

Kendra Kandlestar and the Door to

# Unger

Written and Illustrated  
by Lee Edward Födi



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KENDRA KANDLESTAR AND THE DOOR TO UNGER

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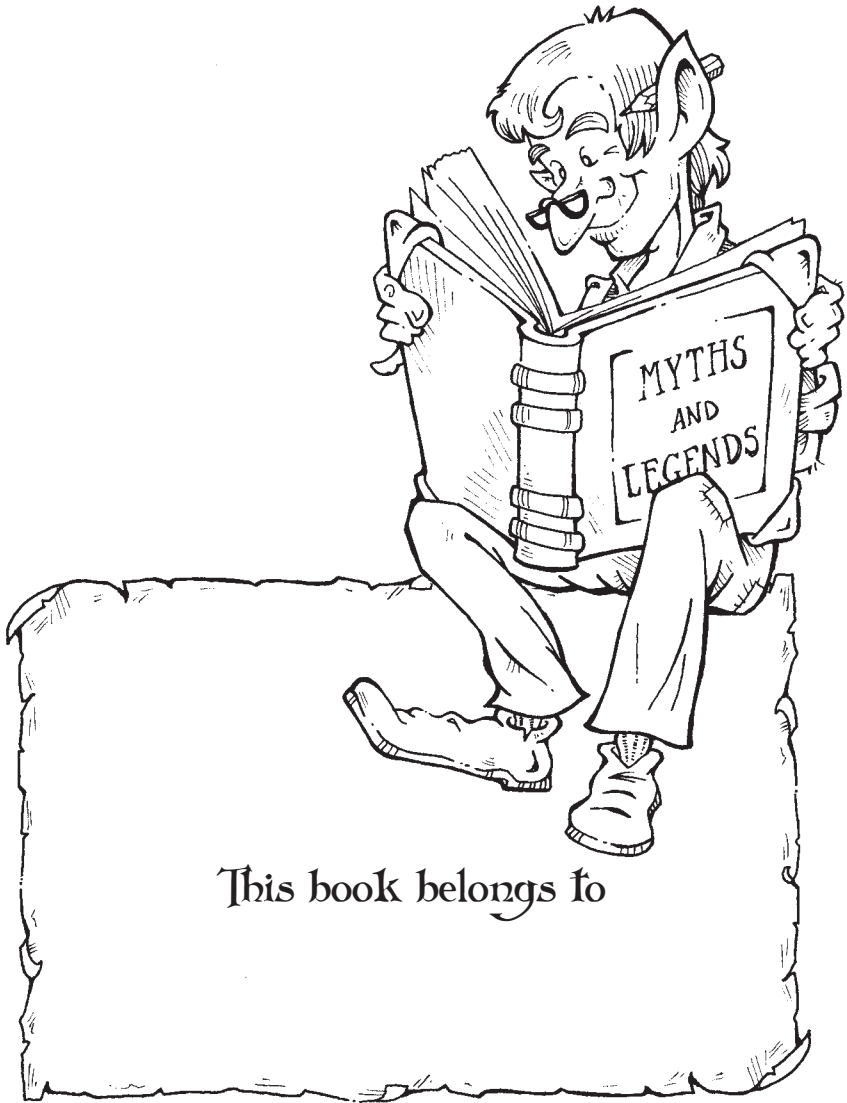
