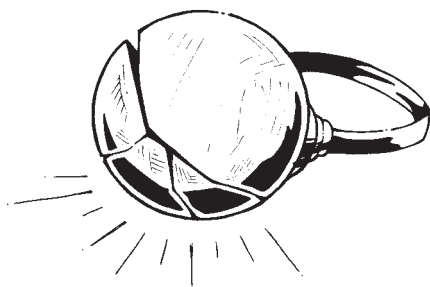


Kendra Kandlestar and the Crack in
Kazah

Written and Illustrated
by Lee Edward Födi



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KENDRA KANDLESTAR AND THE CRACK IN KAZAH

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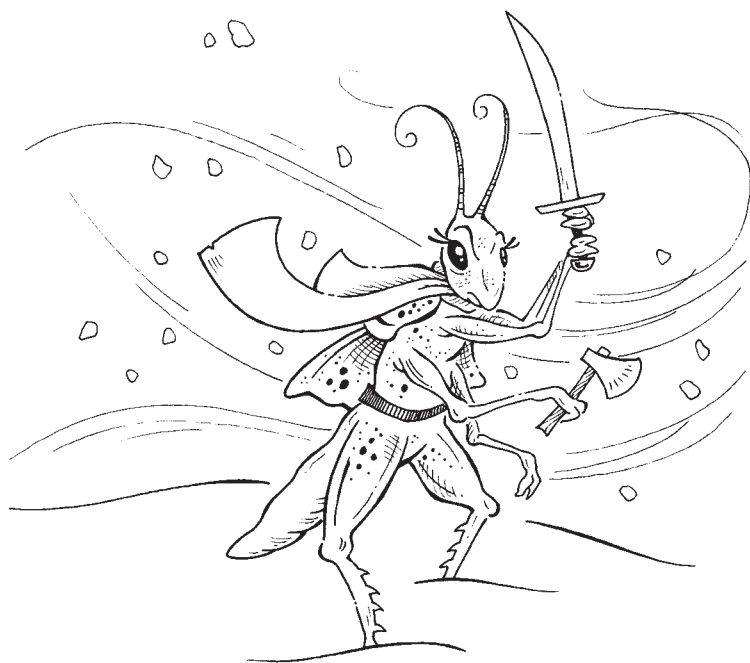
Kendra Kandlestar and the Box of Whispers
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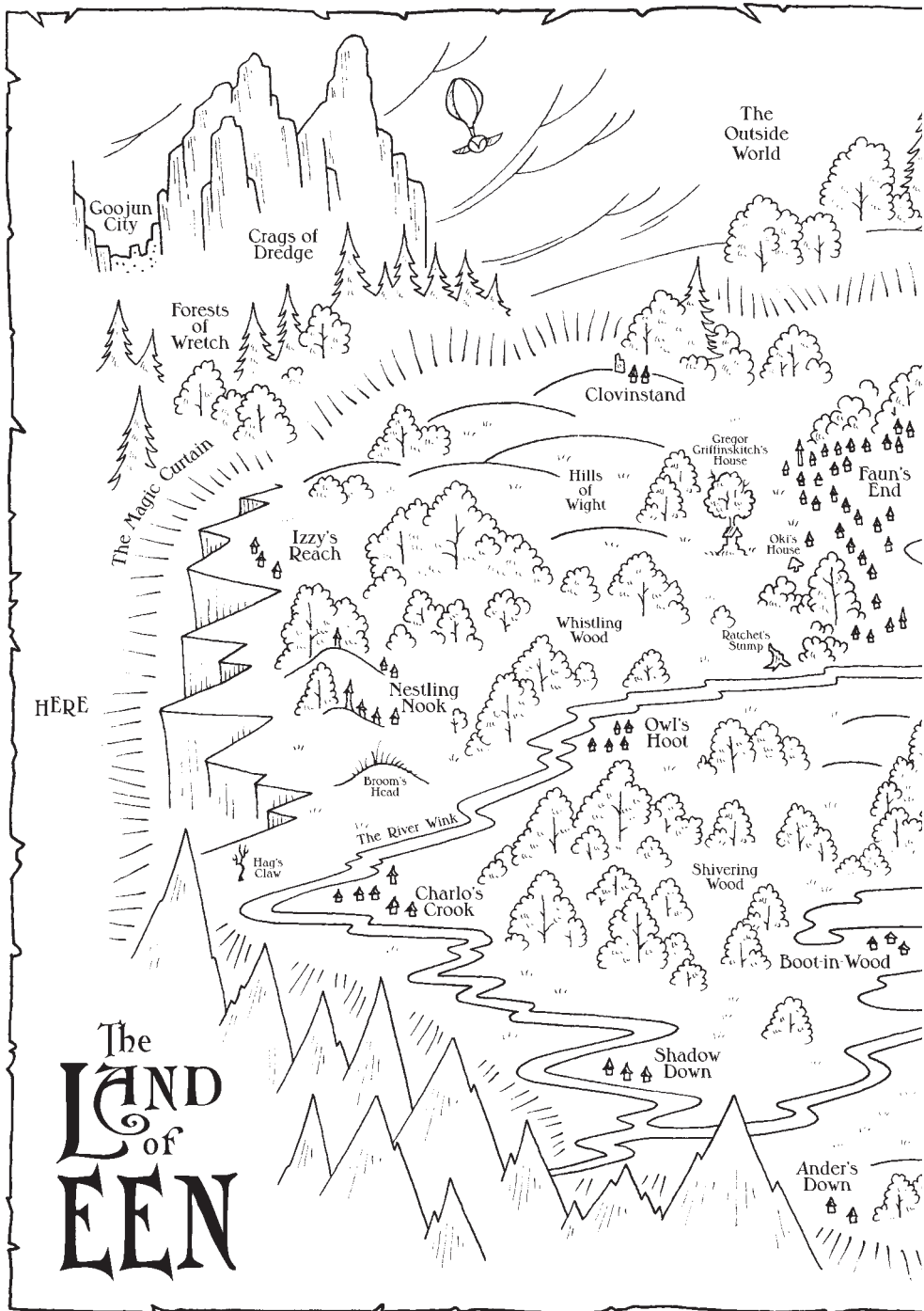
To my mother and father,
because you too
were once young.



