil Thing. We have to do what Mrs. Which sent us to do.

(CW turns his attention to RED EYES. The eyes begin glowing.)

MEG
She said not to go off on your own! Calvin! She said we should do it together! How can you let him go?

CALVIN
Meg, we'll be right here with him. No matter what happens.

MEG
But we don't know what will happen!

CW
(turning around with a blissful, but empty, smile)

But why are you so upset, Margaret?

MEG

Oh, no! I knew it!

CALVIN

What's the matter?

MEG (*grabbing CALVIN*)

That isn't Charles. That isn't Charles Wallace!

CALVIN

What do you mean? How do you know?

MEG

He never once called me Margaret in his whole life. Where is my brother? What have you done with him?

RED EYES

But my dear child, you are hysterical. He is right there in front of you. Well, and happy.

MEG

You know it isn't Charles! You've got him somehow.

CALVIN

Hush, Meg. There's no use trying to talk to him. What we have to do is hold Charles Wallace tight. He's there, somewhere, underneath, and we can't let him take him away from us.

(*CALVIN and MEG each grab hold of one of CW's arms.*)

CW

You're hurting me, Meg! Let me go!

MEG

No!

CW

We've been wrong, Meg. He isn't an enemy at all. He's our friend.

CALVIN

Bull!

CW

You don't understand, Calvin. Meg, let go. I will explain it all to you.

(CW begins struggling against them with unearthly strength.)

MEG

No! Calvin, help. I can't hold him!

CALVIN

I'm doing the best I can. He's gotten pretty strong for a little kid.

PIPPIN

Mrs. Whatsit! Mrs. Which! Help us!

CW

They can't help you now. *(With a sudden explosive burst of force, CW hurls MEG and CALVIN away as if they were mere playthings.)* You've got to stop fighting and relax.

CW & RED EYES

Relax. If you'd just relax, you'd see that all your troubles are over. Relax and discover what a perfect place we have here. Here on Camazotz everything is in perfect order because everybody has learned to relax. To give in. To submit. Submit.

CW

Submit. Just look into the eyes of our good friend here, for he is our friend, dear sister.

MEG

He's taken you in, all right! Calvin, listen. Quick. Remember Mrs. Whatsit said your gift was communication? We've been trying to fight Charles physically, and that isn't any good. Can't you try to communicate with him? Can't you try to get in to him?

CALVIN

Of course! How stupid could I be?

(CALVIN crosses to CW and grabs his arm.)

CW *(pulling free, snarling)*

Leave me alone!

CALVIN

I'm not going to hurt you. I'm just trying to be friendly. Let's make up, huh?

CW

You mean you're coming around?

CALVIN

Sure. We're reasonable people, aster all. Just look at me for a minute, Charles.

(CW turns eagerly and looks at CALVIN with his empty smile. CALVIN returns the gaze with steely determination. A shudder passes through CW's body, then twirls round wildly, then goes rigid and robot-like.)

CW

I should have known better. Now if you're done with this hanky-panky, there's some things you'll need to know, before I can take you to see Murry.

CALVIN

Is that what you call your father - Murry?

CW

Father? What is a father? Merely another misconception. If you feel the need of a Father, I suggest you turn to IT.

MEG

IT? Who is this IT?

CW

All in good time. You're not ready for IT yet. First I will tell you about the beautiful, enlightened planet of Camazotz. On Camazotz we are all happy. Because we are all alike. Differences create problems. You know that, don't you, dear sister?

MEG
No.

CW

Oh yes, you do. You've seen at home how true it is. You know that's the reason you're not happy at school. Because you're different.

CALVIN

I'm different, and I'm happy.

CW

But you pretend that you aren't different.

MEG

Well, maybe I don't like being different. But I don't want to be just like everybody else.

CW

But you won't be exactly like everybody else. You'll have **some** mind of your own. Why do you think we have wars at home? Why do you think people get confused and unhappy? Because they all live they're own separate, individual lives. Here, Camazotz is ONE mind. It's IT. Nobody suffers here. Nobody is ever unhappy.

MEG

But nobody's ever happy, either. Maybe if you aren't unhappy sometimes, you don't know how to be happy.

CW

How dreadful it is to be low, individual organisms. Here, take a look at this.

(A change of lights reveals a girl bouncing a ball in rhythm to the pulsing of a light. Every time the ball bounces, he screams in agony.)

