

~~Eileen.~~

Afraid to ask the question that was really on her mind, Meg said, "But Father, how did the black Thing -- how did it capture Camazotz."

If Mr. Murry, still firmly massaging Meg's limbs, knew what Meg was thinking not nearly as much of surrendered Camazotz as their own shadowed earth, he gave no indication. He said, "Well, Megatron, if you're thinking that perhaps the brain simply marched in and took over all the minds on Camazotz, that IT and the Black Thing are one and the same, it isn't nearly as simple as that."

"Well, how, then?"

"Well, in the first place I'm sure it must have been a long, slow, drawn out process, taking not only thousands, but billions of ~~years~~ centuries. It was one of many possible ultimate ends."

"But how?"

"Well, it was the logical outcome of two things. Of complete totalitarianism in certain countries -- "

~~XXXXXXXX~~ "What's totalitarianism?"

Calvin had come back and was standing with a load of wood in his arms. Mr. Murry looked at him, and Calvin said, "It's like Russia under Khrushchev. Or Germany and Hitler. Countries under dictatorships. Franco. Mussolini. Castro. Mao."

"Well, then, what about countries like -- like ours?" Meg asked. "Ones that aren't under dictatorships? Democracies?"

Mr. Murry sighed. He picked Meg up in his arms, very carefully, saying, "I think we'll carry you back to the edge of the forest before we light the fire. You'll be a little safer there." Then he answered her question, "It's an equally logical outcome of too much prosperity. Or you could put it that it's the result of too strong a desire for security."

Although Meg still could not move her arms or legs she was no longer frightened as she lay in her father's arms, and he carried her tenderly towards the trees. For the moment she felt completely safe and secure and it was the most beautiful feeling in the world. So she said, "But Father, what's wrong with security? Everybody likes to be all cosy and safe."

"Yes," Mr. Murry said, grimly. "Security is a most seductive thing."

"Well -- but I want to be secure, Father. I hate feeling insecure."

"But ~~xxxxxxx~~ you don't love security enough so that you guide your life by it, Meg. You weren't thinking of security when you came to rescue me with Mrs Who, Mrs Whatsit, and Mrs Which."

"But that didn't have anything to do with me," Meg protested. "I wasn't being brave or anything. They just took me."

Calvin, walking beside them with his load of wood, said, smiling warmly at Meg, "Yes, but when we got here you didn't go around whining or asking to go home where you could be all safe and cosy. You kept yelling, where's

Father, take me to Father! You never gave a thought to security."

"Oh," Meg said. "Oh." She brooded for another moment. "But I still don't see why security isn't a good thing. Why, Father?"

"I've come to the conclusion," Mr. Murry said slowly, "that it's the greatest evil there is. Suppose your great great grandmother, and all those like her, had worried about security? They'd never have gone across the ~~seamky~~ ^{land} in flimsy covered wagons. Our country has been greatest when it has been most insecure. This ~~lungin~~ sick longing for security is a dangerous thing, Meg, as insidious as the strontium 90 from our nuclear explosions that worried you so about Charles Wallace when you read in science at school that it was being found in greater and greater quantities in milk. You can't see strontium 90. You can't feel it or touch it. But it's there. So is the panicky ~~seamky~~ searching for conformity, for security. Maybe it's because of the Black Thing, Meg. Maybe this lust for security is like a disease germ that it has let loose on our land. I don't know, Meg. All I realize now is that my fight is much bigger than this little one on Camazotz." They had reached the woods now, and he laid her down gently at the foot of a great oak tree. "Now we'll build a fire for you," he said. "There isn't any underbrush here. I think it will be safe. Can you move at all, now?"

Meg found that she could barely raise her arm a few inches. "See? But it's coming back," she said. "Every minute I can move a tiny bit more."

Mr. Murry looked down at her gravely, but he turned