

Ozzie and the Snortlefish

A Great Story Parable for 2 Actor-Readers & 1 Narrator

Original by Denny O'Neil; adapted for script by Connie Barlow

(Note: Denny O'Neil wrote Batman comics for many years)

www.TheGreatStory.org

Instructions for Facilitator:

Explain the concept of evolutionary parables and that some are serious, while some are humorous and playful. This one is playful! Connie Barlow and Michael Dowd have used this with groups on many occasions. The author of the original text, Denny O'Neil, wrote Batman comics for many years. Connie adapted Denny's text into a text format suitable for improvisational acting.

This script, and scripts of other evolutionary parables, can be downloaded for free by going to www.TheGreatStory.org. Then click on "Parables."

This script is designed for 2 ACTOR-READERS AND ONE NARRATOR.

THE ACTORS: "Ozzie" (protagonist) and "Snortlefish" (antagonist)

You can't get it wrong! Invite the volunteers to simply relax and enjoy this playful parable. There is no advance preparation, so "mistakes" are expected – and can add to the humor!

NOTE: You may wish to find scarves to drape over the actors' shoulders to help viewers remember who is who: bright color for Ozzie and dull color for Snortlefish.

Narrator Role for

Ozzie and the Snortlefish

Original text by Denny O'Neil; adapted for script by Connie Barlow

*INSTRUCTIONS TO NARRATOR: Your parts appear in **bold**. Begin reading with both Ozzie and the Snortlefish standing on stage. Make sure you choose to say either "him" or "her" depending on the gender of the actor. Do not read "him/her."*

NARRATOR: "Once upon a very, very long time ago – 438 million years ago, more or less – there lived an ambitious young fish. This fish's real name was *Panderichthys elpistostege*, but since that's a bit hard to say, we'll call him/her Ozzie.

Ozzie did pretty much what his/her brothers, sisters, and cousins did, which was to putter around the bottom of a pond, looking at the sand and dirt, waving fishy fins, and trying to keep from being eaten by larger fish. That was what bottom-dwelling fish did in those days, and in these days too.

One morning, Ozzie was skimming along the ooze at the bottom of the pond when he met a sleeping Snortlefish named Kumpfrumple.

Kumpfrumple had no friends because he/she was an extremely rude fish, as well as being lazy, ill-tempered, and occasionally flatulent. But if Kumpfrumple had had friends, they would have called him/her "Kump" for short, and so shall we.

Kump opened one eye, looked at Ozzie and said . . ."

KUMP: "Hey stupid! You think you're better than me, right?"

OZZIE: "I beg your pardon?"

NARRATOR: "Kump waved a very flat fin in Ozzie's direction and said,"

KUMP: "Those things growing out of your body: The rest of us fish don't have those, so you must think you're better than us!"

NARRATOR: "Ozzie looked down at two stout appendages jutting from his/her flanks."

OZZIE: "Oh these? You are wrong when you say I'm the only one who has them. Actually, a lot of my relatives seem to be growing them, too."

KUMP: "What are they good for?"

OZZIE: "I've been wondering that myself. Mostly, I use them to help guide me around the pond. I also rub them in the mud and sand, which can be fun if you're in a certain mood. But mostly, I just use them to push and to pull."

KUMP: "Sounds dumb to me!"

OZZIE: "Last night I had a dream. I dreamed that some day I'll climb out of the water and onto the stuff that surrounds the pond: The not-water."

KUMP: "The not-water! Preposterous! No fish has ever ventured into the not-water!"

NARRATOR: "Ozzie sighed and turned away, wiggling his/her appendages. Then Ozzie began to speak again to Kump, and with renewed conviction."

OZZIE: "These strange things will grow thicker and stronger. I just know it! One day I'll use them to raise myself up out of the pond and to move about the not-water by putting one in front of the other."

KUMP: "Does this dumb activity have a name?"

OZZIE: "Uh, . . . I don't know."

NARRATOR: "Suddenly an idea stopped the little fish in his/her tracks."

OZZIE: "*Walking?* How does that sound—*walking*. I think it has a certain ring to it. If you ask me, it could catch on!"

KUMP: "That's it? All that trouble just to do this *walking*?"

NARRATOR: "Ozzie was now bursting with energy. Racing around the ocean floor, Ozzie exclaimed,"

OZZIE: "We'll jump! . . . We'll kick balls! . . . We'll dance! . . . We'll play ring-around-the-rosey!"

KUMP: "Awwwww! What does any of that mean?!"

OZZIE: "I guess I don't really know."

KUMP: "It all sounds stupid! I mean, why would any sane fish want to do any of that?"

OZZIE: "To see! To learn! To explore! To understand! To become! I dreamed that we will change and change and change again. Some of us will soar high above the pond. Some of us will become mighty creatures a hundred fishes high. And some . . . Some will become wise! The wise ones will come to know who they are and why they exist. They will understand everything that is, and they will celebrate everything they understand."

NARRATOR: Kump settled back into the ooze, and with a slap of a fishy tail released a cloud of mud into the water.

