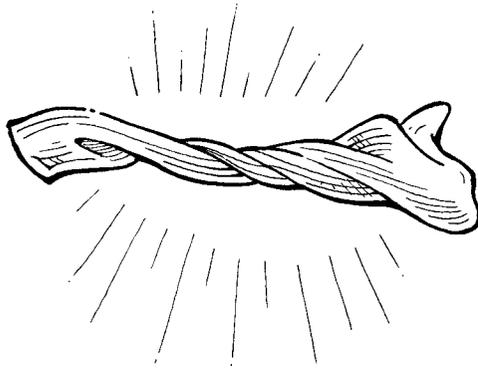


KENDRA
KANDLESTAR
AND THE SEARCH FOR ARAZEEN

BOOK
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Written and Illustrated by
Lee Edward Födi



SIMPLY READ BOOKS

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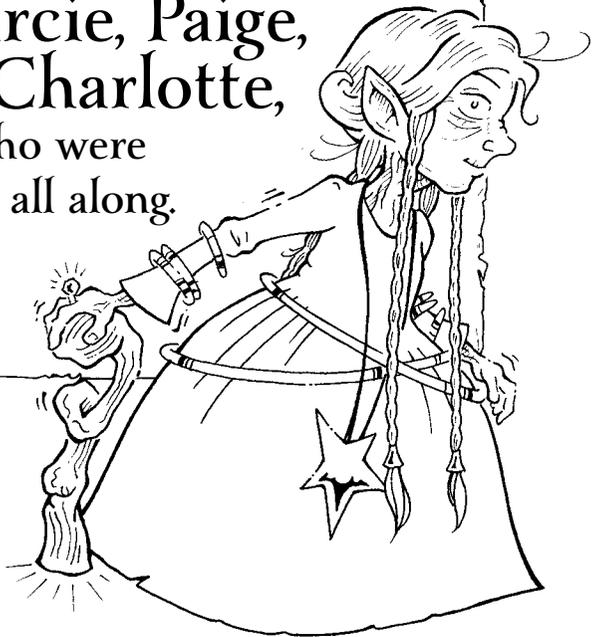
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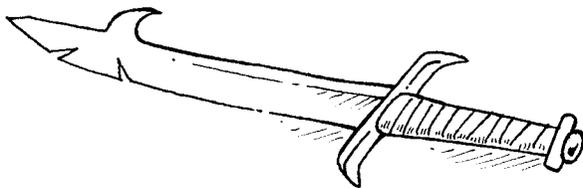
To
Marcie, Paige,
and Charlotte,
who were
there all along.