CALVIN

That's the little girl we saw this afternoon. The one who wasn't bouncing the ball like the others.

CW

Yes. Every once in a while there's a little trouble with cooperation, but it's easily taken care of. After today he'll

never desire to deviate again.

MEG

That's horrible.

CW

No, it is not horrible. In this way we have eliminated all illness, all deformity. We let no one suffer.

CALVIN

You don't call that suffering?

CW

Nobody has weeks and weeks of runny noses or sore throats. Rather than endure such discomfort, they are simply put to sleep.

MEG

Until they get better, you mean?

CW

That would hardly be efficient, dear sister. Who would do their jobs in the meantime?

CALVIN

You mean put them to sleep permanently. You kill them.

MEG

You murder people just because they have a cold?

CW

Murder is a most primitive word. There is no such thing as murder here on Camazotz. IT takes care of all such things. And then there's Murry.

(The lights on the little boy go down. Other lights come up on MR. MURRY.)

MEG

Father! *(MEG runs to her Father, but is repelled by a cylindrical force field which seems to encase him.)* Oh, Father . . .

CW

Boy, he's sure a mess, isn't he?

MEG

Charles, that's Father! Father!

CW

So what?

(MEG turns away from CW in disgust. She holds her arms out towards the figure of her father. He does not respond.)

CALVIN

He doesn't see us, Meg.

CALVIN

I think it's sort of like those peepholes they have in apartments, in the front doors. You know, from the inside you can see out, but from the outside you can't see anything at all.

MEG

What's wrong with him? Why have they done this? Charles!

CW

It's for his own good. Until he sees the rightness of our way.

CALVIN

Until you make him see it, you mean.

MEG

Charles! Let me in to see Father!

CW

Impossible, I'm afraid. Unless you really want to help Father . . .

MEG

You know I do.

CW

Then you must do as I have done. Go in to IT.

MEG

No.

CW

I can see you really don't want to save Father.

MEG

How will my being a zombie save Father?

CW

You will just have to take my word for it, Margaret. IT wants you and IT will get you. Don't forget that I, too, am part of IT, now. You know I wouldn't have done IT if IT weren't the right thing to do.

MEG

Calvin, will it really save, Father?

CALVIN (*concentrating all his energy on CW*)

"for thou wast a spirit too delicate; to act her earthly and abhorr'd commands . . . she did confine thee . . . into a cloven pine"

MEG

That's what Mrs. Who said. What does it mean?

CALVIN

If you want a witch, Charles, IT'S the witch. Not our ladies. Good thing I had "The Tempest" this year, isn't it. It was the witch who put Ariel in the cloven pine, wasn't it?

CW

Stop staring at me.

CALVIN

You're like Ariel in the cloven pine, Charles. And I can let you out. Look at me, Charles. Come back to us.

(A deep shudder ripples through CW's body.)

Come back, Charles. Come back to us.

(Again the shudder goes through his body. Then, as if an invisible hand smacks him in the chest, CW is flung to the ground. An animal-like whimpering comes from him.)

MEG

Calvin, try to get Father.

CALVIN

Charles almost came out. I almost did it. He almost came back to us.

MEG

Try Father!

CALVIN

How?

MEG

Your cloven pine thing. Isn't Father imprisoned in a cloven pine even more than Charles? Look at him, in that column there. Get him out, Calvin.

CALVIN

Meg. I don't know what to do.

MEG

Mrs. Who's spectacles!

(MEG retrieves the glasses from her pocket with trembling hands.)

CW

Give me those spectacles. *(CW lunges at MEG and grabs her by the ankle. MEG kicks him away and puts the glasses on.)* Give them to me!

MEG

Of course! It's not really there! They only want us to think it's real.

(MEG runs at the cylinder and passes through. She presses against him, feeling the complete

reassurance and safety of his presence.)

MEG

Oh, Father! Oh, Father!

FATHER

No leave me alone. I told you, I won't do it. I won't!

MEG

Father, what is it? Are you all right? It's me, Meg!

FATHER

What? Who? Meg? MEG! Is that really you?

MEG

Yes, of course it's me. Can't you see me?

FATHER

No, Meg. That was the first thing he took from me.

MEG

Wait a minute. *(She pushes MRS. WHO's glasses down to the edge of her nose.)* Now I can't see you either.
(She looks through them again.) Yes! Here, put these on.

FATHER

No, I'm afraid your glasses won't help me, Megalopolis.