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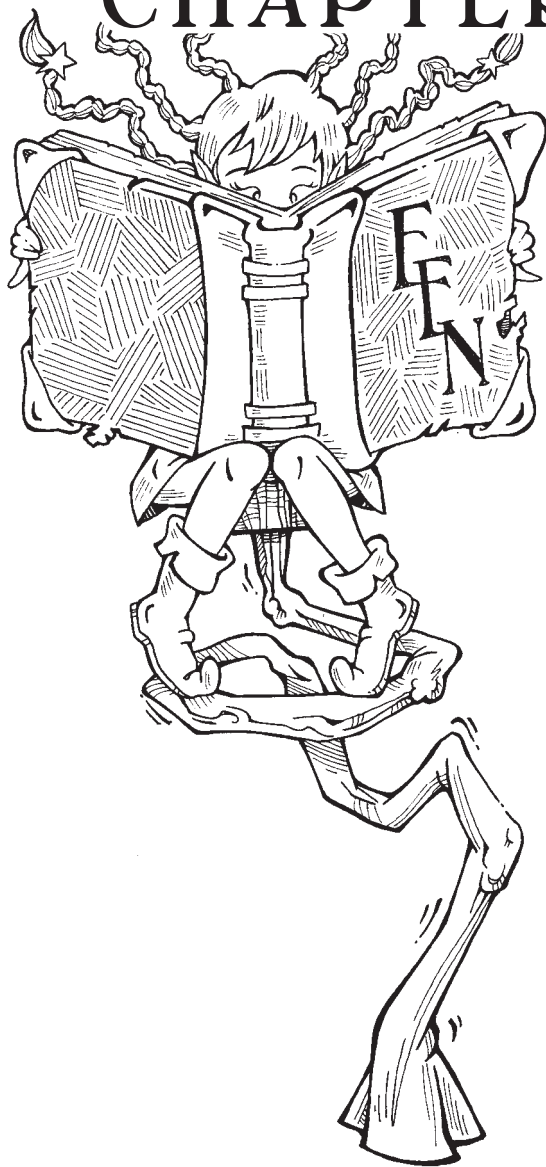
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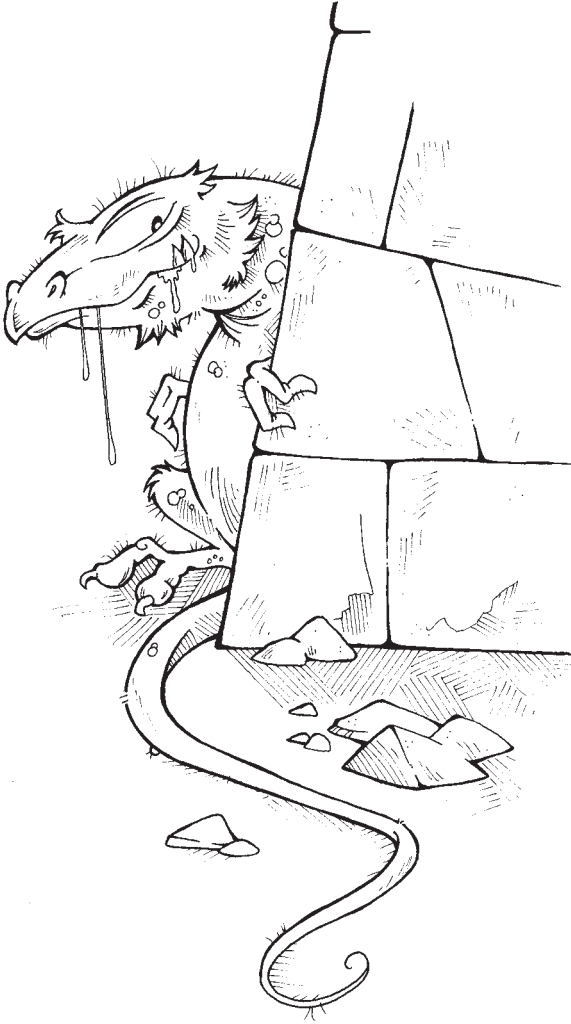
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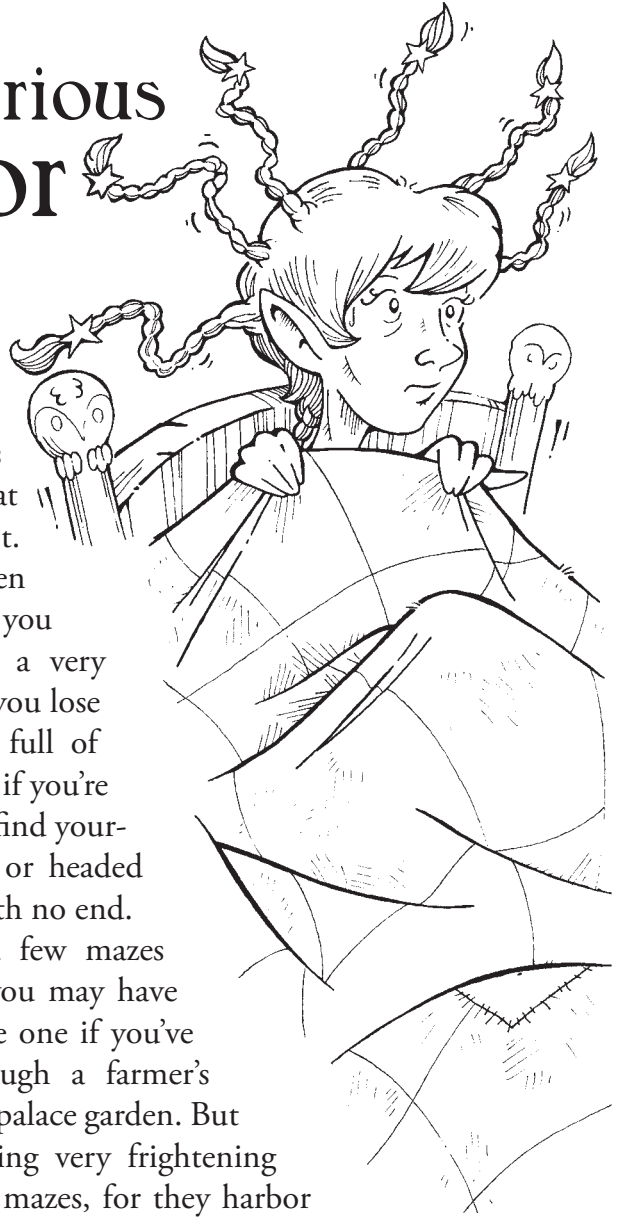


