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STORIES FROM
THE WORLD
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STORIES FROM THE WORLD

OWL MEETS OLD MAN AT THE POND

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There is a place known only as the World. It has everything you would expect in a world: rivers and mountains, tame places and wild places, cottages, bridges, talking animals, old magic, and even older mysteries.

All these things were in the world, but no thing in the world had its own name.



Then Old Man arrived, followed in time by Dink, a young girl who stumbled upon an ancient portal. The two of them discover Tortugo, the wisest of all the creatures, and Shepherd, Dink's fierce and devoted friend.

They also meet Owl, who knows a good many facts but struggles to understand them.

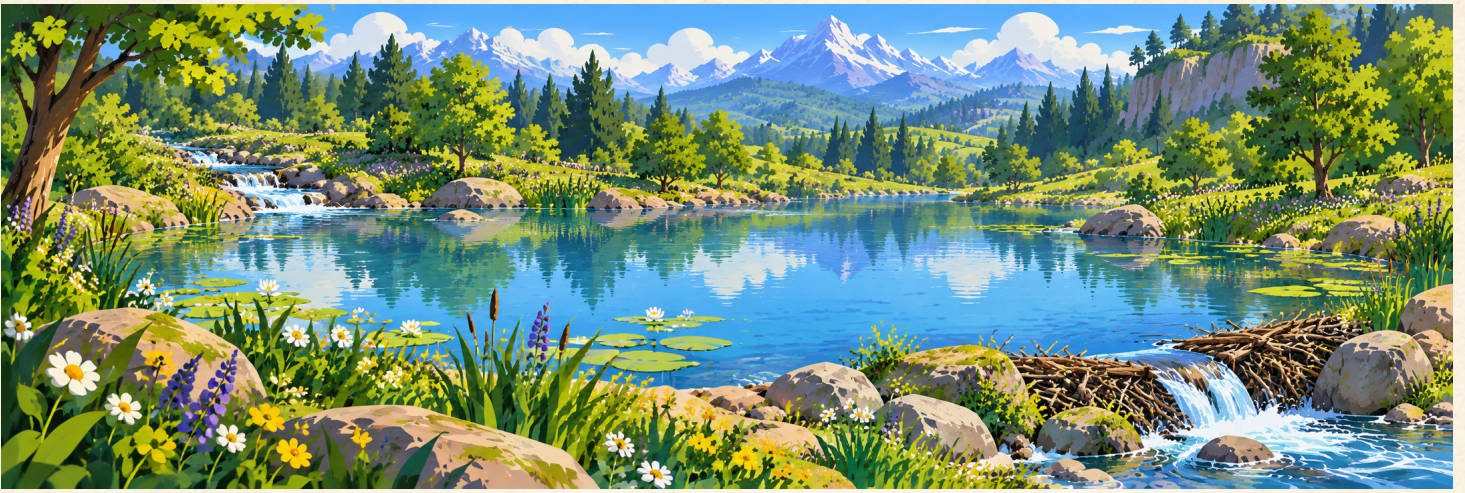
And of course, there is no one in the World who does not eventually meet Fox, whose wild nature leads her inevitably into trouble.

Stories from the World do not appear in chronological order. Each is a small part of a larger history that is only now being written. Read the stories in any order you like. They all answer the same question, really.

What happens when an innocent world begins to know itself?







The Pond was the most beautiful place in the world. It was large enough to contain all sorts of interesting fish and creatures, and small enough that you could swim across it if you wanted to. A gently flowing river entered the Pond from the north and exited around a beaver dam that marked the southern shore.

Owl was at the Pond when he met a curious new creature. It was tall and walked on two legs. It was almost as large as Bear, but not as thick. Owl flew over and landed on a rock near the creature.

Who are you? he asked.

I'm an Old Man, it said.

Who are you?

You may call me Owl.

Owl pinched the creature's shirt and tugged at the fabric. You have strange fur. It seems very loose.

That's not fur. It's my clothing.

Clothing, you say? Very interesting. Some creatures have fur, some have feathers, and some have scales. I've never seen anything like clothing before.

I have skin underneath my clothes.





I don't have fur or feathers or scales. The creature pulled up a sleeve and showed its arm to Owl, who peered with interest over the top of his spectacles.

Your skin doesn't appear to provide much protection.

No, it doesn't, said Old Man. That's why I wear clothing.

Fascinating, said Owl.

I'm afraid I'm lost, said Old Man. Would you mind telling me where I am?

Of course not. You're here with me at the Pond.

Yes, but what is the name of the pond?

It doesn't have a name.

Well, how do you distinguish it from other ponds?

There are no other ponds, at least not around here.

Very interesting, said Old Man. I suppose if there is just the one Pond it doesn't NEED a name. The two sat together in silence for a few moments, watching insects skate across the surface of the Pond. Then Old Man spoke again.



What is the name of this place?

What do you mean by this place? said Owl.

Right here. Where we are. The Mountains, the Pond, the Forest, and the Sky above them all. What is the name of this place?

We call it the World, Owl said.

This isn't the world. This is just one place IN the world. There are other places in the world, and they all have names.

If you say there are other places, I have no reason to doubt you, said Owl. But I've never seen any other places. This place is called the World, and it is the only place we know.

Old Man turned slowly and looked at the World around them.

He saw the goodness of the World and knew the goodness was real.



He looked long into Owl's eyes and asked another question.

What about you? Do you have a name other than Owl?

No, I am only known as Owl. I think you are referring to proper names, which I have read about. However, we have no use for them here. Nicknames are common, of course, but they are private and generally kept within families. We called my grandfather Great Gurt, owing to the astonishing sounds he made when regurgitating his pellets.



Thunderously loud, he was; there was no sleeping near him.

Owl paused. Wait a minute.

I've never thought of it before, but Tortugo has a name. He was once Turtle, but the Old Ones began calling him Tortugo many, many years ago. That was when they gave him the Magic Shell. He did something to anger the Old Ones, and his shell still bears the marks of what they did to him.

Old Man was thoughtful before he spoke. Who are the Old Ones?

They left this World long ago, before all living memory begins, except for Tortugo's memory, of course. Would you like to meet him?

Yes, said Old Man. I would very much like to meet Tortugo.





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- ☐ Do you notice little doors?
- ☐ Can you keep a secret?
- ☐ Have you ever followed a fox with your eyes?
- ☐ Are you still small enough to fit where grownups cannot?

If you answered YES to two or more, remain alert.



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Some mysteries intentionally left unexplained.

SEND AWAY FOR YOUR KIT!

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For brave walkers, careful listeners, and children likely to get muddy.

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- Whistle
- And More!



SEND AWAY FOR A MAP OF THE GREEN PLACES!

Includes likely paths, unlikely paths, and places omitted for safety.



Not all roads are where they seem to be.

WRITE TO FOX!

Fox may answer riddles, complaints, compliments, or questions about trouble.

Fox is not responsible for consequences.



Replies not guaranteed. Mischief possible.

CAN YOU SEE THE WORLD?

Most adults cannot. Some children can. A very few are invited.

