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L'Engle's granddaughters, Charlotte Jones Voiklis and Lena Roy's *BECOMING MADELEINE L'ENGLE*, a biography of the Newbery Award-winning author of *A WRINKLE IN TIME* and over 60 other books for children and adults, to Margaret Ferguson at Margaret Ferguson Books, for publication in Winter 2018, by Lisa Erbach Vance at the Aaron Priest Literary Agency (NA).

Léna and Charlotte interview each other about the biography, the upcoming film adaptation of *A Wrinkle in Time*, and more.

LR: Charlotte, we are having such a good time working together on this biography. How did we get here?

CJV: Laurie Lane, a poet and former assistant to Gran, planted the seed during a visit. She thought a picture book biography would be wonderful. Around the same time I was going through some uncataloged correspondence that turned out to be a remarkably complete set of letters from Gran to her mother from 1937 through 1945. It was the period in her life that most fascinated us as children — the time between

her graduating from college and her marriage — and reading it answered a lot of questions. But it also brought up new ones!

LR: Yes! I remember imagining her energetically writing her first novel, *The Small Rain*, while working as an understudy and assistant stage manager...

CJV: FSG was interested in publishing a middle-grade biography of Madeleine L'Engle and asked me, as her executor, if there was anyone I would like to see write it, and of course I immediately thought of you. You're a wonderful writer, an amazing teacher, and know middle-grade and young adult readers so well.

LR: Why thank you Charlotte! But I couldn't imagine writing anything about Gran without you and I jumped at the chance to collaborate on this project together – we were both so close to her and as kids we had the same fascination with her, even as we had different relationships with her as we grew up. I related to her as an insecure and seeking artist, and you are so wickedly bright —

CJV: The mutual admiration society —

LR: — she made you her literary executor. I convinced you that we both would bring very important skills to the project, and that it would mean so much to Gran if we honored her in this way together.

CJV: And that was the final twist of the arm! A present for her 100th birthday! .

LR: You felt strongly that the book should start with her abandonment at a Swiss boarding school at age 11, so my first attempt was to novelize this scene to get into her head...

CJV: And even though nothing like that is in this book, it did help us imagine her voice.

LR: It is a biography, after all, and not fiction! But now something like that is stirring in my mind...

CJV: And things really started to flow after that, in ways I couldn't have imagined.

LR: We read and read and read, becoming detectives, mining Gran's memoirs, journals, letters for a glimpse into how she became who she was.

CJV: It felt sacred, reading those letters and journals.

LR: It did. Do you think we could have done this before now?

CJV: I really don't – after her death in 2007, we needed time to grieve and recalibrate.

LR: All of our talks over the years about what she meant to us and others laid the groundwork, bringing us so much joy in writing this, in listening to her voice, her legacy.

CJV: The time was right.

LR: And then the movie news...

CJV: Yes, the movie news! Isn't it exciting!

LR: We've only been waiting forty years! I remember the day that we found out that it would be made into a movie. It was November 1979, and Gum (our grandfather) had taken us to the Planetarium or something. When we got back to the apartment, Gran was finishing up a meeting with Norman Lear and Catherine Hand, who were interested in producing a movie.

CJV: Yes, Catherine had read and fell in love with the book when it first came out and had dreamed of making it into a movie. It didn't happen then, though there were many, many near misses, including the made-for-television version. It's really happening now, though, and I know you and I couldn't be more thrilled with the way things are unfolding.

LR: I know that the movie will be different from the book, that it's a different way of telling the story.

CJV: And Jennifer Lee [screenwriter] and Ava DuVernay [director] know how to tell a good story.

LR: I trust them to tell an amazing story.

CJV: I'm reminded that for Gran, she was honored and humbled when people responded to her work with their own creativity. And she always said that she understood that her books have a life of their own, quite apart from her. What a privilege to inspire other artists! As well as all of the readers over more than 50 years.

LR: Gran inspired and continues to inspire me as a teacher. We all have stories to tell, as much as we crave stories. Writing is an important tool for people to find their voice. So many people come to a workshop looking for the right answers, or for a formula that will help them get by. There is no formula!

CJV: No formulas, but there are forms: a sonnet, for instance.

LR: Well said Mrs Whatsit!