## CHAPTER 1

# A Mysterious Visitor

**This** is a story about monsters and mazes, and what it means to be lost. If you have ever been inside a maze, then you know that they do a very good job of making you lose your way. They are full of tricks and turns, and if you're not careful, you will find yourself going in circles or headed down a dark road with no end.

There are still a few mazes left in our world—you may have found yourself inside one if you've ever wandered through a farmer's cornfield or visited a palace garden. But really, there is nothing very frightening about these modern mazes, for they harbor no fanged goblins, no slurping monsters. But if you so lose yourself in this story, you just might discover such an adventure.



Our tale begins long ago in the tiny land of Een. It was a wretched night—the whole sky crackled with claws of lightning and the dark clouds boomed with thunder. Now, the land of Een is a very small place, tucked between the cracks of here and there. A normal-sized person might walk right through Een and not even realize it existed—especially during a terrific storm when the only thing anyone really wants to do is get indoors and dry themselves by a warm fire.

Yes, to you or me, a storm can be quite a dreadful affair—but think of the tiny people of Een: to them, a raindrop could be like a bucket of water, a gust of wind like a hurricane. Of course, the Eens are a magical people and have been in the world for a very long time, so I suppose they know a thing or two about getting through storms. Some experts say that Eens are related to Elves because they have pointed ears and can talk to animals, but I have also heard that they are related to no one—that they are a strange race of people all their own.

Whatever the case, we will concern ourselves with one Een in particular: the tiny girl named Kendra Kandlestar, who, on this dark and shadowy night, was nestled in her bed inside her uncle's house.

Kendra was in a deep dream. Those of you familiar with Kendra's adventures will know that this girl has had her fair share of dreams—many of them quite frightening. But this dream was pleasant. On this night, Kendra was dreaming about her family, who had mysteriously disappeared long ago, when she was just a baby. Even though she couldn't remember them, it was quite wonderful for Kendra to dream about her family: her mother, her father, and her brother, Kiro. Inside that magical dream world, she could clearly picture them all

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together: picnicking on the banks of the River Wink or resting in the shade of the yew tree, where she now lived with her Uncle Griffinskitch. In her dream, everything seemed right. Everything seemed perfect.

But the dream was not to last.

Suddenly, Kendra bolted awake and sat upright in her bed. What had awoken her? A sound? A light? No . . . it was the darkness. It was *too* dark, even for a black sky raging with storm clouds. She tugged nervously at her braids. Tugging always helped her clear her mind. Kendra had seven braids in all, radiating out from the top of her head like the rays of a star, so she had plenty to tug at.

*Something is out there*, Kendra told herself. Through the wind and thunder, she could hear a strange sound. It was a grunting sound, as if someone were in terrible pain. Kendra sat still, frozen for several minutes, but eventually her curiosity won out over her fear. So finally, she crept to her window and pressed her face against the glass—but she just couldn't see well enough. Frustrated, she wrenched the window open, and instantly, wind and rain billowed into the room. She brushed the waving curtains out of her face and leaned out into the rain.

She could see and hear more clearly now. She scanned the yard around their yew tree cottage. Suddenly the lightning crackled again and—for a split second—illuminated the yard. Then she saw it—or, more accurately, she saw its shadow. She caught the dark shape against the garden shed, but she could not tell who (or what) it was. The shadow only told her one thing about its owner: it was simply enormous.

“It's no Een,” she murmured to herself. “No animal either; it's bigger even than a badger.”

She could still hear it breathing, but now, she detected something else: the sound of it dragging itself across the ground, between the shed and the house. *Whatever it is, it sounds as if it's injured*, Kendra thought.

She had to tell Uncle Griffinskitch. Clutching her blanket around her, she raced out of her room, bare feet and all, and scampered up the stairs towards her uncle's room. Suddenly a strange shape, all hairy, hunched, and with a sunken face appeared from around the bend of the staircase. Kendra shrieked in surprise as a bony hand reached out to hold her tight.