KUMP: "Sounds unlikely!"

OZZIE: "Maybe some of it is — and maybe not! We'll never know unless we climb out of the pond."

KUMP: "Seems like a lot of bother with no guaranteed return. A smart fish will stay right here and enjoy life. Now you go swim out of here—or *walk*, if that's what makes you happy. Me? I'm late for my nap."

OZZIE: [wiggling arms and jauntily leaving stage]

NARRATOR: Well, that's the end of the story. But you may want to know a little of what happened next. That afternoon, the sleeping snortlefish was eaten by a much larger fish. . .

KUMP: [look up, frightened, then head down or collapse]

NARRATOR: . . . And within a couple of hundred thousand years, a similar fate befell the entire snortlefish clan— which is why nobody's ever heard of them. [pause] Ozzie never did get out of the pond. But later, some of Ozzie's descendants did. How much of the rest of Ozzie's dream came true? That is yet to be seen.

Ozzie Role for

Ozzie and the Snortlefish

*INSTRUCTIONS TO OZZIE: You are the hero, a friendly fish, mostly optimistic and enthusiastic about your dreams. Your parts appear in **bold**. Begin play by standing near center stage, a distance from the other actor, and act out what you hear the narrator saying about you. (Don't look at your script until the snortlefish speaks to you). It will be important to flap or wiggle your arms from time to time. Face the audience as much as possible whenever it is your turn to speak.*

NARRATOR: "Once upon a very, very long time ago — 438 million years ago, more or less — there lived an ambitious young fish. This fish's real name was *Panderichthys elpistostege*, but since that's a bit hard to say, we'll call him/her Ozzie.

Ozzie did pretty much what his/her brothers, sisters, and cousins did, which was to putter around the bottom of a pond, looking at the sand and dirt, waving fishy fins, and trying to keep from being eaten by larger fish. That was what bottom-dwelling fish did in those days, and in these days too.

One morning, Ozzie was skimming along the ooze at the bottom of the pond when he met a sleeping Snortlefish named Kumpfrumple.

Kumpfrumple had no friends because he/she was an extremely rude fish, as well as being lazy, ill-tempered, and occasionally flatulent. But if Kumpfrumple had had friends, they would have called him/her "Kump" for short, and so shall we.

Kump opened one eye, looked at Ozzie and said . . ."

KUMP: "Hey stupid! You think you're better than me, right?"

OZZIE: [sweetly] **"I beg your pardon?"**

NARRATOR: "Kump waved a very flat fin in Ozzie's direction and said,"

KUMP: "Those things growing out of your body: The rest of us fish don't have those, so you must think you're better than us!"

NARRATOR: "Ozzie looked down at two stout appendages jutting from his/her flanks."

OZZIE: [look at & wiggle your arms] **"Oh these? You are wrong when you say I'm the only one who has them. Actually, a lot of my relatives seem to be growing them, too."**

KUMP: "What are they good for?"

OZZIE: "I've been wondering that myself. Mostly, I use them to help guide me around the pond. [gesture] I also rub them in the mud and sand [gesture], which can be fun if you're in a certain mood. But mostly, I just use them to push and to pull."

KUMP: "Sounds dumb to me!"

OZZIE: [eagerly following Kump, while wiggling arms] "Last night I had a dream. I dreamed that some day I'll climb out of the water and onto the stuff that surrounds the pond: The not-water."

KUMP: "The not-water! Preposterous! No fish has ever ventured into the not-water!"

NARRATOR: "Ozzie sighed and turned away, wiggling his/her appendages. Then Ozzie began to speak again to Kump, and with renewed conviction."

OZZIE: "These strange things will grow thicker and stronger. I just know it! One day I'll use them to raise myself up out of the pond and to move about the not-water by putting one in front of the other." [gesture]

KUMP: "Does this dumb activity have a name?"

OZZIE: [scuttling left and right in confusion] "Uh, . . . I don't know."

NARRATOR: "Suddenly an idea stopped the little fish in his/her tracks."

OZZIE: "Walking? How does that sound—walking. I think it has a certain ring to it. If you ask me, it could catch on!"

KUMP: "That's it? All that trouble just to do this *walking*?"

NARRATOR: "Ozzie was now bursting with energy. Racing around the ocean floor, Ozzie exclaimed,"

OZZIE: [act out] "We'll jump! . . . We'll kick balls! . . . We'll dance! . . . We'll play ring-around-the-rosey!"

KUMP: "Awwwww! What does any of that mean?!"

OZZIE: [humbly, with a sigh] "I guess I don't really know."

KUMP: "It all sounds stupid! Why would any sane fish want to do any of that?"

OZZIE: [passionately pace] **"To see! To learn! To explore! To understand! To become! I dreamed that we will change and change and change again. Some of us will soar high above the pond [gesture]. Some of us will become mighty creatures a hundred fishes high [gesture]. And some—"**
[move toward Kump, speaking close into Kump's face, as if telling a secret]
"Some will become wise! [pause and face audience] The wise ones will come to know who they are and why they exist. They will understand everything that is, and they will celebrate everything they understand."