MEG

But they're not mine. They're Mrs. Who's?

FATHER

Whose?

MEG

Mrs. Oh, never mind. I'll explain later. Please try them, Father. Please! Can you see now?

FATHER

Yes. Yes. The wall is transparent now. How extraordinary! I could almost see the atoms rearranging. Charles! Charles Wallace! Meg, what's happened to him? What's wrong? That is Charles, isn't it?

MEG

Yes. But IT has him, Father. He's gone into IT.

FATHER

IT?

MEG

But its all right now, because we can get him back now. Right, Father?

FATHER

Meg, I'm in prison here. I can't do anything!

MEG

Father, these walls. You can go through them.

FATHER

It seems solid enough.

MEG

But I got in. I'm here. Maybe the glasses help the atoms rearrange. Try it, Father.

FATHER

Well, I guess it's worth a try.

(He puts on the glasses and easily steps through the cylinder. MEG screams in panic as she is left alone, but her voice is inaudible from outside.)

Well, I'll be. You were right, Megaphone. You . . . Meg? Of course, she can't get out without the glasses. I'm coming back for you Meg.

(He does so.)

MEG

. . . leave me in here all by myself, are you? Father? Oh, Father, I was so scared.

It's okay, Megacycle. Now, put your arms around my neck and hold tight. Close your eyes and don't be afraid.

MEG

Calvin, look! It's Father. He's free!

CALVIN

Hello, Mr. Murry. I'm very pleased . . .

CW

IT is not pleased. IT is not pleased at all.

FATHER

Charles. Charles Wallace.

CW

What do you want?

FATHER

It's me, Charles. Your father.

CW

Hi, Pop!

MEG

Don't me mad at him, Father. Charles isn't really like that. IT has him.

FATHER

Yes, I see. Charles. Come here. (CW *stays where he is.*) Look at me.

CW

No.

FATHER

When you speak to me you will say 'No , Father', or 'No, sir'.

CW

Come off it, Pop. You're not the boss around here.

FATHER

Oh? Well, who is your 'boss' then?

CW

IT.

FATHER

And where is this IT?

CW

IT is never far for those who seek IT. Behold.

(CW gestures and a round dais rises from beneath the floor into the center of the room. A dark shape can be seen outlined on the dais amidst a glow of violet flame and the rhythmic beating of a heart. The lights become more distinct as the entrance is completed. CW stares transfixed at IT. The other three recoil when they recognize what IT is.)

CALVIN

What is it?

FATHER

A machine.

MEG

That heart beat. Do you hear it?

FATHER

Yes. It's very . . .

CALVIN

. . . soothing.

MEG

I can't breath. I mean on my own.

FATHER

Look!

CALVIN

It's a . . .

CALVIN & FATHER

Brain!

MEG

My body . . . won't behave.

CALVIN

That's IT . . taking control . . . Of our . . . heart and lungs.

FATHER

Don't give in!

CALVIN

I won't! Help Meg!

FATHER

I . . can't . . .

VOICE OF MRS. WHATSIT

Meg, I give you your faults. Stubbornness and independence will come in very handy on Camazotz.

MEG

"Georgie, porgie, pudding and pie, Kissed the girls and made them cry." No! Too rhythmic. We hold these truths to be self-evident . . . that all men are created equal . . .

CW & IT

And that's exactly what we have on Camazotz. Complete equality. Everybody is exactly alike!

MEG

No! Like and equal are not the same thing at all!

FATHER

Good girl, Megaspore!

MEG

You don't have to be exactly like someone to be their equal!

(The logic and determination of MEG's realization provides her with a moment of freedom from IT's power. In this moment, she decides to attack the brain.)

IT

Stop! Don't you realize that if you destroy me, you also destroy your little brother?

MEG *(stopping momentarily)*

Why should I believe you?

IT

He's dependent on me. If I should break our connection . . .

(A bright flash and CW crumbles to the floor.)

MEG

Charles!

IT

That's right. Come to me. I am rest. I am freedom from pain. Come to me.

FATHER

The periodic table of elements, Meg! Say it!

MEG

Hydrogen. Helium. Lithiumm Berylliummmm.

CALVIN

It isn't working!

MEG

Boron . . . Carbon . . .

FATHER

Too rhythmic. Square roots, Meg! What's the square root of five?

MEG

Nitrogen . . .

FATHER

Meg, what's the square root of five?

