

VOICE
AGENCY
COMICS

ISSUE #13

STORIES FROM
THE WORLD

#3

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AXIS MUNDI
TORTUGO

STORIES FROM THE WORLD

OWL VISITS TORTUGO



by Gordon Atkinson



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The next day, Owl found Tortugo sunning himself along the headwaters of the River. He greeted Tortugo respectfully and approached him.

What is the name of this place? asked Owl.



Tortugo looked surprised.

Who told you there are places and names of places?

Old Man told me. He said he has been to many places and that places are supposed to have names.

Tortugo sat quietly for a moment.

I beg your pardon, Owl. I must go into my Shell and consider what you have told me.

After some time had passed, Tortugo emerged from his Shell and spoke.

Old Man is correct, said Tortugo. There are other places in the world, and he has indeed been to some of them. Tortugo sighed. Old Man has knowledge, but he does not have wisdom. If he were wise, he would not have told you about naming things.





Why not? asked Owl.

Tortugo's Shell began to shimmer and shift. Symbols and words appeared and vanished so quickly that Owl could scarcely keep up with the changes. As Owl watched the Shell, Tortugo began to speak.

The Old Ones say we name things to distinguish them from other things. And once you start distinguishing, comparing is soon to follow. After that, a host of terrible things would come into the World. For this reason, we do not use names here.





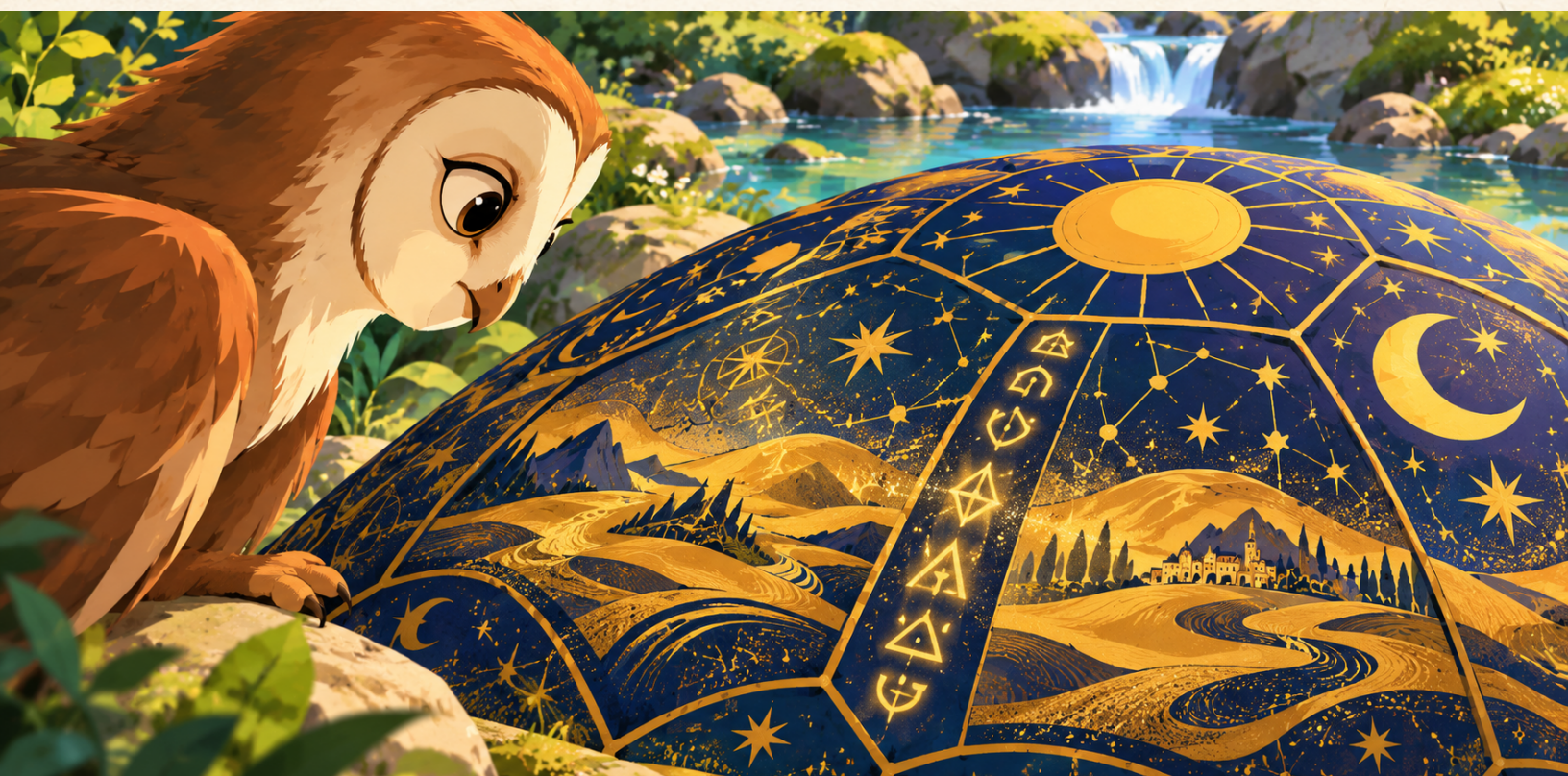
Who are the Old Ones? asked Owl.

The Old Ones were in the World before anyone else. They roamed the World freely when I was a young turtle. And then I did something I should not have done. As a punishment, they named me Tortugo and gave me my Shell.

There is wisdom on the inside and the outside of it. What is on the inside is for me to know. What is on the outside is for others to know.

And now it has been many years since the Old Ones walked in the World.

Owl looked intently at Tortugo's Shell. The pattern looked like a map of the stars in the heavens, but then it changed into shifting sand dunes. Tortugo's rough voice throbbed the air, and the surface of his Shell seemed to dance in the vibrations. Words in an ancient runic script shimmered briefly onto the surface of the Shell, then faded away.



I cannot understand your Shell, said Owl. It is beautiful, but it holds no meaning for me. Tortugo nodded solemnly. I expected not, as I have never met anyone who could understand the outside of my Shell.

He took a deep breath, held it a moment, then exhaled loudly.

Owl, you tell Old Man there is a deep and abiding magic preventing us from leaving the World. In my youth, I traveled the Four Ways, searching for other places. I found a placid lake, a swift river, a vast desert, and an ocean. There is no way to leave the World, at least no way that I could find.

And so we have no need of names here.





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*"I traveled
all Four Ways.
I am still here."*

— Tortugo,
verified customer



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