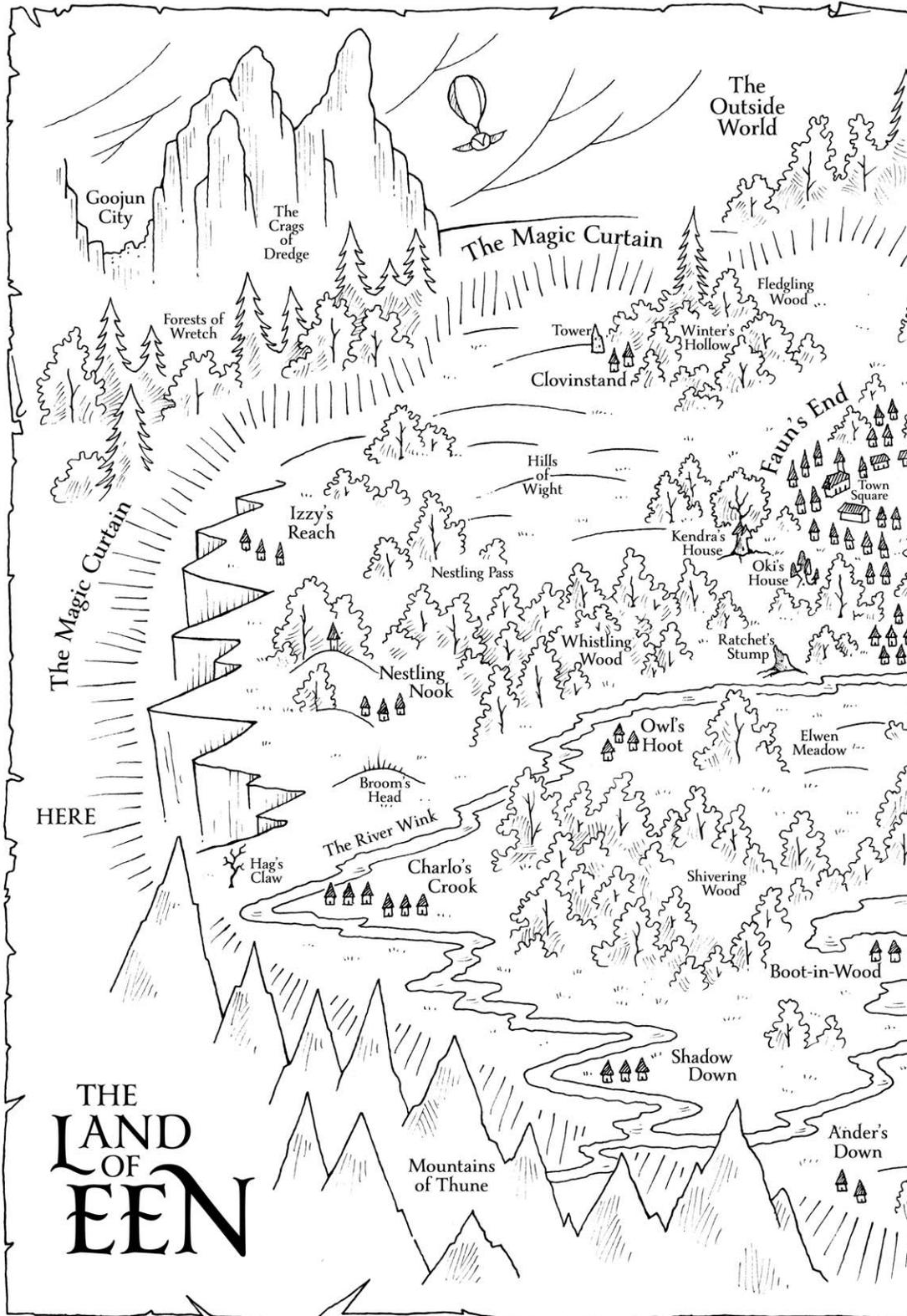


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The Crags of Dredge

Forests of Wretch

The Magic Curtain

Tower

Clovinstand

Fledgling Wood ...