CALVIN

She can't hear you, sir. IT's taking her!

MEG

Oxygen . . .

CALVIN

Tesser, sir.

FATHER

But . . .

CALVIN (*Fighting free to grab MEG*)

Tesser!

(The tesseract effect is the worst yet: violent and painful, but they get out of Camazotz. They are on a new planet, now. When the effect has subsided, MEG is sitting, frozen as a statue.)

CALVIN

There's no heartbeat!

FATHER (*running to MEG*)

Let me see her. IT got too close to her.

CALVIN

Is she . . dead?

FATHER (*walking away*)

Took over to much control.

CALVIN

Nooo! She can't be. Meg? Meg? Dream-boat eyes. Listen to me!

VOICE OF MEG

I hear you. But . . . cold. So cold. I . . . can't . . . move.

CALVIN

Sir. She's here. She's still here. I don't know how, but . . .

FATHER

She's as cold as a piece of marble, son.

VOICE OF MEG

No, I'm alive. I'm very much alive! Only I've been turned to stone.

FATHER

Wait a minute! I think I feel a pulse in her wrist now. Her heart **is** beating, but ever so slowly.

CALVIN

But it **is** beating. She is alive. Isn't she?

FATHER
Barely.

VOICE OF MEG

If I could just give them a signal. If I could just move . . .

CALVIN
Look! Didn't her eyelid move?

FATHER

No. It was just a shadow. I'm afraid . . .

VOICE OF MEG

But I did blink. I'm sure I did. Do something!

(She struggles harder and a small sound escapes from her mouth.)

FATHER

Listen! *(MEG groans and moves slightly. Her eyes open.)* Meg. Meg, are you all right?

MEG

Can't . . . move.

CALVIN

Try. Give me your hand.

MEG

Can't. Where's . . . Charles?

FATHER *(while massaging her limbs)*

Meg, can you feel my fingers?

MEG

No. Yes. A little. Where's Charles.

(Pause, as she was for an answer, but gets none.)

Father, where are we?

FATHER

I don't know. I don't tesser very well. I must have overshot, somehow.

MEG

Why am I so cold?

FATHER

We went through the Darkness when we left Camazotz. I thought for a moment it was going to tear you away from me.

MEG

Is this a dark planet?

FATHER

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

MEG

Then you shouldn't have tried to tessier.

CALVIN

It was the only thing to do. At least it got us off Camazotz.

MEG

And what about Charles? You got him off too, didn't you Father?

FATHER

Meg, you have to remember that the human brain is a very delicate instrument. If we had just tried to yank Charles Wallace away . . .

MEG

You mean you just left him there? How could you?

FATHER

We didn't just leave him . . .

CALVIN

Meg, IT was taking us. It nearly had you!

MEG

And you! You let him! No, I remember now. You told him to tessier.

FATHER

That's enough, young lady.

MEG

No! And you'd better take me back to Camazotz and Charles Wallace. Quickly. You're supposed to be able to help. You don't even know where we are.

FATHER

My daughter, I am not a Mrs. Whatsit, a Mrs. Who or a Mrs. Which. Yes, Calvin has told me everything. You see, I'm just a human being. And I make mistakes. But I think we were sent here for a reason.

CALVIN

Look!

(Three strange, dull gray figures move silently towards the group. Each has four arms with long waving tentacles and a head with no eyes. FATHER shields MEG, trying to protect her.)
How do you do, sir . . . er, Ma'am?

BEAST 1

Who are you?

CALVIN

We're . . . we're from Earth. I'm not sure how we got here. We've had an accident. Meg - this girl - is . . . is paralyzed. She can't move. She's terribly cold. We think that's why she can't move.

(BEAST 1 crosses to MEG, squats down beside her and reaches out a tentacle to touch her face. FATHER starts to object.)

FATHER

What are you doing?

BEAST 1

We will help this child. She must rest.

(Again the beast touches MEG with a tentacle. After a moment, she loses all her stiffness and falls asleep.)

FATHER

Noooo!

BEAST 2

We frighten you?

FATHER

What are you going to do with us?

BEAST 2

I'm sorry. We communicate better with the other one. Who are you?

CALVIN

I'm Calvin O'Keefe.

BEAST 3

What's that?

CALVIN

I'm a boy. A young man.

BEAST 2

You, too, are afraid?

CALVIN

I'm . . . not sure.