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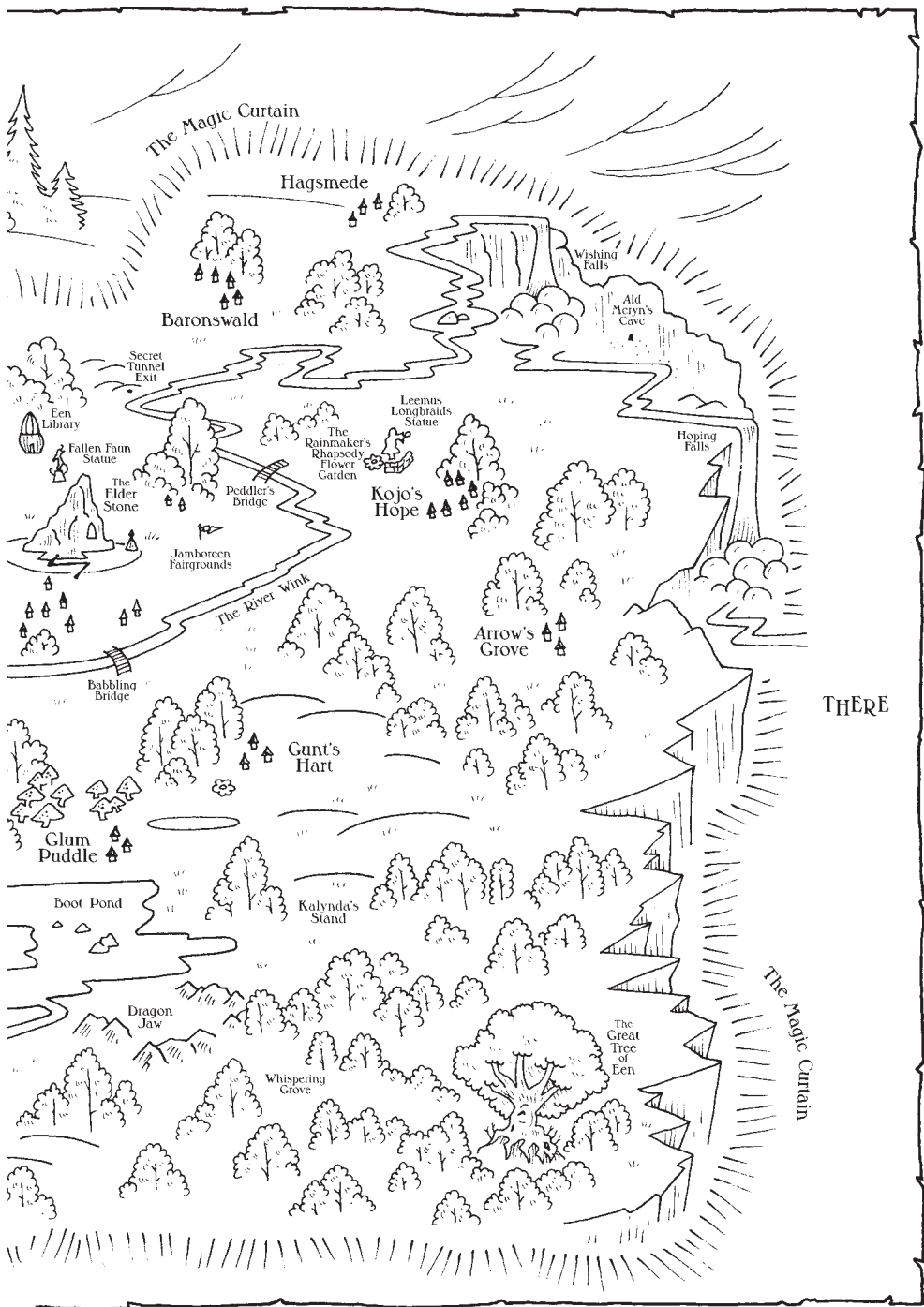