"Don't play the fool! It's me, Uncle Griffinskitch."

Kendra opened her eyes and was greeted with the familiar face of her uncle. It was no wonder he had frightened her, for he was a ghostly figure at the best of times, never mind in the dark, with some strange thing wandering around outside. He had sharp blue eyes and a crooked nose, and his bent body leaned heavily upon the support of the short staff that he always carried in his thin and gnarled hands. Perhaps the most striking thing about Uncle Griffinskitch was his beard, for it was long and white, and covered his entire body, right down to his toes. But Kendra was relieved to see her uncle. He was a strong old man, and a gifted wizard too; some said the best in all the land. And wizardry was something they just might need this harrowing night . . .

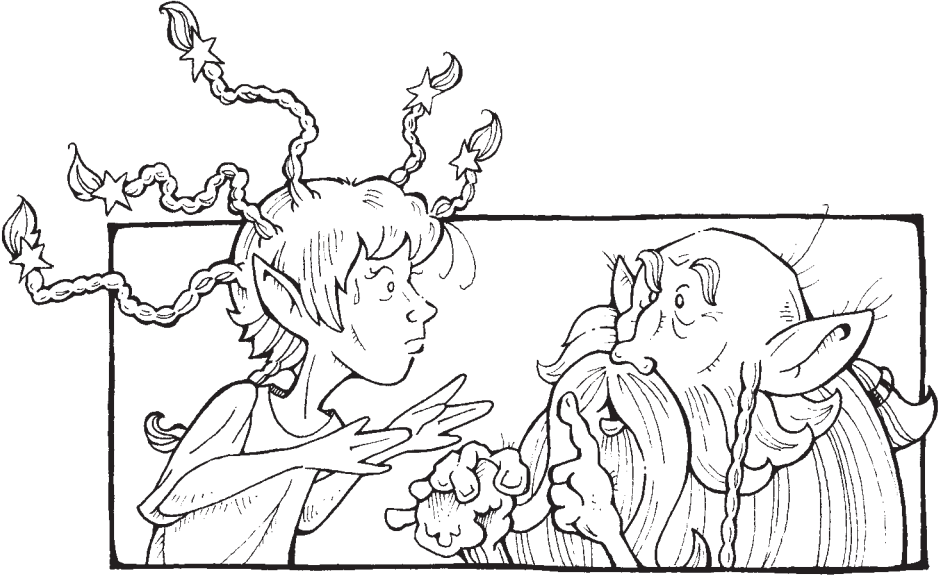
"Are you all right?" Uncle Griffinskitch asked.

"Yes—you startled me, that's all," Kendra replied.

"Didn't mean to," he told her softly. "But keep your voice—"

"There's something out there," she interrupted. "And it's not Een."

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He gave her a nod that told her that he had heard it too. They sat there for a moment in the dark, listening. The night, so wild and stormy, suddenly seemed peculiarly quiet.

But the silence was brief. After a moment, a loud, alarming knock cut through the darkness. Whatever *it* was, it was now banging on their door.

“Humph,” Uncle Griffinskitch muttered. “We have company.”

He lifted his staff and waved his hand over it so that its round top began to glow faintly.

“What are you going to do?” Kendra whispered.

“Answer the door of course,” the old Een said, illuminating the stairs with his staff as though it were a torch. “I suppose there’s no use in asking you to stay up here.”

Kendra opened her mouth to protest, but her uncle cut her off. “Of course not.”

The knock came again, loud and threatening.

Uncle Griffinskitch grunted and hobbled down the winding staircase, Kendra close behind him.

“HURRY!” bellowed a deep voice from outside.

The voice sent a shiver down Kendra’s braids, but her Uncle only grumbled a sharp “Humph.” His annoyed tone made Kendra feel better; it meant the old wizard wasn’t frightened. Most Eens, of course, would be terrified at even the *thought* of a knock in the middle of a stormy night. But not Uncle Griffinskitch. Nothing seemed to ruffle him.

Uncle Griffinskitch now unlatched the door, and as it swung inward, Kendra screamed in spite of herself. For the thing that hulked in their doorway was definitely no Een. And it was bigger than a badger, too—much bigger.

“Kandlestar,” the creature grunted.

It was too large to enter the house, but it plunged its giant cavernous face forward just the same, directly into the light of Uncle Griffinskitch’s staff.

“An Unger!” Kendra cried. “You’re an Unger! Uncle Griffinskitch—how? It’s impossible for any monster—er, creature—er, anything other than an Een, to get through the magic curtain!”

