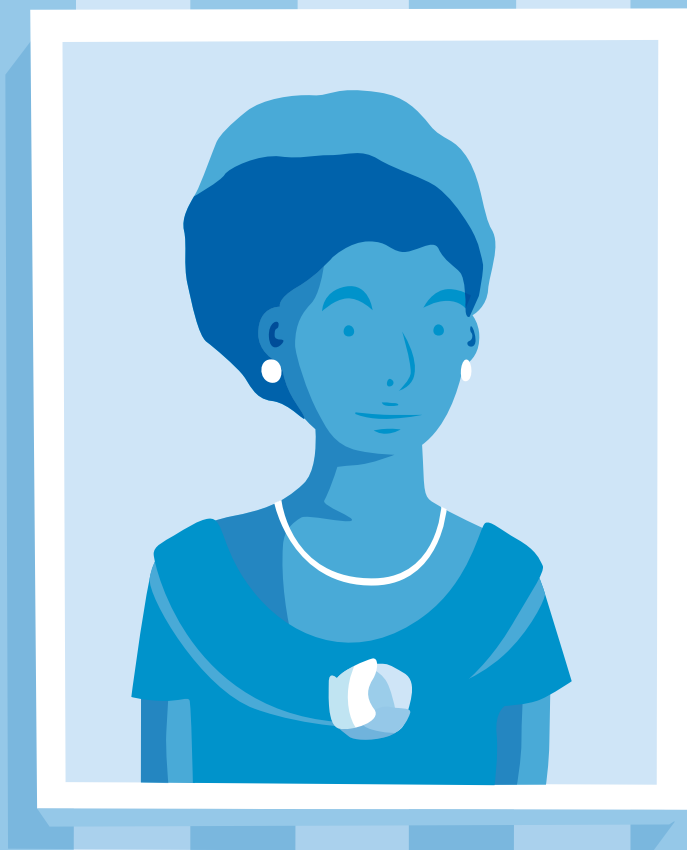
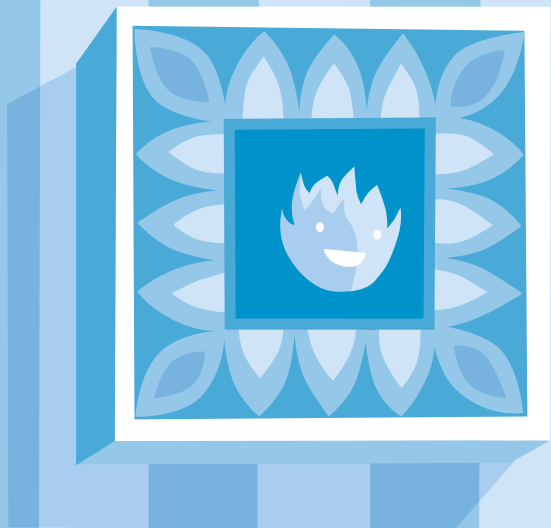


# Ara & the Fox of Friend- ship






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jfml





One night  
Ara awoke to find  
her companion the Fox  
of Friendship gone. And  
the window was open. Had  
he been kidnapped?  
Ara decided to  
investigate.

A stylized illustration of a woman with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a blue tunic and a pink skirt, working in a workshop. She is holding a small orange coal in her right hand and tending to a glowing fire elemental inside a glass lamp on a wooden table. The workshop is filled with various objects: a large white sphere with a blue crystal inside, a large purple bag, a shelf with books and a cat, a window with blue curtains, and a staircase on the left. A speech bubble above her contains text.

She put  
on her cloak and  
gently tapped against  
her lamp to wake up the  
fire elemental inside  
and fed it some  
coals.





On her way she passed the statue of the sleeping Buffalo God, dreaming of the monsoon.

Sleeping at the god's feet gives you her protection and people would not dare to shoo you away.


A whimsical illustration of a city at night. A giant, pink, cartoonish dragon with orange spikes along its back and tail is coiled around a dark, rocky cliff. A small figure of a person with dark skin, wearing a blue shirt and pink pants, stands on the dragon's back, holding a small yellow lantern. The city below is built into the cliffside and on a riverbank, with various houses, towers, and smoke rising from chimneys. A large, orange, teardrop-shaped object floats in the dark, starry sky. Two speech bubbles are present: one on the left asking a question and one on the right providing an answer.

Did the  
Fox of Friendship  
come this  
way?

Yes, I let him  
cross a while ago.  
He went into  
the city.








Sparrowguard!  
Catguard! Have  
you seen the Fox  
of Friendship?


Yes, he was  
heading to  
the Labyrinth  
of Books!

The Shadow Queen,  
who is the guardian,  
archivist and librarian of  
the countless books in  
the labyrinth, walked  
with Ara the same route  
the fox had taken.






The Shadow Queen  
brought Ara to Three  
Sisters Gate, where  
Jahnja was keeping  
watch.




Not many  
people go through  
this gate because you  
have to answer a  
riddle to pass:

You feed it,  
it lives, you give  
it something  
to drink, it  
dies.

...  
It's fire!



Behind the  
gate was the grove  
of the White Hare where  
it was always winter.  
Suddenly Ara heard  
a great crash!



O dearest  
fox! Are you  
hurt? And what  
are you doing  
here?

Hello Ara!  
I'm fine,  
I just got  
stuck.

And I'm the  
Fox of Friendship,  
it's my calling to roam  
city & country at night  
to look for people  
who are lost.





But what  
are we going to  
do? I don't think  
I can lift this  
tree.

You  
poor thing!  
Let me help  
you!








The lady looked a bit scary but she had just helped to save the fox, so they went back to her camp and she told them her story.

My name is Nin. Some time ago I lost my home because the Fire Rooster decided to sit on my roof making my house burn down. I tried to rescue my most favourite stones. That's where I got my scars. I'm a geologist, you see.

Thank you for helping my friend, I'm Ara.

So you don't have a home? There is a treehouse in the garden behind our house. You could sleep there tonight.





Because it  
had been some time  
since Nin had slept under  
a roof they set off. On the  
way home they tip-toed  
past the Parliament  
of Owls.


(The Owl  
Thieves Guild  
has a permanent  
seat in the Owl  
Parliament.)



They had  
breakfast with Ara's  
parents the next morning  
and decided that their  
house could be Nin's  
base to return to from  
her geology  
expeditions.





A stylized illustration of a woman with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a maroon tunic and a blue skirt, running through a town. She has a green backpack and is holding a scroll. In the background, there are yellow buildings, green trees, and a blue sky. In the foreground, there is a white cat lying down, a small brown bird, and a white chair with a scroll on it.

It later  
turned out that Nin  
knew Ara's mother, who  
is a cartographer. They  
had met on their travels  
and Nin has been relying  
on her maps ever  
since.