BEAST 3

Tell me. What do you suppose you'd do if the three of us suddenly appeared on your home planet?

CALVIN

Shoot you, I guess.

BEAST 3

Then isn't that what we should do with you?

CALVIN

I'd really rather you didn't. I mean the Earth's my home, and I'd rather be there than anywhere in the world - I mean, in the universe - and I can't wait to get back, but we have some very mean people. And they make some pretty stupid mistakes sometimes.

BEAST #2

You're not from a dark planet, are you?

CALVIN

No. Not yet. We're in the shadow of the Darkness. But we're fighting the shadow.

BEAST #1

You three are fighting?

CALVIN

Yes. Now that we know about it.

BEAST #3

You. The oldest. Man. From where have you come? Now?

FATHER

From a planet called Camazotz. *(There is a mutter from the three beasts.)* We do not belong there. I was a prisoner there, and these children rescued me. My youngest son, my baby, is still there, trapped in the dark mind of IT.

ALL THREE BEASTS

IT. Did you hear? IT. Yes. We must help. They are fighting the Darkness. And IT, etc.

BEAST #1

We will help this child.

FATHER

May I stay with her?

BEAST #1

No. This . . . girl needs prompt and special care. The coldness - the Darkness - burns unless it is counteracted properly. You must wait over there.

FATHER

What are you going to do to her?

CALVIN

It's okay, sir. We can trust them.

FATHER

How do you know?

CALVIN

Listen to them sir. Not with your ears. Listen with your heart.

(CALVIN and FATHER exit as all three beasts make a circle around Meg. They chant slowly to themselves as they touch her variously with their tentacles. Lights glow and fade as Meg groans and moves restlessly. When the procedure is complete, it is darker - nighttime - and all the BEASTS clear away, except BEAST #1. After a while, MEG sits up.)

BEAST #1

So you are awake, little one? What a funny little tadpole you are. Is the pain gone now?

MEG

Yes. All gone.

BEAST #1

Are you warm and alive again?

MEG

Yes. Thank you. *(She tries to get up.)* Where are Father and Calvin?

BEAST #1

No, lie still, small one. You must rest a while, yet. Until all traces of the Darkness are gone.

MEG

Why is it so dark here? Could you turn on a light please?

BEAST #1

Dark? Light. We do not understand. What is this thing called light?

MEG

Well, we can't see without it.

BEAST #1

We do not understand what that means, to **see**.

MEG

Oh, of course. You have no eyes. Well, on this planet, you have a sun, don't you?

BEAST #1

A most wonderful sun, from which comes our warmth, and the rays which give us our flowers, our music, and all the things which make life and growth.

MEG

Well on our planet, when we are turned toward the sun, we receive its light. And when we are turned away from it, it is night. And if we want to see we have to use artificial lights.

BEAST #1

Artificial lights. How very limiting it must be to **see** with just one of your senses.

MEG

What should I call you, please?

BEAST #1

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, different kinds of people.

BEAST #1

No, **mother** is a special, a one-name; and a father you have here. No, not friend . . . teacher . . . sister . . . Aunt! Well, maybe. Yes, perhaps that will do. And you think of such odd words about me! **Thing** . . . and **monster**! Monster, what a horrid sort of word. I really don't think I am a monster. **Beast**. Ahhh, that will do. **Aunt Beast**.

MEG (*laughing*)
Aunt Beast.

BEAST #1

Have I said something funny? Isn't Aunt Beast all right?

MEG

Aunt Beast is lovely. It's perfect. Aunt Beast, what is this planet called?

BEAST #1

I guess you would call this place Ixchel in your language.

MEG

Are you fighting the Darkness here?

BEAST #1

Oh yes. Of course we have help, and without help it would be much more difficult.

MEG

Who helps you?

BEAST #1

Oh, my child it is so hard to explain. Good helps us. The stars help us; perhaps even what you call light helps us. Love helps us.

MEG

But . . .

FATHER (*entering*)

They promised us you were all right.

MEG

I'm fine. Thanks to Aunt Beast.

FATHER

Aunt Beast?

CALVIN (*running in*)

Meg! You've never tasted such food in your life! Here, you got to try this. (As she tries what he offers) We're working on a plan to rescue your brother. Our friends here 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 come up with anything else, it's the only thing to do! Father, don't you care about Charles at all?

BEAST #1

Child . . .