“Yes, I know—hush,” her uncle scolded.

“Kandlestar,” the giant gasped again.

Kendra knew Ungers all too well. She had once saved one from death, out there in the wilds that lay beyond the magic curtain that protected the Eens from the outside world. That creature had just been a youngster, and she had been able to find the courage to help him. But now—this was completely different, for here was a fully-grown Unger standing in their doorway, right here in the land of Een—where they were supposed to be safe from such creatures.

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Timidly, Kendra peered from behind the open door and studied the beast. The Unger was gargantuan. He looked as if he had been hewn from stone, for his skin was gray and hard, knotted with wrinkles and blemishes. Two giant tusks jutted



out from the corners of his mouth. He was very old, Kendra could tell, for his hair was ghost white and his skin paper-thin. But there was something more—a streak of blood was running down the Unger’s face.

“He’s wounded!” Kendra exclaimed, reaching towards the mighty Unger.

“NO, CHILD!” Uncle Griffinskitch ordered, pulling her back with a surprisingly strong hand.

The Unger pointed a crooked claw at Kendra. “Childs of Kandlestar,” it moaned. “Youzum. Unger seekzum youzum.”

“How do you know who I am?” Kendra asked.

“Quiet, I say!” Uncle Griffinskitch cried, casting a critical glare in her direction. He turned back and stared directly into the creature’s giant, round eyes. “She’s not the one you seek.”

“Itzum her,” the Unger groaned. He shot out a claw and grabbed Kendra’s arm. He twisted her wrist so that her hand was visible in the light of Uncle Griffinskitch’s staff. The Unger’s grip was tight—but also remarkably gentle. “Eenez marked withzum star.”

Kendra stared down at her palm. She could see nothing—just the normal lines that had always run across her hand.

But the Unger seemed to see something more. “Unger can seezum mark,” the mighty creature said, releasing Kendra’s wrist. “Youzum Kandlestar . . . youzum key. Unger prophecy sayzum Een withzum star must gozum to Greeven Wastes by first summerzum moon.”

“The Greeven Wastes?” Uncle Griffinskitch asked. “Where is that?”

“And why should I go there?” Kendra added.

“There youzum finds Door to Unger.”

Kendra looked at her uncle for some sign that he knew what the creature was speaking of—but the old man only shook his head in confusion.

“Timezee runszum short,” the Unger said gravely. “Door openzum but oncezum year—nightzum of first summerzum moon. Youzum findz it before then, Kandlestar! Otherwize it too latezum!”

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“Humph,” Uncle Griffinskitch muttered, banging his staff loudly against the floor. “None of this makes sense. Now see here—,”

“Oroook,” the Unger interrupted. “Unger’s namezum Oroook. Eenez mustzum trust Oroook. Oroook knewzum motherzum of Kandlestar.”

“My mother!” Kendra gasped. “Where is she?”

“You’re talking nonsense!” Uncle Griffinskitch told the Unger. “Kayla Kandlestar would never befriend a—,”

“Oroook speakzum truth!” the Unger interjected again. “But now Oroook havezum no time lefts. Oroook wounded . . . listenzum! Youzum, Kandlestar, youzum must findzum Door to Unger.”

“Why?” Uncle Griffinskitch demanded.

“Itzum doorzum to truths,” the Unger groaned, falling to his knees in pain. “Truthzum about Eens! Truthzum . . . about family of Kandlestar! Een child must findzum Door to Unger. Rememberzum, by first summerzum moon!”

He grunted and his final breath was sharp and edged with a whistling sound. Then he closed his large eyes and slumped forward against their house, so hard that they could feel the tree bend against his great weight. He was so big that he completely blocked the doorway.

“Days of Een!” Uncle Griffinskitch uttered. “He’s dead!”

And then, before their very eyes, the fallen creature faded away and disappeared. There was no puff of smoke, no sudden flash—he just melted into the darkness and was gone.

Kendra rubbed her eyes. *I’m still dreaming*, she thought. *I must be. This still must be a dream.*

Quickly, Uncle Griffinskitch closed the door. He shuffled to the kitchen table, only a few paces away, and fell heavily

into his chair. He looked at Kendra with a strange expression on his face.

“It didn’t really happen,” she announced, somehow hoping that her uncle would agree with her.

But he didn’t. And, in fact, the next day when the rain clouds scattered before the sun, Kendra discovered that it *had* to have happened. For there, pressed into the thick black mud before their doorway, was a set of enormous three-toed prints—the type of footprints that could only belong to an Unger.