Winter's Hollow

The Magic Curtain

Izzy's Reach

Hills of Wight

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Town Square

Kendra's House

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THE LAND OF EEN

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Babbling Bridge

Toadstool Forest

Gunt's Hart

Fayfeld

Glum Puddle

Boot Pond

Kalynda's Stand

Salt Mines

Dragon Jaw

Whispering Grove

The Great Tree of Een

THERE

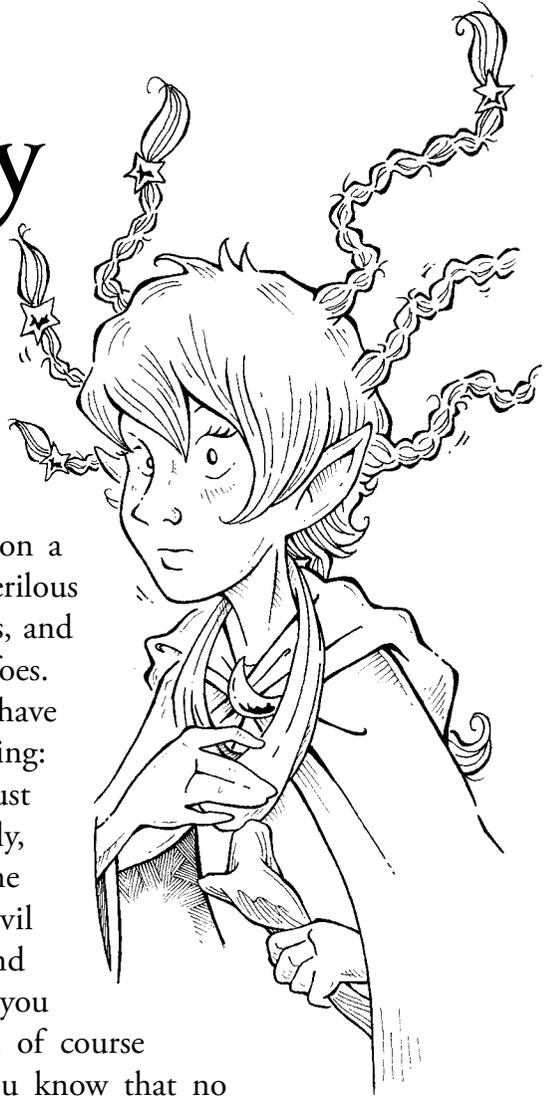
The Magic Curtain



CHAPTER 1

The Unseen Enemy

Being the type of reader who loves adventure, you understand all too well what it means to follow a hero on a quest. You have braved perilous seas, crossed lonely plains, and even faced dangerous foes. And, through it all, you have learned one important thing: all good adventures must come to an end. Eventually, the hero must return home and, if we are so lucky, evil has been vanquished and peace restored. But if you pay close attention (and of course you always do), then you know that no journey is complete without the hero losing something precious along the way. This might be something as simple as a token, some shiny trinket that the hero once held so very dear. It might be an enchanted weapon that helped complete the quest. Or, sometimes, it is something



just a bit more personal, something that forever alters the hero's path ahead.

Yes, the loss is an important part of every story—even our own. Yet, this is the strange thing about the journey, the magic thing, if you will. You see, the act of losing this precious thing is sometimes what helps us see ourselves for who we really are. The loss may seem devastating at first, but by the end it can be the greatest gift of all.

How can this be, you ask? How can losing something possibly be a gift? Ah, this is something you will come to understand. For this is a story of loss, and the incredible power it can grant us . . . if we so let it.

And now you are wondering what all of this means for Kendra Kandlestar, the twelve-year-old wizard's apprentice whom you have come to know so well. Having followed Kendra's past adventures, you know that she has already lost a shiny trinket, and an enchanted weapon, too. She has even lost her family: her mother, father, and brother Kiro. And so, you might ask, what more can she possibly lose?

We will come to that, all in good time. For now it is enough to remind you that Kendra is an Een, coming from that tiny land tucked between the cracks of Here and There. If you recall anything about Eens, it is that they wear braids and are mostly small, mostly elf-like, and mostly best at staying safe and hidden behind the magic curtain that protects their land from the outside world. Kendra, of course, is not one of those "mostly" Eens. Indeed, as we join her in this tale, we find her far away from her beloved home, standing alone in a mysterious chamber, preparing to face a powerful adversary.

Kendra couldn't see a thing in the room. She could only rely on her hearing, her sense of touch, and—most impor-

tantly—her magic. Raising her wand of Eenwood, she took a cautious step forward, tentatively reaching out with the toe of her foot to find the reassuring plane of the floor. The wooden planks creaked beneath her, but that was okay. Her rival already knew she was coming. Patient as a spider, he was waiting to make his move.

This is what it must feel like to be blind, Kendra thought as she took another step. She couldn't help thinking of the future, a future she had been lucky enough (or unlucky enough—Kendra supposed it depended on your point of view) to catch a glimpse of. In that future she was the ripe old age of one hundred and twelve, and completely blind. It bothered her to think of herself that way, but if there was one thing her adventures had taught her, it was that the future was never set in stone.

Besides, that's a hundred years from now, Kendra thought, inching forward.

Suddenly, something hot and searing hissed past her ear. Kendra's wandering mind instantly snapped to attention.

Fire bursts, Kendra realized, her heart thumping.

She fought the urge to duck, realizing that this might be exactly what he expected. This was no time to panic. She just needed to swallow her fear and focus. She tuned her mind and slowly began to feel shapes emerge from the darkness. It wasn't seeing exactly, more like a sensation of what was around her. To her left there was a chest, to the right something taller. A cask? A cabinet? She wasn't sure, except that it was inanimate, and that's all that mattered. She could always use that for cover, if necessary. She shuffled forward—only to sense something stretched in front of her. It was suspended just a hand's width above the floor.