MEG

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

BEAST #1

The child is distraught. Don't judge her too harshly. She was almost taken in by the Darkness. Sometimes it takes longer to repair the spiritual damage than it does to heal the physical damage.

CALVIN

Hasn't it occurred to you that we've been trying to tell them about our lady friends? What do you think we've been doing all night? Just stuffing our faces? Okay then, you give it a shot.

BEAST #1

Yes. Try, child.

MEG

Well, there's Mrs. Whatsit. She wears a man's coat with lots of multicolored shawls and scarves. And Mrs. Who . . .

BEAST #1

No. Don't just describe what they look like. Use all your senses. Tell me what they are.

CALVIN

Angels! Guardian angels! Messenger of God!

BEAST #1

No. Not clear enough. Almost. Ah yes. Now, I "see"!

VOICE OF MRS. WHO

WEEE'RE HEEERE!

MRS. WHATSIT

You wanted us?

BEAST #1

It is a question of the little boy.

MEG

Father left him! He left him on Camazotz!

MRS. WHATSIT

And what do you expect us to do?

MEG

But it's Charles Wallace! IT has him, Mrs. Whatsit! Save him! Please save him!

MRS. WHATSIT

You know that we can do nothing on Camazotz.

MEG

You mean you'll let Charles be caught by IT forever?

MRS. WHATSIT

Did I say that?

MEG

But we can't do anything! You know we can't! We tried! Mrs. Whatsit, you have to save him!

FATHER

If you could teach me more about tessering . . .

MRS. WHICH (*suddenly*)

Wwhatt thenn?

FATHER

I will try to take my child away from IT.

MRS. WHICH

Annd yyou kknoww thatt yyou wwlll nnott ssuccceedd?

FATHER

There's nothing left except to try.

MRS. WHATSIT

I'm sorry. We cannot allow you to go.

CALVIN

Then let me. I almost got him away before.

MRS. WHATSIT *(shaking her head)*

No, Calvin. Charles has gone even deeper into IT. You will not be permitted to throw yourself in with him.
For that, you realize, is what would happen.

MEG *(after a long silence)*

Then what are you going to do? Are you just going to throw Charles away?

MRS. WHICH

Ssilencce, cchildd!

MEG

I can't go. I can't! You know I can't!

(MEG goes running to AUNT BEAST for comfort, but the creature offers none.)

MRS. WHICH

Ddidd annybboddy asskkk yyou tto?

(MEG bursts into tears. She starts beating against AUNT BEAST like a child having a tantrum. AUNT BEAST just stands there quietly against the assault.)

MEG

All right, I'll go! I know you want me to go!

MRS. WHATSIT

We want nothing from you that you do unwillingly. Or that you do without understanding.

MEG (*her tears stopping abruptly*)

Oh, but I do understand.

MRS. WHICH

Wwhatt ddo yyou unndderstandd?

MEG

That it has to be me. It can't be anyone else. I don't understand Charles, but he understands me. I'm the one who's closest to him.

MRS. WHATSIT

Do you have the courage to go alone?

MEG

No. But it doesn't matter.

FATHER

No! I will not allow it!

MRS. WHICH

Wwhy?

CALVIN

Maybe IT's right about you three. Or maybe you're in league with IT. No, you can't send Meg by herself. I won't let you!

MEG

Please. Please! Can't you see you're just making things harder for me? I've got to go. You know that. And each minute you put it off makes it harder.

MRS. WHICH

Sshee iss rightt. Itt iss ttimme.

BEAST #1

Is she strong enough to tesser again?

MRS. WHATSIT

If Which takes her through, she can manage.

BEAST #1

If it will help I could go too, and hold her hand.

MEG

Oh, Aunt Beast!

MRS. WHATSIT

No.

BEAST #1

I was afraid not. I just wanted you to know that I would.

MEG

Thank you. Thank you for everything. I know you saved my life. I love you.

BEAST #1

And I love you, little one.

MEG

Cal . . .

(CAL crosses to MEG and takes her hands. After an awkward pause, he pulls her to him and kisses her. CALVIN turns away after, and does not see the surprised happiness that brightens MEG's face. She then turns to her father.)

I'm - I'm sorry, Father.

FATHER

Sorry for what, Megatron?

MEG

I wanted you to do it all for me. I wanted everything to be easy and simple . . . and I wanted you to make it be that way. So I pretended it was all your fault . . . because I was scared and I didn't want to have to do anything myself.