NARRATOR: Kump settled back into the ooze, and with a slap of a fishy tail released a cloud of mud into the water.

KUMP: "Sounds unlikely!"

OZZIE: **"Maybe some of it is — and maybe not! We'll never know unless we climb out of the pond."**

KUMP: "Seems like a lot of bother with no guaranteed return. A smart fish will stay right here and enjoy life. Now you go swim out of here—or *walk*, if that's what makes you happy. Me? I'm late for my nap."

OZZIE: [wiggling arms and jauntily leaving stage]

OZZIE: [After narrator concludes the story, return to stage to take a bow.]

Snortlefish Role for

Ozzie and the Snortlefish

*INSTRUCTIONS TO SNORTLEFISH (KUMP): You are the antagonist — a gruff, nasty, and lazy fish. Your parts appear in **bold**. Begin play by standing near center stage, a distance from the other actor. Pretend to be asleep, but don't make any noise). (Only look at script to begin reading when narrator says, "Kump opened one eye, looked at Ozzie and said.") Remember to face the audience as much as possible while speaking.*

NARRATOR: "Once upon a very, very long time ago — 438 million years ago, more or less — there lived an ambitious young fish. This fish's real name was *Panderichthys elpistostege*, but since that's a bit hard to say, we'll call him/her Ozzie.

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Kump opened one eye, looked at Ozzie and said . . ."

KUMP: "Hey stupid! You think you're better than me, right?"

OZZIE: "I beg your pardon?"

NARRATOR: "Kump waved a very flat fin in Ozzie's direction and said,"

KUMP: "Those things growing out of your body: The rest of us fish don't have those, so you must think you're better than us!"

NARRATOR: "Ozzie looked down at two stout appendages jutting from his/her flanks."

OZZIE: "Oh these? You are wrong when you say I'm the only one who has them. Actually, a lot of my relatives seem to be growing them, too."

KUMP: [facing audience & taunting harshly] "What are they good for?"

OZZIE: "I've been wondering that myself. Mostly, I use them to help guide me around the pond. I also rub them in the mud and sand, which can be fun if you're in a certain mood. But mostly, I just use them to push and to pull."

KUMP: [turning & moving away a meter or so in a huff] **"Sounds dumb to me!"**

OZZIE: "Last night I had a dream. I dreamed that some day I'll climb out of the water and onto the stuff that surrounds the pond: The not-water."

KUMP: [skeptically, facing audience] **"The not-water! Preposterous! No fish has ever ventured into the not-water!"**

NARRATOR: "Ozzie sighed and turned away, wiggling his/her appendages. Then Ozzie began to speak again to Kump, and with renewed conviction."

OZZIE: "These strange things will grow thicker and stronger. I just know it! One day I'll use them to raise myself up out of the pond and to move about the not-water by putting one in front of the other."

KUMP: **"Does this dumb activity have a name?"**

OZZIE: "Uh, . . . I don't know."

NARRATOR: "Suddenly an idea stopped the little fish in his/her tracks."

OZZIE: "*Walking?* How does that sound—*walking*. I think it has a certain ring to it. If you ask me, it could catch on!"

KUMP: **"That's it? All that trouble just to do this *walking*?"**

NARRATOR: "Ozzie was now bursting with energy. Racing around the ocean floor, Ozzie exclaimed,"

OZZIE: "We'll jump! . . . We'll kick balls! . . . We'll dance! . . . We'll play ring-around-the-rosey!"

KUMP: **"Awwwww! What does any of that mean?!"**

OZZIE: "I guess I don't really know."

KUMP: **"It all sounds stupid! Why would any sane fish want to do any of that?"**

OZZIE: "To see! To learn! To explore! To understand! To become! I dreamed that we will change and change and change again. Some of us will soar high above the pond. Some of us will become mighty creatures a hundred fishes high. And some—"

KUMP: [turn toward Ozzie, with skeptical interest, don't look at script until Narrator reads again.]

OZZIE: "Some will become wise! The wise ones will come to know who they are and why they exist. They will understand everything that is, and they will celebrate everything they understand."

NARRATOR: Kump settled back into the ooze, and with a slap of a fishy tail released a cloud of mud into the water.

KUMP: "Sounds unlikely!"

OZZIE: "Maybe some of it is — and maybe not! We'll never know unless we climb out of the pond."

KUMP: [facing audience] "**Seems like a lot of bother with no guaranteed return. A smart fish will stay right here and enjoy life.** [pause, turning toward Ozzie] **Now you go swim out of here—or walk, if that's what makes you happy.** [turning to audience] **Me? I'm late for my nap.**" [yawn and droop head]

NARRATOR: Well, that's the end of the story. But you may want to know a little of what happened next. That afternoon, the sleeping Kumpfrumple was eaten by a much larger fish. . .

KUMP: [look up, frightened, then head down or collapse.]

KUMP: [narrator will speak a few more sentences to end story, then you take a bow.]