Aha! A rope! Kendra thought as she adeptly stepped over the snare. This was no time for smugness, however—for at that exact moment she detected three more bursts of fire blazing towards her. Coolly, Kendra flicked her wand and uttered the following spell:

*Arrows of flame, bolts of fire,
Feel my magic—then expire.*

Before the flaring arrows could reach her, they simply fizzled away, falling to the floor like failed firecrackers. Kendra allowed herself a smile of satisfaction.

More fire bursts came, dozens of them. Now full of confidence, Kendra twirled her wand, deflecting every missile with ease as she moved steadily forward across the chamber. There were a few more obstacles in her path, but they caused her no grief. Her mind was working like a well-oiled machine. Just a few more steps and victory would be hers . . .

“Oomph!” Something struck her in the gut, so hard that it caused her to crash to the floor—and drop her wand in the process. Whatever had hit her (*Definitely not a fire burst*, Kendra thought) had left her completely winded. Now, as she gasped for air on the floor, she could hear her attacker stride forward. Kendra was defenseless. Desperately, she reached out into the darkness, hoping her fingers would find her wand. Instead, she felt a cold and hard foot press down on her wrist.

“Humph.”

With her free hand, Kendra pulled away the cloth that had been used to blindfold her, but she didn’t need to look up to know what Uncle Griffinskitch was thinking. She was an expert at deciphering his humphs, and this particular one said

it all. It had that I'm-disappointed-but-sadly-not-surprised tone about it.

"Are you going to let me get up?" Kendra asked, purposely staring at the floor.

Uncle Griffinskitch lifted his foot. "You lose," he proclaimed. "Again."

Kendra collected her wand, stood up, and finally dared to look at him. He was so hunched that he was a full head shorter than her, but that didn't make him seem any less intimidating. It probably had something to do with his long, gnarled wizard's staff. Or his vivid blue eyes. Or maybe it was all that beard; there was so much of it that you just couldn't be sure what he was hiding underneath it. Indeed, the beard covered his whole body—almost, anyway; Kendra could see his two feet poking out from the bottom. That's when she realized one of the feet was suspiciously naked. The missing boot was lying nearby, its tongue lazily hanging out, as if to taunt her.

"A boot!?" Kendra cried in exasperation. "You threw a boot at me?"

A hint of mischief played in the old wizard's eyes. "You know what they say," he said as he waved his staff, causing his boot to return to its rightful place. "The most painful attack is the one we least expect."

"Seriously?" Kendra retorted. "I was fighting fire bursts. You know . . . *magical* weapons. Not an ordinary boot! How was I supposed to see that coming?"

Uncle Griffinskitch's expression turned from amusement to ire. "You are a sorceress of Een! You must not see what is ahead. You must *feel*."

Kendra glared at him, fuming. "You cheated."



“Humph,” Uncle Griffinskitch growled. “Once again, you have failed to understand the lesson.”

“To win at all costs?”

“No!” Uncle Griffinskitch growled, thumping his staff against the floor. “To feel the energy of things, to trust what is really there—not what you *think* is there. When it comes to the magic of Een, you must unite both heart and mind. You must become one. You must find *Arazeen*.”

“Paradise?” Kendra said dubiously. “Perhaps you have forgotten, *Master*, we are not searching for some magical Een heaven written about in your ancient texts. We’re searching for—”

“Arazeen is not a place,” Uncle Griffinskitch interrupted. “You will not find it across the seas, floating in the skies, or hidden in some distant vale.”

“Where then?”

“Here,” Uncle Griffinskitch replied, raising his staff to tap

Kendra on the forehead.

Kendra pulled away with a scowl. “I thought Arazeen was an Een myth, just a place to go when you die.”

“That is what Professor Bumblebean would tell you,” Uncle Griffinskitch said. “But a wizard seeks Arazeen in *this* life, in the here and now. To discover Arazeen means to know one’s self. To know who you are, and what you are about. To find your true power.”

Kendra tugged at one of her braids. It was a habit she was trying to break, but it was difficult with seven different braids to choose from, each sticking out from her head like a long and tempting tree branch. Besides, tugging helped her think—and right now she was thinking, *I’m really not in the mood for a lecture. None of this changes the fact that he cheated.*

Uncle Griffinskitch’s brow furled, as if he was reading her thoughts. “Come,” he commanded. “There is something I would show you.”