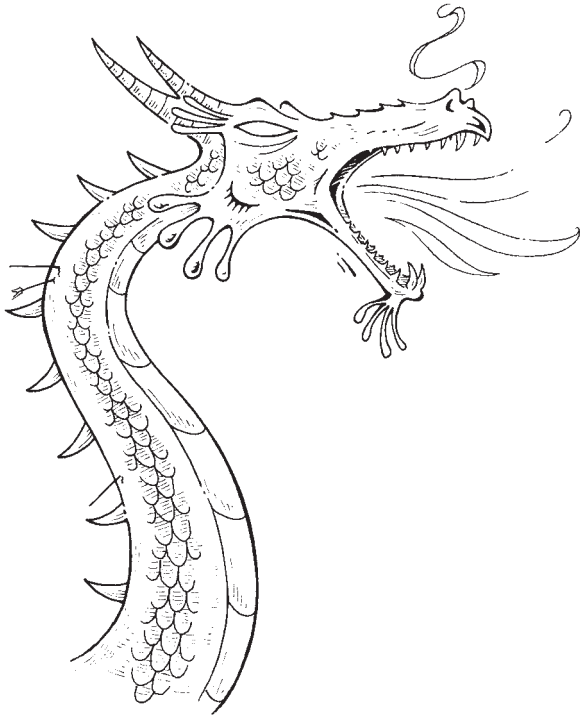
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The LAND of EEN