FATHER

But I wanted to do it for you. That's what every parent wants. I won't let you go, Meg. I'm going.

MRS. WHATSIT

No. You are going to allow Meg the privilege of accepting this danger. You are a wise man, Mr. Murry. You are going to let her go.

FATHER

Little Megaparsec. Don't be afraid to be afraid. We will try to have courage for you. That is all we can do.
Your Mother -

MEG

Mother was always shoving me out into the world. She'd want me to do this. You know she would. Tell her . . . No. Never mind. I'll tell her myself.

FATHER

Good girl. Of course you will.

MEG (*to MRS. WHATSIT*)

Are you coming with me?

MRS. WHATSIT

No. Only Mrs. Which.

MEG

But the Darkness.

MRS. WHATSIT

Remember the presents we gave you before. And here's one more: I give you my love, Meg. Never forget that.
My love always.

MRS. WHICH

Arre yyyou readddy, cchillddd?

FATHER

No!

MEG

Yes. Let's go!

(The tesser effect happens again. When it subsides, MEG is back on Camazotz, in the chamber room with IT.)

VOICE OF MRS. WHICH

Anndd hheere iss mmy ggiftt: Yyyou hhavve ssomethingg thatt ITT hhass nnott. Tthatt ssomethingg iss yyour onlly wwapponn. Bbutt yyou musstt ffindd itt fforr yyourselff.

MEG

What? What do I have? Wait, Mrs. Which. Don't leave. I don't understand. What could I possibly have that IT hasn't got?

CW

You have nothing that IT hasn't got. How nice to have you back, dear sister. We knew that Mrs. Whatsit would send you. She is our friend, you know.

MEG

What do you mean?

CW

She is one of us. She works for IT.

MEG

No! No! You're lying. That can't be true.

CW

Think about it. Who kept bringing you back here. Who convinced you to come by yourself.

IT (*with Mrs. Whatsit's voice*)

It's your turn now, Meg dear. Just relax. Everything is going to be just fine. Just relax.

MEG

No. I don't believe you.

IT

Relax. Come to me.

MEG

No. You're lying. Mrs. Whatsit wouldn't do that to me, because . . . because she loves me.

CW (*laughing*)

Not quite, dear sister. She sent you here because she hates you.

MEG

No!

IT

Mrs. Whatsit hates you!

MEG

That's not true. I know it. Mrs. Whatsit loves me! She said so. And so did Aunt Beast. And so did . . . You don't know what you're talking about. You don't know because no one loves you. How could they? You're so full of hate. You have no love in you at all. You . . . (She pauses, then recognition dawns on her) That's it! That's what I have that you don't have!

CW

You don't have anything that IT doesn't have.

IT

Nothing!

MEG

Yes, I do. I really do. I have . . . love. And so do you, because Father and Mother love you. And me. Charles. Charles, I love you. My baby brother who always takes care of me. Come back to me, Charles Wallace. Come away from IT. Come home.

(As MEG keeps pleading with him, CW starts shaking and his eyes begin twirling. IT begins to pulse and the heart beat gets louder and louder throughout the struggle.)

I love you Charles. You are my darling and my dear and the light of my life and the treasure of my heart. I love you Charles Wallace. I love you.

(Suddenly CW snaps out of his spell, the lights and heartbeat subside and CW goes running to his sister.)

CW

Meg! Meg! Meg!

VOICE OF MRS. WHICH

Hhholdd onnn cchilddrenn! Holdd onn ttightt!

(The final tessera effect lands MEG, CALVIN, CW and FATHER back into the Murry's kitchen. It is morning.)

CW

Meg! You did it! You saved me!

CALVIN

We're here! We're home! I mean, **you're** home!

MOTHER *(from offstage)*

Meg? Charles Wallace? Is that you?

CW *(running to meet her at doorway)*

Mother!

MOTHER

Charles Wallace, what's come over you. You'd think I haven't seen you in ages. And why are you still in your clothes from . . . *(MOTHER looks up and sees FATHER standing there watching her.)*

FATHER

So, what's for breakfast? *(MOTHER runs to FATHER and embraces him.)*

CALVIN *(punching CW on the shoulder)*

Glad you're okay, sport.

MEG *(to herself)*

So much love.

CW

Shhhh! Listen!

(Everyone stops and listens, as the three W's appear above them, floating like an invisible safety net.)

BLACKOUT