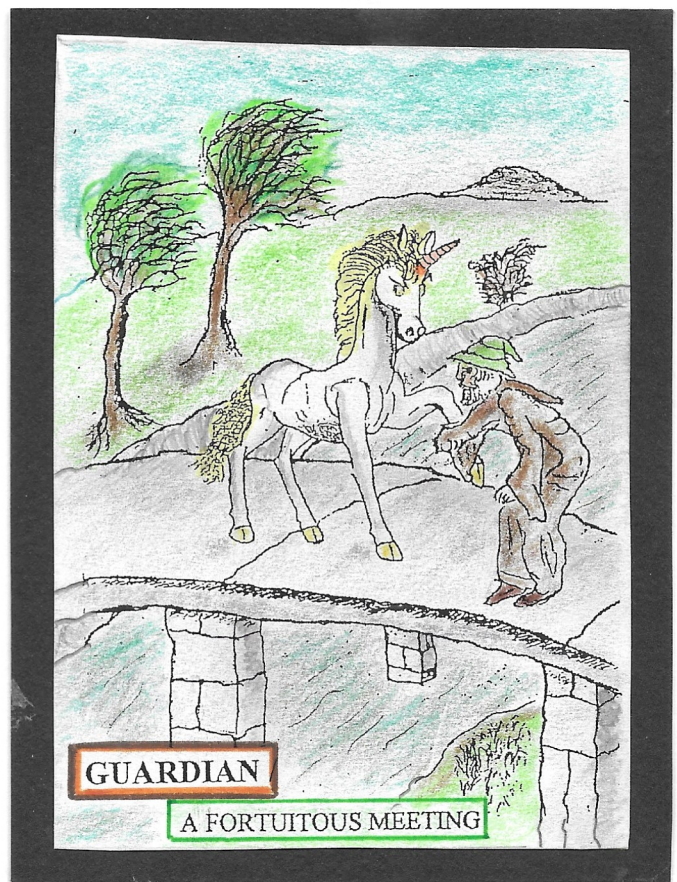


TAN'SA

A lovely sunny day in first spring, fresh with the smells of growing things and the gentle warmth of a friendly sun. Reveling in the heady sense of freedom at getting out of the nursery fields for the first time and that her dam had considered her ready to go out on her own, Tan'sa came back to earth with a start, as she narrowly avoided knocking the bent figure of the Shardan off the clapper bridge. Stuttering she managed to apologise, her almost victim said "that's alright lass, my golly you are a young'un, aren't you". "I've just turned two" Tan'sa said proudly "and this is my first solo, I am to start first school in second Spring"



She started to back up intending to let the humanoid continue over the bridge and, as soon as he started to move she knew what her mind was nagging her about. The stance of the Shardan was all wrong, they normally walked tall and straight, this one wasn't. "What's wrong" she asked. "I think I've busted my ankle, I slipped on a rock up there and heard a crack and now it's swelling up like an elephant's leg" the humanoid said as he showed Tan'sa a leg which was about five times as big as it should have been. "I'm heading for Mem'th's healer station".

Tan'sa thought fast, "that's miles away, you'll be days getting there on your own" she said and then asked "what's your name?" "Yes' I know it's miles away but I don't have much choice and my name is Ogleth" was the answer. "Well if we can get you on my back you'll get there today. Ogleth stared, startled "you're not old enough to be carrying my weight, young'un". Tan'sa figured she was going to have to insist, "my dam said I'm well built and strong for my age, so we'll get you in place and see how we go, there's a boulder over there that we can use. So long as I take it steady I reckon I can get you to Mem'th's station"

Tan'sa thanked Mem'th for sending a message to her dam, said goodbye to Ogleth, who now sat in a chair with his leg stuck out in front of him covered in plaster of paris, the ankle had indeed been broken, and waving to them left the healer station. She knew she wouldn't make it back home before dark, but it didn't matter, all she had to do was follow the track she was on and it wasn't that far, both her dam and Mem'th had said "well done", Mem'th especially because a very tricky bit of bone setting would have been a lot more difficult if Ogleth had caused more damage trying to walk. Mem'th had needed to access the medical database of the Shardan species from their home universe because of the triple ball and socket arrangement of the Shardan ankle, highly unusual in a humanoid species.