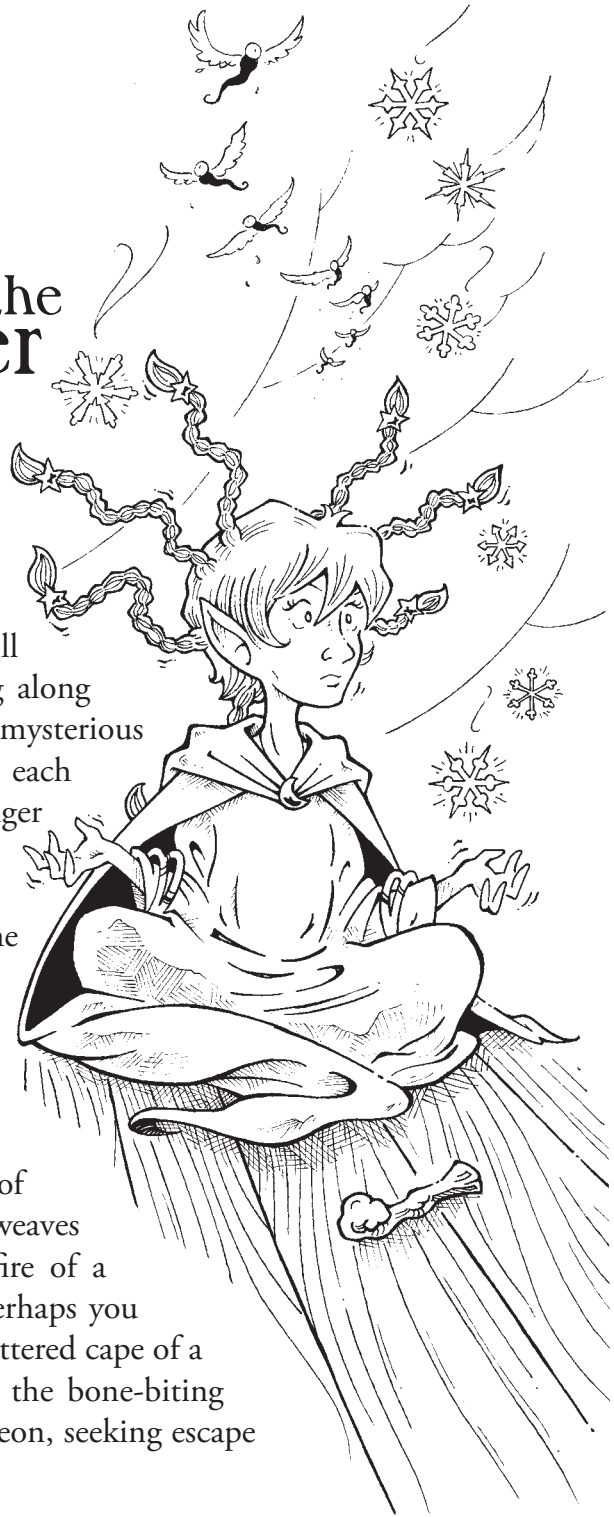


CHAPTER 1

How Kendra Heard the Danger

AS this tale unfolds and your mind leaves the humdrum drone of everyday life, you will find yourself wandering along a familiar path, where mysterious characters lurk around each bend, where certain danger lingers in every shadow. Indeed, you know this path well—for this is the road to adventure, and you, my young dreamer, have traveled it before.

Perhaps you have found yourself hiding behind the long beard of an ancient wizard as he weaves his magic against the fire of a ferocious dragon. Or perhaps you have crept behind the tattered cape of a brave explorer, through the bone-biting shadows of a dark dungeon, seeking escape



from monstrous fiends. Perhaps you have even found yourself amidst the roar and rumble of a mighty battle, dodging claws and talons, fists and feet.

