Sentence Island

Second Edition

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CHAPTER ONE
Mud’s Two Sides

Once upon a time—
not so long ago—
in a busy, blue sea not far from
Grammar Island...
...was Sentence Island,
a blue island filled with ideas.

High in the wind,
a gray bird could just discern
the shape of the island,
shimmering in the ocean light.
In the ocean, 
schools of blue fish 
swam under the waves 
that splashed on the beach. 
Shells filled the sand 
like chocolate chips.
Of all the fish in the school, one was different. His name was Mud. The others swam around him. “Are you a mudfish?” they asked. “No,” said Mud. “Are you a muddy fish?” they asked. “No,” said Mud. “My name is Mud.”
Mud was different; he didn’t care who knew it, so no one bothered him.

In fact, Mud was different from the other fish in two ways. (Yes, he could talk, but all fish can talk.)

First, Mud could walk on land. Second, Mud was obsessed; ideas rose from his head like bubbles.
Mud was obsessed.  
He could not stop thinking about it.  
About what?  
Oh, the sentence.  
Mud had overheard a learned fish saying wonderful things about the sentence,  
and he just had to find a sentence, to see one for himself,  
to see a real one,  
to learn how to write one.  
It was Mud’s mission.
Mud knew where to look: on that island, there: Sentence Island.
CHAPTER TWO
Mud Thinks about Doing and Being
Mud was deep in thought.
“More?” thought Mud. “Much more to learn?”
But suddenly he heard
a splash, and then a sploosh,
and two pelicans, who were circling
for some breakfast, glided right
over his head. Being a fish, Mud
eyed the pelicans suspiciously,
but they appeared to wish him no harm.
“Who are you?” they called.
“My name is Mud,” called Mud. “Who are you?” “I’m Oopsy, and that’s my flappy friend Daisy,” called Oopsy. “We’re very fancy flyers!” Oopsy almost flew into Daisy. “I’m looking for sentences!” called Mud. “Cow Loon said I could learn all about sentences!” “Cow Loon?” said Oopsy. “He’s a fine fiddler! We’ll inform you about the facts! We’re familiar with the flight path!” Laughing like a couple of pelicans, they flapped in for a floppy landing,
and both of them hopped and almost flipped on their noses.
“I flunked Flap School,” said Oopsy.
  “Your flipper was flat!” said Daisy.
  “Don’t be foolish,” said Oopsy, and they laughed like pelicans.
  Mud stared, open-mouthed. Oopsy-Daisy stopped laughing.
  “Sentences,” said Mud.
  “Tell me about sentences.”
“Follow, Fred,” said Oopsy, “and I’ll give it a fling,”
and this is what he said:

“Daisy is a doozy, but
Oopsy flew loops, see?”

“No,” said Mud, “and my name’s not Fred.”

“Daisy IS, but Oopsy FLEW,” said Oopsy,
“Follow, Fred?”

“No,” said Mud, “and my name is Mud.”

They glared at each other.
“Fine,” said Oopsy, “follow this, Fred,” and this is what he said:

“Daisy was hazy, but Oopsy sipped soup, see?”

“No,” said Mud, whose name was Mud.

“Fine, Fred,” said Oopsy, “follow further,” and this is what he said, very slowly:

“Daisy eats fish, and Mud is a fish. See?”
Mud raised a scaly eyebrow.
“No,” he said, “and I don’t like that sentence!”
Daisy flopped and flapped and said,
“The figure, Oopsy, show him the figure.”
Oopsy looked dubiously at Mud but said,
“Fine, Fred. Follow this,”
and he drew in the sand with his bill.
“These are called the parts of the sentence,” said Oopsy, “and there is more to follow, Fred, but we’ll fly with this fact: a sentence has a structure, with parts that are connected, just like other structures. Every sentence features a subject, made of a noun or pronoun, and every sentence has a verb. Follow: the verb might be an action verb, like see, ran, ate, or flew, or the verb might be a linking verb, like is. There are flocks of action verbs but only a few linking verbs.”