If your imagination has taken you to such places, then you know that no adventure happens without a long journey. We do not find ourselves thrust immediately against the dragon, or suddenly lost in the dungeon maze, or so quickly catapulted into the roar of battle. Indeed, we must begin with that first step upon adventure's path. We must trek through places strange and unknown. The journey, as you know, is sometimes as important as the final destination.

Ah! Such has always been the case with our young heroine, Kendra Kandlestar. If you are familiar at all with her adventures, then you know she comes from the quiet land of Een, tucked between the cracks of here and there. The Eens, of course, are an ancient race—some say older than even Elves or Dwarves. The Eens are a very small people and are known for many things: their long braids, their ability to speak to animals, and—perhaps most of all—for their shy and timid nature. Indeed, they prefer to stay hidden behind the magic curtain that protects them from the outside world. But Kendra has never been an ordinary Een. We have seen her cross river and wasteland, descend into mines and dungeons, and climb cliffs and castle towers. And now she will undertake her most difficult journey yet. Perhaps you will be surprised to know that she will end just as she has begun, for in this tale Kendra will not visit new lands. She will find herself only in those places she has been before.

Then how can this be a journey, you ask? Ah—and there lies the key to this tale. Imagine, if you will, not a journey to where—but a journey to *when*.

HOW KENDRA HEARD THE DANGER

So now, your mind is swirling with questions, just like flakes of snow on the cold and bleak morning when our story begins. Here, amidst a symphony of wind and cloud, a magical airship chugs across the sky. It looks like a giant bird, with sails for wings and windows for eyes. The ship is called the *Big Bang*, and amongst its crew is a wizard's apprentice: twelve-year-old Kendra Kandlestar.

On this winter's morn, Kendra was sitting in a dark chamber below deck, her mind ablaze with questions as she pondered the mysteries of Een magic. She did not enjoy sitting in quiet meditation. Even with her eyes closed and her hands outstretched, it was a grueling task to focus on the moment, to think only of the present.

Instead, Kendra thought of the past. She thought of the future. She thought of her brother Kiro, and all that he had done, all that he was meant to do. And yet Kiro, in a way, was no more. Long ago, he had been transformed into Troogul



the Unger, a beastly creature with tusks and claws and crooked limbs, and it was difficult to know whose side he was on. Troogul had stolen the dark stone known as the shard from Greeve, a fragment of an ancient warlock's cauldron. As far as Kendra knew, Troogul was intent on

rebuilding that vile cauldron—which meant resurrecting a curse that could transform the entire Een race into monsters, just like Trooogul himself.

He's somewhere out there, in the lands below, headed towards the City on the Storm, Kendra told herself. We must find him before it's too late.

“Humph.”

Kendra opened her eyes and gazed upon her master. He sat across from her, mirroring her pose, and as still as a statue in the Elder Stone. He was ancient and frail, with a beard so long and white that some Eens claimed he used it to sweep his floors. But Kendra knew better, for not only was the wizard her master, but her uncle as well. With her family having long ago disappeared, ornery old Uncle Griffinskitch had raised her from the time she was a baby. He never swept his floors, with his beard or otherwise. Sweeping was *her* job.

Uncle Griffinskitch looked older than ever. His face was a criss-cross of cracks, as if someone had taken a putty knife to clay, and his beard was as white as the surrounding mountain tops. He even wore spectacles now—an old hand-me-down pair from Professor Bumblebean. Of course, at this moment, Uncle Griffinskitch didn't need his spectacles. Even though his eyes were closed, Kendra felt as if the old man was glaring right into her soul.

“You must focus, child,” Uncle Griffinskitch admonished. “If you wish to master Een magic, then you must quiet your mind, tune yourself to your wand.”

Kendra's eyes turned to the small stick of wood that lay in front of her. She had received her wand months ago, but she still had trouble understanding its power. Kendra looked back at her uncle. His own wand was more like a staff, twisted and

gnarled, its length a symbol of his mastery of Een magic. The wand stood beside him, without support, as if it had a mind and will of its own.

“Remember, the wands do not give us magic,” Uncle Griffinskitch instructed, his eyes remaining shut.

“Then why have them at all?” Kendra asked.

“A wand is like a musical instrument,” the old man replied.

“Like the narfoo?” Kendra asked, thinking of the golden horn-shaped instrument that hung on their wall back at home. The narfoo seemed to have a hundred valves and keys—far too complicated for Kendra to imagine playing. Come to think of it, she had never seen Uncle Griffinskitch play it either.

“Yes, the narfoo, if you wish,” Uncle Griffinskitch grunted impatiently. “If you want to make music, then you need the narfoo. But the instrument itself doesn’t make beautiful sounds; it only amplifies that which the player finds within.”

Kendra sighed, and tugged nervously at one of the seven braids that radiated from her head of brown hair. “Was it this difficult to train my mother?”

Uncle Griffinskitch’s eyes fluttered open. “Where does this question come from?”

Kendra fiddled with her hair, not sure what to say.

“She asked as many questions as you, that is for certain,” the old wizard offered. “She had a strong will—and more attitude than a giant with a sliver in his toe.”

Kendra had seen a giant or two in her time; she couldn’t help thinking that, for a giant, the nearest thing to a sliver would be a small tree.

“Your mind wanders again,” Uncle Griffinskitch accused.

“Sorry,” Kendra said. “You didn’t really like her, did you? My mother, I mean.”

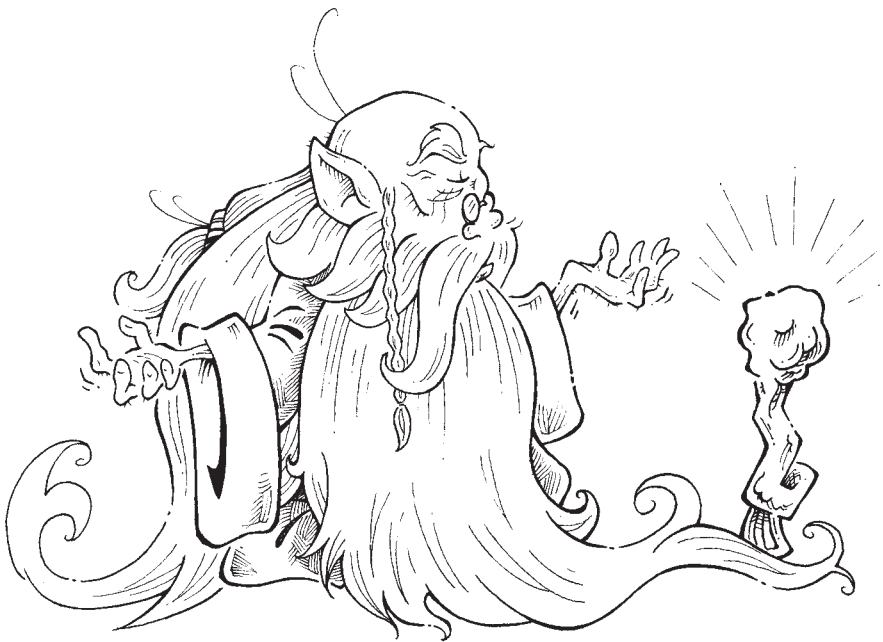
A soft growl escaped from the wizard's lips. Kendra knew it was difficult for him to talk about such matters. After all, Kendra's mother was his own sister. She was just as long-lost to him as she was to Kendra. "Your mother and I did not often see eye to eye," Uncle Griffinskitch admitted. "But my love for her was as deep as my beard is long."

"Is," Kendra said. "You mean *is*. She's still alive."

"Humph," Uncle Griffinskitch muttered. It was the type of humph that meant the discussion was over. "We shall return to our meditation, this time with our wands."

Kendra nodded, lifted her wand, and closed her eyes again. She took a deep breath.

Focus, came her uncle's voice—but he wasn't speaking out loud. The words just popped into Kendra's mind. He was speaking to her through their wands. *Feel the world around us*, he said.



HOW KENDRA HEARD THE DANGER

Yes, master.

What can you see?

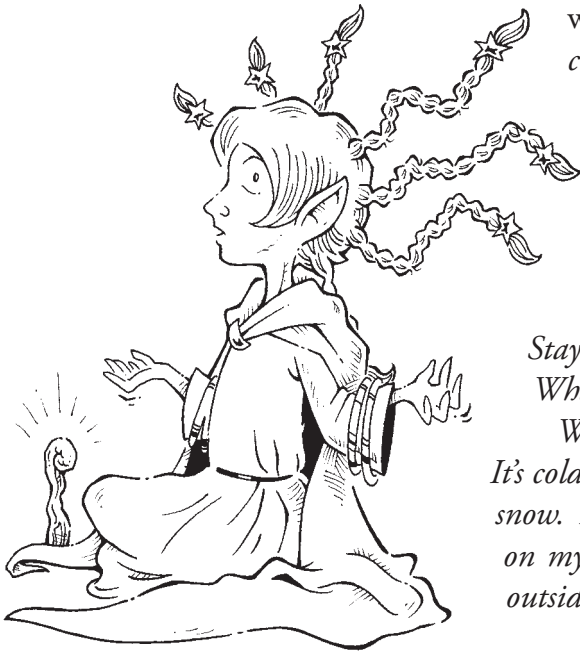
My eyes are closed!

See without your eyes, Uncle Griffinskitch told her. Deeper breaths. Let your mind expand. The world surrounds us, alive and vibrant. Tell me what you see.

Kendra wrinkled her nose, wishing she could tug at one of her braids. But instead she followed her uncle's command by taking another deep breath, trying to focus. For several minutes she just sat there, quietly breathing as the sound of her uncle's voice whispered inside her. Slowly, Kendra felt her mind begin to drift, as if she was entering a dream.

Now tell me, came her uncle's voice, what can you see?

A picture began to appear in Kendra's mind, hazy and white. *Clouds, Kendra told her uncle. An endless stretch of clouds.* Then she saw something sharp and black amidst the



white. There are rocky crags ahead, Kendra added. We should warn Ratchet, so he doesn't crash the ship.

The ship will be fine, her uncle said.

Stay with the moment.

What can you taste?

Water, Kendra replied. It's cold . . . wait, not water; snow. I can feel it melting on my tongue! It's snowing outside.

Good. Now, what do you smell?

Smoke on the wind. Someone has lit a fire, far below, on the ground. Kendra now felt light as air, as if she was no longer in her body, no longer on the ship. The sensation was incredible.

Keep it going, Uncle Griffinskitch urged. *Tell me, what do you hear?*

Kendra tuned her mind. *I hear someone telling a story. It's the legend of how two Eengels with braided hair appeared before the first elders of Een. I think we must be close to home! But still, how can I hear that from way up here?*

Distance, size—even time, these are but barriers in our minds. We must train ourselves to climb these walls! Our frail minds may fret over such obstacles, but the magic of Een does not. Yes, the magic. Tune to it, Kendra. It can take you anywhere, if you so allow. Now, keep seeking, Kendra. What else do you hear?

Kendra breathed and let her senses wander. *Snow is falling on the trees, on the mountains. There's a murmur in the wind. There's a—*

Suddenly, a dreadful shriek pierced her mind, like an arrow splitting a melon. She dropped her wand with a clatter and clutched her ears—and the sound was instantly gone. Her eyes flew open, only to see Uncle Griffinskitch staring back at her, his wrinkled face gaping in surprise. He had heard it too.

“Uncle—”

But the old wizard was already rising to his feet in a flourish of white beard. “Quickly, Kendra,” he beckoned. “To the ship's deck. We're under attack!”

HOW KENDRA HEARD THE DANGER

